

Neverlanders

AUTHOR

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ILLUSTRATOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Secondary



SYNOPSIS

Bee and her fellow runaways are their own found family. So when a stranger named Paco saves her life, Bee invites him to join their crew, thinking he's another lost teen. The truth is Paco's not just a lost teen, he's a Lost Boy from Neverland. And he needs Bee and the others to come back with him.

When the group is then spirited away by a foul-mouthed Tinker Bell, they discover that Neverland is not some fun-filled hideaway. It's a war zone under siege by a horde of pirates with a merciless new leader who will stop at nothing to steal the land's magic. Tink leads a fairy army that barely holds them at bay. Peter Pan is gone. And the rest of the Lost Boys have been killed. Paco is all that remains...but he hopes that this group of teens will become the new Lost Ones.

These young runaways may be Neverland's only hope—but they're about to learn that it'll take a lot more than happy thoughts to win a war.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom Taylor is a #1 New York Times bestselling and award-winning author, BAFTA-nominated screenwriter, and GLAAD Award nominee. He's written for DCeased, Suicide Squad, Spider-Man, X-Men, and more. His comics have sold over 8 million copies in the US—and over 10 million globally. He is also the co-creator, executive producer, and lead writer of the animated series *The Deep*, which is based on his graphic novels and can be seen in over 140 countries. He lives with his family in Australia, but you can visit him at tomtaylormade.com or follow him on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook @TomTaylorMade.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Jon Sommariva (also known as Red J) has been the artist for such bestselling comics as Batman, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Star Wars, and the Avengers, and he's sold well over a million copies of his comics. He lives with his family in Australia, but you can follow him @sommariva on Instagram and @JonSommariva on Twitter.

STUDY NOTES

- Complete these activities before reading the story:
 - Discuss what you know about the story of *Peter Pan*. Perhaps you've read the original book *Peter and Wendy* by J.M. Barrie, or seen one of the films? What are some of the iconic elements you remember of this story—for

instance: Peter Pan, the boy who never grows up; the Lost Boys; the fairy Tinker Bell; the land of Neverland; Captain Hook and his pirates.

- Now take a look at the front cover of *Neverlanders*, which completely reimagines some of those elements. Write down any similarities or differences you see from the story you know. Do the characters look different? Who is the focus on?
- Write a short excerpt imagining what might happen in the first chapter. What do you think this story will be about?
- Can you identify any other novels/movies that incorporate the found family trope? Explain how the trope is incorporated in your chosen texts.
- From reading the story, do you think family must be people we are related to? Or do you think we can find familial comfort from other people within our lives?
- How do the 'Lost Ones' support and look after one another in the story? Refer to specific examples.
- Justin, out of concern for his friends, betrays the Neverlanders. He is ultimately forgiven. How is he redeemed? Would you have forgiven Justin too, if he were a close friend/ family member? Have you ever had a disagreement with someone that you worked through? Why do you think Justin's friends forgave him? Could it be to do with their close bond and experiences they share?
- Do you think the friends are stronger as a family or on their own? Could Neverland have been saved without everyone working together? Make sure to explain your answer.
- The Neverlanders are referred to as the 'Lost Ones', as they all do not have proper families or homes. Do you think they are really 'lost'? How is this ironic?
- Action and adventure play a big part in *Neverlanders*. From dangerous missions to gripping drama and exciting plot twists, the action and adventure genre keeps its readers on the edge of their seats, longing for more. Identify some of your favourite action-packed flicks and stories. In dot points, write down why you liked these and what parts of the story made it exciting and fun!
 - See if you can identify any similar (or new!) moments in *Neverlanders* that elevate the action and adventure. Think about the specific narrative and literary devices used to amplify these moments.
- What do you think might happen in future books in the series?
- *Neverlanders* reimagines some of the elements of *Peter Pan*, and in particular it subverts many of those elements, with twists and reveals about the characters and settings. Which characters can you identify that are inspired by the original characters, and how have they changed?
 - Characters were revealed to have 'changed sides' from good to bad or vice versa. Do you think people are inherently good or evil or do you think they can be shades in between?
- Paco tells us that 'Pan's shadow could leave him. And when Peter fell his shadow was far away from him . . . unable to touch. Unable to speak.' Later, Felix tells us that 'When your own shadow turns against you, that's a sure sign you've made some mistakes.' (p 199; p 176) What are the connotations associated with a shadow? What do you think it may represent in terms of Pan's character?
- The adult character Robb says that 'adults can grow up too' (p 171). What do you think he means by this? Do you think adults can make mistakes as well and learn from kids? What else do you learn about Robb's past? Have a go at guessing what you think may have convinced this character to change his views.
- Does the new Tink meet your expectations? Why do you think the writers opted for a foul-mouthed General Tinker Bell? How does this change the tone of the story? Do you like this new version? Why?
- In the story, Neverland chooses Bee as its new leader. Why do you think this is the case? What qualities does Bee possess that makes Neverland choose her to be their new leader and protector?
- Neverland is a place for children, where no adults may enter. It's a place where you can stay young forever, never having to grow up. Why do you think this magical world is called Neverland? What might it be a metaphor for?
- Robb later tells us 'The tree healed my hand and my heart' (p 172). What do you think he means by the tree healing his heart? What else might that imply Neverland does and is about, beyond physically keeping children young?
- Bee's mum says 'Sometimes adults run away from home too.' (p 139) While Neverland is reserved for kids, do you

