

"Hook or Me This Time"

by J.M. Barrie from Peter Pan

Peter Pan is about a magical flying boy who takes his new friends – Wendy, Michael, and John – to Neverland to have adventures. The children join the Lost Boys in the battles against the evil pirate Captain Hook and his crew. In this text section, Peter is going to rescue Wendy and the boys who have been captured by Hook. Hook has an iron hook for a hand. Peter cut off the captain's real hand in a battle, and a crocodile ate it. The crocodile also swallowed a ticking clock. Wherever the crocodile goes, the ticking could be heard.

Odd things happen to all of us on our way through life without our noticing for a time that they have happened. Thus, to take an instance, we suddenly discover that we have been deaf in one ear for we don't know how long, but, say, half an hour. Now such an experience had come that night to Peter. When last we saw him he was stealing across the island with one finger to his lips and his dagger at the ready. He had seen the crocodile pass by without noticing anything peculiar about it, but by and by he remembered that it had not been ticking. At first he thought this eerie, but soon concluded rightly that the clock had run down.

Without giving a thought to what might be the feelings of a fellow-creature thus abruptly deprived of its closest companion, Peter began to consider how he could turn the catastrophe to his own use; and he decided to tick, so that wild beasts should believe he was the crocodile and let him pass unmolested. He ticked superbly, but with one unforeseen result. The crocodile was among those who heard the sound, and it followed him, though whether with the purpose of regaining what it had lost, or merely as a friend under the belief that it was again ticking itself, will never be certainly known, for, like slaves to a fixed idea, it was a stupid beast.

Peter reached the shore without mishap, and went straight on, his legs encountering the water as if quite unaware that they had entered a new element. Thus many animals pass from land to water, but no other human of whom I know. As he swam he had but one thought: "Hook or me this time." He had ticked so long that he now went on ticking without knowing that he was doing it. Had he known he would have stopped, for to board the brig by help of the tick, though an ingenious idea, had not occurred to him.

On the contrary, he thought he had scaled her side as noiseless as a mouse; and he was amazed to see the pirates cowering from him, with Hook in their midst as abject as if he had heard the crocodile.

The crocodile! No sooner did Peter remember it than he heard the ticking. At first he thought the sound did come from the crocodile, and he looked behind him swiftly. Then he realized that he was doing it himself, and in a flash he understood the situation. "How clever of me!" he thought at once, and signed to the boys not to burst into applause.

Questions

1. Why did Peter start making the ticking sound?
2. What does stealing mean in this phrase: "he was stealing across the island."
3. Peter does not pay attention to several things in this passage. What is one of them?
4. The passage begins with, "Odd things happen to all of us on our way through life without our noticing for a time that they have happened." Have you had something or can you imagine something that happened to you without you noticing it? Tell about that "something."

Vocabulary List

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. Odd
2. Stealing
3. Peculiar
4. Eerie
5. Superbly
6. Mishap
7. Ingenious
8. Cowering
9. Swiftly

Context Clues

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1) "**Odd** things happen to all of us on our way through life without our noticing for a time that they have happened."

- a. confusing b. strange c. wonderful d. worrisome

2) "When last we saw him he was **stealing** across the island with one finger to his lips and his dagger at the ready."

- a. moving quickly b. moving openly c. moving greedily d. moving carefully

3) "He had seen the crocodile pass by without noticing anything **peculiar** about it, but by and by he remembered that it had not been ticking."

- a. unusual b. plain c. simple d. important

4) "At first he thought this **erie**, but soon concluded rightly that the clock had run down."

- a. strange b. frightening c. confusing d. boring

5) "He ticked **superbly**, but with one unforeseen result."

- a. continually b. wonderfully c. kindly d. poorly

6) "Peter reached the shore without **mishap**, and went straight on, his legs encountering the water as if quite unaware that they had entered a new element."

- a. good luck b. bad luck c. help d. prayers

7) "Had he known he would have stopped, for to board the brig by help of the tick, though an **ingenious** idea, had not occurred to him.

- a. wild b. unusual c. simple d. clever

8) "... he was amazed to see the pirates **cowering** from him..."

- a. crouching in fear b. taking gold c. standing away d. moving confidently

9) "At first he thought the sound did come from the crocodile, and he looked behind him **swiftly**."

- a. quietly b. quickly c. continually d. worriedly