

Study Materials and Activities for the 2015 ASF Production of



Alice in Wonderland

adapted from Lewis Carroll
by Jean Erickson

Director
Nancy Rominger

Set Design
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Costume Design
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Lighting Design
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Study materials written by
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Characters

- Alice, a young girl
 - Edith, her sister
 - The White Rabbit
 - The Caterpillar
 - The Duchess
 - The Duchess's Cook
 - A Cheshire Cat
 - A Mad Hatter
 - A March Hare
 - A Dormouse
- } taking tea
- Playing Cards: Two, Five, and Seven of Spades
 - The Queen of Hearts
 - The King of Hearts
 - The Knave [Jack] of Hearts

Setting: The girls' world briefly and then Wonderland.
 In the original, the date is May 4, Alice Liddell's birthday.

The Alice cast costumed for their touring production of As You Like It, clockwise from left: Patrick Burr (who will play the White Rabbit in Alice), Betsy Helmer (Edith, Cook, Queen of Hearts), S. Lewis Feemster (Cheshire Cat, Five, and Caterpillar), Cory Lawson (March Hare and King), Jessica G. Smith (Alice), Mike Petrie, Jr. (Dormouse, Knave), Jonathan Weber (Hatter, Seven), and Metushaleme Dary (Duchess, Two).

Welcome to *Alice in Wonderland*

Since time immemorial, parents and grandparents, caretakers and friends have told children stories to entertain and delight them or to soothe them to sleep. *Alice in Wonderland* is one such story, an improvisation created during a boating excursion "all in the golden afternoon"—at the end of which one of the children, Alice Liddell, asked that the story be written down. So many improvised tales live only in the moment, but because of Alice's request this one has delighted children—and adults—for 150 years.

Charles Dodgson may have been a quiet mathematics professor at Oxford University, but growing up as the eldest of 12 had sharpened his sense of fun and gregarious and inventive wit that shone with children. *Alice in Wonderland* takes the child's world—her schedule, lessons, and rules—and turns it topsy-turvy with word games, imaginative challenges, and an encouraging route to selfhood. Every child (and adult) becomes 7-year-old Alice and has adventures when entering Lewis Carroll's Wonderland.



One of John Tenniel's illustrations for the first edition of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865)

The Cast of *Alice*

A year as an ASF intern brings with it a lot of experience—not only a knowledge of the South touring a production of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* to high schools but also performing a children's/youth classic, *Alice in Wonderland*, and joining the ASF repertory season acting company for *King Lear*, plus understudying the entire season! These eight talented actors will help you imagine Wonderland—so imagine them with a crown or rabbit ears or as a dormouse, a cat, a caterpillar and a playing card.

About the Study Materials

These study materials offer background information on the author and original Alice (the real girl and Alice the story), Victorian childhood, Alice's themes, the fantasy and nonsense of the tale, production design renderings, and activities for discussion and/or writing (which are boxed in blue).

Adapt the materials to the level, needs, and interests of your students; they fit most educational standards and will let you supplement the performance experience with more detail and analysis.





Lewis Carroll.

Charles Dodgson, who published under the pen name Lewis Carroll



Alice Liddell, the original Alice, who inspired the story and asked that it be written down

Lewis Carroll and the *Alice* Books

About the Author

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson was born in 1832, the eldest of the Dodgsons' twelve children. He grew up entertaining his younger brothers and sisters with nonsense rhymes, puzzles, games, and a family newspaper that he wrote and "published." His experience at home proved valuable, for throughout his life he was able to delight and entertain children.

He was educated at Rugby School, infamous at the time for its physical and academic harshness, and then received a scholarship to Christ Church College, Oxford, where he took a First in Mathematics. At that time the conditions of advanced study or faculty status at Christ Church College included taking holy orders and remaining celibate, and Dodgson dutifully became a deacon, though he never took holy orders. He stayed at Oxford to teach mathematics, receiving his Master of Arts degree in 1857.

He also began sending contributions to *Comic Times*, one of England's many satiric and comic publications. An editor suggested that he choose a pen name (as was common in the 19th century), and from a list of four possible pseudonyms that Dodgson offered, the editor chose "Lewis Carroll," a Latinized version of the author's given names (Charles = *carolus* in Latin). Dodgson also began his lifelong passion for photography, the Victorian era's newest craze.

