

Fort Wayne youth theatre

*Education
Guide*



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FORT WAYNE METALS

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Fort Wayne youtheatre

About Us...

Did you know Fort Wayne Youtheatre is the fifth oldest children's theatre in the country? Since 1934, we've been on a mission to educate, engage, and entertain through the power of live theatre.

It all started when the Old Fort Players (now Civic Theatre) imagined a place where children participated in theatre to develop poise, self-confidence, and an ability to express themselves creatively. Thus, the "Children's Theatre" was born! The very first class had 40 students – paying just \$1 for 8 weeks of lessons! Their first show, *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*, featured 75 young actors performing for audiences at the Majestic Theatre. Tickets were only 10¢ for kids and 25¢ for adults!

In 1978, Broadway actor Harvey Cocks took the lead as Executive Director, inspiring young performers for more than 40 years. In 1984, the Youtheatre began its independent journey. Over the decades, Youtheatre moved to different homes across the city before finding its place at Park Lake Professional Center in 2025. Today, Youtheatre is guided by Executive Director Heather Closson, Artistic Director Christopher J. Murphy, and a team of amazing local artists.

Youtheatre isn't just about what happens on stage—we take theatre into the community, too! Our touring troupe, Youtheatre-On-The-Go, brings stories to schools, libraries, hospitals, and community centers. In 2018, our Young Heroes of Conscience series, which has celebrated inspiring figures like Anne Frank, Ruby Bridges, and Harriet Tubman, won the Mayor's Arts Award.

For over 90 years, countless youth have discovered their voices, made lifelong friends, and experienced the joy of storytelling. And the story is still being written – by the young artists of today.



ELEMENTS OF A PRODUCTION

SETS

The scenery pieces that form the area in which the performers act out the play. Sometimes scenery is very realistic, making the audience think they are inside a real house, for example. Other times the scenery is quite fanciful or limited. What different sets can you name in the show? What time and place does it look like?

LIGHTS

The lighting instruments that help to create the right atmosphere on the stage. Lights direct the attention of the audience to specific areas of the stage or to a specific performer. The lights may be different colors to add special effects such as nighttime or a storm. How do the lights in this production show changes in the time and place?

PROPS

The objects performers carry to help them act out the story. Look for important props that help define character or place. Can you name a few?

MAKE-UP

The cosmetic bases, blushes, lipsticks, mascara and eye liners which helps the performer physically become the character he/she is playing. Make-up is also used so that the performers facial features can be seen clearly under the bright stage lights from a distance. Do you notice any special make-up in the show?

COSTUMES

The clothing the performers wear. Depending on the story being acted out, this clothing may be what a character of the time would have actually worn. It may also be very exaggerated or fantastic in the case of a dream or a fairy-tale. Costumes help the audience know what a character is like or where and when he/she lived. Are the costumes drab or colorful? Do they look realistic? What do they tell you about the time and place?



BEHIND *the* SCENES

Any play or musical takes an army of artists behind the scenes working countless hours to create the world you see on-stage. One of these artists is the combat director. Today, we are proud to shine a spotlight on the stage combat director, Marissa Drew!

Marissa Drew is a proud Youtheatre alum who returns this season as a combat director. Currently in her senior year of pursuing a BFA in Acting at Ball State University, Marissa has trained extensively in combat and movement and is excited to apply those skills from a directing standpoint. Her passion for storytelling (and sword fighting) is rooted in her early experiences at Youtheatre, making this homecoming especially meaningful. Offstage, she continues to develop her craft through leading workshops and classes, sharing her knowledge with others and striving to blend artistry with physical storytelling.



MARISSA DREW

Fort Wayne Youtheatre Alumni and current Ball State acting major
Combat Director of **PETER PAN AND WENDY**



Q: What does a Combat Director do?

A Combat Director designs and teaches safe, exciting fight scenes for plays and musicals. Whether it's sword fights, slaps, or flying through the air, they help actors move in ways that look real—but are carefully planned and rehearsed to keep everyone safe. Their job is part choreography, part storytelling, and all about trust, teamwork, and stage magic.

Q: What inspired you to learn stage combat?

I have always been interested in stage combat, and in high school I started teaching myself some simple sword tricks. However, it wasn't until college that I was able to dive into actual combat, including hand-to-hand, knife, and several different types of swords. The era of swords and armor and dueling is a fascinating one to me, and what could possibly be cooler than knowing how to wield a sword safely and duel with your friends?

Q: What is your stage combat moment?

My favorite stage combat moment that I've been able to do is when I was Constance in *The Three Musketeers* and had to be poisoned. The director wanted to use real liquid so the experience would be visceral for both actor and audience. It was something the combat directors had never encountered before, so we had to collaborate and figure out how I could choke on water safely. I will never forget the day I walked into rehearsal completely clueless to the fact that I was about to get waterboarded in the girl's bathroom as we repeatedly poured water over my face for 2 hours.

Q: Did you have a favorite mentor?

The person that taught me most of what I know is the coordinator of the BFA Acting option at Ball State, Drew Vidal. I've had the opportunity to have him as a director, as well as a professor for other subjects such as devising, and no matter what he does, he is always so collaborative and kind. Although I've completed our combat course at school, I continue to do directed studies with him to further develop my combat skills.

Q: What does your process look like?

