

TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

***PETER PAN GOES WRONG***

By Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer, Henry Shields



 Image description: A poster with the title *Peter Pan Goes Wrong*. An actor dressed as Tinkerbelle, who is hung by a rope, is seen cutting another rope and a Peter Pan hat flying off.

2022.23 season

Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage

September 8–October 16, 2022

The show is generously sponsored by:



**Contents**

[Welcome 1](#_Toc517183919)

[About the Arts Club Theatre Company 1](#_Toc517183920)

[Learning Objectives 2](#_Toc517183921)

[Connections to BC Curriculum 2](#_Toc517183922)

[Synopsis 3](#_Toc517183923)

[About the Playwrights](#_Toc517183924) 4-5

[About Mischeif Theatre](#_Toc517183925) 5

Character List .7-8

[Discussion Questions](#_Toc517183926) 9

[Activities](#_Toc517183927) 10-13

Resources………………….………………………………………………………………………………………………………..13-14

[Sources](#_Toc517183930) 14

**Welcome**

This guide was created for teachers and students. It contains an overview of the play's story as well as informative resources and activities for teachers and students. The guide aims to provide background knowledge and critical perspectives on the play that will yield fruitful discussion and foster an understanding and appreciation of theatre arts.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for the guide, please contact our Education & Community Engagement Manager, Hila Graf **hgraf@artsclub.com**.

This study guide was written by Amy Collisson and Braden Griffiths.

**About The Arts Club Theatre Company**

The Arts Club of Vancouver was founded in 1958 as a private club for artists, musicians, and actors. It became the Arts Club Theatre in 1964 when the company opened its first stage in a converted gospel hall at Seymour and Davie Streets. Now in its 59th season of producing professional live theatre in Vancouver, the Arts Club Theatre Company is a non-profit charitable organization that operates three theatres: the Granville Island Stage, the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage, and the Newmont Stage at the BMO Theatre Centre. Its popular productions range from musicals and contemporary comedies to new works and classics.

Learn more about the Arts Club Theatre Company at artsclub.com

**About The Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage**

The legendary Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage is a newly renovated art deco theatre that originally opened in 1931 as a cinema and Vaudeville House. Now beautifully updated, this 620-seat theatre has been home to musicals such as My Fair Lady, Swing, and Sweeney Todd, revitalized classics such as Hamlet, and comedies ranging from Easy Money to Art. The restoration of the venue received a 1999 City of Vancouver Heritage Award.

**Learning Objectives**

After viewing Peter Pan Goes Wrong and working through the following activities, students will:

* Engage with, and consider critically, adaptations of classic works.
* Experiment with the technical elements of a theatre space and integrate those elements within creative work.
* Improvise and take creative risks.

**BC Curriculum Connections**

**Grade 9**

* The roles of performers and audiences in a variety of contexts.
* Develop and refine ideas and technical skills to improve the quality of performance pieces.

**Grade 10–12**

* Reflect on dramatic works and make connections with personal experiences.
* The role of the performer, audience, and venue.
* Strategies and techniques to support creative processes.
* Describe, analyze, and evaluate ways in which props, technologies, and environments are used in drama, using discipline-specific language.
* Health and safety protocols and procedures.

**English**

* Recognize and appreciate how different forms, formats, structures, and features of texts enhance and shape meaning and impact
* Think critically, creatively, and reflectively to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts
* Express and support an opinion with evidence
* Transform ideas and information to create original texts.

**Synopsis**

Though not necessary to enjoy the comedy and chaos of *Peter Pan Goes Wrong*, a greater engagement to the adaptation might be made with an understanding of the original play that the actors of The Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society are attempting to perform…

J.M. Barrie’s play, *Peter Pan, or, The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up*, begins in the nursery of the Darling household in [London](https://www.britannica.com/place/London). Wendy, John, and Michael are going to bed, under the watchful eye of their “nursemaid”, Nana… who also happens to be a Newfounland breed dog. After their parents, George and Mary, leave for an evening out, the children are surprised by the arrival of Peter Pan and the [fairy](https://www.britannica.com/art/fairy) [Tinker Bell](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Tinker-Bell). Peter has come to retrieve his shadow, which he had previously lost there. Peter reveals that he lives in Neverland as captain of the Lost Boys (all of whom happen to be children that fell out of their baby carriages when their nurses were looking the other way).

Invited by Peter to come to Neverland to tell stories to the Lost Boys, Wendy and her brothers fly with Peter to an island populated by (in addition to the Lost Boys), villainous pirates led by Peter’s sworn enemy, Captain Hook; a crocodile that had been fed Hook’s arm by Peter Pan and wishes to eat the rest of him (but has also swallowed a clock, the ticking of which can be heard when the beast is near); and Tiger Lily, a young Indigenous lady, who is in competition with Wendy and the jealous Tinker Bell for Peter’s affection.

