

# **Peter and the Shadow Thieves Study Guide**

**Peter and the Shadow Thieves by Dave Barry**

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# Plot Summary

Peter and the Shadow Thieves is a fictional story about an English boy named Peter who helps a secret organization known as Starcatchers escape from the sinister Lord Ombra, the leader of a dark group called The Others. Peter lives on the tropical Mollusk Island, which is inhabited by a band of pirates led by the evil Black 'Stache, also known as Captain Hook, as well as a band of natives called the Mollusks. He lives with four other boys on the island and is constantly accompanied by Tinkerbelle, a fairy-like "birdgirl" who, like Peter, has the ability to fly.

The story revolves around a substance called starstuff, which has magical powers. Starstuff falls to earth and is collected by the Starcatchers to be returned to the heavens in a special event called the Return. A dark group called The Others seeks to steal the collected starstuff from the Starcatchers to use its powers for evil.

Lord Ombra is one of the Others. He is a dark figure with the ability to subdue people by capturing their shadows. Ombra comes to Mollusk Island on a ship captained by the pirate Captain Nerezza looking for a trunk of starstuff that had been brought to the island by Lord Aster, one of the Starcatchers. Finding that Aster has returned to England, Ombra sails back with Peter and Tinkerbelle stowing away secretly on board. Once back in England, Peter tries desperately to find Lord Aster and his daughter, Molly, for whom Peter has deep feelings. Meanwhile, on Mollusk Island, Captain Hook captures Peter's friends to use as bait to lure Peter into a trap.

Peter finds Molly Aster, whose father has gone away to the Return without telling anyone where, and whose mother has been kidnapped by Lord Ombra. With the help of a friend of Molly's named George Darling, Peter and the others track down her father to warn him about Ombra, who has discovered the time and location of the Return. In a dramatic scene, Ombra arrives at the Return and is nearly able to steal the trunkful of starstuff, but is foiled by Peter at the last possible moment. Ombra is destroyed in a bright flash of light, and the shadows he has stolen, including that of Molly's mother, are returned to their owners. Lord Aster, who was gravely wounded during Ombra's attack, is magically healed when he is exposed to a small amount of starstuff that Peter keeps in a locket.

With the starstuff safely returned to the heavens, Peter says an emotional goodbye to Molly and returns to Mollusk Island where he successfully assists his friends in escaping from the pirates.



# Chapters 1-5

## Chapters 1-5 Summary

Chapter one is entitled "A Speck on the Horizon." A scrawny red-haired boy named Peter and four other boys who call themselves the "Lost Boys" are on Mollusk Island. Peter, who has the ability to fly, is selecting an overripe mango he intends to drop on Captain Hook, the leader of a band of pirates encamped on the other side of the island. Peter enjoys tormenting the pirates, and he takes off into the air in a dramatic fashion to impress the other boys, who cannot fly.

Peter soars into the sky and takes in the view of the whole island. He is soon joined by another flying creature, a "birdgirl" named Tinkerbelle, who speaks in a series of tinkling sounds like small bells. She warns Peter to be careful, but Peter is confident he can avoid being captured by the pirates. Peter does not notice that below one of the Lost Boys, a boy named James, has started climbing the slope of the mountain that separates the boys' camp from the pirate camp. James is determined not to miss out on the action. Peter also fails to notice a tiny black speck on the horizon that is slowly growing closer.

The scene shifts to that tiny speck, which is a sailing ship, in Chapter 2, called "The Choice." The ship is captained by Captain Nerezza, a cruel character with a hole in his face where his nose used to be. Nerezza wears a wooden nose strapped to his face, and pulls it aside when he wishes to smell something. He takes in a deep breath and smells the scent of land.

Climbing to the lookout on top of one of the masts, Nerezza finds a sailor named Palmer asleep at his watch. He awakens Palmer and berates him for sleeping and not noticing the signs of land. He gives Palmer a choice. Nerezza can cut his throat and throw him into the sea, he can jump himself and hope to swim to land, or he can spend one night in the cabin next to the captain's with the strange shadowy passenger that all the men are terrified of. Palmer chooses to jump.

"The Wrong Side of the Mountain" is the title of Chapter 3. The pirates in their camp are led by a sinister character called Black Stache after his long black mustache. Peter calls the man Captain Hook because he has a sharp metal hook in place of one of his hands, which was bitten off by a crocodile. The pirates see Peter approaching by air and warn Captain Hook, who looks at Peter through his telescope. At the same time, he spots James climbing down the slope of the mountain toward the camp. He quickly dispatches some of his men to capture James.

Chapter 4 is "The Voice," a reference to the hissing voice of the strange passenger aboard Captain Nerezza's ship. The shadowy figure, whom none of the men saw board the ship and whom they all fear, only comes out at night. This island is one they have been looking for, according to Nerezza's first mate, a man named Slank, who has been



to the island before and was defeated by Peter. Slank looks forward to seeing the boy again and taking his revenge.

Chapter 5 is called "The Agreement." Peter is surprised to see Captain Hook standing in the open, expecting him. He throws the mango at him and Hook confidently catches it on his hook and begins to eat it calmly. Peter is suspicious. Hook calls out to him that he has captured James, and that he will let him go in exchange for Peter. Peter is to meet him at the spring near the walls of the pirate fort that night. Peter is outraged and flies away to make a plan.

## Chapters 1-5 Analysis

The first five chapters focus on Peter and his opposition to Captain Hook and the pirates on Mollusk Island. The villainous characters Nerezza and Slank, who will play a central role later in the story, are established as they approach Mollusk Island; however, Lord Ombra is only referred to.

"Peter and the Shadow Thieves" is a sequel, and readers who have read the previous part of the story will already be familiar with some of the characters; however, the authors still must establish the main characters such as Peter, as well as his special flying ability. Captain Hook's ruthless willingness to kidnap children in his pursuit of Peter is established, and this scene will be repeated later in the story.



# Chapters 6-11

## Chapters 6-11 Summary

Chapter 6 is called "The Darkest Way." Nerezza's ship, which is called "Le Fantome" sails into a bay of Mollusk Island. They have spotted smoke from a campfire and choose it as a target to go looking for Peter and something called "starstuff." They will wait until dark and row ashore with their dark "guest."

Chapter 7 is entitled "An Ally." Peter goes to Fighting Prawn, the leader of the Mollusk tribe, for help in rescuing James. Fighting Prawn admonishes Peter for being cocky and encouraging his friends to take risks, but he offers to help Peter. He tells Peter that the spring where he is to meet Hook runs underground to a cavern. It is a possible escape route for James, if they can find a brave person to help them who is also a strong swimmer. Peter seems to know who the chief is talking about.

"The Mission" is the title of Chapter 8. After dark, Nerezza, Slank and several others row the dark hooded figure ashore. Slank hears Nerezza refer to the figure as Lord Ombra. As they row, Slank is fearful from a previous experience on the island where he was attacked by mermaids, and he is watchful of the water around the boat. He thinks about the possibility of catching Peter and taking his revenge and is surprised when Ombra responds to his thoughts. Ombra can read his mind. They reach the sandy shore and Ombra glides up the beach, leaving no footprints.

Chapter 9 is called "A Tasty Meal Lost." Peter prepares to meet Hook at the spring. He puts on long pants that conceal his feet and hovers above the ground giving the illusion he is standing. He meets Hook, who is holding James near the spring. As Peter nears, Hook lets go of James and grabs at Peter, who has lifted into the air, but only grabs his empty pant legs, which pull away. Peter draws Hook away from James, then pushes James into the spring, where he disappears. Peter escapes Hook, laughing, then flies off urgently to find James. Hook rushes back into the fort when Mr. Grin, the crocodile that had taken his hand, reappears and begins chasing him.

