

# Nana the Nanny

by J. M. Barrie *from Peter Pan*

*Peter Pan is the story of three English children, Wendy, John, and Michael Darling. They meet the amazing Peter Pan, a boy who lives in magical Neverland. In this passage, the reader is introduced to Nana, the Darling children's nurse and nanny, who happens to be a dog.*

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Mrs. Darling loved to have everything just so, and Mr. Darling had a passion for being exactly like his neighbours; so, of course, they had a nurse. As they were poor, this nurse was a prim Newfoundland dog, called Nana, who had belonged to no one in particular until the Darlings engaged her. She had always thought children important, however, and the Darlings had become acquainted with her in Kensington Gardens, where she spent most of her spare time peeping into perambulators, and was much hated by careless nursemaids, whom she followed to their homes and complained of to their mistresses. She proved to be quite a treasure of a nurse. How thorough she was at bath-time, and up at any moment of the night if one of her charges made the slightest cry. Of course her kennel was in the nursery. She had a genius for knowing when a cough is a thing to have no patience with and when it needs stocking around your throat. She believed to her last day in old-fashioned remedies like rhubarb leaf, and made sounds of contempt over all this new-fangled talk about germs, and so on. It was a lesson in propriety to see her escorting the children to school, walking sedately by their side when they were well behaved, and butting them back into line if they strayed. On John's footer [in England soccer was called football, "footer" for short] days she never once forgot his sweater, and she usually carried an umbrella in her mouth in case of rain. There is a room in the basement of Miss Fulsom's school where the nurses wait. They sat on forms, while Nana lay on the floor, but that was the only difference. They affected to ignore her as of an inferior social status to themselves, and she despised their light talk. She resented visits to the nursery from Mrs. Darling's friends, but if they did come she first whipped off Michael's pinafore and put him into the one with blue braiding, and smoothed out Wendy and made a dash at John's hair.

No nursery could possibly have been conducted more correctly, and Mr. Darling knew it, yet he sometimes wondered uneasily whether the neighbours talked.

He had his position in the city to consider.

Nana also troubled him in another way. He had sometimes a feeling that she did not admire him. "I know she admires you tremendously, George," Mrs. Darling would assure him, and then she would sign to the children to be specially nice to father. Lovely dances followed, in which the only other servant, Liza, was sometimes allowed to join. The gaiety of those romps! And gayest of all was Mrs. Darling, who would pirouette so wildly that all you could see of her was the kiss, and then if you had dashed at her you might have got it. There never was a simpler happier family until the coming of Peter Pan.

## Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. How did the other nurses feel about Nana?
  - A. They liked her very much.
  - B. They thought she was below than them.
  - C. They were afraid she would bite them.
  - D. They thought she danced funny
  
2. Where was Nana's kennel?
  - A. In the basement of Miss Fulsom's school
  - B. In the stable
  - C. In the garden
  - D. In the nursery
  
3. Who gave the children baths?
  - A. Mrs. Darling
  - B. Wendy
  - C. Liza
  - D. Nana
  
4. What was the Darling family like?
  - A. Rich and happy
  - B. Unhappy
  - C. Poor but happy
  - D. The largest in the neighborhood

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**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. acquainted
2. perambulators
3. contempt
4. new-fangled
5. sedately
6. forms
7. affected
8. assure
9. gaiety
10. pirouette

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**Context Clues**

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

1) the Darlings had become **acquainted** with her in Kensington Gardens"

a. familiar; known    b. annoyed; irritated    c. neighbors    d. stuck; saddled

2) she spent most of her spare time peeping into **perambulators**"

a. dining room windows    b. purses; handbags    c. baby carriages    d. doggy doors

3) "made sounds of **contempt** over all this new-fangled talk about germs"

a. joy; happiness    b. boredom; disinterest    c. interest    d. dislike; scorn

4) "made sounds of contempt over all this **new-fangled** talk about germs"

a. modern    b. highly scientific    c. exaggerated    d. recently disproved

5) "It was a lesson in propriety to see her escorting the children to school, walking **sedately** by their side"

a. excitedly; energetically    b. quickly or hurriedly    c. calmly; quietly    d. sleepily

6) "They sat on **forms**, while Nana lay on the floor"

a. tablecloths    b. benches    c. pillows    d. boxes

7) "They **affected** to ignore her"

- a. pretended   b. hated   c. started   d. failed

8) "I know she admires you tremendously, George," Mrs. Darling would **assure** him"

- a. contradict; challenge   b. scold   c. question   d. comfort or promise

9) "The **gaiety** of those romps!"

- a. length; duration   b. merriment; fun   c. seriousness; somberness   d. beauty

10) "Mrs. Darling, who would **pirouette** so wildly that all you could see of her was the kiss"

- a. turn; spin   b. kick   c. flapped; waved   d. run; gallop