

## The Immortal Children

In 1990, one of Stephen King's scariest creations would make its way from the book to horrify children yet again but on the big screen. Everyone knows him. He wears white make-up. He has long red hair and his jaw reveals razor sharp teeth. He is IT. Tommy Lee Wallace would direct the mini-series whose creative collaboration with Tim Curry brought Pennywise the clown to life, this time scarier than words on a page. With its nostalgic impression, the film mirrors the kids' (known as the losers' club) encounter with Pennywise in the '60s up to their return in 1990. IT is often credited as a simple televised horror adaptation, but under his disguise, I want to discuss how Pennywise immortalises childhood. Although different in genre but similar in message, Disney filled children's hearts with awe following the release of Peter Pan. He danced, he flew, he fought... Pan's belief was that adults lose their magic: "The moment you doubt whether you can fly, you cease forever to be able to do it". Glorifying childhood, Peter promised kids that with him, they would never have to grow up in Neverland: A world of preserved childhood, free from adult responsibilities. But with this came a sense of entrapment. As the 'darling children' are arrested in development, they draw to the necessity of adulthood and the desire to experience life: Feelings foreign to Peter and Neverland. Tommy Lee Wallace knew that to direct Pennywise, he couldn't just be a monster, he had to be traumatic. By manifesting what children found scary, IT had the advantage of fear, the most powerful emotion over anybody, small or big. Fear is used everyday by politicians because it leads to anger which then leads to revolt. As the children's coming-of-age is disturbed by Pennywise, they become anxious and argumentative of each other

until they eventually drift apart as adults and forget everything that happened. Anger can often make you feel unrecognisable to yourself, and that leads me onto my second point: Pennywise's erasure of adulthood.

When the Losers' Club, now adults, receive a phone call which links them all back together, they immediately revert to their pre-adolescent selves. Bill stutters, Eddie gets an asthma attack and even Ben holds his stomach with insecurity of weight. Similar to Pan's prevention of ageing, Pennywise immediately erases adult identity, both physically but mentally returning them back to the scared children they used to be in the '60s. In addition to this, IT is able to cleverly weaponise the Losers' Club adulthood against themselves. In one scene, Pennywise tells the adults, "You'll never see me. You'll see only what your little mind can allow". Reminding you that even thirty years later, the Losers' truly are on a journey as children. They will only ever see Pennywise for the imprisonment of childhood that he embodies. Pennywise is also seen mirroring the losers' maturity, using crude humour to weaponise adulthood. In one scene, Pennywise taunts Richie's arousal by exposing his perversion, "A little young for you isn't she, Eddie?" the clown hysterically asks as Richie's eyes are glued to a woman's skirt. IT doesn't just mock you, he bullies you like a child.

There's lots you can talk about, especially being a two-part-mini-series, but I hope that by discussing Wallace's use of emotional trauma, erasure of maturity and similarity to Peter Pan, you further understand Pennywise's ability to immortalise childhood.