

# FINDING NEVERLAND



Discussion guide developed by Heartland Truly Moving Pictures to accompany *Finding Neverland*, a Truly Moving Picture Award-winning film. A Truly Moving Picture Award winner is a film that unlocks the vast potential of the human spirit and enables us to view stories that display courage, integrity and hope, taking entertainment to a higher level.

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## One Film Can

Heartland Truly Moving Pictures, a non-profit organization, recognizes and honors films and filmmakers whose work explores the human journey by expressing hope and respect for the positive values of life. We believe that one film can move us to laughter, to tears, or to make a difference. *Finding Neverland* is a movie that demonstrates that *One Film Can*.

## Synopsis

Award winners Johnny Depp, Kate Winslet, Dustin Hoffman and Julie Christie star in this magical tale about one of the world's greatest storytellers and the people who inspired his masterwork, Peter Pan! Well-known playwrite James M. Barrie (Depp) finds his career at a crossroads when his latest pay flops and doubters question his future. Then by chance he met a widow (Winslet) and her four adventurous boys. Together they form a friendship that ignites the imagination needed to produce Barrie's greatest work! An enchanting big-screen treat with an acclaimed cast of stars, *Finding Neverland* has been hailed as one of the year's best motion pictures.

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## To die will be an awfully big adventure. Peter Pan

James Matthew (J.M.) Barrie's life was impacted by death. The effects of these tragedies on Barrie seem to permeate his tale, *Peter Pan*, also known as *The Boy Who Would Never Grow Up*.

Barrie, a Scottish author and playwright in the late 1800's and early 1900's was born into a large family with many siblings, two of whom died before his birth and another brother who died at age 13. This brother, David, was the next closest in age to Barrie and his death took a tremendous toll on both Barrie's mother and Barrie himself.

Later when Barrie met the Llewelyn-Davies boys by whom *Peter Pan* was inspired; he saw them become orphans and unofficially adopted them. In those years Barrie lived as their caretaker he saw two of the five boys die; one by war and the other a suspected suicide. Later, after Barrie's death, Peter, after whom Peter Pan the character is supposedly named, killed himself.

All of these events, with the exception of Peter's suicide long after Barrie's death, likely impacted Barrie and his writing heavily.

## Discussion Questions

- Although *Finding Neverland* takes liberties with history and J.M. Barrie's life, for the most part it is a fair depiction of the events and people that inspired his play, *Peter Pan*. After watching the movie do you have a different appreciation of the story *Peter Pan*? Why?
- As portrayed in the movie, how does Barrie deal with death?
- How does the death of their father affect the Llewelyn-Davies boys? How is it different for each child and how do they overcome the grief?
- Peter Pan was based on Peter Llewelyn-Davies, but do you believe that Barrie saw himself as Peter Pan, as Peter Llewelyn-Davies states at the end of the movie? Why?

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**Time is chasing after all of us, isn't that right?** Mrs. Snow to J.M. Barrie in *Finding Neverland*

When theatre patron Mrs. Snow encounters Barrie in *Finding Neverland* after the debut of *Peter Pan* she expresses how taken she is with the play and how her late husband would have loved the pirates and the adventure saying, "He was really just a boy himself, you know."

*Peter Pan* evokes multiple thoughts and emotions. It is a story full of themes ripe for exploration. Use your knowledge of the story of *Peter Pan* to discuss the following questions.

## Discussion Questions

- Time and its finiteness are themes in *Finding Neverland*. How does time play a central role in both this story and in the play *Peter Pan*?
- Although Captain Hook and the crocodile are not central to the story in *Finding Neverland*, if you are familiar with the story of *Peter Pan* think about and discuss the symbolism these characters have.
- As Sylvia Llewelyn-Davies time begins to run out she has a conversation with Barrie about Neverland and asks him what it is. What do you think of his explanation of Neverland? Does this conversation make you think about the Neverland represented in *Peter Pan* any differently?
- In what ways did Barrie struggle with the finiteness and boundaries of time and how did these struggles manifest in his writing?
- Besides time, what other symbolism or themes can you find in *Peter Pan*, and how do you feel those symbols and themes were influenced by Barrie's life?

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**Do you believe in fairies? Say quick that you believe. If you believe, clap your hands!**

Peter Pan

Barrie demonstrates a boundless imagination in the movie and creates imaginative worlds that are very healing places for the Llewelyn-Davies boys as well as for others, young and old. Think about the power of imagination demonstrated in the movie as you discuss the following questions.

## Discussion Questions

- How do the limitations of the real world boundaries Barrie and the Llewelyn-Davies family experience counteract the limitless imagination Barrie embraces in the film? Give some examples.
- What about the Llewelyn-Davies boys inspired Barrie? Likewise, how did Barrie inspire the Llewelyn-Davies boys and impact their outlook on life?
- Have you ever been inspired by an individual in a similar way? How?
- What did you think about the fantasies interspersed throughout the film? Did your imagination ever work this way as a child? If so, at what point did your powerful imagination become inactive? Was there a particular event that caused it to end?
- In the beginning of the film when Barrie meets Peter he is struck by Peter's reluctance to indulge in imagination. How do you believe this initial encounter helped shape their relationship?
- *Finding Neverland* highlighted the power of imagination. What are some ways you can inspire imagination in your family or with youth with which you might work.

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## Truly Moving Moments

*Finding Neverland* has been honored as a Heartland Truly Moving Picture Award-winning film. This award was created to honor films released theatrically that align with Heartland's mission to recognize and honor films and filmmakers whose work explores the human journey by artistically expressing hope and respect for the positive values of life.

These award-winning movies are made up of moving and inspiring moments – those moments that cause you to think, see something in your life differently, be inspired to do something. It's what makes the movie and its message remain with you well after you've left the theatre.

Think about *Finding Neverland*. What were the moments that stood out to you? How did they make you feel? How will they cause you to think about things differently in the future? Share those Truly Moving moments with others at [www.TrulyMovingPictures.org](http://www.TrulyMovingPictures.org). Simply create a membership or login if you already have one and then search the movie list for *Finding Neverland*. You can leave your review of the movie or thoughts about your Truly Moving Picture in the "Thoughts and Reviews" section.



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