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Candidate session number

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Examination session (May or November)

May

Year

2012

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: English A2

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: The absence and replacement of parental characters in Peter Pan and The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.

Candidate's declaration

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The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

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[redacted] sorted out through hours of material and several ideas. She found her topic by tapping into her inner resources as an orphan child. She then tackled the material with sensitivity and diligence, doing a lot of research and producing high quality writing. Her attitude was low key and her dedication total. It was a pleasure working with her, as she was offering a new reading of a traditional material from a personal perspective.

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I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent  hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature:

Date:

Jan 20 2012

*has too many hours of supervision*

**Assessment form (for examiner use only)**

Candidate session number



**Achievement level**

Criteria	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3
A research question	12	2		2	
B introduction	12	2		2	
C investigation	13	4		4	
D knowledge and understanding	14	4		4	
E reasoned argument	13	4		4	
F analysis and evaluation	13	4		4	
G use of subject language	14	4		4	
H conclusion	11	2		2	
I formal presentation	13	4		4	
J abstract	12	2		2	
K holistic judgment	13	4		4	

Total out of 36 29 ✓

Name of examiner 1:

Examiner number:

Name of examiner 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
(TOTAL letters)

Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of examiner 3: \_\_\_\_\_  
(TOTAL letters)

Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_

IB Cardiff use only: B: ✓

IB Cardiff use only: A: 105273

Date: 15/05/12

## **Extended Essay English A2**

### **The absence and replacement of parental characters in *Peter Pan* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe***

**Candidate name:**

**Candidate number:**

**Subject: English A2**

**Session: May 2012**

**Supervisor:**



## *Abstract*

Escapism of reality is a common occurrence in children's literature. Two examples of novels where characters escape to a fantastical world are J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* and C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. These children enter a new environment without parents or guardians, but are they totally detached from the concept of parents or guardians?

In this essay I examine the characters other than the legal guardians of the Darlings and Pevensies provide them with parental care and new families that are formed in this way. My research is done by looking at characters that guide, advice and take care of the children instead of their parents or legal guardians. I also compared the situation of the newly established families to situations that may be defined as a 'traditional' family, where a mother, father and children live under the same roof. My research has led me to the conclusion that the children in the novels find characters that function as parental replacement and are not fully responsible for themselves in an unknown environment. Having compared the families that are established in Neverland and Narnia, I conclude that the situation of the Pevensie children (*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*) and the parental care provided by the Beavers resembles a 'traditional' family, whereas the Darlings experience a shift to an unorthodox situation in terms of their newly formed family.

**Word count: 234**

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*Poor  
No detail*

## *Introduction*

In Barrie's *Peter Pan* and Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, two fantasy lands are created where the Darlings and Pevensies are engaged in adventures that they experience together with all sorts of mystical creatures. Noticeable is how the children of both families escape into an unknown world without any parents or guardians to guide and nurture them in times of trouble. Living in a fantastical land without parental supervision takes away many restrictions, which seems to be the reason why Barrie and Lewis let the children in their novels escape to an exciting new environment in Narnia and Neverland. However, the writers do not leave the children completely unattended, as situations occur where other characters take pity on them. This essay contains a comparative study of the replacement of parental care received by the protagonists in *Peter Pan* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and compares the newly established families with the concept of traditional families.

Though the traditional or orthodox family is hard to define nowadays, in the British society of 1911 and 1950 this family was seen as "the 'natural reproductive unit' of mom, pop, and the children all living under one roof" (Ball, 2002, p.68). The Darling family fits the aforementioned description very well. *Peter Pan* was written for and about "the Llewelyn Davies family, on whom the Darlings were to be based" (Birkin, 2003, p.46). Wendy, John and Michael live a rather ideal life, with their parents, nanny and maid, which indicate that are not from the lower class in Britain.

Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is believed to have been written for religious purposes, as "the entire Chronicles (of Narnia) follow biblical contours" (Beliefnet, 2011). The novel takes place during World War Two and the Pevensie are evacuated from London,

an event that took place in reality in Britain. The fact that the four siblings are still together may be an indicator of children of a wealthy family, as those from the lower class of the British society often “would be split from brothers and sisters” (History Learning Site, 2011).

