

The Never Bird

by J.M. Barrie from Peter Pan

Peter Pan is a book about the adventures of a magical boy, Peter Pan, who lives in an amazing place called Neverland. In the story, Peter brings three English children named Wendy, Michael, and John, to his home in Neverland. There they meet Peter's friends, including the Lost Boys. They help Peter in his fight against the evil pirate Captain Hook.

In this passage, the children have been in a battle at the mermaid's lagoon with Hook and his pirates. All the children have escaped except Peter. He has been wounded and can neither fly nor swim. He is on a rock in the middle of the lagoon. The tide is coming in and the water is rising. Peter is sure to drown. Suddenly, he sees the Never bird paddling against the tide to rescue him. She is on her nest of eggs which is floating in the water. The Never bird is very tired after such an effort. She has tried to explain to him that she wants him to use her nest to float toward the shore. Peter, however, does not speak her language.

Nevertheless the bird was determined to save him if she could, and by one last mighty effort she propelled the nest against the rock. Then up she flew; deserting her eggs, so as to make her meaning clear.

Then at last he understood, and clutched the nest and waved his thanks to the bird as she fluttered overhead. It was not to receive his thanks, however, that she hung there in the sky; it was not even to watch him get into the nest; it was to see what he did with her eggs.

There were two large white eggs, and Peter lifted them up and reflected. The bird covered her face with her wings, so as not to see the last of them; but she could not help peeping between the feathers.

I forget whether I have told you that there was a stave on the rock, driven into it by some buccaneers of long ago to mark the site of buried treasure. The children had discovered the glittering hoard, and when in a mischievous mood used to fling showers of moidores, diamonds, pearls and pieces of eight to the gulls, who pounced upon them for food, and then flew away, raging at the scurvy trick that had been played upon them. The stave was still there, and on it Starkey had hung his hat, a deep tarpaulin, watertight, with a broad brim. Peter put the eggs into this hat and set it on the lagoon. It floated beautifully.

The Never bird saw at once what he was up to, and screamed her admiration of him; and, alas, Peter crowed his agreement with her. Then he got into the nest, reared the stave in it as a mast, and hung up his shirt for a sail. At the same moment the bird fluttered down upon the hat and once more sat snugly on her eggs. She drifted in one direction, and he was borne off in another, both cheering.

Questions

1. Why did the Never bird cover her face with her wings? What was she afraid of?
2. What did Peter do with the Never bird's eggs?
3. What do you think a stave is?
4. At the end of the passage, both Peter and the Never bird are cheering. Why?

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. Mighty
2. Deserting
3. Clutched
4. Stave
5. Hoard
6. Scurvy
7. Admiration
8. Snugly

Context Clues

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

- 1) “Nevertheless the bird was determined to save him if she could, and by one last **mighty** effort she propelled the nest against the rock.”
a. strong b. careful c. imaginary d. weak
- 2) “Then up she flew; **deserting** her eggs, so as to make her meaning clear.”
a. taking b. leaving c. breaking d. guarding
- 3) “Then at last he understood, and **clutched** the nest and waved his thanks to the bird as she fluttered overhead.”
a. tossed b. destroyed c. squashed d. grabbed
- 4) “I forget whether I have told you that there was a **stave** on the rock, driven into it by some buccaneers of long ago to mark the site of buried treasure.”
a. deadly bug b. shiny stone c. animal fur d. wooden stick
- 5) “The children had discovered the glittering **hoard**...”
a. group of rocks b. valuables c. group of birds d. garbage
- 6) “...raging at the **scurvy** trick that had been played upon them.”
a. mean b. silly c. magic d. confusing
- 7) “The Never bird saw at once what he was up to, and screamed her **admiration** of him...”
a. hatred b. affection c. distrust d. trust
- 8) “...at the same moment the bird fluttered down upon the hat and once more sat **snugly** on her eggs.”
a. quickly b. openly c. fearlessly d. closely