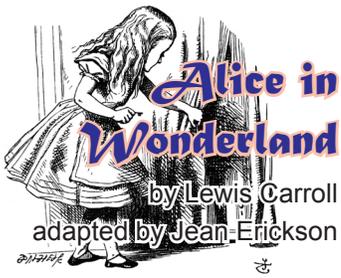
In 1855 Dr. H. G. Liddell (the name rhymes with 'fiddle') was named dean of the college, and Dodgson quickly became friends with the family, including the three young daughters, Lorina, Alice, and Edith, whom he met playing on the college lawn. He often visited the Liddell family, and he and other faculty took the girls on outings, such as boat excursions with a picnic.

The Genesis of the Story

The most famous of these outings, according to Dodgson's diary, occurred on July 4, 1862, when he and another young faculty member, Robinson Duckworth, rowed the girls to Godstow. As usual, the girls asked for a story, so as he rowed Dodgson began telling them of a time Alice went down a rabbit hole and had great adventures, weaving in all sorts of "in" jokes about their family, their friends, and their school lessons. At the end of the day, 10-year-old Alice asked Dodgson to write this story down, the only time in all his storytelling she ever made such a request.

He sat up all night trying to record the details of his improvised story, then wrote out a special copy by hand, adding new incidents and illustrating it himself, which he presented to Alice for Christmas of 1864, calling it *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*. Several friends who had also seen the manuscript urged Dodgson to publish the remarkable work, which he then expanded again; the added material includes the Pig and Pepper scene, the Mad Hatter's Tea Party, the Cheshire Cat, the Caucus Race, and much of the trial at the end. John Tenniel, the famous Victorian illustrator, agreed to provide drawings for the text, now called *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which was published in 1865 and became an instant success.

Dodgson began planning a sequel to the first *Alice* book and started writing it in 1868. By 1871 it was in print as *Through the Looking Glass and what Alice found there*. He continued to write children's books and mathematical games as well as academic studies of Euclidean geometry and logic until his death in 1898, by which time the *Alice* books had sold more than a quarter of a million copies.



Victorian Childhood

Though childhood was for centuries considered a miniature version of adulthood, by the Romantic era in the early 19th century Wordsworth could exclaim that, in fact, children come into this world in a pure spiritual state that they lose with time:

There was a time when meadow, grove, and
stream,
The earth, and every common sight
To me did seem
Apparalled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.

(from "Ode: Intimations of Immortality
from Recollections of Early Childhood")

The Victorian world was not similarly Romantic; it sent poor children to work by the age of six and educated its more privileged youth for adulthood. Thus, for an advantaged child such as Alice Liddell, childhood was a time of both freedom and bondage. She could and did play, although it is doubtful she was ever allowed to get really dirty, for her life was supervised by a governess within a home where children had a proper but peripheral role. A Victorian household with its host of servants worked like a small hotel; even lower middle class families had a few servants. Alice's father was a senior administrator at Oxford, and her mother entertained with the skill of a professional; children did not join this adult world until they knew their "place" and could fill it properly.

Alice ate separately from her parents, went to bed early, and was trained in manners and morals virtually from birth, as were all Victorian children of her class. Even the books she read were instructional, for Victorian children's stories had a decidedly moralistic bent—until Lewis Carroll showed the potential of nonsense as a partner to virtue.

The "privileged" ideal of both Victorian womanhood and childhood was innocence. For the most part, boys and girls were raised by two different standards. Alice's brothers were sent to boarding school and learned ancient history, Latin, and Greek (subjects that the Mock Turtle so lacrymously remembers in a section not included in the play), while Alice and her sisters were educated at home. In addition to elementary subjects such as reading, writing, history, and some mathematics, they were taught the skills a refined lady would be expected to have mastered: music, dancing, drawing, French, and needlework. Recitations formed a significant part of the education, since much of it was by rote memory, so Alice's firm knowledge of poems gave Carroll the basis for his parodies: many of the poems in the *Alice* books are twisted versions of poems and songs the Liddell children had memorized.

Growing up amid the forthrightness of the English academic environment at Oxford, Alice can and does speak her mind and question others astutely. The games Carroll played with the Liddell children demanded sharp wits and clear thinking, and Alice loved these challenges, as did all the children Dodgson befriended. He wrote them letters with picture-words, sent mirror letters, and gave them brain teasers. The only atypical part of Alice's education was the opportunity to have such a remarkable friend.