Unlike the Darlings in *Peter Pan*, the Pevensies are not in the presence of their parents, in fact, parents are not even mentioned in this novel.

The similar sense of escapism and different situations of the families in both books make up an interesting comparison in terms of family structure. I was originally inspired by literature about orphans, but changed the topic when I discovered that in the children in *Peter Pan* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* do have parents but are separated from them in the novel for various reasons.

sol

✓

sol context  
2



## *Main body*

### *Caretakers and leaders*

#### **The Caretakers: Wendy and the beavers**

As the protagonists in both works leave England for magical world without parental supervision, their families transform. The following paragraphs will elaborate on the new caretakers of the children.

When the children in *Peter Pan* disappear through the nursery window tempted by adventure, the existence of mystical creatures and flying to Neverland, Peter Pan tells them that they will be young forever, as Peter himself does not like the idea of adults, parents or grownups.

Michael and John are the ones that get to enjoy an adventurous and carefree extension of their childhood, but Wendy has to grow up fast, and seems to experience adulthood earlier than planned. The main reason for the great difference between Wendy and her brothers is the fact that Wendy is a girl, unlike Peter Pan's other companions. Barrie compliments girls by saying that they are "are much too clever to fall out of their prams"(Barrie, 2007, p.37) and that "one girl is more use than twenty boys"(Barrie, 2007, p.35). Wendy is the first girl to join the Lost Boys in Neverland, and Peter Pan has a clear idea of what Wendy's role will be once she joins him on the journey to Neverland. Peter takes advantage of Wendy's girly instincts, when he tells her that none of the Lost Boys "has ever been tucked in at night" (Barrie, 2007, p.39).

The poor way in which Peter is looked after and the fact that he has no mother makes Wendy immediately feel "in the presence of a tragedy" (Barrie, 2007, p.32) and it awakens her urge to take care of these boys that neglect themselves. The aforementioned reasons and the fact that Wendy is attracted to Peter convince her fully. It is interesting how Peter hates everything about parents, but misses parental care and comfort to the extent that he looks for an

alternative, in this case Wendy. Later on Wendy is suddenly referred to as a mother, which is a very strange transition for the reader. The fact that the boys are surrounded by a caretaker that is very similar to an actual mother, make one doubt the validity of Peter Pan's hatred for adults and parents. And although Peter Pan is responsible for the adventure the boys get to be a part of, Wendy is the character that takes care of the boys and enables them to take part in the adventures without being hungry, dirty or cold. Her role becomes that of a traditional housewife and Barrie supports this by referring to the boys as "those rampagious boys of hers (Wendy)" (Barrie, 2007, p. 80) and the fact that Wendy keeps "her nose to the pot" (Barrie, 2007, p. 80). The aforementioned shows that Barrie uses a character that fully replaces a traditional parent with all the characteristics that a mother needs.

*Show*

*a bit to much  
narrative*

Even though the depart of the Pevensie children is similar to that of the Darlings, the experiences of the families in the lands of fantasy differ a great deal. The Pevensies enter Narnia through the wardrobe out of curiosity rather than temptation. One might expect that in this fairytale the oldest child would become the new parent, but Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy have the chance to fully enjoy their youth for most of the time in the story, because these children have other characters taking care of them. The first characters to shelter the four minors are Mr and Mrs Beaver, who immediately provide them with food and a roof over their heads. Mrs Beaver is described as "a kind-looking old she -beaver"(Lewis, 2009, p.81), Mr Beaver has his "own special rocking-chair beside the fire"(Lewis, 2009, p.83) and smokes a pipe, which are characteristics often associated with grandparents. The beavers in fact do take care of the minors as if they are their grandchildren, and take away many of the worries that the Pevensies have. Mr Beaver takes the group of four where they "can have a real talk and also dinner"(Lewis, 2009, p.77) right away, these decisions are not to be made by the children, which does not allow them to worry about comforts such as food or housing. The