Magical adventures and pirate attacks take place. And, at length, the Darling children decide to return home, taking the Lost Boys with them… unfortunately, they are captured by the pirates. The boys are being made to walk the plank and Wendy is tied to the mast, but Peter Pan rescues them, and the boys kill all the pirates.

At last, the children return to London, leaving Peter Pan to his perpetual boyhood.

BUT…!

In *Peter Pan Goes Wrong*, The Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society make a valiant, albeit doomed, effort to stage the J.M. Barrie classic as their annual Christmas production. Hoping to outshine some of their past theatrical holiday offerings (thanks, in large part, to an increased budget), the directors and performers try their best to honour this classic English text. Unfortunately, interpersonal disputes, underwhelming artistic ability levels, and technical malfunctions, perpetually manage to derail the proceedings. Actors crash through sets, while simultaneously forgetting every line that was rehearsed (if those lines were ever memorized in the first place); performers try in vain to portray a huge cast of characters, with very little time to ensure that costumes can properly be changed; sets tumble, Tinkerbell causes an electrical blackout, and a Shadow/Stagehand narrowly avoids pyrotechnic calamity. Despite it all, bad luck, bad timing, and bad acting, the artists persevere to the last, after all… the show must go on.

**About the Playwrights**

**J.M. Barrie:**

Sir James Matthew Barrie (J.M. Barrie) was born on May 9, 1860. Born and educated in Scotland, Barrie moved to London as an adult and wrote a number of successful novels and plays. Barrie was the ninth of ten children, born to a modest family. The children were all well educated, and their parent’s hoped for them to have professional careers. James was known for his storytelling abilities from a very young age. At the age of six, his older brother David (just shy of his 14th birthday) was killed in an ice-skating accident, devastating the family. Young James would try to comfort his mother, even wearing his brother’s clothes. According to Barrie’s biographical account of his mother (Margaret Ogilvy, 1896), his mother found comfort in the idea that David would remain young forever, instead of growing up and leaving home. Barrie found success and fame through a series of novels that were released in the late nineteenth century, and then turned his attention to theatre. *Peter Pan*, or *The Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up* had its first stage performance on December 27, 1904. The play contrasts the societal constraints of late Victorian/Edwardian middle class domestic reality, with Neverland, a world where morality is ambivalent. The contemporary playwright, George Bernard Shaw, described the play as ‘ostensibly a holiday entertainment for children, but really a play for grown-up people’, which suggested a tendency of Barrie’s work to integrate his beliefs towards societal concerns of the day into his work. In 1911, the play was adapted into the novel *Peter and Wendy*. In 1929, the copyright on all Peter Pan works was signed over to the Great Ormond Street Hospital, the leading children’s hospital in London. Barrie died of pneumonia on June 19, 1937 at the age of 77.

**Henry Lewis:**

Henry Lewis Henry is an Olivier Award-winning writer, actor and producer and is the artistic director of Mischief Theatre. Henry’s work has been produced in over 40 countries worldwide. A co-founder of Mischief Theatre, Henry has been nominated for multiple Olivier Awards and What's On Stage Awards - two prestigious Award bodies in the UK. In addition to countless other projects, he helped to write and create the *"... Goes Wrong*" series of plays, which have been performed on stages around the world. Outside of Mischief Theatre, Henry produced and performed in the critically acclaimed West End revival of Philip Ridley’s *Mercury Fur* and produced the UK premiere of Tracy Letts’ *Superior Donuts*.

**Jonathan Sayer:**

Jonathan is an Olivier award-winning writer and a director of all Mischief Theatres companies working as a writer, actor and producer. He is a graduate of LAMDA (The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art). Another co-founder of Mischief Theatre, Henry has been nominated for multiple Olivier Awards and What's On Stage Awards - two prestigious Award bodies in the UK. In addition to countless other projects, he (also) helped to write and create the *"... Goes Wrong*" series of plays, which have been performed on stages around the world. Jonathan teaches improvisation and has taught at LAMDA, Mountview and Cambridge School of Visual and Performing Arts (CSVPA).

**Henry Shields:**

Henry is an Olivier award-winning writer and has been a member of Mischief Theatre since 2009. The final co-founder of Mischief Theatre, Henry has been nominated for multiple Olivier Awards and What's On Stage Awards - two prestigious Award bodies in the UK. In addition to countless other projects, he (too) helped to write and create the "*... Goes Wrong*" series of plays, which have been performed on stages around the world. He initially studied nursing at university but dropped out after a year and auditioned for drama school, gaining a place at LAMDA (The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art). During his time there, he met the collaborators with whom he would go on to form Mischief Theatre company.