Chapter 10 is called "Dead Eyes." Lord Ombra leads Nerezza, Slank and their men through the dark jungle toward the village of the Mollusks. They come into the village and Ombra goes into the hut of the chief, where he finds the chief's wife and daughter. He tells Slank to take the girl and they go back outside. Mollusk warriors surround them, but do not attack because they are holding the girl. The chief is not in the village. Ombra approaches one of the Mollusk warriors and Slank watches as a dark tendril seems to emerge along the ground from Ombra's cloak. When the tendril reaches the shadow of one of the Mollusk warriors, the warrior's eyes go dead. He turns to the others and says something to them in the native language, then turns back, woodenly. Slank is surprised when the warrior begins to speak again, but in English and in Ombra's voice. He says the other warriors have been sent to get the chief.



Chapter 11 is entitled "Strangers." The scene returns to the exchange with Captain Hook. James is surprised when Peter pushes him into the spring and alarmed to feel himself being pulled under. He has been grabbed by a mermaid named Teacher, a friend of Peter's, who quickly pulls him through the underground spring to a pool and brings him to the surface. Peter is glad to see his friend and thanks Teacher and Fighting Prawn, who had come up with the plan and accompanied Peter. Suddenly two Mollusk warriors rush up and inform Fighting Prawn of the strangers in the village who have taken his daughter captive.

## Chapters 6-11 Analysis

The suspense continues to build as Lord Ombra and The Others approach Mollusk Island and then make their way to the village of the Mollusk tribe. Lord Ombra's ability to steal shadows, read minds and control those people whose shadows he has taken is established. The presence of Ombra and the others on Mollusk Island will provide Peter with information about his friend Molly Aster in England as well as provide him with a way to get back to England.

The first 14 chapters are set on Mollusk Island, telling a portion of the story that is largely separate from the main narrative thread. This section does provide some important character development, however.



# Chapters 12-18

## Chapters 12-18 Summary

Chapter 12 is called "Something Familiar." Tinkerbell leads James back to the Lost Boys' hut and Peter flies to the Mollusk Village to see if he can help Fighting Prawn and to learn about the strangers that have been reported. He arrives just as Fighting Prawn does and watches from a hidden spot in the jungle. He sees Slank and thinks there is something familiar about his face.

Chapter 13 is called "The Coming Danger." Fighting Prawn confronts Ombra and the others, insisting they release his daughter. Ombra tells him they have come to retrieve a box of starstuff that was left behind on the island and want to know where it is. Fighting Prawn tells them it is no longer on the island and that it was taken away by an Englishman named Lord Aster. After briefly possessing his shadow, Ombra learns that Fighting Prawn is telling the truth. He leads the men back to the shore, taking the girl as hostage to protect them until they get to the boat, where she is released. Peter is alarmed. He knows Lord Aster and his daughter Molly, and something Ombra says about his plans make him believe that Molly is in danger.

"The Farewell" is the title of Chapter 14. Peter returns to the Lost Boys' hut and tells them he must go to England to help Molly Aster. Tinkerbell, who likes Peter and senses his attraction to Molly, goes into a jealous pout when Peter asks her to come with him. He flies off alone after saying farewell, but after a few moments Tinkerbell relents and goes flying after him.

The scene shifts to England in Chapter 15, which is called "Into the Night." Molly Aster is speaking with her parents, Louise and Leonard Aster, in their mansion in a nice section of London. Lord Aster is alarmed because he has just had news about the visitors to Mollusk Island who were looking for the box of starstuff he had taken from there. He tells Molly and his wife that the starstuff is well guarded, but he does not tell them where it is. He must leave for several days, he says, and move the starstuff. He does not tell them where he is going and warns them not to try to follow him or find him.

In Chapters 16, 17 and 18, called "One Look Back," "Ombra's Feeling," and "No Bees at Sea," Peter has hidden on Nerezza's ship and is returning with them to England. He follows the ship at first, flying low behind it in the darkness, then flies to the top of one of the masts where a large sail is rolled up. He hides in the sail, but Lord Ombra seems to sense his presence and tells Nerezza to send someone up to look at the sails. Nerezza sends a sailor up, and Peter is nearly discovered before Tinkerbell flits around the sailor, confusing him into losing his balance and falling from the mast. Unsure of what he has seen, the sailor tells the others he was stung by a bee, but another sailor points out there are no bees at sea.





## Chapters 12-18 Analysis

Chapter 13 establishes the existence of the box of starstuff that is the main object of Lord Ombra's search. It also provides a turning point for Peter when he overhears Ombra speaking about Molly Aster and her family. He decides he must leave the island and go to England, foreshadowing the middle portion of the book which will take place on the journey between the island and England.

As Peter travels toward England, the scene is set with a shift to the Aster Mansion in Chapter 15. It is the first appearance of Molly and her family, with Lord Aster present only briefly before he goes away to secure the starstuff. The special nature of the Aster family is established since they have apparently received word of the search for the starstuff on Mollusk Island through a network of dolphins and porpoises, with whom they can communicate.

Peter's relationship with Tinkerbell is also established as sometimes tense. Tinkerbell likes Peter and gets jealous when she knows he is thinking about Molly. She is loyal, however, and proves to be very helpful while Peter is hiding on the ship. Tinkerbell's odd feeling when Lord Ombra is near, as well as his feeling that someone is aboard the ship, hint at a magical connection between people who have been exposed to starstuff.



# Chapters 19-24

## Chapters 19-24 Summary

Chapter 19 is called "Anything Unusual." Lord Ombra is interested in the report that one of the sailors thought he was attacked by a bee and tells Nerezza to double the watch at night and report anything unusual to him.

"The Signal" is the title of Chapter 20. Molly and her mother are having tea served by their servant, Jenna. When Jenna leaves the room, they speak in quiet voices about the dangerous situation. Molly refers to a group called the Others who had captured her once before until she was rescued by Peter. Her mother cautions her to be careful what she says since people may be listening.

Jenna returns to the room and tells Molly that she has a visitor. It is George Darling, an awkward boy who lives nearby. He senses something is unusual and comments on the large men that Lord Aster has hired to stand guard outside the Aster house. Molly is reluctant to tell him anything, and he departs after a brief conversation. Molly climbs the stairs to her room, which looks out over the street. She sees a policeman walk by and notices his uniform does not fit well. The policeman stops and looks at the Aster house intently, she notices. She does not see that he is looking at one of the other windows where Jenna is holding up three fingers in a signal.

Chapter 21 is called "The Scuttlebutt," in reference to the barrel on a ship where drinking water is stored. After several days hiding in the sail without food or water, Peter is hungry and thirsty. He comes down from the sail after dark, and Tinkerbelle, using a shell, brings him water from the scuttlebutt. Below deck, Lord Ombra senses Tinkerbelle's presence and glides out to look around.

"Tubby Ted's Discovery" is the title of Chapter 22. Tubby Ted, one of the Lost Boys, goes hunting for fruit in the jungle of Mollusk Island and falls partially into a hidden cavern. James hears his cries and pulls him out, and is excited to find the secret cavern. He rushes back to tell the other Lost Boys about it.

Chapter 23 is entitled "A Second Visit." Molly awakens in her bedroom and looks out the window at the foggy street. She sees the same policeman that had been in the street earlier, but he is now with another man. They walk past Mr. Cadigan, one of the guards posted by the house, but do not speak to him. Molly thinks it is odd, and considers whether to tell her mother about her concern, but decides she is being overly suspicious and goes back to sleep.

Chapter 24 is called "The Stowaway." Peter has had water, but still no food. Tinkerbelle tells him she has discovered the room on the ship where the food is stored, and they sneak there after dark. Peter makes his way into the dark hold where the cook is sleeping, guarding the food. Lord Ombra, sensing their presence, makes his way toward



the hold. Peter accidentally awakens the cook, who begins to yell. In a rush, Peter and Tinkerbell rush above deck, with Lord Ombra drawing nearer. Peter runs quickly and jumps over the side of the ship.

Captain Nerezza calls all the sailors to the deck and when nobody is found missing determines there must have been a stowaway aboard. He concludes the stowaway must have drowned after jumping overboard, and is surprised when Lord Ombra does not seem so sure.

## Chapters 19-24 Analysis

George Darling, an important secondary character, is introduced in Chapter 20, as is Jenna, the Aster's maid who is secretly spying on them for Lord Ombra and the Others. Jenna's signal to Hampton on the sidewalk outside is made known to the readers, but is not known to the main characters. The authors use this device on occasion to increase the mystery and heighten the sense of danger to the main characters. Molly is described as an observant girl, but she is also hesitant to share what she sees with her mother, doubting herself.