From the perspective of a combat director, the process is very collaborative. I think it's near impossible to choreograph stage combat solo, and I've had the pleasure of working on this project with my good friend Lily Canter. You can discuss what you want the fight to look like as much as you want, but it's crucial to get on your feet at some point and try things out, because often things don't work out in real life like they do in your head. My process often involves very slow improvisation; figuring out how to parry a thrust or escape a slice in real time to see what works and what doesn't and building a phrase from that.

Q: How can I start to learn stage combat?

Taking classes or workshops, watching instructional videos online, and watching movies or shows with types of combat that interest you are all great places to start. It's also great to stay active, even if you aren't participating in any kind of combat related activities. Stage combat is a workout!

ABOUT: STORYLINE



Read more about the plot of PETER PAN & WENDY!

In J.M. Barrie's captivating play "Peter Pan and Wendy," young Wendy Darling is prepared to leave her familiar nursery for the esteemed halls of a boarding school when—suddenly—Peter Pan, the boy who never grows up, appears, offering her passage to the enchanting realm of Neverland, where adulthood is a distant concept. Wendy, along with her brothers, John and Michael, embarks on this fantastical adventure filled with pirates, fairies, and mermaids, where they confront the infamous Captain Hook. Ultimately, Wendy's decision to return home marks the conclusion of their Neverland adventures, as she chooses to embrace the responsibilities of growing up.

This whimsical narrative explores themes of childhood innocence, the tension between eternal youth and maturation, and the profound power of imagination. Peter, with his perpetual adventures and carefree lifestyle, embodies the allure of endless joy, while Wendy steps cautiously into the realm of adulthood, contending with the inevitable challenges it brings.

The play elegantly navigates between the realms of reality and fantasy, highlighting the significance of both in the human experience. In Neverland, the children realize their wildest dreams, unbound by adult constraints, yet the call of home and family remains ever-present, reminding them of time's relentless progression and the beauty of embracing change.

Barrie's timeless tale encourages us to delight in the joys of childhood whimsy while acknowledging the necessity of growing up. It gently prompts us to keep our inner child alive as we traverse the complexities of adulthood, cherishing life's enchanting moments along the way.



INSPO: THE SOURCE MATERIAL

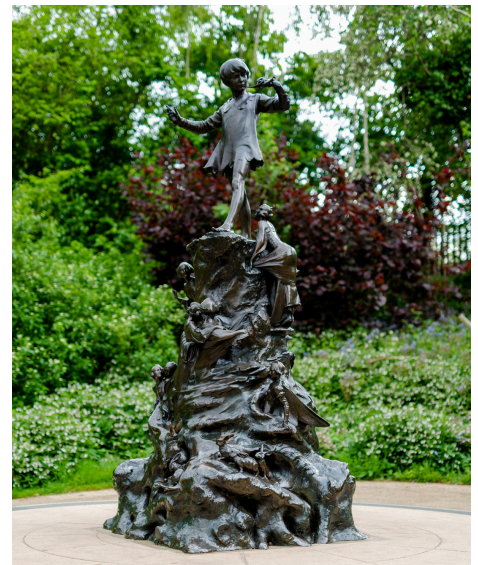
Discover the enigmatic character and delve into his origins!



Illustration of Peter Pan playing the pipes, by F. D. Bedford from *Peter and Wendy* (1911)

Peter Pan is an imaginary character created by Scottish novelist and playwright J. M. Barrie. A free-spirited and mischievous young boy who can fly and never grows up, Peter Pan spends his never-ending childhood having adventures on the mythical island of Neverland as the leader of the Lost Boys, interacting with fairies, pirates, mermaids, Native Americans, and occasionally ordinary children from the world outside Neverland. He became a cultural icon symbolizing youthful innocence and escapism. He was said to wear clothing made of autumn leaves and cobwebs. He describes him as a "lovely boy, clad in skeleton leaves and the juices that ooze out of trees" Peter is an exaggerated stereotype of a boastful and careless boy. Peter symbolises the selfishness of childhood, and is portrayed as being forgetful and self-centred. He is skilled in mimicry, copying the voice of Hook and the ticking of the clock in the crocodile.

Peter Pan first appeared as a character in Barrie's *The Little White Bird* (1902), a novel for adults. In chapters 13–18, titled "Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens", Peter is a seven-day-old baby and has flown from his nursery to Kensington Gardens in London, where the fairies and birds taught him to fly. He is described as "betwixt-and-between" a boy and a bird. Traditionally, the character has been played on stage by a female actor, but can also be played by a male actor. He is said to have all of his baby teeth, forever young.



THEMES: STORY POINTS

Explore some of the key concepts presented in the play.



ETERNAL YOUTH



"All children, except one, grow up." Peter Pan refused to grow up. He sacrificed his friendship with Wendy and the companionship of the Lost Boys to remain a child forever. In the book, he is the only one who desires to remain a child. Neverland can be a magical place, but it is only Peter who did not grow up. Living without responsibilities and having wild adventures has its appeal, but like Peter, sacrifices would have to be made for this to happen.

MOTHERLY LOVE

Peter and Wendy had opposing views of mothers. Peter hated mothers, as a mother would try to control him and he would always have to bid her wishes. On the other hand, Wendy loved her mother very much. Mrs. Darling was the epitome of a mother's love. She always thought of her children first. She never lost faith that they would come back to her and they would be a family again. Wendy became a mother at the end of the book, and Peter visited her for spring cleaning. He was first heartbroken when he saw that she was old and couldn't fly. Then, Wendy's daughter lifted his spirits. He proclaimed that he came back to see his mother, and Jane said that he, indeed, needed a mother. "No one knows it so well as I", Wendy agreed.