- think our characters act as mature and (sometimes) more grown-up than the adults in the story? Find specific examples where our characters have displayed these characteristics. What do you think this says about adults in general? Do you think everyone can make mistakes no matter how old they are? Can kids be as smart as adults?
- You've probably realised the tone of *Neverlanders* is darker and grittier than that of *Peter Pan*. Why do you think the writers opted for a dystopian-esque reimagining of a beloved and light-hearted classic? Do you think this decision makes the story more exciting and grounded, with its more realistic and serious themes? Or do you prefer the original?
 - What other stories have you read or seen that contrast the innocence of childhood against the experience of adulthood? Examples might include: Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights*, John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, Terry Pratchett's *Nation* or Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*.
 - Author Tom Taylor and illustrator Jon Sommariva were keen to add an element of climate change allegory to *Neverlanders*, with the main theme of the conflict being selfish adults stealing the future from the next generation by damaging Neverland's environment and upsetting the delicate balance of its climate. When comparing Neverland and Otherland, there is a stark difference in the natural elements of these two settings. Have a go at identifying some visual techniques the author and illustrator use to juxtapose the two worlds and present them as polar opposites. Some techniques you might think about include: the salience (the part in the picture you are first drawn to), the colour scheme, line, shape, space, balance, proportion, movement, any symbolism, the composition (the positioning of the elements in the scene), vector, high/low angles, etc.
 - Why do you think Otherland (the adult world) is depicted in such a dark way as opposed to the bright Neverland?
 - What do you think the writers are trying to say about the true motivations and characteristics of the adults?
 - What could the adults of Otherland do to begin being more sustainable? Provide a list of suggestions, explaining how the adults could go about enacting your ideas.
 - List examples of how the Lost Ones might look after Neverland and protect the Tree. What could happen to Neverland if the kids stopped looking after it?
 - What green space, park or wildlife area is the 'Heart' of your own local area? Write a newspaper article about the importance of this place to the community and its benefits.
 - Will it take more than 'happy thoughts' to save our environment and create a more sustainable future? Do some research into some local sustainable practices and initiatives in your area. Write a brief description on what is being done and how it is helping the environment. Could you perhaps do some similar things at school? For instance, monthly clean-up days?
 - Reflect on ways you could be more sustainable and environmentally responsible in your everyday life. For instance, you could make sure all the lights are turned off before you sleep, take shorter showers to conserve water or try walking to school if it is within walking distance. Try to incorporate the things you brainstorm into your life. You might like to do them with a friend to keep tabs on each other's progress.
 - Discuss the techniques Paco uses to convince the others to help him protect Neverland.
 - Write a persuasive speech comparing Neverland and Otherland to our world, and asking people to change and take action for a sustainable future. Use facts and research, literary techniques such as metaphor and symbolism, and persuasive techniques to make your case.
 - The Tree in Neverland is an example of a 'keystone species', an organism that is essential to a particular ecosystem. Research other keystone species from around the world, and the important role they play in their ecosystem.