CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

Five Children and It

E. Nesbit · *1902 · original English text*

The house was three miles from the station, but before the dusty hired fly had rattled along for five minutes the children began to put their heads out of the carriage window and to say, “Aren’t we nearly there?” Five Children and It is Nesbit’s complete first Psammead book, a holiday of wishes that will not stay still.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What happens when five children on a holiday are granted wishes by a sand-fairy, and how should a comic wish-book be read as a lesson in wanting, not as a mere string of tricks?

“The house was three miles from the station, but before the dusty hired fly had rattled along for five minutes the children began to put their heads out of the carriage window and to say, 'Aren't we nearly there?'”

Chapter 1, Beautiful As the Day, the opening

The hosted text is Five Children and It (1902, PG #778), complete as Nesbit’s first Psammead novel. The opening is exact, including “hired fly” and “Aren’t we nearly there?” (straight quotes in the Gutenberg file). Later Nesbit wish-books, if hosted, are other volumes, not chapters of this one. Excellent for a wide younger and middle band. Some wishes go wrong in ways that frighten; guide younger readers. Quote this typography.

KEY CHARACTERS

the five children
The impatient holiday party who put their heads out of the carriage window before they are nearly there.

the Psammead, called It
The sand-fairy who grants the wishes that will not stay still.

the Lamb
The baby of the five, who is part of more than one wish.

the grown-ups of the holiday house
The household that does not always see what the wishes have done.

AREN’T WE NEARLY THERE?

> *“The house was three miles from the station, but before the dusty hired fly had rattled along for five minutes the children began to put their heads out of the carriage window and to say, 'Aren't we nearly there?'”*
>
> Chapter 1

Grades 3–5
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

Aren’t We Nearly There?

CHAPTER 1, THE OPENING

The house was three miles from the station, but the children cannot wait. The book begins as a holiday arrival, already impatient, before any wish is granted.

- The opening is exact in both witnesses, including ‘hired fly.’
- The first chapter’s title in this file is Beautiful As the Day.
- Excellent for a wide younger and middle band.

> *“The house was three miles from the station, but before the dusty hired fly had rattled along for five minutes the children began to put their heads out of the carriage window and to say, 'Aren't we nearly there?'”*
>
> Chapter 1

02

It, in the Sand

THE FINDING OF THE PSAMMEAD

The five children find a sand-fairy who grants wishes, and the wishes will not stay as they were imagined. The comic law of the book is already that wanting is harder than asking.

- Keep the Psammead as this book’s creature, not a general fairy only.
- The wishes going wrong are the plot, not a decoration.
- Guide younger readers when a wish frightens.

03

Wishes that Will Not Stay

THE LATER CHAPTERS

Golden guineas, wings, a castle, and the rest of the holiday follow as separate wishes in one summer. The book is complete here; later Psammead books are other volumes.

- Map this novel as complete in itself.
- Do not import later sequels into this map.
- A wide younger and middle band can hear these with help.

04

A Complete 1902 Wish-Book

THE HOSTED FILE

PG #778 and the site EPUB are this complete book. Quote stretches that appear in both.

- Complete Five Children and It.
- The first of the Psammead books, complete as itself.
- For a wide younger and middle band.

A Holiday of Wishes | Wanting, and Getting | Five Children | A Sand-Fairy | A House from the Station

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 3–5

1. The hosted text is Five Children and It (1902, Project Gutenberg #778), complete as Nesbit’s first Psammead novel. The opening is exact: “The house was three miles from the station, but before the dusty hired fly had rattled along for five minutes the children began to put their heads out of the carriage window and to say, 'Aren't we nearly there?'” (straight quotes in the Gutenberg file).
2. Later Nesbit wish-books, if hosted, are other volumes, not chapters of this one. Excellent for a wide younger and middle band. Some wishes go wrong in ways that frighten; guide younger readers.
3. Quote stretches that appear in both the Gutenberg text and the site EPUB.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #778, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/five-children-and-it/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.