BELIEF

In this story, a lot of impossible were made possible. Flying, mermaids, and fairies are among these impossible things. The characters' faith made them possible. They could fly if they thought of happy thoughts. Fairies were created when a child laughed, and they could be saved from untimely death when somebody said they believed in fairies.

ABOUT: CHARACTERS

Meet a few of the characters you might encounter on stage.



WENDY

✧ The oldest Darling sibling. She's imaginative, caring, and loves to tell stories.

JOHN

✧ The middle Darling child. A logical and proper boy who loves being in charge.

MICHAEL

✧ The youngest Darling child. He's sweet, curious, and never without his teddy bear.

PETER PAN

✧ The daring boy who never grows up. He flies, fights pirates, and leads the Lost Boys in magical Neverland adventures.

LOST BOYS

✧ A group of playful children who live in Neverland. They follow Peter and love fun, food, and make-believe.

CAPTAIN HOOK

✧ The villainous pirate captain with a hook for a hand. He's dramatic, clever, and always out to defeat Peter Pan.

MR. SMEE

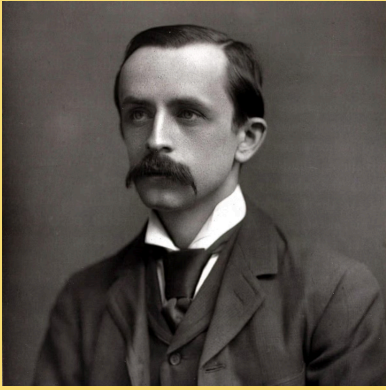
✧ Captain Hook's kind-hearted and silly first mate. He's more soft than scary and often gets into goofy trouble.

TICK-TOCK CROCODILE

✧ A ticking crocodile who once took Hook's hand—and now wants the rest of him! The sound of his tick-tock sends Hook running.

BIOGRAPHY:

J.M. BARRIE



**Learn more about the author of PETER PAN,
James Matthew Barrie!**

James Matthew Barrie (1860-1937) was a Scottish novelist and playwright, best known for writing Peter Pan in 1904. After graduating from Edinburgh University in 1882, Barrie worked as a Journalist, but had a particular interest in writing. He published his first novel, Better Dead, in 1887, and soon became known as a prominent author in his time.

After having success within the fiction genre, Barrie began writing plays in the 1890s. His play, Walker London, was a crowd favorite due to its ability to poke fun at the institution of marriage. Despite this, he soon got married himself to actress Mary Ansell.

James and Mary's union was not a joyful one, and soon James began embarking on long strolls in London's Kensington Gardens, where he met the five Llewelyn Davies brothers, who later inspired him to create his best known work; Peter Pan- in his companionship with the Davies family. Barrie would later become the children's guardian after the death of their parents.

Peter Pan was first seen in Barrie's 1902 book, The Little White Bird. Two years later, his play, Peter Pan, premiered on the London stage and became a great success. Audiences were drawn into the fantastical tale of the flying boy who never grew up and his adventures in Neverland with the Darling children.

Barrie died on June 19, 1937, in London, England. As a part of his will, he gave the copyright to Peter Pan to a children's hospital in London. After his death, Barrie's beloved characters were transformed into animated figures in the Disney classic Peter Pan (1953).



ACTIVITY:

COLOR FACTS



Color the boxes that hold accurate information about J.M. Barrie!

J.M. Barrie was born in 1860 and died in 1937

Walker London was written as a serious tragedy about war and peace

He graduated from Edinburgh University in 1882

Barrie began his career as a journalist before turning to fiction writing.

Peter Pan was first introduced in a Disney film in 1953.

His first novel, Better Dead, was published in 1887

Peter Pan first appeared in Barrie's 1902 novel The Little White Bird

The play Peter Pan premiered in 1904 and became a major success

J.M. Barrie graduated from the University of California

Barrie left the rights to Peter Pan to a children's hospital in his will

Barrie's marriage to Mary Ansell was long and joyful

Mary Ansell was an actress



ANSWER KEY:

COLOR FACTS

Use the answer key below to check your knowledge!



J. M. Barrie was born as James Matthew Barrie

Walker London was written as a serious tragedy about war and peace

He graduated from Edinburgh University in 1882

Barrie began his career as a journalist before turning to fiction writing.

Peter Pan was first introduced in a Disney film in 1953.