**About Mischief Theatre**

Mischief Theatre is a British theatre company specializing in comedy. The company was founded in 2008 by a group of students from The London Academy of Music & Dramatic Art in West London. Since its inception the company has performed scripted and improvised comedy in the West End, across the UK, and in Europe and Asia. The company is led by Artistic Director Henry Lewis and Company Director Jonathan Sayer.

Mischief Theatre performed their first show *Let's See What Happens* on Tuesday 15 July 2008 at The Questors Studio Theatre in Ealing. *Let's See What Happens* ran at The Questors Theatre for a week before it moved to The Edinburgh Festival the following month. Since then, Mischief Theatre has produced three more of its own improvised shows: *Lights! Camera! Improvise!*, *Late Night Impro Fight,* *Improvaganza* and scripted shows including: *The Murder Before Christmas*, *Magic Goes Wrong* and *The Buffoons*. The Mischief Theatre Company was formerly known as The Scat Pack.

OTHER WORKS BY MISCHIEF THEATRE:

* The Play That Goes Wrong
* Magic Goes Wrong
* REPLAY: Mischief Movie Night
* The Goes Wrong Show
* 12
* Groan Ups
* The Comedy About a Bank Robbery
* A Christmas Carol Goes Wrong
* Mischief Makers Podcast

**Character List**

Peter Pan Goes Wrong is a play-within-a-play, so there are two sets of characters: the characters of the ‘Actors of the Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society’, and the characters of Peter Pan.

**ACTORS OF THE CORNLEY POLYTECHNIC DRAMA SOCIETY**

CHRIS BEAN (playing GEORGE DARLING and CAPTAIN HOOK in the play) The uptight director of the Society who has cast himself in the show’s most coveted role. Rigid, high-status clown. Deeply committed to his art and everything going smoothly – his pain is evident when something goes wrong and every time someone laughs the pain becomes worse. Has utter disdain for the audience and takes his frustration out on them and the rest of the cast.

ROBERT GROVE (playing NANA and STARKEY in the play) Robert likes to think he is a leading man, although he may not entirely resemble one. He truly believes that he can act his way out of every predicament. Committed to the play 100%. This is not a parody of bad acting, it's just that Robert is unaware of those around him. Single-minded and bombastic. Auguste clown.

DENNIS TYDE (playing JOHN DARLING and MR SMEE in the play) Wretched, low status and terrified of being in a play. The sole reason he joined the Society was to make friends, but this has back-fired somewhat. Not a good actor at all but imbues everything with a painful truth. Naive clown.

TREVOR WATSON (the STAGE MANAGER of the play) The Society's stage manager. Doesn't like actors, certainly doesn't want to be one.

JONATHAN HARRIS (playing PETER PAN in the play) Handsome ‘hero’ of the play. Jonathan joined the Society for a laugh.

MAX BENNETT (playing MICHAEL DARLING and THE CROCODILE in the play) Only cast because his uncle put up the money. Devoid of any theatrical talent but longs for the spotlight. Earnest, sincere and sweet, audience connection is vital for this role. Naïve honest clown.

ANNIE TWILLOIL (playing MARY DARLING, LISA, TIGER LILY, and TINKER BELL in the play) After an unexpected taste of the spotlight, Annie is deeply committed to each of her many roles but finds herself biting off more than she can chew.

SANDRA WILKINSON (playing WENDY DARLING in the play) Ambitious, flirtatious with a huge ego. Believing herself the quintessential leading lady, she tries to steal the scene at every turn that leads her to constantly overact.

LUCY GROVE (playing TOOTLES in the play) Robert’s niece in the company. Timid, naïve and vulnerable clown. She suffers from stage fright and is terrified by the whole experience of performing, however finds her voice and confidence at the end.

FRANCIS BEAUMONT (NARRATOR and CECCO in the play) A robust professional who, despite his best efforts, fruitlessly tries to keep the production together.