The secondary story thread of the Lost Boys moves forward slightly as Tubby Ted finds a secret cave ideal for a hideout for the boys. Peter has a narrow escape on board the ship, but raises the suspicions of Slank and Ombra, who suspect Peter may be the stowaway. Peter's escape, with the help of Tinkerbell, is the first of several he will make over the course of the story as he finds himself in repeated similar situations.



# Chapters 25-32

## Chapters 25-32 Summary

Chapter 25 is called "Genius." Captain Hook watches from high above on the mountain slope as the Lost Boys move back and forth into the jungle. He determines they have found a hiding place in the jungle and devises a plan to capture them. After a frustrating exchange with Smee, his first mate, he congratulates himself on his brilliance.

"St. Katherine's Dock" is the title of Chapter 26, and refers to the location where Nerezza docks his ship in London. Peter recognizes the dock as the same place from which he had departed England before going to Mollusk Island. He is grateful to see land, and eager to look for Molly, but has no idea how to begin to find her. Under Ombra's orders, Nerezza tells his crew that nobody is allowed to leave the ship. Ombra wants no word of his presence to escape. Two men come to the ship, the same two men who had walked past the Aster house earlier. One is named Gerch. The other, the one dressed as a policeman, is called Hampton. They receive orders from Ombra to return to the ship after dark.

Chapter 27 is entitled "Into the Storm." Tinkerbelle has overheard the men talking and returns to Peter to tell him they are planning on going to the Aster house and that they know Lord Aster is not there. A storm has arisen, giving Peter cover to leave the ship and fly unseen to the dock.

"Not Safe at All" is the title of Chapter 28. Peter, afraid to be seen flying, drops into an alley and surprises a man sitting on the ground drinking from a bottle. The man is astonished when Peter appears from the sky, but decides he is only seeing things. He warns Peter to be careful, because the docks are a dangerous place.

Chapter 29 is called "A Bone to Pick." Slank climbs to the crow's nest of the ship to look out over the city and keep an eye on the grumbling crew, who are not allowed to leave the ship. In one of the high sails, he spots something and investigates. It is a bone. He also finds some apple cores that have teeth marks in them. He knows it means Peter has been hiding there. He decides to keep his discovery to himself and resolves his intention to get revenge on the boy.

"Somehow," "A Tiny Heart Beating," and "A Feeling" are the names of the very short Chapters 30, 31 and 32. In Chapter 30, Peter resolves to find Molly somehow, but finds the people of London unhelpful. In Chapter 31, Peter feels the locket around his neck, which holds a small amount of tarstuff, begin to vibrate like a small heart beating. At the same time, Molly Aster, who has a similar locket, has the same feeling in Chapter 32.



## Chapters 25-32 Analysis

The book's humorous tone is evident in Chapter 25, which is a funny exchange between Hook and his dim first mate, Smee. Lord Ombra is shown to have a larger network of people helping him in his quest and a plan to force Lord Aster into turning over the starstuff. Slank discovers evidence of Peter's stowing away on the ship and vows his revenge.

The author makes use of many short chapters to emphasize that the events described are taking place simultaneously. Chapters 31 and 32 are examples of this technique of using very short chapters to indicate the same event from two points of view at the same time.



# Chapters 33-39

## Chapters 33-39 Summary

Chapter 33 is called "A Way Out." Hungry and cold, Peter wanders the foggy streets of London. He meets a boy named Trotter, who offers to take him someplace warm where he can get some food. Tucking Tinkerbelle under his shirt, Peter follows him to a small, dark room with a small coal fire in the center, where several other ragged children are huddled. A large man hands bread around to the children, skipping one boy who he says had not brought in his share of money. The man tells Peter that the children are beggars who bring him the money they collect, and he tells Peter that this will be his job from now on, as well. Peter is trapped in the room when night comes and the man lies down in front of the only door to sleep.

"A Visitor" is the title of Chapter 34. It is the middle of the night and Molly cannot sleep. She watches the street below her window. She is startled by a knock at her bedroom door. It is Jenna, the maid, who wonders if Molly needs anything. Molly sends her away, but is suspicious that Jenna would also be awake and outside her door. She goes back to watching the street.

Chapter 35 is called "A Walk in the Dark." Lord Ombra, Nerezza, Slank, Hampton and Gerch ride in a carriage to the Aster house. Outside the house stands Mr. Jarvis, one of the guards hired by Lord Aster. Ombra instructs Hampton, who is wearing the policeman's uniform, to walk up and speak with Jarvis, making sure he is standing in the light of the street lamp.

Molly watches the scene on the street in Chapter 36, called "A Few Seconds." She sees the policeman walk up and speak with Jarvis; then she sees a dark figure come up behind Jarvis. She sees Jarvis' shoulders slump for a moment; then the policeman and the dark figure leave and Jarvis stands up straight again. She is not certain what she has seen, but she knows something unusual has happened.

"I'll Find You" is the title of Chapter 37. Peter is trapped in the dark room, thinking of a way to escape. Tinkerbelle devises a scheme. Peter begins to cry out that his hair has caught fire, waking up Trotter and the man. Once they are awake, Tinkerbelle creates a very bright flash of light that temporarily blinds them, allowing Peter to make his way to the door and escape. As he is flying away, the man yells at him that he will find Peter, no matter where he goes.

Chapter 38 is called "The Shadow Thief." Hampton and Ombra go around to the back of the Aster house, where a guard named Cadigan is standing watch. Hampton again engages him in conversation and watches in disbelief as Ombra emerges from the shadows until he is touching Cadigan's shadow. Hampton watches as Ombra pulls Cadigan's shadow away from him and puts it, writhing, into a burlap sack. He then



watches as a new shadow takes the place of Cadigan's original shadow. Cadigan is now under the power of Ombra, who instructs him to resume his watch.

Chapter 39 is called "The Market." Peter and Tinkerbell find their way to a pet market, an open-air market where birds and other animals are sold. Tinkerbell, who understands the language of birds, is alarmed at their chirping and tells Peter they are hungry and want to be released from their cages. She darts away from Peter toward some of the cages, but is quickly caught by a bird seller named Wren. Wren shoves Tinkerbell into a cage and threatens Peter when he demands that he give Tinkerbell back. Peter grabs the cage and the man stops him, calling the police. A policeman comes and grabs Peter, believing Wren's story that Peter had tried to steal one of his birds. The policeman holds Peter firmly while he helplessly watches Wren take Tinkerbell away.

## Chapters 33-39 Analysis

The danger to Molly builds slowly in this portion of the book. She sees Lord Ombra approach the guard but does not know exactly what has happened. Again, the reader is made aware of danger to the main character that the character is not aware of herself, heightening the sense of impending harm.

Tinkerbell again helps Peter out of a jam, this time by using her power to create a sudden very bright flash that blinds people temporarily. It is the first time she uses this ability, which she will use to great effect several times. Tinkerbell takes an almost motherly attitude toward Peter, who is grateful for her help. When they are separated in Chapter 39, the reader feels that Peter is truly in a tight spot.



# Chapter 40-45

## Chapter 40-45 Summary

Chapter 40 is called "The Fear in Her Eyes." Molly is awakened by Jenna rapping on her bedroom door and goes down to breakfast with her mother. She begins to tell her mother about the incident she witnessed on the street the night before, but they are interrupted by Jenna and she stops talking. Suddenly there is a loud barking sound coming from Hornblower, the large dog that belongs to one of the guards, a man named Hodge. Hornblower is barking at Jarvis and Cadigan, which is unusual because the dog normally obeyed the men. The two men stand impassively. Molly's sense that something is wrong deepens, and she sees a similar fear in her mother's eyes.

Chapter 41 is entitled "Play It Safe." Nerezza and Slank sit at a table aboard the ship discussing the events of the night before. Slank considers telling Nerezza about the bone he found in the sail and his suspicion that Peter is in London, but he keeps quiet.