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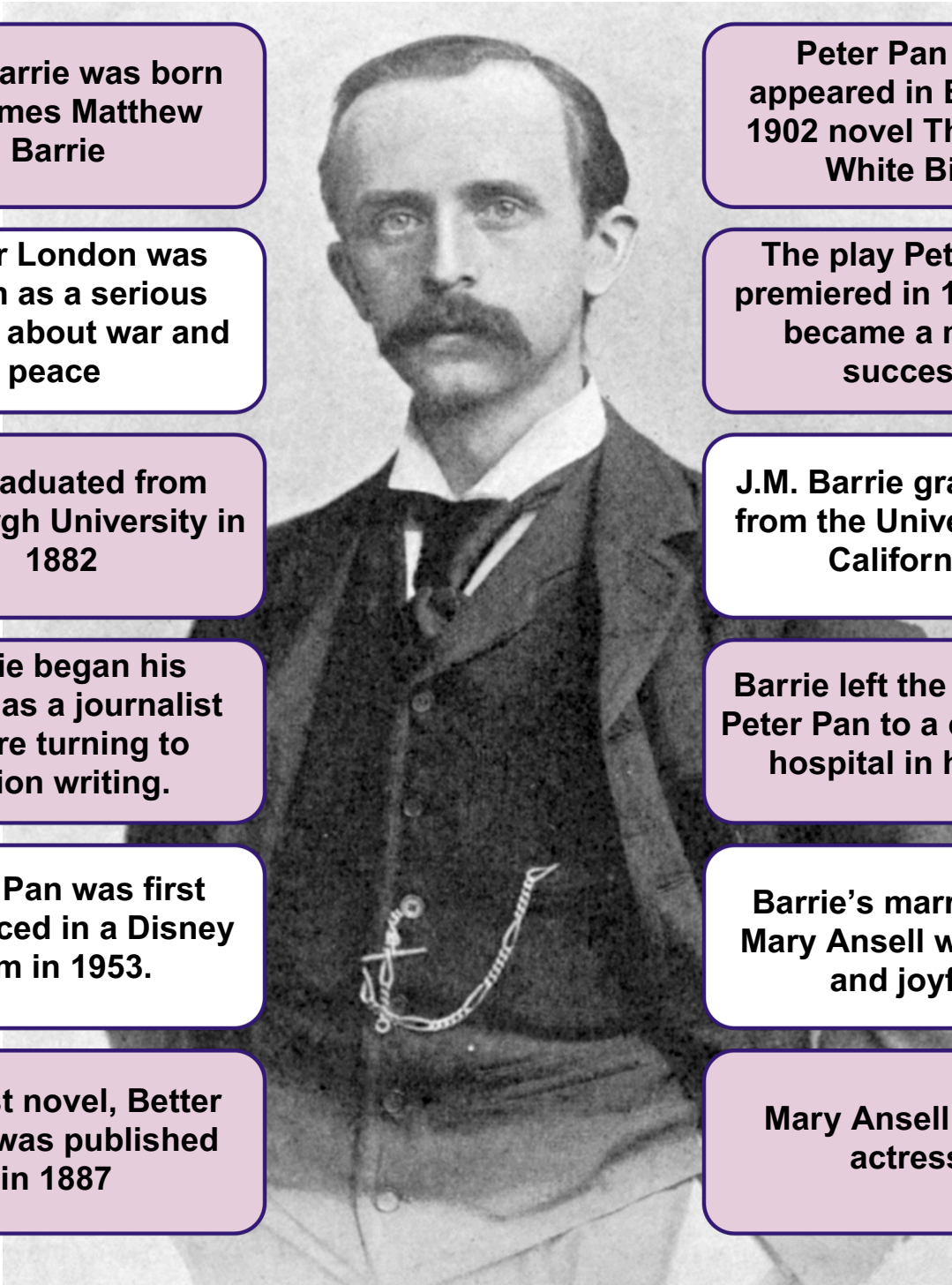
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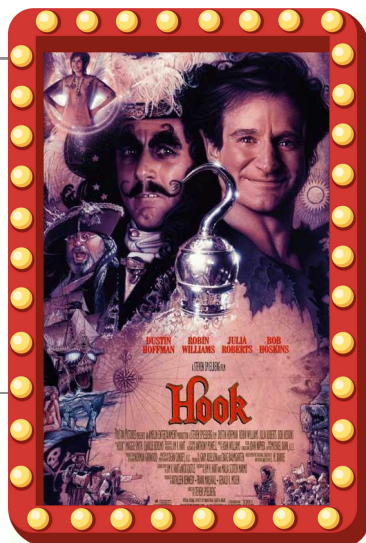
Barrie's marriage to Mary Ansell was long and joyful

Mary Ansell was an actress



CINEMA: WATCH THIS NEXT!

Want more magic? Watch these films to prepare for your flight to Neverland!



When his young children are abducted by his old nemesis, Capt. Hook (Dustin Hoffman), middle-aged lawyer Peter Banning (Robin Williams) returns to his magical origins as Peter Pan. Peter must revisit a foggy past in which he abandoned Neverland for family life, leaving Tinkerbell (Julia Roberts) and the Lost Boys to fend for themselves. Given their bitterness toward Peter for growing up -- and their allegiance to their new leader, Rufio -- the old gang may not be happy to see him.

As Wendy Darling (Rachel Hurd-Wood) recounts stories to her brothers, John (Harry Newell) and Michael (Freddie Popplewell), she is visited by Peter Pan (Jeremy Sumpter). Peter, a boy who magically never ages, invites Wendy and her brothers to Neverland, an island where he lives with the Lost Boys. Once there, however, Wendy and her brothers are kidnapped by Captain Hook (Jason Isaacs). Peter, with assistance from the fairy Tink (Ludivine Sagnier), must face Hook in order to rescue the Darlings.



Based on J. M. Barrie's novel "Peter and Wendy" and inspired by the 1953 animated classic, "Peter Pan & Wendy" is the timeless tale of a young girl who, defying her parents' wishes to attend boarding school, travels with her two younger brothers to the magical Neverland. There, she meets a boy who refuses to grow up, a tiny fairy and an evil pirate captain, and they soon find themselves on a thrilling and dangerous adventure far, far away from their family and the comforts of home.

