

"Peter Pan: The Author and Historical Context"

James Matthew Barrie was born in Scotland on May 9, 1860. After graduating from college in 1882, he worked as a journalist writing theater reviews. He moved to London, England, in 1885.

Becoming a Writer

In the late 1800s, J.M. Barrie wrote his first **novels** for adults. He **published** his first novel in 1887. He began writing plays in the 1890s.

In 1894, he married Mary Ansell, an actress, but the marriage was not a happy one. To get out of the house, Barrie started taking long walks in Kensington Gardens in London. Here he met a family of five boys, George, John, Peter, Michael, and Nicholas, and their mother, Sylvia Llewelyn Davis. The children **inspired** him to invent **fantasy** stories about a boy called Peter Pan who had adventures, which Barrie would tell the boys to **entertain** them.

Peter Pan and Beyond

The character of Peter Pan first appeared in a book for adults by Barrie called *The Little White Bird*, published in 1902. Two years later in 1904, Barrie's play *Peter Pan* was a great success in London. The play was about the same main character but was quite different from the **original** story. It was written for children as well as adults. *Peter Pan and Wendy*, a book based on the play, was published in 1911. This is the **classic** story we now know as *Peter Pan*.

In the early 1900s, J.M. Barrie was very successful. He continued to write successful plays and novels for adults. When the mother of the Llewelyn Davis children died in 1910, J.M. Barrie became one of their guardians.

J.M. Barrie died in London in 1937, aged 77.

Historical Context

At the time this book was written in the early 1900s, life in England was very different from today, and this is reflected in the **literature** written at the time.

Stereotypes

England is on the island of Great Britain and, in the early 1900s when Barrie wrote *Peter Pan*, traveling to other countries was very expensive and often dangerous. There were no planes, so to leave the island,

people had to travel by boat. As a result, only a few people were able to travel outside of England. Most people in Great Britain at that time did not understand other places, cultures, or ways of life. Their only understanding came from the stories of explorers and travelers who often did not understand the people or places they encountered. Some explorers and travelers believed that the way they lived in England was the best way to live. They often treated people in other places very badly because they lived differently, and sometimes they wanted to take **advantage** of them. When they returned, the stories they told of their travels were often inaccurate and unfairly portrayed people who lived in other places and their customs and cultures. As a result, the literature from this time may inaccurately portray people from other places in the world.

At this time, **society** considered women to be physically and intellectually weaker than men. Many thought that women should not work outside the home and that only men were responsible for earning money to support their families. As a result, a lot of the literature from this time portrays the stereotype of women and girls as maternal and motherly. They are also depicted as doing jobs in the home like sewing socks, while their husbands are out working all day.

J.M. Barrie's books and plays reflect his own thoughts and experiences, which were shaped by many factors, including the time and place in which he lived.

Glossary

Word	Meaning
Novels	fiction books
Published	prepared and sent out books to sell
Inspired	caused someone to want to do something
Fantasy	fiction involving imagination and adventure
Entertain	provide amusement or enjoyment
Original	the first one that is a model for others
Classic	still judged to be high-quality even after a period of time
Literature	written work
Advantage	the opportunity to benefit or profit
Society	people living together in an organized community

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