"The Standoff" is the title of Chapter 42. Peter has been thrown into a jail cell with several other boys and a few drunken men. His golden locket draws the attention of a bully named Rafe who tries to take it from him. Peter dodges the boy and moves to the corner of the filthy cell where a bucket that has been used as a toilet is sitting. Peter picks up the disgusting bucket and threatens to throw it on Rafe, who backs down.

"Thunder Down the Trail" is the title of Chapter 43. Captain Hook puts into motion his plan to trap the Lost Boys and use them as bait to bring Peter to him. He has some of his men provoke some of the wild boars that live on the island to stampede through the Lost Boys' camp, sending them running down the path toward their secret cave hideout. James and Thomas reach the secret entrance of the cave and dive in, but Prentiss and Tubby Ted miss the entrance and run into a net trap. Hook watches from above on the mountain slope, wishing he had caught all four boys, but pleased with the results.

Chapter 42 is called "The Collector." The bird seller, Wren, is astonished by Tinkerbelle, who is unlike anything he has seen before. He takes her to the home of Lord Welton Pondle, a wealthy collector of unusual animals, and shows her to him. Pondle wants to own Tinkerbelle very much and finally offers to give Wren a great deal of money. As Pondle is holding Tinkerbelle, she sees that Wren has failed to latch the door on the canary cage where she was kept. She calls out to the canaries inside to fly out and peck at Pondle, which they do, forcing him to let go of her. A pet monkey of Pondle's calls out to Tinkerbelle that she can escape through the fireplace. She quickly flies toward the fire and shoots up out the chimney.

"The Cold Iron Ring" is the title of Chapter 45. A loud guard named Humdrake comes to the cell and tells the boys they are to be taken before a judge. Peter, looking for any chance to escape, is disheartened when he is chained by the ankle to the other prisoners.





## Chapter 40-45 Analysis

Peter and Tinkerbell embark on separate adventures in this portion of the story and Peter is shown to be resourceful in getting out of tight situations even without Tinkerbell's help. Peter's desperation increases as he is repeatedly set back in his search for Molly Aster. These adventures fill out the story and provide added suspense. The relationship between Peter and Tinkerbell is further explored as they demonstrate their devotion and loyalty to one another.

Molly Aster finally decides to confide in her mother about her concerns, but as the reader has been made aware it is nearly too late. They are nearly surrounded by people under the control of Ombra but are unaware of the closeness of the danger.



# Chapters 46-54

## Chapters 46-54 Summary

"Hopeless" is the title of Chapter 46. Tinkerbelle has escaped but has no idea where to look for Peter. She finds little help talking to pigeons, who are only interested in food.

Chapter 47 is called "The Drunken Centipede," referring to the image of Peter and the other prisoners ambling through the streets chained together. Desperate to escape, Peter opens his locket containing some starstuff and touches it to the chain, unsure what will happen. Suddenly he and the other prisoners and the guard Humdrake are filled with a wonderful feeling and begin to rise slowly in the air while people stand below watching in amazement. After a while the starstuff begins to wear off, however, and they start to descend. Peter has bought some time, but he is still trapped.

At the moment Peter opens his locket, Molly feels a pulsation in her own locket and Tinkerbelle senses that he has opened the locket as well and must be in trouble. These short episodes are described in the two short chapters "Something Strong" and "Either Way," Chapters 48 and 49.

"Grasping Hands" is the title of Chapter 50. The prisoners are descending and are nearly within reach of the people on the ground when Tinkerbelle flies to the rescue, taking the keys from Humdrake the guard and unlocking Peter's shackles, allowing him to fly away.

Chapter 51 is called "The Message from Egypt." Molly tells her mother about the shadowy figure she had seen on the sidewalk. Her mother is worried and tells Molly that a message had come from a Starcatcher in Egypt that they were in danger and to "beware the shadows."

"The Letter" is the title of Chapter 52. After seeing a postman delivering letters, Peter comes up with a plan to find Molly. He asks a postal clerk to write a letter for him to be sent to Lord Aster's house. He has the clerk make a large X on the back of the letter so he can see it in the postal carrier's bag. When the postman goes out on his rounds, Peter follows him, watching to see where the carrier delivers his letter.

"Potato Soup" is the title of Chapter 53. Jenna the Aster's maid is having a meal with the rest of the servants of the household. She is especially careful that each of them has some of the potato soup.

Chapter 54 is called "A Fine Name Indeed." Peter follows the postman, watching carefully for his letter, but he is surprised by Trotter and the man from the dark room. They recognize Peter and grab him. He is rescued by a small man with a large dog named Jamie Barrie who makes them let Peter go. Meanwhile Peter has lost sight of the postman. Barrie helps him, however, by giving him directions to the Aster Mansion.



## Chapters 46-54 Analysis

The authors again use very short, episodic chapters to convey a sense of simultaneous action. The reader is given a first glimpse of the power of starstuff when Peter opens his locket and uses it in an attempt to escape the prison shackles, and a humorous episode follows as he and his fellow prisoners float into the air. Once again Tinkerbell comes to his rescue.

Molly begins to put the pieces of the puzzle together when she hears about the warning from Egypt to beware of the shadows. This will help her fend off Ombra later in the story. Peter seems finally to be on the right track to finding Molly's house, but is again thwarted when characters established earlier in the book suddenly reappear. By delaying Peter's progress and establishing the imminent danger to Molly and her mother, every problem Peter faces heightens the tension and suspense.

Peter is assisted by a character named Jamie Barrie, who is a reference to the author J.M. Barrie, the author of the original Peter Pan character on which the character Peter is based. The authors invent an episode where Barrie meets the real Peter and chooses to use his name for the character he is writing about.



# Chapters 55-64

## Chapters 55-64 Summary

Chapter 55 is called "Take All his Air." Hook, not knowing that Peter has left the island, is dismayed that he has not tried to save his friends. He decides he should capture the other two boys as well.

"A Very Strange Business" is the name of Chapter 56. Lord Ombra, Nerezza, Slank, Gerch and Hampton return by carriage to the Aster house in the late afternoon as the postman comes by. Jarvis is on guard, and Hampton tells the others he is one of the guards who is under Ombra's control. The men sit quietly and uncomfortably until Hampton breaks the silence and mentions he heard a strange story about several prisoners going flying into the air earlier in the day. Slank is immediately interested in the story and grills Hampton on what he knows. Hampton knows little, but says that one prisoner apparently escaped. Slank is convinced that it was Peter. Ombra agrees, but tells Slank to put revenge out of his mind for the time being while they do what they have come to do.

Chapter 57 is called "At Last." Peter follows the directions to Molly's house and recognizes it from the description Barrie gave him. He sees a guard posted outside, but decides he will simply try to walk to the door and if he is stopped will fly around the house looking for Molly's window. He is stunned when he sees a carriage pull up to the house and Slank gets out, whom he recognizes at once.

Chapter 58 is entitled "Visitors." Molly sees the carriage pull up from her bedroom window and also thinks she recognizes Slank. She watches as the men approach Jarvis, who unlocks the gate to the house and lets them in. Knowing she must warn her mother, Molly runs to her door, but when she opens it Jenna is standing there, holding a knife.

"Something Odd" is the name of Chapter 59. Under Ombra's instructions, Jarvis brings Hodge and Hornblower outside the house where Ombra can steal their shadows. The men enter the house and Ombra gives instructions to get Molly's mother and take her to the carriage while he will deal with Molly himself.

Chapter 60 is called "Overheard Words." Peter watches Slank and the others enter the house and knows he must help Molly. In Chapter 61, called "Footsteps," Molly is held in her room by Jenna. She hears the footsteps of men in the house below, then hears her mother scream. In Chapter 62, entitled "Rough Hands," Louise Aster is captured by the men. She tries to call out to Molly but a rough hand covers her mouth.

Chapter 63 is called "The Thing on the Stairs." Molly manages to get past Jenna by throwing a bottle of ink in her face. In her struggle with Jenna, her locket flies off and



lands under her bed. She rushes past Jenna to the top of the stairs, but sees Ombra coming up toward her. She rushes back into her room and slams the door.