ACTIVITY #1:

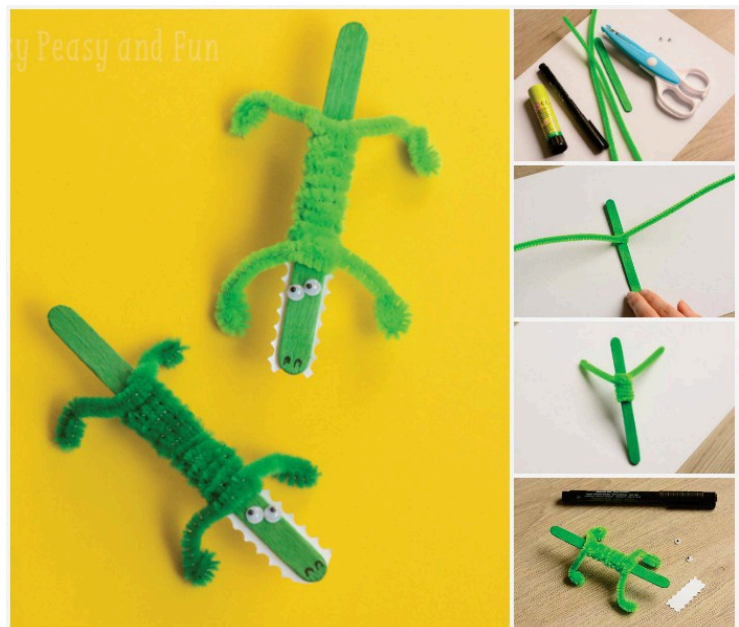
CRAFT STICK CROC

This activity is best suited for lower elementary through lower middle students.



What you need

- Craft sticks (pre-colored, or colored green)
- Zig zag scissors
- Green pipe cleaners
- Small wiggly eyes
- Black marker
- Glue

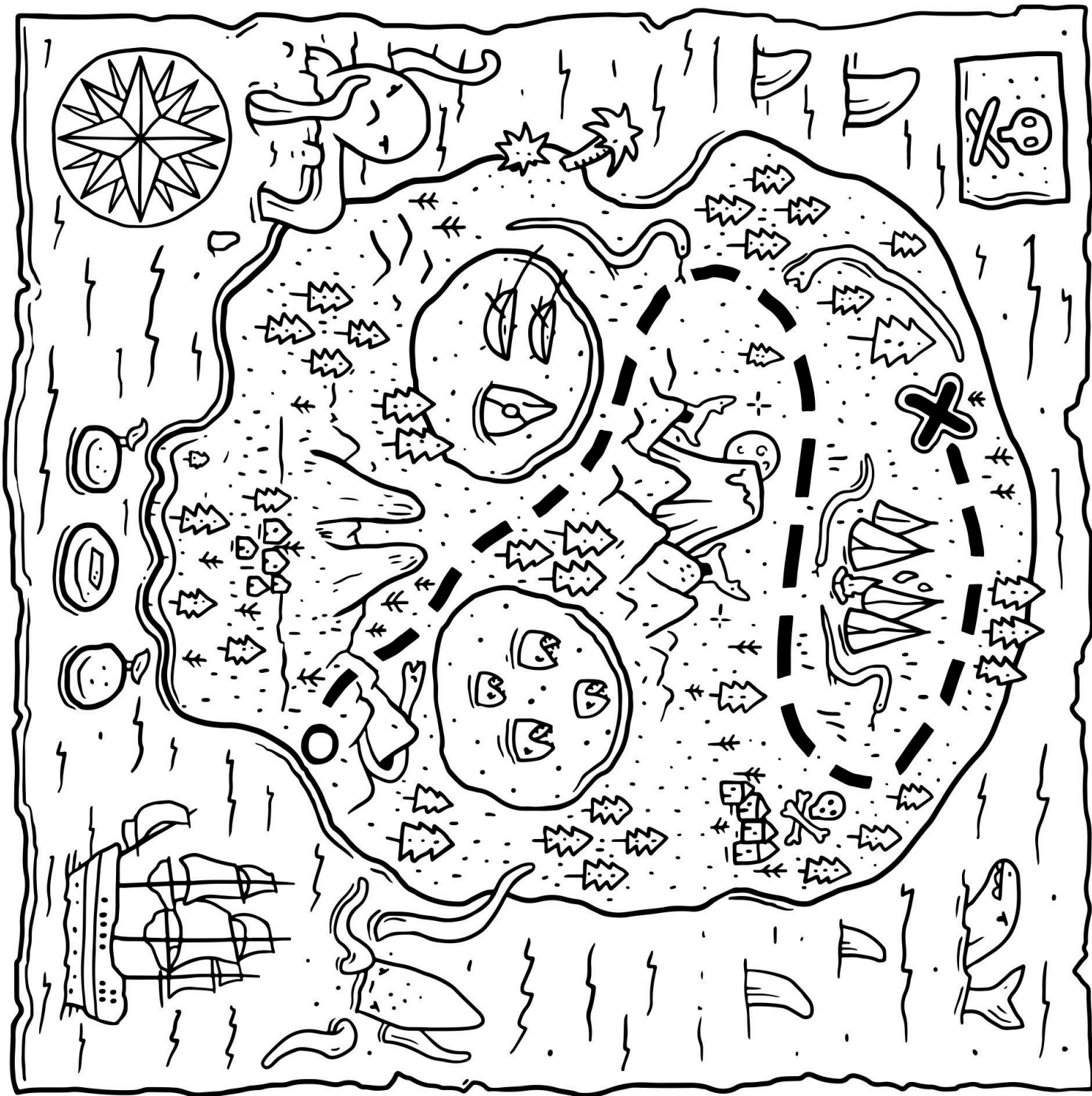


Instructions:

- Start wrapping the pipe cleaner around the craft stick, working your way toward one end of the stick.
- Once you wrap to the point that a quarter of the stick is still “unwrapped” stop. Make legs. Repeat the whole process on the other end of the stick. Cut the teeth with zig zag scissors. Glue them on the bottom of the craft stick. Stick on two googly eyes. Draw nostrils with marker. Have fun!