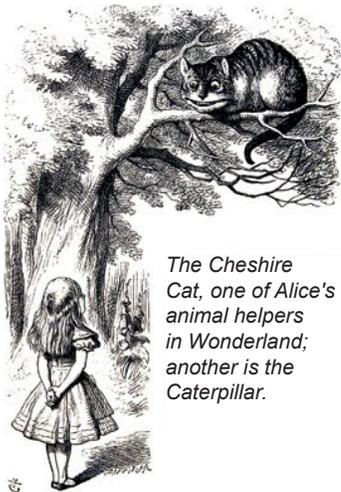
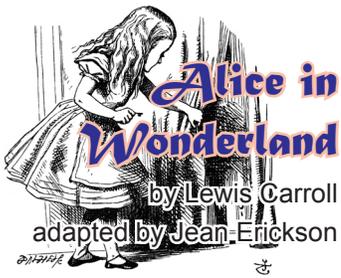
The real Alice Liddell and Tenniel's illustration of Alice becoming a Queen in the "fairy tale" ending of *Through the Looking Glass*

Comparing Childhoods

- Research Victorian childhoods (both privileged and impoverished) and compare their attitudes, rules, and experiences to growing up today. What do most children share now? Are there divides in attitudes, rules, and experiences? If so, where, how, and why?

Are all childhoods equal now? Does where you live (what country, what neighborhood) make a difference? What kind, if so? Are there things all children need or deserve? Research the winners of this year's Nobel Peace Prize.





The Cheshire Cat, one of Alice's animal helpers in Wonderland; another is the Caterpillar.

Growing Up in the *Alice* Books

The Fairy Tale Underpinning

Fairy tales are tales of maturation ranging from young children's need to start the long journey to independence (as in "Hansel and Gretel," where the children cling and must be forced to rely on themselves) through later maturational stages of listening to warnings or suffering the consequences (as in "Little Red Riding Hood") and on to maturity, often shown as becoming a prince or princess ready to "rule" one's own life (as in "Cinderella").

Fairy tale characters do not always follow the prescribed path or rules, but they have "the right stuff," which can also include accepting aid from animal helpers or fairy godmothers and being pro-active when the chips are down. The fairy tale world is often disorienting, beset with wolves and briars and giants and wicked stepmothers who want to devour or tear or poison the questing youth, and being lost is all too often part of making progress—to find oneself one must first lose oneself, one's old self, because the self that's found may be a newer, better self.

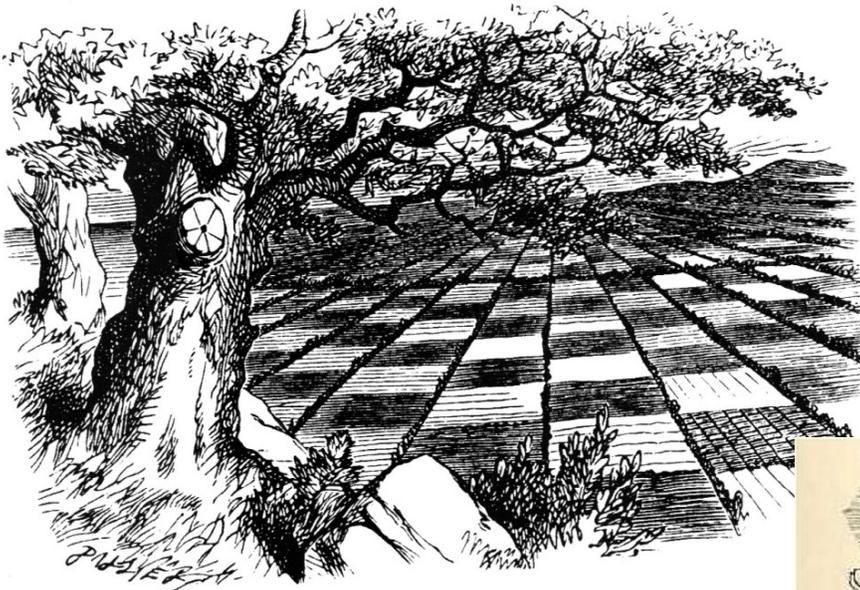
Fairy Tale Aspects of the *Alice* Books

Technically, dream tales are not fairy tales, but the *Alice* stories partake effectively of fairy tale incident and imagery. Alice's challenges in the first *Wonderland* book are in the middle phase of the fairy tale spectrum of maturation—about identity and growing independence but still a yearning for home and safety. The emphasis on rules—what they are, what they mean, who follows them—forms a large part of the tale as does gaining control of one's size.