Ombra reaches Molly's room in Chapter 64, called "The Black Pool." He is angry with Jenna for using a knife to threaten Molly, telling her he does not want her harmed. Slowly, Ombra seems to flow like black water under the door to Molly's room.

## Chapters 55-64 Analysis

A major dramatic turning point takes place in this portion of the story as Peter and Ombra and his men arrive at the Aster mansion at the same time. Ombra's plan goes off exactly as planned and Molly is trapped in her room as Ombra slowly approaches. While Peter has finally found the house, he is still uncertain how to find Molly inside.



# Chapters 65-70

## Chapters 65-70 Summary

Peter frantically looks for Molly's window in Chapter 65, called "An Urgent Search." Chapter 66 is called "The Envelope." Ombra comes into Molly's room and gives her an envelope, telling her she is to deliver it to her father if she wants her mother to be released. Seeing that Ombra is moving toward her shadow, Molly douses the lamp. Before Jenna can relight it, Peter and Tinkerbell appear at the window. Tinkerbell fills the room with a bright flash, temporarily stopping Ombra, and Molly escapes with them, taking the envelope, but leaving her locket behind.

Chapter 67 is entitled "The Phantom Light." Peter has difficulty flying while holding Molly and they land and hide in a large tree. Below, the men search for them but cannot find them. Ombra is frustrated.

In Chapter 68, called "Conversation in a Tree," Molly tells Peter about her father going away to the Return, an event where the starstuff gathered by the Starcatchers is returned to the skies. Deciding they cannot stay in the tree, Molly suggests they go to the house of George Darling.

"A Cry on the Wind" is the name of Chapter 69. Hook hangs Tubby Ted by his feet in the jungle. When his cries bring James and Thomas to investigate, he captures them and puts them in a large bamboo cage with the others.

Chapter 70 is called "Reluctant Allies." Molly, Peter and Tinkerbell go to the bedroom of George Darling, whose parents are away. Peter senses the mutual attraction he and George have for Molly, making things awkward. Although he would rather not, Peter accepts George's help.

## Chapters 65-70 Analysis

Remembering the warning about shadows, Molly hits on an effective way to avoid capture by Lord Ombra. She puts out the light in her room so she will cast no shadow. Tinkerbell and Peter help her in a daring rescue during which Tinkerbell once again uses her power to create a bright flash, temporarily dissolving Ombra.

Molly escapes, but without her locket of starstuff, which is unguarded but hidden under her bed. The authors leave the question open as to what happens to the locket, leaving the reader to wonder if it will be found by Ombra and what might happen if it is.

The awkward romantic situation centered on Peter and Molly is fully established in this portion. Tinkerbell is attracted to Peter and jealous of his obvious attraction to Molly. George Darling, who has already been established as being attracted to Molly as well, is introduced as a rival to Peter. Molly appears to be attracted to both boys.



Tinkerbell's jealous character is established through her sharp remarks about Molly and Peter's obvious attraction to her. Because only Peter can understand Tinkerbell's bell-like speech, she boldly makes these remarks in Molly's presence, leaving Peter to change or soften her words as he interprets them for Molly. This is a source of humor.

The secondary story on Mollusk Island moves forward slightly once more as Hook successfully captures all four of Peter's friends. The reader knows that his efforts are bound to be fruitless while Peter is away from the island. Hook does not know this, however.



# Chapters 71-77

## Chapters 71-77 Summary

Chapter 71 is called "The Secret Place." Molly and Peter are awake in George's room while he sleeps. She reads the letter from Ombra, which demands that he give Ombra the trunkful of starstuff or he will kill Molly's mother. Molly resolves to find her father and decides to start at the Tower of London, a place where she knows he sometimes goes and which might be the safe place where the starstuff is kept.

Chapter 72 is called "The Warder and the Watcher." The next day, George gives them some money to take a cab to the Tower. He wants to go along, but Molly convinces him to stay behind, promising to return. At the Tower, the guard recognizes Molly and lets her inside. He does not let Peter pass, however. Peter falls back and flies over the wall to meet Molly, with Tinkerbell tucked away in his shirt. He does not see a man hiding in the shadows who moves away as Peter flies over the wall.

The man in the shadows was a messenger posted to watch for anything unusual. In Chapter 73, called "The Messenger," the man brings word to Nerezza and the others that Molly and Peter are at the Tower.

In Chapter 74, called "The Ravens' Cries," Molly and Peter make their way to the White Tower within the tower yard. Meanwhile, ravens cry along the walls of the fortress.

"Traitor's Gate" is the title of Chapter 75, where Ombra makes his way into the Tower and learns from the ravens where Molly and Peter have gone. He lets the others in as well.

Chapter 76 is called "McGuinn," named for the guard who greets Molly and Peter at the White Tower. McGuinn tells them that Molly's father had been there and taken the starstuff, but he could not tell them where he went. Tinkerbell hears men approaching.

"Wolves on the Steps" is the title of Chapter 77. Ombra leads a group of men to the steps of the White Tower and tells them to catch the girl and bring her to him unharmed.

## Chapters 71-77 Analysis

A second showdown is set up between Ombra and Peter, Molly and Tinkerbell, this time at the Tower of London, a real historical place that is described in detail. By placing the action in real historical settings, the author adds realism to the mystical elements of the story. The situation again builds slowly over the course of several short chapters, emphasizing the increasing danger. The main characters are apparently trapped once again with no means of escape.





# Chapters 78-86

## Chapters 78-86 Summary

"A Deadly Fall," "The Silent Struggle," "The Metal Man," "The Secret," "The Keep," "Ombra's Plan," and "A Voice in the Dark" are the titles of Chapters 78 through 84 and outline the attempt of Ombra and his men to capture Molly and Peter. Ombra makes his way under the strong door of the tower, held off by McGuinn's lantern while Peter and Molly run down a staircase. McGuinn follows them, but is caught by Ombra briefly before he falls down the stairs and dies. Trapped in the lower floor, Molly and Peter accidentally discover a passage to a secret keep where Molly's finds clues that her father had been there recently. They come back out of the keep and dodge the men to reach the upper level of the tower where they barely escape through a hole in the wall.

"Dark Kites" is the title of Chapter 85. Lady Aster has come under the control of Lord Ombra, who tells the others that while he had his brief hold on McGuinn he learned from his shadow where the Return was to take place, but not when.

In "An Offer of Help," Chapter 86, Molly and Peter return to George's room with a clue from the Keep in a set of numbers written on a scrap of paper. George recognizes them as train times and helps them determine that Molly's father had perhaps taken a train to Salisbury, a nearby village. He offers to help Molly and Peter buy train tickets to Salisbury, but insist on coming along. Peter is reluctant, but Molly agrees.

## Chapters 78-86 Analysis

The story takes a dark turn when the character of McGuinn is killed after a fall down the stairs of the White Tower. His death not only darkens the tone of the overall story, but makes the danger faced by the main characters more serious. McGuinn's death proves to be an important element in the plot, as well, because Ombra is able to learn from his shadow the location of the Return, setting up the final dramatic showdown.

The discovery of the Keep is a stroke of unusual luck and serves not only to remove the main characters from danger temporarily, but also provides them with a vital clue to track down Lord Aster. It falls to George to solve the mystery of the clue, however, hinting that he will become an important ally to Peter and Molly in the final resolution of the story. George's contribution only deepens Peter's resentment of him, but he puts his feelings aside because he recognizes George may be able to help.



# Chapters 87-90

## Chapters 87-90 Summary

"The Golden Weather Vane" is the title of Chapter 87. Upon reaching Salisbury, Molly recognizes the village cathedral and remembers she had been taken there as a young girl by her parents. Remembering a house with a gold weather vane, she finds the house with the help of George.

In Chapter 88, called "A Good Friend of His," Lord Ombra takes over the shadows of two people who live near Salisbury, settling into their house to wait.

"No Choice" is the title of Chapter 89. The house Molly remembers is guarded by a large man who has a bear named Karl. The children are caught by Karl but then let inside, where Molly's father is surprised and dismayed to see her. She explains her mother's kidnapping to her father, but he tells her he has no choice. He cannot give the starstuff to Ombra.