**CHARACTERS OF PETER PAN**

NARRATOR

WENDY DARLING, a girl from London

JOHN DARLING, her younger brother

MICHAEL DARLING, her youngest brother

MARY DARLING, their mother

GEORGE DARLING, their father

NANA THE DOG, the Darling’s nursemaid (and dog)

LISA, the Darling’s housekeeper

PETER PAN, the boy who would not grow up

TINKER BELL, his fairy

CAPTAIN HOOK, the Captain of the Jolly Roger

MR SMEE, his boatswain

STARKEY, his first mate

CECCO, another of his crew

MERMAIDS

THE CROCODILE

TIGER LILY, a friend of Peter Pan

**Discussion Questions**

**PRE-SHOW**

J.M. Barrie wrote the play *Peter Pan*, or *The Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up* in 1904. There are animated adaptations, spin-off novel series, and television shows... Tinkerbell is on the side of lunchboxes around the world, but…

1.) Are you familiar with the original story of *Peter Pan*?

2.) What are the core plot points and themes of *Peter Pan*?

**POST SHOW**

Like so many fiction and non-fiction works from that era, there are aspects of J.M Barrie’s play (and eventual book) that would not be considered inclusive today...

3.) What similarities or differences did you notice in the adaptation, *Peter Pan Goes Wrong*?

4.) If J.M. Barrie wrote *Peter Pan* today, what sort of make-believe characters and adventures would the story contain?

Peter Pan Goes Wrong is a play that requires huge technical precision: Lights flash and fall; actors crash through (and get stuck inside) the set; voices on loud speakers interrupt the action. Think about a moment where a technical element was used, or a stunt performed…

5.) How do you think the artists created that moment?

And, lastly, one could argue that this play's core goal was to make you laugh...

6.) Did you find this play funny?

7.) What moment(s) made you laugh?

**Activities**

**Warm Up Activity**

**Pirate Ship**

Number of players: 5+

1. The instructor will be the captain OR select one player to be the captain. The captain stands at the front of the designated play space.

2. All other players line up single file, facing the captain.

3. Introduce the various commands and actions to be used in the game (see below).

4. When ready for play to commence, the captain calls out a command. The players do the action associated with the command.

5. Play continues with the captain calling and the ‘crew’ responding. The faster the actions are called and performed, the trickier (and funnier) the game becomes.

**Basic commands:**

* **Portside:** run to the left
* **Starboard:** run to the right
* **Stern:** run to the back
* **Scrub the deck:** crouch down and make a scrubbing motion with hands
* **Hit the deck:** lay on your stomach
* **Clear the deck:** everyone must have their feet off the floor
* **Up periscope:** lie on back with one leg raised straight in the air. Twist the raised foot as if a scanning periscope
* **Captain’s coming:** stand to attention and salute
* **Climb the rigging:** pretend to climb a rope

**Partner commands:**

* **Love boat:** players pair up and dance together
* **Abandon ship:**players must pair up, sit face to face and pretend to row a lifeboat
* **Crow’s nest:** players pair up and the lightest player rides on their partner’s back (piggyback)

**Extension:**

If you wish to add a competitive element to the game, players that perform the wrong action are eliminated and the last player standing becomes the new captain. Alternatively, those players who are eliminated could just stand out for a count of ten jumping-jacks before rejoining the game.

**Drama Activity**

**Part I**

In small groups (4 - 5), students will be given a familiar narrative from their instructor (e.g. a classic fairy tale or piece of children's literature). Students will create a 2-minute adaptation of their assigned story to perform for the class. The instructor will provide each group with a "Something Goes Wrong!" prompt to incorporate into their scene (see below). These prompts should take effect at roughly the one-minute mark of each scene (e.g., at the one-minute mark, one of the characters suddenly faints). For beginner levels, the prompt can be given before they present and can be integrated as students devise and rehearse. More advanced levels, they can be given the prompt at the one-minute mark during their performance, meaning they must improvise based upon the new information provided by the prompt.

*"Something Goes Wrong!" Prompt Suggestions:*

* A character from a different story has arrived.
* Two characters have fallen madly in love.
* There is a mysterious ticking sound.
* A character has suddenly dropped dead.
* A natural disaster occurs (Earthquake, volcano eruption, hurricane winds, etc.).
* One of the characters is living with narcolepsy (and falls asleep).
* The characters suddenly realize the audience is full of bears and they must create a plan to escape (wolves, witches, etc… whatever the core nemesis of the main characters happens to be).
* The writer of the story steps in to comment on the action.
* Time jump to fifty years in the character’s future.

**Part II**

This part of the activity can either be added to Part I, or it can be done as a separate activity. If students are starting here, refer to Part I and provide a "Something Goes Wrong... Technically!" prompt instead of the Part I prompts. If students did Part I, use the same scenes that were rehearsed in Part I. Students should now begin to integrate technical elements into their pieces.