DISCUSSION TOPIC:

How can you tell the difference between a crocodile and an alligator?

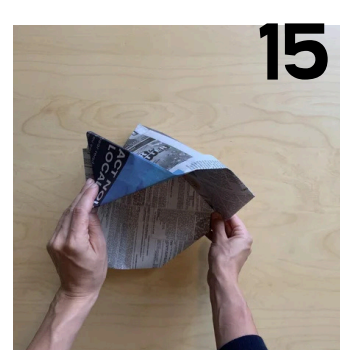
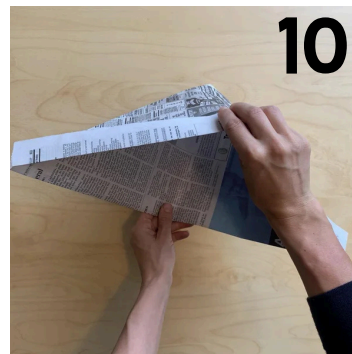
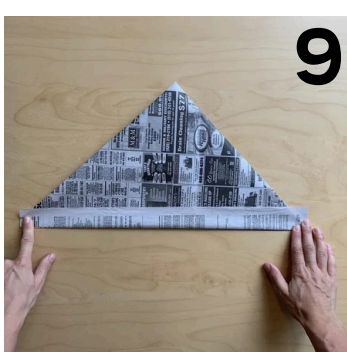
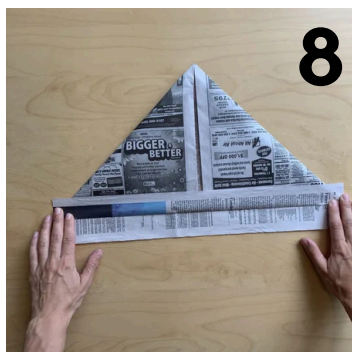
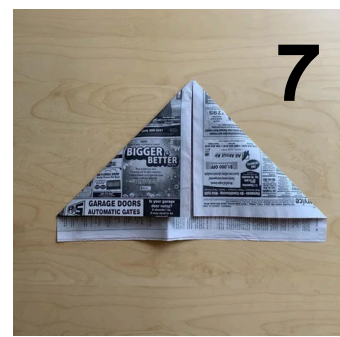
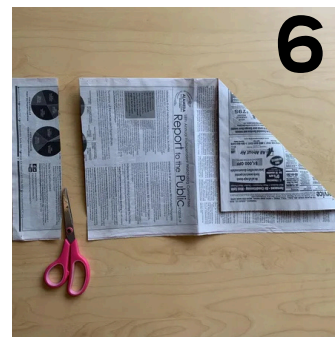
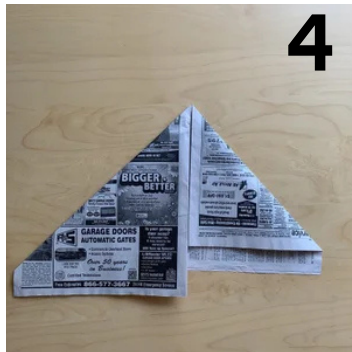
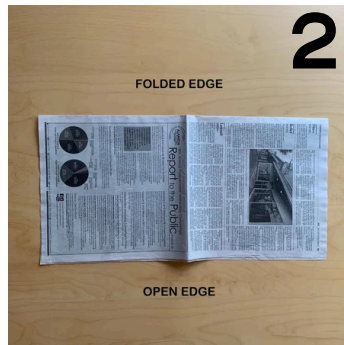
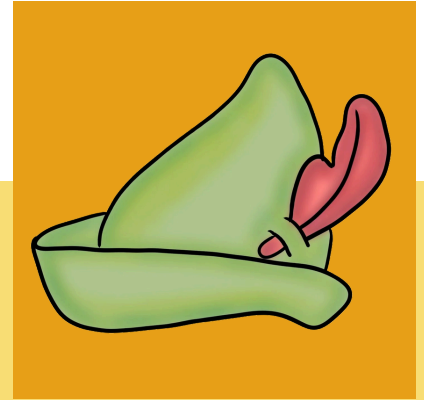


ACTIVITY #2:

PETER PAN'S HAT

This activity is best suited for upper elementary through middle students.