In Chapter 90, called "George's Thought," Molly explains to George how the Starcatchers gather starstuff and return it to the heavens in a ceremony called the Return. George, who is an amateur astronomer, notes that there is a lunar eclipse that evening, and he hints that he has a good idea where the Return will take place.

## Chapters 87-90 Analysis

The stage is set for the final showdown in this portion of the book. Lord Ombra, who has learned the secret location from McGuinn, leads his men to a farmhouse where he plans to wait for the Return, uncertain of its exact time. Meanwhile, George again provides crucial and helpful information in finding the house where Molly's father is located. He also hints that he thinks he knows where and when the Return will take place. These plot elements have been kept from the reader even though they are known by some of the characters. This adds an element of surprise when the time and location are revealed.

Molly has an emotional interaction with her father, who faces the difficult choice of whether to give in to Ombra's demand to save his wife. He determines that if he does give in she will probably be killed anyway. This choice is similar to the one faced by Peter earlier in the book when he must decide whether to give himself up to Captain Hook in order to save the life of James. He correctly assumes that Hook intends to kill them both once he has Peter and so he chooses to try to rescue James instead.



# Chapters 91-96

## Chapters 91-96 Summary

In Chapter 91, called "The Destination," Lord Aster arrives at the scene of the Return, having left Peter and the others guarded at the house with strict instructions not to follow him. In "Not Much Time," Chapter 92, George guesses that the site of the Return is Stonehenge, the ancient stone monument that stands nearby. They escape the house and the wolves that are guarding it by flying. Molly and George use some of Peter's starstuff which gives them the temporary ability to fly.

Chapter 93 is called "A Raven's Eye." Ombra, Slank and the others take Lady Aster with them in a carriage toward Stonehenge after Ombra gets word through some ravens that others are approaching the monument.

Chapter 94 is entitled "The Return." In preparation for the Return, Lord Aster has dressed in a special suit that protects him. He carefully carries the trunk full of starstuff toward the center of the monument as the lunar eclipse begins. As the moon darkens, luminous green strands of light begin to streak down toward the earth from the moon. Ombra stations two riflemen nearby, ready to shoot Aster before he can open the trunk, but he sees them and opens it, casting a bright blinding light. Nobody can get near the trunk while it is open except Aster, who is wearing the protective gear. Ombra brings out Lady Aster and makes her walk toward the open trunk. Seeing his wife walking into danger, Aster closes the trunk.

Peter, Molly, George and Tinkerbelle have reached the site and Molly rushes to her mother who is walking toward the open trunk. After Lord Aster closes the lid, Ombra's men shoot him, knocking him down. George helps pull Aster away from the monument as Ombra approaches the closed trunk and prepares to take it. Peter and Karl attack the men who are taking the trunk, however, and with a flash from Tinkerbelle hold off Ombra and his men long enough for Peter to open the trunk again, just in time for the green light from the moon to reach it. Peter is shot in the arm, but after the return he is miraculously healed. Ombra dissolves in the intense light. Aster is also healed by the small bit of starstuff in Peter's locket.

Chapter 95 is called "A Swift, Sure Shadow." Everyone returns to the nearby house and Lord Aster offers to make arrangements to sail Peter back to Mollusk Island. Peter thanks him but says he will fly with Tinkerbelle. He says a sad goodbye to Molly and promises to return to help her if he is needed. George is returned home, promising not to tell anyone what he has learned about the Starcatchers.

The final chapter is called "Over Their Heads." The Lost Boys are trapped in a giant cage by Captain Hook. By enticing some monkeys to chew through some of the ropes securing the cage, they manage to escape. Just as they are out of reach of the pirates, Peter appears, throwing a mango that strikes Captain Hook in the eye.



## Chapters 91-96 Analysis

Chapters 91 through 94 present the final showdown that resolves most of the threads of the story. All of the main characters converge at Stonehenge during a lunar eclipse, each of them having determined the time and place independently. The plot continues to twist suddenly. Even when it seems Lord Aster is about to successfully complete his mission, things change when his wife and daughter appear and are put in danger. When Lord Aster is wounded by Ombra's men, Peter must step forward and take the responsibility to complete the Return. Starstuff has been established as being fatal to humans when they are exposed to a large amount of it. Lord Aster must wear a special gold-covered suit to open the trunk full of starstuff. Peter, it is revealed, is somehow different than most people in that he has survived exposure to starstuff, which has given him some special abilities like flying. When Lord Aster is wounded, Peter is the only person in the world who can save the situation.

The action in this final section is very fast-paced, with nearly every character taking some part. Although the situation is made more serious by the apparent killing of Lord Aster, the authors use the device of starstuff to heal both Lord Aster and Peter to provide a happier ending.

Chapter 95 wraps up Peter's adventure in England and resolves some of the outstanding questions while leaving open the possibility of future adventures. Peter and Molly say a sad goodbye, each longing to see the other again soon. George is sworn to secrecy, but it is hinted he may play a role in the future of the Starcatchers. Lord Aster informs them all that there may be other shadow thieves operating in the world, suggesting that Peter's help may be needed again in the future. Tinkerbelle appears to have developed a grudging respect for Molly, but is pleased she will be returning to the island with Peter alone.

The final chapter sees Peter back on the island in a situation similar to where the book opened, tormenting Captain Hook. In the meantime, however, the Lost Boys have figured out how to save themselves without Peter's help.



# Characters

## Peter

Peter is the central character in the story. He is a boy; however, he has been exposed to a substance called starstuff that has made him immortal so that his body will always be that of a boy. The starstuff has also given him the ability to fly. Peter is an orphan who originally lived in England but after a series of adventures came to live on a tropical island called Mollusk Island. On the island, he is the leader of a small band of boys who call themselves the Lost Boys. Among the five Lost Boys, Peter is the only one who can fly.

Peter is an adventurous boy who enjoys taking risks. One of his favorite activities is to use his flying abilities to torment the pirates who are encamped on one side of Mollusk Island. Over the course of the story, Peter becomes more serious and responsible, but he retains a boyish glee in bothering these pirates.

Peter is attracted to Molly Aster, the daughter of a wealthy English family who lives in London and whose peril motivates him to go to England to help her. His attraction for Molly creates tension in Peter's life because of the jealousy it creates in his close friend, Tinkerbelle, a magical creature who is herself attracted to Peter.

## Molly Aster

Molly Aster is the daughter of Leonard and Louise Aster, a wealthy family who live in a large London mansion. Molly is a girl in her early teen years and an only child. She is an intelligent and observant person, and her ability to recall small details becomes a helpful asset in solving the central mystery of the story. Molly has started to feel attracted to boys, and she sometimes has conflicting feelings for both Peter and George Darling.

Molly has been through some intense adventures prior to the period described in the story. She has been captured by pirates and escaped successfully with Peter's help. She is brave, and not afraid to go up against sinister characters such as Lord Ombrage. Her father is a Starcatcher, one of a secret group of people who know about starstuff and its magical powers, and who gather the substance from around the world to return it to the stars. Although she is not fully aware of her father's activities, Molly does know about some of the magical creatures that exist as a result of starstuff and she carries a small amount of the substance in a locket around her neck. This locket is somehow magically connected to a similar locket worn by Peter.

## Lord Ombrage

Lord Ombrage is a leader of a secret dark organization called the Others. The Others are the opposition to the Starcatchers, who travel the globe gathering the magical starstuff.



The Others also seek starstuff, but wish to use it for their own purposes of ruling the world.

Lord Ombra is a shadow thief and is the primary villain in the story. He is a nebulous figure made up of shadows who takes the form of a cloaked man. He attacks his victims by touching their shadows and pulling them away from their bodies, replacing them with a shadow of his own that allows him to control them. If he can touch a shadow he can also read the mind of the person casting it.

Lord Ombra can be held at bay by strong light that counteracts his shadow, and cannot attack in complete darkness where no shadows are cast. He has the ability to seep under doors and through cracks like a wisp of smoke. Ombra is ultimately dissolved in the bright flash of light created during the Return ceremony when the trunk of starstuff is opened and returned to the stars.