*beaver*

Beavers do not just take care of shelter and food, but also help to make decisions and escort the group of four throughout their journey to find Aslan. The worst damage done during the trip that the children and the Beavers make is Susan's "slight blister on one heel page" (Lewis, 2009, p.135), which is less of a threat than that of falling in the water while falling asleep, like the Darlings in their tour to Neverland. ✓

### **Wendy and Mrs Beaver compared**

Though Wendy and Mrs Beaver have different roles in both works, similarities can be found between the two characters, as they both seem to have the same worries and supply the children with comfort so that they have less to worry about. Though it is unknown what Mrs Beaver's previous experience with children is, it seems as though she knows how to take care of them, whereas Wendy has her first experiences as a mother. Similarities in the behavior of the two characters is found through their love of sewing, as Mrs Beaver is found "working busily at her sewing machine" (Lewis, 2009, p.81), Wendy sews more often in the novel and is said to prefer sewing when the boys are all sleeping and she has "a breathing time for herself" (Barrie, 2007, p.80). Though Wendy's case is described to a greater extent than that of Mrs Beaver, both characters prioritize the well being of the (other) children. ✓

any textual support?

### **The leaders: Peter Pan and Aslan**

Other than the caretakers in *Peter Pan* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, much of the destiny of the children lies within the hands of leading characters Peter Pan and Aslan. ✓

good organization

Peter Pan is the leader of the Lost Boys, but does not necessarily have the characteristics that make one associate with a great leader. He surely has the ability to convince others, he knows where to find adventures and is very clever, but turns out to be quite selfish and cruel and his

urge for adventure does not always help out others. A good example of Peter Pan's negative characteristics that put the Darlings in an unpleasant situation occurs during the flight to Neverland. Wendy, Michael and John get annoyed by Peter for various reasons; he often flies away "to have some adventure in which they (the Darlings) had no share" (Barrie, 2007, p.47), and he often waits with helping the children out until the very last moment, because it is "his own cleverness that interested him and not the saving of human life" (Barrie, 2007, p.46). Even though Peter initially causes trouble for the Darlings, he saves their lives when they are threatened by the pirates. It is not necessarily the fact that Peter Pan is young that makes him a bad caretaker (Wendy proves this to be wrong), but predominantly his lack of empathy, his excessive love for adventure and reluctance to grow up that make him want to look for a mother to join him and the Lost Boys in Neverland. Peter plays an important role in the shift of Wendy's role within the family, as he decides that Wendy will be the mother of many boys in Neverland.

An important character that functions as a leader of the children in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is Aslan. He is a character with authority, which is described in many ways; his "deep and rich" (Lewis, 2009, p.139) voice, "his beautiful fur" (Lewis, 2009, p.170), his "golden mane and the great, royal, solemn, overwhelming eyes" (Lewis, 2009, p.138-139) and his concise and direct words. Unlike Peter Pan's appearance and personality, that of Aslan reassures both the reader and the Pevensies with new hope to save Narnia. Aslan's tranquility, self-assurance and natural sense of authority result in other characters taking his advice and doing as he says in a respectful manner. Aslan's advises are always taken by the children, or any other creature that is on his side, but his wise and almost divine character and appearance create some sort of distance between the lion and the other Narnians. The whereabouts of the lion are vague, he will only be present in when needed and otherwise it is unknown where he

is and when he will return. Aslan gives good advices and guards the four minors, but is more of a protector, rather than a parental figure.

Show this

### **Aslan and Peter Pan compared**

Aslan is not as reliable and constantly present as a parent should be, which are characteristics similar to those of Peter Pan. Aslan “doesn't like being tied down”(Lewis, 2009, p.197) and staying at one location for long and neither does Peter Pan. Both characters show up when needed; Aslan is there to help the daughters and sons of Adam and Eve to free Narnia from the White Witch, Peter Pan is there to save Wendy and the boys from the pirates and seem to like having separate adventures that others do not know of. These similarities help understanding but do not fully determine why both Aslan and Peter Pan are good leaders that are willing and able to save the children from threatening situations, but not suitable to take care of them in a parental way.

see pt

Even though the concept of family and its importance is more thoroughly mentioned in *Peter Pan* than in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Both Barrie and Lewis do not leave the children unattended. In both works, the formation of a new family occurs, which is evident in *Peter Pan*, but certainly also present in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Peter Pan and Aslan have the function of leaders and even role models, characters who are present and important in almost every child's life. Though less involved with family matters, these characters are but of great importance.