Alice at first is a "tween, between child and teen; at ten, the original Alice was the middle of the three Liddell girls and could watch her older sister's new challenges and her younger sister's development that she had long surpassed. In the *Looking Glass* tale, however, although she only six months older, she confronts the chessboard of life, learns the moves and the possible disappointments as well as opportunities on her quest to gain her crown and power as "Queen." That step is the grown up, ready for marriage stage in fairy tale lore, well beyond "tween."

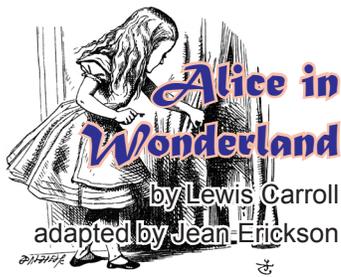
While *Through the Looking Glass*, like *Wonderland*, is a dream story, in it Lewis Carroll lets Alice dream further ahead in life's challenges; he looks further down the path, as well he might, since she was a late teen by the time he began planning that story.

The adaptation at ASF treats only the *Wonderland* tale, so the focus is on the earlier part of maturation, but there are enough hints of coming challenges that the entire arc of development can be sensed in the action.



Above, the checkerboard world of *Through the Looking Glass*, which Alice must "play" across to become a Queen, and right, making swift progress between squares with the Red Queen





"You're nothing but a pack of cards!"

Who Dreams Whom—from
Looking Glass, Chap. 4

Alice, Tweedledum, and Tweedledee are looking at the Red King sleeping:

"He's dreaming now," said Tweedledee: "and what do you think he's dreaming about?"

Alice said "Nobody can guess that."

"Why, about you!" Tweedledee exclaimed, clapping his hands triumphantly. "And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?"

"Where I am now, of course," said Alice.

"Not you!" Tweedledee retorted contemptuously. "You'd be nowhere. Why you're only a sort of thing in his dream!"

"If that there King was to wake," added Tweedledum, "you'd go out—bang!—just like a candle!"

"I shouldn't!" Alice exclaimed indignantly....

"Well, it's no use *your* talking about waking him," said Tweedledum, "when you're only one of the things in his dream. You know very well you're not real."

"I *am* real!" said Alice....

Carroll's discussion here is actually metaphysical, based on Bishop Berkeley's theory that all material objects, ourselves included, only exist in the mind of God—a view Samuel Johnson refuted by kicking a stone.

Dreaming and Imagination

Both of Carroll's *Alice* books are presented, or explained away, as dreams at the end. Yet at the beginning the dream state emerges as an unbroken reality, for in *Wonderland*, bored on the hot afternoon as her sister read a book without pictures, she suddenly sees a white rabbit run by—except this White Rabbit is talking to himself and taking a pocketwatch out of his waistcoat! Thus we enter her dream, supposedly a visit to her subconscious otherwise known as *Wonderland*.

Of course, it is actually a visit to Carroll's vivid imagination, which also partakes of the lively dynamics of the subconscious and which links itself to a game—cards in the first tale, chess in the second—with strict rules. At the end, now at full size, as she reacts to the pack of cards flying up at her, she wakes to find her sister brushing fallen leaves away from her face. We can "explain away" the ending, but not everything in between. Alice runs in to get tea, but Edith stays to enter and share Alice's dream imaginatively for a moment.

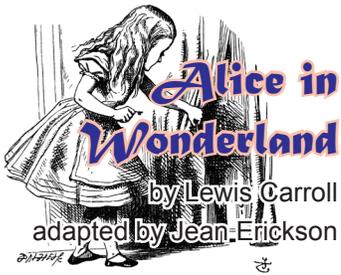
At the start of *Through the Looking Glass*, Alice has been playing chess and is talking to a kitten, saying "let's pretend," so she is engaging her own imagination. She wants to speculate about Looking Glass Land, for she has studied the "reality" in and "beyond" the mirror and wonders if the space just out of sight down the corridor matches the space in her family's home, for it could be quite different. So Alice sees if she can pass through the looking glass, and of course she does—into a rich new world of familiar unfamiliarity with chess as its basis.