## **Tinkerbell**

Tinkerbell is a magical half-girl half-bird creature called a "birdgirl." Like Peter, she can fly. She is small, about the size of a small bird, and gives off a soft glowing light. She also has the ability to create short, very bright flashes of light that temporarily blind others. She uses this ability to escape capture and to save Peter and the other characters from danger. She speaks in a language that sounds like tiny bells ringing which only a few people can understand, such as Peter and Lord Aster. She can also understand and communicate with birds and other creatures, an ability which proves helpful in her adventures.

Tinkerbell is attracted to Peter and protects him fiercely. She is also jealous at any sign that Peter might be attracted to someone else, such as Molly Aster. She has a sharp tongue and speaks her mind openly.

## **Black Stache or Captain Hook**

Black Stache is a pirate dubbed "Captain Hook" by Peter. His name "Black Stache" comes from his long, carefully-kept black mustache. His nickname Captain Hook is in reference to the hook he has in place of one of his hands. He lost his hand to a crocodile named "Mister Grin," who still stalks him hoping to eat the rest of him.

Captain Hook leads a band of pirates who have encamped in a fort on Mollusk Island. He is consumed by a desire to capture Peter and get his revenge on the boy for foiling him in a previous adventure. He develops several schemes to catch Peter by taking his friends hostage, all of which fail.



## James

James is one of the "Lost Boys" who live on Mollusk Island with Peter. James longs to be involved with Peter's adventures, but is captured by Captain Hook while following Peter one day. James is ultimately rescued, but is captured again. The second time, James and the other boys manage to rescue themselves, mostly without Peter's help.

## Captain Nerezza

Captain Nerezza is a vicious sea captain with a false wooden nose in place of his missing nose. Nerezza is hired by Lord Ombra to take him to Mollusk Island and then to help capture and take Louise Aster hostage upon returning to England. He is a cruel man and feared by the sailors on his ship.

## Slank

Slank is the first mate of Captain Nerezza. He is a vindictive man who has had a past encounter with Peter and is motivated by revenge to find him and kill him. Slank is a vicious man who does not hesitate to threaten children, kidnap or kill.

## Lord Aster

Lord Aster is the father of Molly Aster. He is a Starcatcher, a member of the secret group who gathers starstuff from around the world and returns it to the stars. He leaves his family to go to the secret location of the Return but is found by Peter and the others as well as Lord Ombra. Aster is mortally wounded in an attack by Ombra's men, but is healed by starstuff.

## George Darling

George Darling is a neighbor of Molly Aster. He is an intelligent boy in his early teens who is attracted to Molly. George's knowledge of astronomy, history and old languages proves to be important in solving the central mystery of the story. He is a rival to Peter over Molly, but the two boys form a grudging respect.

## Tubby Ted

Tubby Ted is one of the Lost Boys. He gets his nickname for being overweight and constantly interested in food.



## **Smee**

Smee is the bumbling first mate of Captain Hook.

## **McGuinn**

McGuinn is the guard at the White Tower, where the starstuff was kept before being taken by Lord Aster to the Return. McGuinn dies during an attack on the tower, and unwillingly provides Ombra with the location of the Return when Ombra touches his shadow.

## **Louise Aster**

Louise Aster is Molly's mother. She is taken hostage by Ombra, who threatens to kill her if Leonard Aster does not give him the trunk of starstuff.

## **Fighting Prawn**

Fighting Prawn is the chief of the Mollusk tribe, who live in a village on Mollusk Island. He is an ally of Peter against the pirates and helps Peter rescue James when he is taken hostage by Hook.





# Objects/Places

## Mollusk Island

Mollusk Island is a tropical island where Peter and the Lost Boys live, along with the Mollusk tribe and a group of pirates led by Captain Hook.

## London, England

The largest city in England and the home of the Aster Family is London, England.

## Le Fantome

Le Fantome is the ship captained by Nerezza which carries Lord Ombra to Mollusk Island and on which Peter stows away to travel to England.

## St. Katherines Dock

St. Katherines Dock is the filthy and dangerous dock where Nerezza's ship docks in London and where Louise Aster is held captive.

## The Tower of London

The Tower of London is a collection of old buildings along the Thames River in London which have served as prisons. It is where the Starcatchers guard the collected starstuff.

## The White Tower

The White Tower within the Tower of London is where the starstuff is kept in a secret keep.

## Salisbury

Salisbury is a village outside London near the Stonehenge monument.

## Stonehenge

Stonehenge is an ancient stone monument that seems to have astronomical connections. It is the location of the Return in the story.



## **Aster mansion**

Aster mansion is the large, multi-story house where Molly and her family live. The mansion is in a very nice part of London next to a park called Kensington Garden

## **Starstuff**

Starstuff is a magical substance that falls to earth from the sky. A group called the Starcatchers gather starstuff from around the world to return it to the stars in a ceremony called the Return.

## **The Return**

The Return is an event that takes place during total eclipses of the moon at the Stonehenge monument. During the Return, green streaks of light descend from the moon until they touch the collected starstuff placed in the center of the monument, taking it up in a brilliant flash of light.



# Themes

## Revenge

Revenge is a common motivation to many of the characters in Peter and the Shadow Thieves. The story is part of a series, and often refers back to events in a previous book in the series where Peter had interacted with some of the characters. Captain Hook, for example, is motivated to capture and kill Peter out of revenge for Peter's foiling him in a previous encounter. Peter's ongoing torment of Hook deepens his drive to seek revenge so that he kidnaps Peter's friends in an attempt to capture Peter. Hook's vengeful plan is finally thwarted by Peter and the boys, however, and he is left even more desirous of revenge than before.

The character of Slank is motivated by revenge, as well, also over a previous incident with Peter. Slank goes along with Ombra's scheme because he believes it will bring him back into contact with Peter, whom he wishes to capture and kill in revenge. Slank is admonished by Ombra, who reads his thoughts, and so keeps his thoughts to himself when later he finds evidence that Peter had stowed away on Le Fantome.

Finally, Ombra himself seeks revenge on Peter after he escapes him at the White Tower, saying he has "special plans" for him when he finally catches him.

By using revenge as a primary motivation for some of Peter's enemies, the authors create an ongoing situation that can sustain their interaction over several episodes. The vengeful characters do not give up over minor setbacks, and each time they are thwarted, their vengeful feelings only increase, deepening their motivation.

## Magic and Mysticism

Central to the story of Peter and the Shadow Thieves is the mysterious substance called "starstuff." Starstuff apparently falls from the sky all over the world and is gathered by a secret group of people known as Starcatchers who periodically return it to the skies in a ceremony called the Return. Starstuff has magical but unpredictable effects on anything it touches. It fills a person with feelings of well-being and gives them the temporary ability to fly.

The main character, Peter, is a human who has a high tolerance for starstuff, which is described as dangerous to people in large quantities. He has become permanently able to fly after being exposed to it, connecting him with a population of other creatures who have special abilities from starstuff, such as mermaids and the creature Tinkerbell, who is described as part girl, part bird.

In opposition to the Starcatchers and star creatures are a darkly secret group called the Others who have magical abilities of their own. One of their leaders, Lord Ombra, is made up of shadows and has the ability to control others by stealing their shadows. The



authors create a stark distinction between the darkness of Lord Ombra and the brightness of starstuff and creatures like Tinkerbell, and the story is largely cast as an opposition between these two magical forces, with the light triumphing over the darkness.

## Boyhood and Manhood

The main character, Peter, has been given something like eternal life from his exposure to starstuff. This means he will always have the body of a boy, it is explained. His mind, however, will continue to mature and he will eventually become a man in a boy's body it is suggested. He begins to notice this discrepancy through his attraction to Molly Aster, whom he notices has grown taller than he has. He wonders if she will still be attracted to him as she grows into a young woman but he stays a boy, or if she will turn her attentions to George Darling, whose voice has started to change and who has grown into a lanky young man.

