

Wendy's Story

by J.M. Barrie from Peter Pan

Peter Pan is the story of the adventures of Wendy, John, and Michael Darling after they meet the flying boy, Peter Pan. Peter teaches them to fly, and they leave the Darling home through an open window. They go with Peter to his home in magical Neverland. Once there, Wendy pretends to be the mother of all the children there, including Peter's friends, the Lost Boys.

In the section of the story below, Wendy is just finishing a bedtime story for the boys. The bedtime story sounds very much like the way Wendy and her brothers left their home.

“See, dear brothers,’ says Wendy pointing upwards, ‘there is the window still standing open. Ah, now we are rewarded for our sublime faith in a mother’s love.’ So up they flew to their mummy and daddy, and pen cannot describe the happy scene, over which we draw a veil.”

That was the story, and they were as pleased with it as the fair narrator herself. Everything just as it should be, you see. Off we skip like the most heartless things in the world, which is what children are, but so attractive; and we have an entirely selfish time, and then when we have need of special attention we nobly return for it, confident that we shall be rewarded instead of smacked.

So great indeed was their faith in a mother’s love that they felt they could afford to be callous for a bit longer.

But there was one there who knew better, and when Wendy finished he uttered a hollow groan.

“What is it, Peter?” she cried, running to him, thinking he was ill. “Where is it, Peter?”

“It isn’t that kind of pain,” Peter replied darkly.

“Then what kind is it?”

“Wendy, you are wrong about mothers.”

They all gathered round him in affright, so alarming was his agitation; and with a fine candour he told them what he had hitherto concealed.

“Long ago,” he said, “I thought like you that my mother would always keep the window open for me, so I stayed away for moons and moons and moons, and then flew back; but the window was barred, for mother had forgotten all about me, and there was another little boy sleeping in my bed.”

I am not sure that this was true, but Peter thought it was true; and it scared them.

“Are you sure mothers are like that?”

“Yes.”

So this was the truth about mothers. The toads!

Questions

1. Who does the narrator say are “the most heartless things in the world”?
2. What kind of pain was Peter feeling?
3. What happened to Peter that made him not like his mother?
4. What does “hitherto concealed” mean in this sentence: “They all gathered round him in affright, so alarming was his agitation; and with a fine candor he told them what he had hitherto concealed.”?

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. Sublime
2. Pleased
3. Nobly
4. Callous
5. Agitation
6. Candour / Candor

Context Clues

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

1) “Ah, now we are rewarded for our **sublime** faith in a mother’s love.”

- a. combined b. questionable c. wonderful d. serious

2) “That was the story, and they were as **pleased** with it as the fair narrator herself.”

- a. unhappy b. happy c. annoyed d. angered

3) “... and then when we have need of special attention we **nobly** return for it, confident that we shall be rewarded instead of smacked.”

- a. honorably b. unexpectedly c. absolutely d. confidently

4) “So great indeed was their faith in a mother’s love that they felt they could afford to be **callous** for a bit longer.”

- a. sensitive b. insensitive c. jealous d. greedy

5) “They all gathered round him in affright, so alarming was his **agitation**...”

- a. sad hopefulness b. confused sadness c. nervous excitement b. nervous anger

6) “... and with a fine **candour** he told them what he had hitherto concealed.”

- a. story-telling voice b. dishonesty c. honesty d. thoughtfulness