At the end, another return to normal size, as well as to waking, allows Alice to ponder the equivalences between worlds: Red Queen equals black kitten. She then asks "who it was that dreamed it all. This is a serious question ... it *must* have been either me or the Red King. He was part of my dream, of course—but then I was part of his dream, too!" Carroll ends by asking the reader, "Which do *you* think it was?"

Dream worlds revel in subconscious discontinuity and inventiveness; submerged below the rational realm of "reasons" and "oughts," the mind can play with other possibilities. Animals speak, inanimate objects move, language twists and turns, calling into being things otherwise impossible because now whatever can be imagined can be and "reflect" our own twisted rational world.

Left: Alice and playing cards becoming normal sized at the end of *Wonderland*. Below: Alice going through the looking glass in Carroll's later *Alice* story; note that the mantel objects have faces in *Looking Glass House*.





It was widely supposed that Tenniel based his drawing of the Duchess on the 16th-century "Ugly Duchess" by Quintin Matsys. It is reputed to be a portrait of Margaretha Maultasch, called the ugliest woman in history.



The more tractable Duchess with Alice and her croquet mallet, a flamingo. Her older companion insists there is a moral for everything and that moral is what she says it is. Meanwhile, Alice's "equipment" for "playing the game" is entirely unsuited to the purpose.

Some Whys of Wonderland

• Why is everyone else so small?

In the original story, Alice initially follows a Rabbit down a rabbit hole, so she joins the rabbit's world. The fact that a 10-year-old girl can fit down a rabbit hole is the first fantastical leap in the narrative; when she finally hits bottom, unhurt after a long free-fall past rows of shelves, she finds herself in a hallway, another fantastical leap (rabbits use human architecture)—which has many regular doors and a table, plus one very small door that the key on the table fits. That is the door into the lovely garden, the only door Alice opens and wants to go through, but she can't at first because of her size.

In the tale her size varies from mouse-size to over the treetops early on, and much of the time she is the size of the creatures she speaks to, be they animals or playing cards. At the end she begins to "grow" again so that she is her normal human size just before she awakes.

• Why does the Cook add so much pepper to the soup?

We never actually learn the Cook's motives, but Alice wants to know, because, along with sneezing from the pepper, the Cook hurls her cooking implements at everyone in the room. Anger and inciting distress are issues.

In thinking about her experience and meeting the Duchess later in a more "pleasant temper," Alice wonders if it were the pepper that had affected her—"Maybe it's always pepper that makes people hot-tempered"—and considers it a new kind of rule. Asking if problems are inside or outside, absolute or changeable, opens Alice to analysis and options rather than a deterministic view.

• Why are so many inanimate things animate in the story?

Carroll does what all who tell stories to children do: he takes the everyday aspects of the child's world and makes it animate, playful, and instructive. The child's life is lessons and play, rules and changing circumstances, all of which Carroll explores.

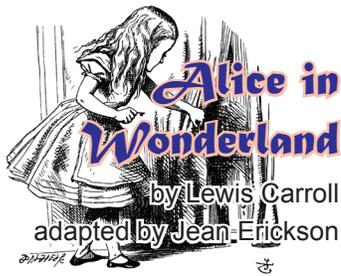
Not only is Alice in a dream, where many things take on different, more plastic and responsive traits, but she is dealing with issues of control, including self-control, and her own identity/personhood. Her world is no longer a "given," set and immobile for her, but altering for her as she grows.

To have that expressed as part of a game, such as the Queen's croquet game, shows that the expectations can alter and rules seem to shift when the wickets are animate cards and move around, the balls are hedgehogs that walk away, and the mallets are flamingoes with necks that are far from rigid. Nothing stays put; nothing is predictable nor many things controllable. Accomplishing one's objective, just getting the ball through the wicket, proves almost impossible under these circumstances, though not for lack of trying. Such description brilliantly expresses Alice's psychological state in growing up (and adults might add it can also accurately reflect the working world).

Also, as J. R. R. Tolkien points out in his essay "On Faerie Stories," fantasy allows humans to experience a connectedness with other life, a greater communication (where things and animals can talk and we can understand them); we are not alone but part of a larger expressive creation and can learn from many "others."