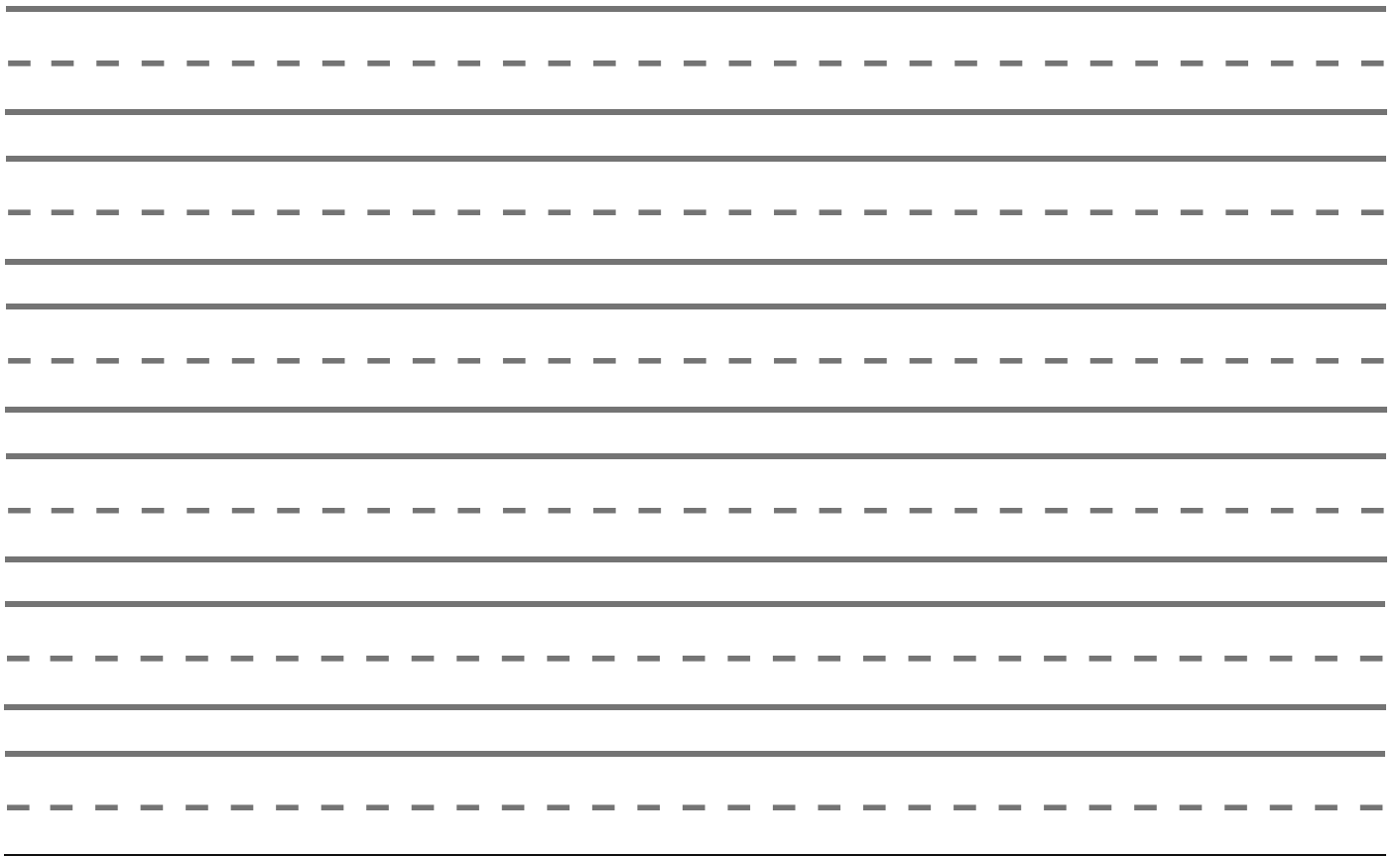
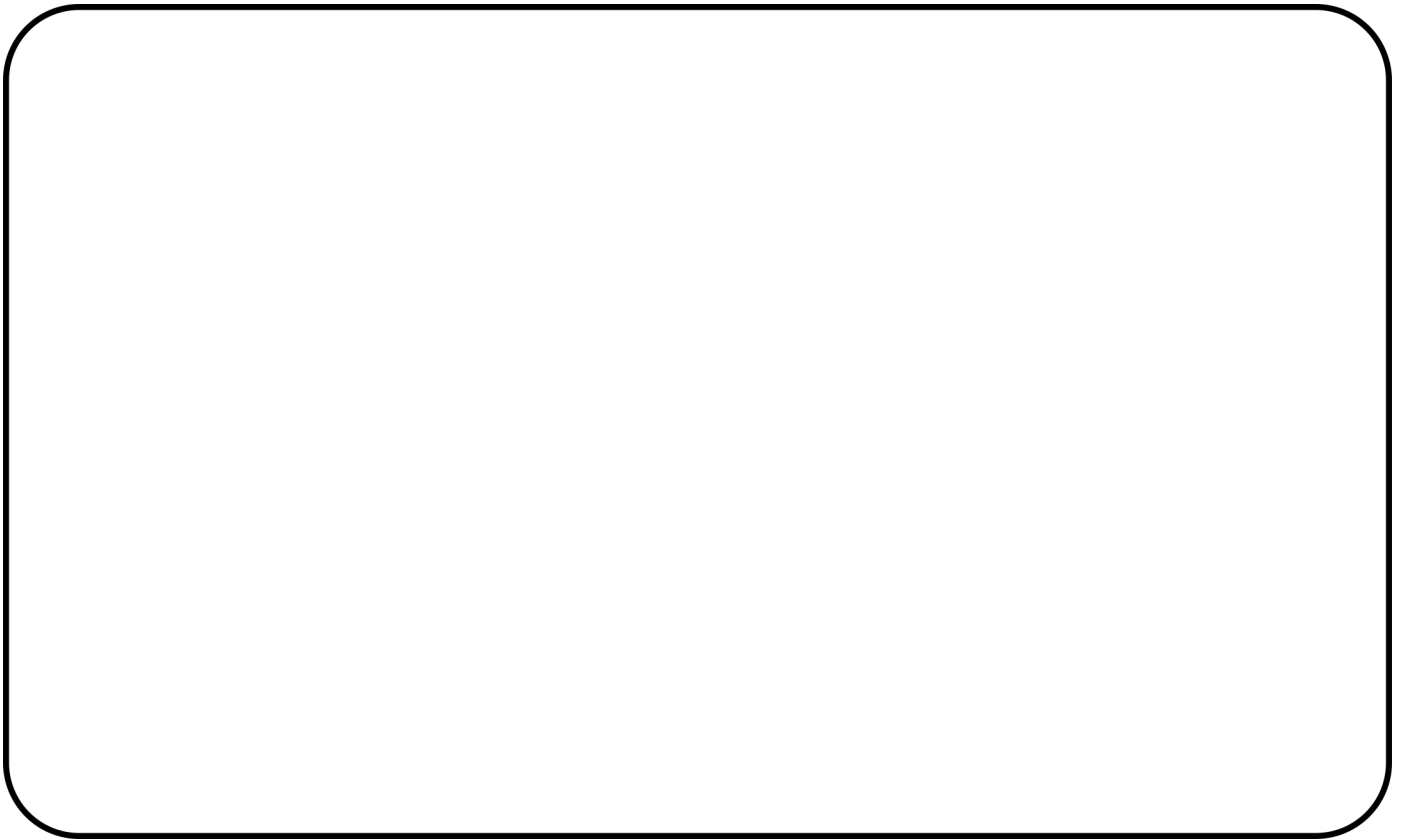
Follow the step by step instructions below to make your own version of Pan's hat!