### ***The unfortunate ones***

Previously discussed is the general care that the children get, but both works have a character that turns out to be less fortunate or has a different experience from its siblings, either by being physically separated from its them or because of a difference in gender and function.

Wendy Darling and Edmund Pevenise are the unfortunate ones. Both characters are taken care of and looked after in a different way from the others, which possibly makes the absence of a parent or guardian harder. It seems as though both Barrie and Lewis want to teach the reader a lesson by making these two characters suffer from escaping from their home or siblings.

Support  
this idea  
w/ desc

### Wendy

Though Wendy does not complain much, the reader can perceive that taking care of a house full of boys is a bit much for a young girl to handle. She cooks, cleans, sews and reads the boys bedtime stories, which sometimes leads to Wendy not leaving the home for several weeks. Wendy hardly complains and when she does so, her complains are often very lighthearted, an example is: "I'm sure I sometimes think that children are more trouble than they are worth" (*Barrie, 2007, p.107*). The way Wendy says the words 'sometimes' and 'I think', give this sentence an insecure tone, that implies that Wendy does not dare to exclaim her frustrations fully. Most readers would agree that Wendy has every right to complain as a mother, because it leaves her with an unfinished childhood, whereas her little brothers get to enjoy their exciting and untroubled youth.

show

Barrie creates a contradiction when he says that Wendy is "only a little girl" (*Barrie, 2007, p.126*), when she is captured by Captain Hook, because she mostly fulfills the role of a woman and mother. It is in times of threats and danger that Wendy is seen as forlorn, but her overall situation is quite unfortunate too. Wendy came to Neverland because she pitied the boys and the lack of care they received, but Wendy can be pitied for the same reason once she's in Neverland. As Wendy really is only a little girl, she too needs a parental figure to read her stories, tuck her in and look after her. When Wendy and her brothers return home, Wendy is almost tempted to leave with Peter again because "he does so need a mother" (*Barrie, 2007,*

p.169), but her mother deservedly says no, because Wendy needs a mother too. Barrie emphasizes the importance of parental love and especially motherly love by saying that Wendy (like every other child) needs a mother or someone to replace her if she is not there anymore. It can be said that Wendy does not benefit from the shift that occurs in her role in the family, which is possibly the reason to make her doubt her decision to leave her safe habitat in London for Neverland.

*good characterization*

### **Edmund**

Edmund also experiences his time in an unfamiliar place in a different way from his siblings, for he's separated since the moment he decides to walk away from them and the beavers. While Peter, Lucy and Susan were doing well under the beavers' guidance, Edmund was "having a most disappointing time" (Lewis, 2009, p.121). Edmund misses out on the coming of Father Christmas and accompanies the White Witch on her mission. As Edmund cooperates with 'evil', he has to pay the price. The Witch treats Edmund very badly, gives him bad food and gives him the disrespectful name of "human creature" (Lewis, 2009, p.121). Mostly Edmund complains about the bad food he's supplied with, but more horrible is the way in which the Witch humiliates Edmund, he does not get the care and attention he needs. The images in the book (Lewis, 2009, p.128) show that Edmund's hands are tied together and the dwarf behind him threatens with a whip. Edmund does not dare to complain, but the narrator describes how it really is "a terrible journey for Edmund" (Lewis, 2009, p.123). Not only is Edmund missing out on his siblings and the care of the beavers, he is also abused by the Witch. The fact he's treated so badly makes his longing to see his siblings and to be taken care of in loving way even bigger. Despite the differences between the situations of Edmund and Wendy, both characters do not benefit from or experience the shift in the situation of their



*This seems quite different from P.P. + Wendy's situation*

families in the same way as their siblings do.