Questions Alice Asks its Audience

- Where does Alice try to fit in and why?
- Where does Alice make her own decisions and why?
- In Wonderland or our world, is it important to answer the question, "Who are You?"
- Which characters or traits in Wonderland do we want to emulate and which do we want to avoid, and why?



Alice finds herself too small and thus vulnerable to a puppy or too tall and opening up like a telescope



"The first thing I've got to do," said Alice to herself, as she wandered about in the wood, "is to grow to my right size again; and the second thing is to find my way into that lovely garden. I think that will be the best plan."

The Themes of the *Alice* Stories

Most of the Victorian tales for children, like the Grimm and Perrault fairy tales before them, portray an adult's view of childhood. Lewis Carroll, on the other hand, more nearly presents a child's view of both childhood and adulthood. He is very true to the subjective states of growing up, but his adult characters are various sorts of strange creatures, angry, demanding, or sentimental and spouting rules and orders and directions, or—in the case of some *Looking Glass* characters—wistful and resigned to life's trials.

Control

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland opens with an Alice befuddled by her new environment; she cannot control either her size, her surroundings, or even her reactions. As the story develops, however, she learns to control both her size and her temper and speaks her mind clearly and straightforwardly. She is basically a bright, sensible, well brought up, polite, observant, and curious Victorian child—the ideal subject for such an adventure.

Gaining control plays a larger role in the story than in the play, because the challenge of getting through the small door into the beautiful garden extends for 7 of the tale's 12 chapters; only after swimming in her own tears, meeting the Caterpillar, meeting the Duchess, attending the Tea party, and encountering the Cheshire Cat does Alice finally remember to pick up the key before she adjusts her size with bites of mushroom. The garden in the written tale takes Alice into contact with the roses and with the playing card royalty. In the play, she gets into the garden during the first scene and all the remaining action takes place there.

Size

The first major challenge Alice faces is her size, for she is either too small or too large to fit through the door she finds. Children and youths know the "too small/too big" phenomenon very well; they outgrow clothes at an alarming rate (alarming, anyway, to those who provide them), are told they're too big to "cry like a baby" or to suck their thumbs or to behave indulgently but too small to ride their bicycles to school by themselves or to do what their older siblings do. They are repeatedly confronted with the demand to mind their manners, to obey the family and social rules, and to think things through, as Alice does when she finds a bottle marked "drink me." Alice wants to be "the right size" and eventually she is, thereby gaining control of herself in her surroundings.

Even as teens, young people find themselves not yet old enough to drive, or vote, or drink legally as they approach adulthood, but perhaps too old to rely entirely on parents' income; they may be expected to or want to get a job to buy their own first car or pay for their own entertainment and activities. They also assure themselves they will not end up a statistic if they text while driving.

All aspects of human beings do not mature at the same time or the same rate. Bodies outstrip brains in quick development. Because physical maturity occurs before emotional or reasoning maturity (psychologists now put the latter at age 24), youths also must take responsibility for their sexual choices made while immature in other regards.



Alice suddenly much too large for Rabbit's house



Above, a very small Alice is just the size of the Caterpillar she talks with, and below, painting white roses red (note that the "spades" are gardeners)



The Themes of the *Alice* Stories/ 2

Identity

Size and change also appear in the caterpillar scene, where growing up is compared to metamorphosis—caterpillar, chrysalis, butterfly. Even with humans, the changes are not simply getting larger but a total transformation, inside and out. Thus, closely related to the idea of size is the theme of identity, for the Caterpillar also asks the crucial question, "Who are You?"

Early on, as Alice tries to figure out Wonderland, she several times replies that she is not herself or must not be who she was this morning. Because she is no longer in her known world of family and home, she is not sure she is the same, either; identity is partly a matter of context. Identity is changeable in Wonderland, and not just in terms of metamorphosis, for the Duchess's baby son turns into a pig in Alice's arms.

Yet amid her alterations in size and locale, Alice is still recognizably Alice, and she meets others as committed to their own identity. As Alice gains control, she meets characters, such as the Cheshire Cat, who choose their own identity, in fact their very degree of visibility. In a different sense, the White Rabbit also keeps appearing and disappearing, popping in and out of the action. This theme also extends to language, for with puns and homonyms, words can change meaning right before her, and our, very eyes and ears.

