

Peter Pan

How is gender represented and what does this suggest?

In JM Barrie's novel *Peter Pan* (1911), we can see numerous ideological representations of gender. Boys are boys and girls are girls and this is the way it is. In the characters of Wendy, Mrs Darling, Tinkerbell and Tiger Lily, we can see how the female gender is represented in diverse forms, particularly through Tinkerbell and Tiger Lily. In *Peter Pan and the Lost Boys* we see the gender role of 'boy' against the adult roles of 'man' in Mr Darling and Captain Hook. It is clear that Barrie has clearly defined gender roles against the ideology of late Victorian and early Georgian society.

First of all, Wendy and Mrs Darling parallel each other. Wendy will eventually become just like her 'mother' fulfilling the typical gender roles of female. She takes on maternal duties from the moment she meets Peter in the nursery as she exercises the domestic chore of sewing in Chapter Three. "I shall sew it on for you, my little man," she said, though he was tall as herself, and she got out her housewife [sewing bag], and sewed the shadow on to Peter's foot.' (Need to find ref). By calling Peter, her 'little man', Wendy gets into to the gendered role of mother quickly. Wendy is further recognised in the gender role of 'mother' when she gets to Neverland and Peter assigns his own gender stereotypes to Wendy and his confidence in what she should do echoes the strong Victorian ideas of what the female gender resembles. "Wendy," he said, "how we should all respect you..." followed by "Wendy," he said, the sly one, "you could tuck us in at night, None of us has ever been tucked in at night.", only allows Wendy to revel in this further for it is what her own mother does for her. Peter also follows with, "And you could darn our clothes and make pockets for us." This thus suggests that 'mothers' have a lot of responsibility in caring for their children and that Peter may have brought Wendy to Neverland to do the chores that he does, as a boy, not want to.

The characters of Tinkerbell and Tiger Lily (from Neverland) also have an important gendered stereotype. It should be noted that they do not talk in the novel at all and when Peter meets Wendy he exclaims that "Girls talk too much" because he has never been subjected to females talking. Even the mermaids only talk to ask Peter of his adventures and fulfilling further gender roles of women being silenced by men in the Victorian world.

The role of Peter is itself a gender stereotype. Like Mr Darling, Peter is adamant in himself and set in his ways. He is also like a father figure to the Lost Boys with Wendy as his 'mother'. He protects the Lost Boys like his children and is the one who stands up to Captain Hook and the Pirates. As a boy, he is a representation of childish confidence as well. He also acts above others like Mr Darling.