Depending on the facilities and technologies available, students should consider integrating sound cues, light cues, projection cues, a set transition, etc. It is suggested that two groups work together to take turns providing technical assistance for the performances. Integration of the prompts from Part I is optional, i.e., the scenes can revert to their original (pre-prompt) state if that is preferable. Whichever group is running tech should be given a "Something Goes Wrong... Technically!" prompt prior to the performance (or during the devising process for Beginner Levels). Some of these prompts can also be given to performers but they should be kept secret.

A technical prompt will be given to each group before they create their scene.

*“Something Goes Wrong... Technically!" Prompt Suggestions:*

* A sound cue is played at the wrong time.
* An incorrect, and totally wild, sound cue is played instead of the planned cue.
* An incorrect lighting cue (if you have a follow spot, perfect!)
* An unexpected blackout.
* A stagehand enters and places an incorrect set piece.
* A stagehand gets stuck on / in a set-piece.
* Someone enters wearing the wrong costume.
* Someone enters wearing their costume backwards.

**English Activity**

Depending on the grade level, preference of the instructor, and content of the course, students will write a review/reflect on the play based on one of the following prompts:

1. Compose a piece of critical writing

Your review should include the following:

* A short synopsis of the play - the basic details of the plot. (i.e., inciting incident, major conflict, climax, etc.)
* A reflection of the actors/characters you enjoyed the most. Why did you like their performance?
* A reflection on the technical elements of the production. Describe: sets, costumes, lights, special effects (e.g., fog). How were they effective? Are there any elements you would use differently?
* To wrap up, summarize your ideas, and conclude with a critical review of the play itself. What were the perceived goals of this script/production? Did the production achieve those goals?
1. Compose a “scathing” review

Do all the steps above, but...

* Imagine you are the Arts and Culture Critic for the local Cornley Newspaper, "THE DAILY KERNAL". You are very snooty. –
* You were hoping this show might have fewer problems than the production last Christmas... it did not. –
* Write a scathing review on how it "failed to live up to your expectations."
1. Compose J.M. Barrie’s review

Imagine you are J.M. Barrie, and you have just attended the same performance of *Peter Pan Goes Wrong*

* Write a reflection on how you enjoyed, or didn't enjoy, this adaptation.
* Did he absolutely LOVE the production? Or did he DESPISE it, leaving the theatre disappointed? Exaggerate his point-of-view in your writing.

**Resources**

**RE: J.M. Barrie**

*Peter Pan*, or, *The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up* | PDF Script: <https://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks03/0300081h.html>

*Peter and Wendy* by: J.M. Barrie Novel | Full text and Illustrations: <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/26654>

Gender and Performance in Peter Pan | A video essay (likely too dry for students, but informative for teachers) re: gender roles in J.M. Barrie's original novel: <https://youtu.be/HwhOllKqgg8>

**RE: Mischief Theatre**

The Play That Goes Wrong | Trailer: <https://youtu.be/kPVEPoMKgR8>

The Play That Goes Wrong | First 10 Minutes of the Show: <https://youtu.be/USger0TP238>

Getting to know the Playwrights | A Short Interview with Mischief: <https://youtu.be/Q7xgchj9SgE>

**Plays and Media Similar to *Peter Pan Goes Wrong***

The Play That Goes Wrong, Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer and Henry Shields

Noises Off, by: Michael Frayn

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged), By: Adam Long, Daniel Singer and Jess Winfield

Fawlty Towers | Available to stream on Prime Video (as of May 2022)

**Other Resources**

'Dentity Crisis (Jane) | A monologue by Christopher Durang: <https://www.dailyactor.com/monologues/dentity-crisis-jane/>

About the play | Mischief Theatre's Own Description of Peter Pan Goes Wrong: [https://www.mischiefcomedy.com/our-work/peter-pan-goes-wrong/about BroadwayWorld.com](https://www.mischiefcomedy.com/our-work/peter-pan-goes-wrong/about%20BroadwayWorld.com)

Review of Citadel Theatre's Original Production: <https://www.broadwayworld.com/edmonton/article/BWW-Review-PETER-PAN-GOES-WRONG-is-a-Side-Splitting-Comedy-Adventure-20220305>

**Sources**

Playwright Bio’s:

<https://mischiefcomedy.com/about-us/members/henry-lewis>

<https://www.mischiefcomedy.com/about-us/members/jonathan-sayer>

<https://www.mischiefcomedy.com/about-us/members/henry-shields>

Peter Pan Plot:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Peter-Pan-play-by-Barrie>

Mischief Theatre:

<https://mischiefcomedy.com>

J.M. Barrie Bio & Character List:

<https://citadeltheatre.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Peter-Pan-Goes-Wrong.pdf>