

The Children Are Carried Off

by J.M. Barrie *from Peter Pan*

In the novel Peter Pan, Peter's main enemy is the pirate Captain Hook. Hook and Peter have a long history. The captain hates Peter for cutting off his hand and feeding it to a crocodile. Now the captain uses an iron hook for a hand. This passage explains Hook's feelings about Peter.

It was Pan he wanted, Pan and Wendy and their band, but chiefly Pan.

Peter was such a small boy that one tends to wonder at the man's hatred of him. True he had flung Hook's arm to the crocodile, but even this and the increased insecurity of life to which it led, owing to the crocodile's persistence, hardly account for a vindictiveness so relentless and malignant. The truth is that there was a something about Peter which goaded the pirate captain to frenzy. It was not his courage, it was not his engaging appearance, it was not—. There is no beating about the bush, for we know quite well what it was, and have got to tell. It was Peter's cockiness.

This had got on Hook's nerves; it made his iron claw twitch, and at night it disturbed him like an insect. While Peter lived, the tortured man felt that he was a lion in a cage into which a sparrow had come.

Questions

Explain the meaning of the underlined words in each quotation from the passage.

1. "hardly account for a vindictiveness so relentless"
2. "something about Peter which goaded the pirate captain"
3. "it was not his engaging appearance"
4. "It was Peter's cockiness."

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. Chiefly
2. Persistence
3. Goaded
4. Engaging
5. Cockiness

Context Clues

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

1) It was Pan he wanted, Pan and Wendy and their band, but **chiefly** Pan.

- a. sometimes b. usually c. least importantly d. mainly

2) True he had flung Hook's arm to the crocodile, but even this and the increased insecurity of life to which it led, owing to the crocodile's **persistence**, hardly account for a vindictiveness so relentless and malignant.

- a. refusal b. determination c. teeth d. power

3) The truth is that there was a something about Peter which **goaded** the pirate captain to frenzy.

- a. guided b. gloated c. glided d. glared

4) "It was not his courage, it was not his **engaging** appearance, it was not—."

- a. ugly b. attractive c. overwhelming d. tidy

5) "It was Peter's **cockiness**."

- a. cluelessness b. assertiveness c. attractiveness d. boldness