You will need:

- Newspaper.
- Optional: Add a red feather, or use red tissue paper to make feather.

Draw and write about your favorite part of "Peter Pan".



POP QUIZ:

TEST YOUR MEMORY

See how much you remember from the performance of
PETER PAN AND WENDY!



1. Who wrote Peter Pan?
 - a. Charles Dickens
 - b. Roald Dahl
 - c. David Walliams
 - d. J.M. Barrie
2. What sort of animal is Nana?
 - a. Hamster
 - b. Cat
 - c. Fish
 - d. Dog
3. Where is the author from?
 - a. Scotland
 - b. England
 - c. Ireland
 - d. Wales
4. Why does Peter Pan live in Neverland?
 - a. He fell out of his stroller and went to live with the fairies
 - b. He's the king of Neverland
 - c. Captain Hook kidnapped him
5. What does Peter Pan think a kiss is?
 - a. A doll
 - b. A thimble
 - c. A button
6. What is the name of the fairy in Peter Pan?
 - a. Tinkerbang
 - b. Tonkerboom
 - c. Tinkerbell
 - d. Tiddlybonk
7. What did the crocodile swallow?
 - a. A toaster
 - b. A clock
 - c. A Kettle
 - d. A rice cooker
8. What is Wendy's last name?
 - a. Cutesy
 - b. Darling
 - c. Lovekins
9. What does Neverland NOT have?
 - a. Unicorns
 - b. Mermaids
 - c. Fairies
 - d. Pirates
10. What do humans need in the story to fly?
 - a. Wings
 - b. An airplane
 - c. Fairy dust

Answer Key

Fort Wayne Youththeatre

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Suggested Reading...

Elementary: *The Never Girls Series* by Kiki Thorpe, *Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie, *Peter and the Starcatcher* by Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson.

Middle: *Peter Pan* by Caryl Hart, *The Never Girls Series* by Kiki Thorpe, *The Mermaid Moon* by Briony May Smith, *When I Was a Pirate* by Tom Silson.

Highschool: *Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie, *Tiger Lily* by Jodi Lynn Anderson, *Lost in the Never Woods* by Aiden Thomas.



LANGUAGE ARTS

STANDARDS

Most Youtheatre productions are literature-based and on the recommended reading list of the Library of Congress.

Language Arts Standard: Perceive, identify, describe and analyze the distinguishing characteristics of form, structure and style of story.

- Retell story identifying plot, theme, characters, and setting.
- Recall story plot utilizing chronological order.

Language Arts Standard: Evaluate Theatre/Literary work based on critical perception and analysis.

- Share perception of theatre experience in the area of voice, movement, mood and motivation.
- Make suggestions for alternative endings.
- Analyze and critique story and performance through creative writing.
- Create a similar story through creative writing.

Language Arts Standard: Use Theatre /Literary work to develop affective areas of self-concept, problem solving and interpersonal skills.

- React to feelings of self and others within a production.
- Identify conflict within story as it relates to self and others.
- Compare and contrast problems and resolutions found in different stories and real life situations.
- Express personal attitudes, values, and belief systems as it relates to theatre piece.
- Interact freely in conversations, class discussions and dramatic activities.
- Contribute to the solving of problems through dramatization/improvisation.

Language Arts Standard: Examine Theatre /Literary work in a historical and multicultural context.

- Identify similarities and differences between characters from diverse cultures depicted.
- Identify historical differences/figures in different time frames depicted in story.
- Identify significance of historical aspects in story.

Exploring Aesthetics: A Philosophical Basis for Life!

- Attending live theatre helps children value its importance to the community and helps develop a lifelong commitment and love of Theatre and Literature. Students experience aesthetic growth through appreciation of Theatre.
- Students discover through experience that making art is an essential human activity. It requires collaboration, and enhances creative thinking.

