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Classic Synthesized

We seem to be at the end of our flight with Peter, and what a journey it has been. We began reading the classic *Peter Pan* by J. M. Barrie, mixed in cinematic pieces and ended with intriguing articles. A classic by definition (provided by me) was something that stood the test of time (meaning over 10-years-old), was a household name (popular), and provided an adventure for its readers. By definition I provided, yes, *Peter Pan* is one hundred percent a classic. *Peter Pan* was initially published in 1911 (over 110 years ago). Everyone knows of Peter Pan; at least the Disney remake, and the franchise is full of adventure; thus, the novel checks all my boxes. In my eyes, the purpose of a classic is to offer readers books that are tried and true, meaning they are well-written and provide a decent storyline with a cast of relatable or interesting characters.

As a somewhat "contemporary child" myself, being born at the tail end of the 90's I feel that I have an interesting perspective on classics. I have found classics challenging to read simply because they are dry at times, for example, the use of wording that is no longer used. This exact example happened at the beginning of *Peter Pan*; it was not until I got used to it, I started to enjoy the book. I also dread classics because they are stories I have heard so much about that I feel it is often pointless to read them for myself. I often wonder what a classic can offer me, and to be frank, that's the problem; for the most part, they often do not have anything that I cannot find at Barnes and Noble in the "New Releases" section. A more significant issue is how I will know if the book is any good. At a minimum, the ideology of choosing a classic novel over a newly written novel is the supporters behind the book. Classics offer opposing opinions, research, and quality assurance, meaning the selected novel will, at minimum, be well-written. This is where one can get "contemporary children" to join the bandwagon; provide them with an opposing view or a slightly obscure theme. In all honesty, when first assigned to read *Peter Pan*, I assumed I knew enough to get by without opening a page, then I saw your small message about the book being different from the Disney film, and it sparked my curiosity. I spoke to co-workers, each of them with a different perspective on the novel, some so divergently different that I had to read it for myself and now look at me.

To keep the novel relevant, the tale had to be altered to adapt and fit its consumers' needs. The *Peter Pan* franchise's lifeline went from dark to fantasy, to be loved, to sinister, to well who knows where it is headed off to now. The flow is not a straight line, fluctuating based on the director or author's intent. All of the renditions are interpretations of the same tale lending itself to different audiences; as an example, if we only look at the cinematic remakes, we have the world-renowned Disney remake, a lighthearted fairy-tale version made for young children. Whereas the ABC *Once Upon a Time* version lent itself to an adult audience with its sinister and sexualized twists (some could say Peter Pan grew up with his audience, at least cinematically). This malleability is what keeps the franchise alive today; without its various remakes, who knows if the tale of *Peter Pan* would have fizzled out years ago.

Revisiting the idea of opposing viewpoints as a way to engage readers. It is no lie that everyone loves a controversy, including children. Remarkably I find that children will go to lengths to prove their stances, which makes classics a good fit for them, and because of this, I believe that a "contemporary child" (child being a high schooler) would enjoy uncovering the darker side of the classic *Peter Pan* franchise (or any classic for that matter). One way that readers were able to take opposing seats was through the themes found between the pages. The novel of *Peter Pan* possessed several intriguing themes, some more evident than others. I dove into the unrequited love between Peter Pan and Wendy Darling; as I once stated, it was the love story I never knew existed or never knew I wanted. After reading the novel, I was entranced with the idea of a disconnected love story between Peter and Wendy. Still, after watching both cinematic remakes, I was left with two very different interpretations. One gave me no love story at all; as for the other one, well, I will say it put quite the hook in my translation (literally). I began to wonder if all along I made this connection up until I read the articles. Although they were not as direct as I had hoped, it was good for me to see that other individuals also saw their connection and commented on it.

Many of the noted themes would have been overly complex for young readers; for that reason, I think this novel would be well suited for a high school student. Like with most things, the teacher needs to let the students select their own themes, articles, and shows; the power of choice will forever ring true at any age. Allowing us to choose our own learning paths allowed us to see the parts we wanted. For example, after reading the articles, I wanted to see the darker side of *Peter Pan*, and I wanted to understand this interpretation better; because of this, I provided myself with ample time to research, read and review outside of classwork. From this outside time, I understood my stance on the novel, and I had some interesting conversations with my family and friends about Peter Pan. Without this time and ability to choose, I would have never considered all those themes or cared enough to mention them to others. As the slightly older "contemporary child" I claim to be, it was the personal research outside the assignments that made the classic that much better. For example, watching the entire season of *Once Upon a Time*, hearing what my peers thought or saw, and googling random internet articles that feature interesting views (VOX has a good one!) is what made this experience enjoyable and rememberable. Had we plucked a newly written gem off the "New Release" rack at Barnes and Noble, there could not be this level of conversing, simply because it would not exist, there wouldn't be cinematic remakes. We would be lucky to find at least one article, and where is the conversation in that? The way to capture a young reader is not always with relatability or realism; instead, offer them their own journey or path to uncover some truths behind the classics.