At the beginning of the book, Peter is shown leaving his friends behind as he enjoys flying around the pirate fort bothering Captain Hook. Eager to join in, his friend James follows him and is put in danger because of Peter's self-indulgent behavior. As Peter continues on his adventure he is confronted with situations where he must choose his actions responsibly, such as when he reluctantly agrees to team up with George, putting aside his personal feelings. He stops behaving in his own interest and begins acting more like a man than a boy. His transformation is an underlying thread of the story. By the final chapter, his relationship with his friends on Mollusk Island has changed so that they are now more like equals.



# Style

## Point of View

Peter and the Shadow Thieves is written in the third person and takes place in the immediate past tense as if the events described have just happened. It is narrated from an omniscient point of view, with the characters' thoughts and motivations described for the reader.

Most of the story is told from the point of view of Peter, the main character. Peter is a boy with magical abilities that allow him to fly and stay forever young. His mind is maturing, however, even as his body stays that of a boy, which presents a conflict in his relation to Molly, whom he likes. The story takes Peter out of his familiar setting of Mollusk Island and puts him in the strange surroundings of London where everything is new and where he cannot use his ability to fly. The character must shift his point of view from the confident and assured manner he enjoyed on the island to a cautious and careful outlook amid the dangerous environment of London.

The authors shift the point of view frequently from character to character, with each of the many chapters usually focusing on the experience of one character. This technique creates a complex story where the reader is made aware of more of the narrative than the characters, heightening the tension before the final dramatic resolution.

## Setting

The book takes place in the 19th century and is set primarily in two locations. The first is Mollusk Island, a tropical island inhabited by Peter and his friends, a tribe of natives, and an encampment of pirates. The second main location is England.

Mollusk Island is an island divided by a high mountain. On one side of the island several pirates are encamped under the leadership of a pirate called Black 'Stache or Captain Hook. On the other side is a village of natives called the Mollusk tribe and a hut where Peter and four of his friends live. The boys have the protection of the Mollusk tribe and are led by Peter, who enjoys tormenting the pirates.

Peter stows away on a ship, which is the setting for some of the middle chapters. It is a sailing ship commanded by Captain Nerezza, a strict and harsh captain. Peter stows away in the folds of a high sail and sneaks around the ship after dark to find food and water.

Once the ship arrives in England, the setting changes to London, where Peter must make his way through some tight spots. The London settings vary from grimy alleys and filthy jails to the rich luxury of the Aster mansion, which borders a large park and is near a palace. It is the nineteenth century and the main means of transportation is by horse



and carriage and trains. The final dramatic scenes take place at Stonehenge, a large, ancient stone monument in the English countryside.

## Language and Meaning

*Peter and the Shadow Thieves* is directed at young readers and uses vocabulary and dialogue that are appropriate for that audience. Most of the characters are English and speak using British expressions and dialect. Some of the action takes place aboard a sailing ship, where the characters use jargon specific to sailing. The authors provide contextual information when these unusual terms are used so the reader can determine their meaning.

The writing is fast-paced and direct, suitable for the quick action of an adventure story. The authors make wide use of dialog to advance the story and use a variety of dialects and accents. The pirates and sailors speak using nautical jargon and colorful expressions, while the upper-class British characters speak with proper grammar and distinctly British idioms. One character, Tinkerbelle, does not speak at all in a conventional sense. She communicates using bell-like sounds that only a few humans can understand. Peter interprets for her, often softening her sometimes harsh words.

The authors maintain a humorous tone throughout the book, much of it centered around language such as when Smee, Captain Hook's bumbling first mate, takes the captain's figurative examples literally. Peter's interpreting of Tinkerbelle's jealous remarks about Molly are another recurring humorous element.

## Structure

*Peter and the Shadow Thieves* uses an episodic structure to heighten the tension and keep several threads of the story moving at the same time. It consists of 96 short chapters, each with a title referring to an event within that chapter. Some of the chapters are very short, made up of only a few paragraphs, and shift quickly back and forth between locations to create a sense of simultaneous action.

The events of the story unfold quickly and in chronological order. It is an adventure story with a great deal of action and suspense. Each chapter ends with an unresolved situation that is completed in a later chapter. The first several chapters establish Peter as the main character and introduce Lord Ombré, the primary villain in the story. The middle part of the story presents a series of difficult situations that Peter must overcome before he reaches Molly Aster, a second central character. The final part of the story resolves the mystery surrounding Molly's father and Lord Ombré's evil plan and concludes in a dramatic showdown between Peter and Lord Ombré, with Peter emerging victorious. Finally, a short chapter appears at the end resolving the situation on Mollusk Island, where Peter's friends have been taken captive by pirates. The book ends with only a partial resolution of the larger conflict leaving open the possibility that the story will continue in a future book.



## Quotes

"Holding the sweet-smelling mango in his left hand, Peter raised his right hand over his head and, pointing his index finger skyward, sprang up and rose swiftly from the earth. It was a dramatic takeoff, and totally unnecessary."

Chapter 1, p. 1

"Slank clambered out of the boat and hauled the dory out of the water. He looked up the beach, now pale white in the moonlight. His eyes traced the path Ombra had taken across the wet sand, and felt the chill again. There were no footprints."

Chapter 8, p. 50

"Lord Ombra glided across the floor planks of the captain's quarters, where thick wool blankets hung over the stern windows, preventing even a sliver of sunlight from penetrating. A lone lantern suspended from an overhead beam cast a dim yellow light."

Chapter 17, p. 104

"Hook was in a cold rage. He was never pleasant to be around, but now his mood was foul even for him. A dark fury consumed him. He'd been this way for days, ever since his utter humiliation at the hands of the cursed flying boy."

Chapter 25, p. 148

"As the gray drizzle of evening sky turned to the murky dark of night, Peter trudged through mud-slick streets, his feet bleeding from cuts he was too cold to feel. It would be inadequate to say he was lost, since he'd never known where he was, or where he was going."

Chapter 33, p. 183

"'I shouldn't have to tell you,' continued Nerezza, 'what even a boy can do if he has hold of the starstuff.'"

Chapter 41, p. 229

"Forgetting her weariness, she leaped up from the rooftop and streaked low across London as fast as she had ever flown. She understood that Peter had opened the locket, or somebody else had. Whichever it was, Peter was in serious trouble."

Chapter 49, p. 272

"A cab rumbled out of the darkness into the glow of the streetlamp. It stopped across from the Aster house. The cab's door opened, and a man stepped out. Peter gasped. It was Slank."

Chapter 57, p. 309

"Peter turned back to the house and resumed going window to window. His search was all the more urgent now. The dark-cloaked man had not emerged from the house. He was still inside, no doubt looking for Molly. Peter had to find her first."

Chapter 65, p. 334



"Nerezza sat at the writing table in his dim cabin aboard Le Fantome, his brain still echoing with the scream that, a minute earlier, had risen through his ship. It was a woman's scream, piercing and short, as if something had suddenly cut it off. It came from below, from the locked hold where Louise Aster was being kept prisoner."  
Chapter 73, p. 385

"Ombra remained where he was, facing the suits of armor. In his dissection of the fragment of soul he had managed to extract from McGuinn, Ombra had concentrated on learning, in what little time he had, the location of the starstuff, and the Return. But he'd sensed that McGuinn was holding back something else as well - another deep secret, something about the White Tower."  
Chapter 81, p. 420

"The last thing Peter felt was the wonderful warmth flowing into the hole in his shoulder, taking his pain away. The last thing he saw was the green column of light plunging down toward the light pouring from the open trunk, like a giant cobra striking. Peter saw that, and then he saw nothing."  
Chapter 94, p. 530





## Topics for Discussion

Discuss the rivalry between Peter and George. How does it affect their adventure?

How does Peter change over the course of the story?

What role does the secondary story of the pirates and the Lost Boys play in the larger adventure?

Compare the characters of Tinkerbelle and Molly. How are they different and alike?

Several characters in the story are presented with difficult choices, such as Lord Aster's decision to return the starstuff rather than turn it over to save his wife's life. Does Aster make the right decision? Can there be a right or wrong decision in these circumstances?

What role does revenge play in motivating Slank, Captain Hook and Lord Ombra?

Peter ultimately decides to return to Mollusk Island rather than stay with Molly in London. Why does he make this choice, do you think?