March 13, 2005  |  LONDON (AP) -- Peter Pan and the wily Captain Hook are set for a rematch. Children's author Geraldine McCaughrean has been chosen to write the official sequel to J.M. Barrie's "Peter Pan,' the London hospital that holds the copyright to the classic work said Sunday.

Barrie willed the "Peter Pan" copyright and royalties to the Great Ormond Street Hospital when he died in 1937, and the institution has long wanted to commission a follow-up.

It has stipulated that the new work, titled "Captain Pan" must feature the original characters: the boy who never grew up, along with his pals Wendy, fairy Tinkerbell and the Lost Boys -- as well as the fearsome pirate Hook.

"It is an astonishing, daunting privilege to be let loose in Neverland, armed with nothing but a pen, and knowing I'm walking in Barrie's revered footsteps," said McCaughrean, 53, three times winner of Britain's prestigious Whitbread Children's Book of the Year.

"But completing this book is going to be the writing adventure of a lifetime -- and such amazing fun! I am delighted beyond words."

McCaughrean has experience of reworking classic tales: she won her third Whitbread award in January for "Not The End of the World," a retelling of the story of Noah's ark.

She was chosen from a number of authors who submitted sample chapters and synopses of the potential book.

"I think J.M. Barrie would have liked her style -- if I'm wrong, he'll be back to haunt us," said David Barrie, a great-great-nephew of J.M. Barrie who was on the judging panel.

The judges said McCaughrean's entry "captured the elusive spirit of the original whilst offering a fresh and astounding creative response and will appeal to both children and adults."

Jane Collins, chief executive of Great Ormond Street Hospital and a panel judge, said the hospital has always wanted to do a sequel to "Peter Pan" because of the pleasure he has given children and adults for more than 100 years and to build on Barrie's generosity.
"Peter Pan may never grow up, but the income he brings us has helped many other children grow up and get better over the years," she said. "With half our beds in a building dating back to the 1930s, any little help from the sequel will be very welcome."

McCaughrean and the hospital will split the royalties from the new book. The copyright expires in 2007.


Barrie turned the story into a children's book in 1911, and its combination of mystery and magic made it a children's favorite.

Others have attempted sequels -- and even prequels -- but McCaughrean's will be the first officially sanctioned follow-up.

Hollywood marked the play's centenary last year with two movies, a live action "Peter Pan" and "Finding Neverland," a biopic starring Johnny Depp that delves into Barrie's relationship with the five young Llewelyn Davis boys who inspired "Peter Pan."

Scottish-born Barrie, who never grew beyond five feet (1.5 meters) in height, married actress Mary Ansell, but the relationship ended in divorce and produced no children.

Barrie later adopted the Llewelyn Davis boys when their parents died of cancer.

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