### ***The newly established families compared to traditional families***

Having compared the way in which new caretakers and leaders occur and how the children in both novels benefit from this care, one can say that new families are formed. Though the formation of families plays a significantly more important role in *Peter Pan*, it occurs in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* as well. The situation of the Darlings shows more similarities to reality than that of the Pevensies, as the oldest sibling often has to take care of the younger ones. However, when the newly established families are compared to the concept of a traditional family, the situation of the children in Narnia is more similar. Although Mr and Mrs Beaver seem to resemble grandparents rather than parents, a situation occurs where Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy are in the house of the Beavers, with a male and female character. Mrs Beaver has “the potatoes boiling and the kettle's singing”(Lewis, 2009, p. 81) while Mr Beaver goes fishing. The couple shows all signs of being happily married and able to take care of four siblings. When Edmund decides to walk away from his siblings and the Beavers, the consequences do not benefit him. Edmund eventually shows signs of 'homesickness', as life was a lot less worrying before he left his siblings and the Beavers. The importance of parents is never mentioned in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, mostly because it is not Lewis's purpose to convey a message about parents, as it is believed that *The Chronicles of Narnia* are “an extended allegory for Christianity”(About.com, 2011) where Lewis writes about his religion. Because Lewis does not emphasize how important parents are to a child, he allows the Pevensies to become adults in Narnia and return to the real world as if no time has passed. The children came back by coincidence, not because they regretted leaving home.

is this why?  
he leaves?

not clear  
now -



Unlike Lewis, Barrie does emphasize on the importance of parents and the care they offer. The Darlings escape from a situation in which their family can be described as traditional, but the roles of the children and the formation of the family changes in Neverland. Wendy becomes a single mother of ten boys. Though Wendy resembles a traditional housewife, the newly established household does not resemble a traditional one. Women who raised their children by themselves were mostly widows who mourned over their husbands. Even though this is not the case with Wendy, the situation of her and the boys deviates from that of a traditional family. However, Wendy, John and Michael escaped from a traditional situation to a non-traditional one. The departure of the Darlings can be compared to that of Edmund, as he too leaves a safe environment and a (group of characters that resembles) a traditional household. It is quite logical that the Darlings do not end up with a situation where their family in Neverland is similar to that London, because they would not have gotten homesick in this case. Barrie shows that Wendy can be a wonderful mother, but she is still a child and needs parental love and care too. Not only does the writer argue that children need parents, but also that parents need children. At a certain point in the novel the readers gets to know that Mrs Darling is devastated about her children's departure and has "no proper spirit"(Barrie, 2007, p.159) and that she left the nursery window open for them to come back. Through his novel, Barrie argues that children and parents complete and need each other until the minors become grownups.

2nd pt

ok  
FP in particular  
is well argued

## Conclusion

The children in *Peter Pan* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* escape the real world without restrictions from their parents. However, the protagonists do not totally get to decide their own destiny. In Wendy's case, she undergoes a shift in her role in the family, from daughter and child to mother, as she is the only girl. For John, Michael, Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy, nothing much changes, as other characters take pity on them and enable them to enjoy their youth. Wendy and the Beavers are characters that take care of the children in a parental way. Peter Pan functions as a role model and leader for the boys and Wendy and is needed to help the Darlings when they are in danger, because of Peter Pan, they survive a pirate attack. Aslan has a similar function to Peter Pan, as he is needed to defeat the White Witch and functions as a mentor for the Pevensies.

OK summary

Having said that new families are formed in Neverland and Narnia, it turns out that these families show similarities to what may be defined as a traditional family. Interesting is how the children in *Peter Pan* escape from an ideal situation and environment to become part of a family that deviates much from what was considered to be normal, in order to realize that they should consider themselves lucky with their siblings and parents. The children of the Pevensie family do not mention their parents or their importance. Contrary to the Darlings, they escape from an unorthodox situation where they live without parental figures to a fantasy worlds where characters that take care of them like parents. The main reason for the differences between the two works seem to be the message conveyed and the motivations of the writers: Barrie based his novel on a family and the importance of their relationship and Lewis wrote his novel out of Christian beliefs.

irony?

to what end then?

(This was not really made clear)

An interesting BQ and comparison, there is good knowledge of the works shown though there are a number of places where textual support is needed. Despite several weaknesses, this is a good effort.

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