

The Home Under the Ground

by J.M. Barrie from Peter Pan

Peter Pan is a book about the adventures of Peter, a boy who did not want to grow up, and his friends from London named Wendy, Michael, and John. Peter has taught the children to fly, and they have gone to Peter's home called Neverland. Once there, they meet the Lost Boys who live there with Peter. While Wendy is still a child herself, she still tries to be a mother to all of the group. In this part, Wendy tries to help her brothers and the other boys remember their parents.

As time wore on did she think much about the beloved parents she had left behind her? This is a difficult question, because it is quite impossible to say how time does wear on in the Neverland, where it is calculated by moons and suns, and there are ever so many more of them than on the mainland. But I am afraid that Wendy did not really worry about her father and mother; she was absolutely confident that they would always keep the window open for her to fly back by, and this gave her complete ease of mind. What did disturb her at times was that John remembered his parents vaguely only, as people he had once known, while Michael was quite willing to believe that she was really his mother. These things scared her a little, and nobly anxious to do her duty, she tried to fix the old life in their minds by setting them examination papers on it, as like as possible to the ones she used to do at school. The other boys thought this awfully interesting, and insisted on joining, and they made slates for themselves, and sat round the table, writing and thinking hard about the questions she had written on another slate and passed round. They were the most ordinary questions—"What was the colour of Mother's eyes? Which was taller, Father or Mother? Was Mother blonde or brunette? Answer all three questions if possible." "(A) Write an essay of not less than 40 words on How I spent my last Holidays, or The Characters of Father and Mother compared. Only one of these to be attempted." Or "(1) Describe Mother's laugh; (2) Describe Father's laugh; (3) Describe Mother's Party Dress; (4) Describe the Kennel and its Inmate."

They were just everyday questions like these, and when you could not answer them you were told to make a cross; and it was really dreadful what a number of crosses even John made. Of course the only boy who replied to every question was Slightly, and no one could have been more hopeful of coming out first, but his answers were perfectly ridiculous, and he really came out last: a melancholy thing.

Peter did not compete. For one thing he despised all mothers except Wendy, and for another he was the only boy on the island who could neither write nor spell; not the smallest word. He was above all that sort of thing.

By the way, the questions were all written in the past tense. What was the colour of Mother's eyes, and so on. Wendy, you see, had been forgetting, too.

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. Beloved
2. Wear
3. Confident
4. Disturb
5. Insisted
6. Ordinary
7. Melancholy
8. Despised

Context Clues

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

1) “As time wore on did she think much about the **beloved** parents she had left behind her?”

- a. beautiful b. admired c. dear d. strict

2) “This is a difficult question, because it is quite impossible to say how time does **wear** on in the Neverland...”

- a. pass slowly b. pass quickly c. pass normally d. pass intermittently

3) “But I am afraid that Wendy did not really worry about her father and mother; she was absolutely **confident** that they would always keep the window open for her to fly back by, and this gave her complete ease of mind. “

- a. unsure b. sure c. pleased d. worried

4) “What did **disturb** her at times was that John remembered his parents vaguely only...”

- a. remind b. scare c. worry d. bother

5) “The other boys thought this awfully interesting, and **insisted** on joining....”

- a. decided carefully b. begged persistently c. asked nicely d. refused adamantly

6) “They were the most **ordinary** questions—“What was the colour of Mother’s eyes?”

- a. difficult b. average c. uncommon d. tricky

7) “...but his answers were perfectly ridiculous, and he really came out last: a **melancholy** thing.”

- a. happy b. sad c. confusing d. rude

8) “Peter did not compete. For one thing he **despised** all mothers except Wendy...”

- a. loved b. upset c. avoided d. disliked