...and Conformity

Being oneself and knowing one's values and strong and weak points give strength, but can also cause push back from society, which has its own ideas about values and behavior as it pressures individuals to conform to the group. The talking flowers (who are not part of the play) want to retain their own distinctive colorfulness and not undergo the uniform painting that the Queen orders so that all roses will be red.

Balance

Related to the themes of size and identity is the theme of balance. Wonderland's most formidable "unbalanced" character, the Queen of Hearts, uses only anger and threats of violence as a response if she doesn't have her way immediately. The King temporizes, waits for her to get distracted, and then pardons those she had arrested, just as he politely offers her one of the stolen tarts, which she enjoys and then offers some to everyone. Even the Queen, stuck as she is in selfish demands, can be helped to a more open response.

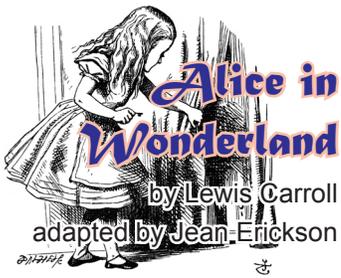
Through the Looking Glass has two balance-challenged characters, Humpty Dumpty and the White Knight. With Humpty Dumpty the principle of pride going before a fall remains important. The quixotic White Knight, however, is a gentler example of imbalance, too absorbed in his own ideas to notice much else, and he does try to please Alice.

... Especially Equanimity/Temper

Within the larger idea of balance the Caterpillar offers Alice one key guideline for her growth and progress: "keep your temper." As Alice controls her temper, she confronts a number of character who do not or cannot control theirs, specifically the Duchess, the Cook with the pepper, and the Queen of Hearts, whose one answer to all life's challenges is "off with his head!" In *Through the Looking Glass* Tweedledum and Tweedledee fight, or would like to fight if they weren't afraid of being hurt. The *Wonderland* trial becomes chaotic, like wild play, but Alice understands that she can control or stop it when she chooses—and she does. She wakes up.



The Queen of Hearts, mouth open, screaming orders and demands, in Wonderland (Tenniel)



"Things of wonder often upset those that don't ... wonder...."

—Cheshire Cat in the play

The Themes of the *Alice* Stories/ 3

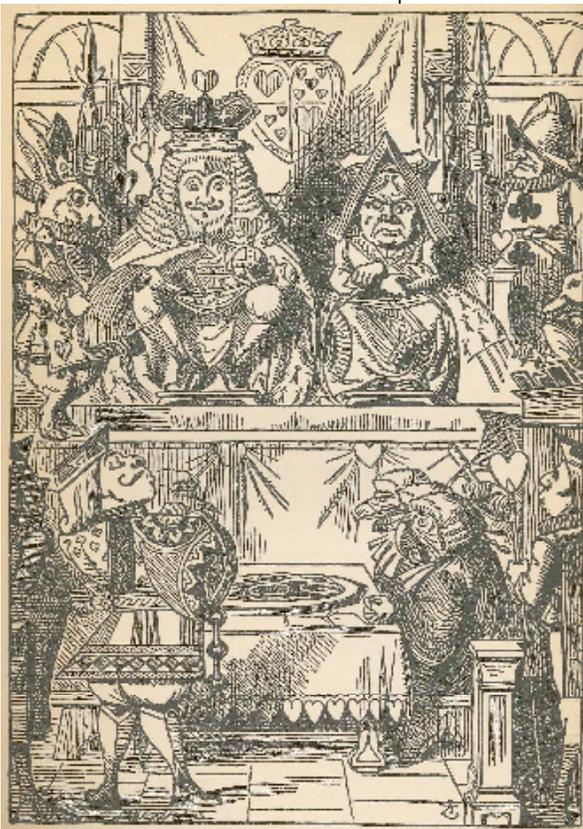
Rules and Manners

A concern for rules and manners frequently enters the action of the story. If Alice asks a question or interjects a comment, she is often told she is being rude (the Victorian "seen but not heard" rule applied to both children and women). Life in Wonderland seems to exist by its own set of rules, she learns, rules quite different from those she is accustomed to at home. Yet Alice usually demands that discourse follow the rules she has been taught.

When, at the trial, the procedure works out of sequence, the sentencing called for before the evidence is presented, Alice and the White Rabbit have to insist on the proper order, on the "rule" of law.

Guilt and Innocence

The trial also raises issues of guilt and innocence, and in a world of quick-fire consequences involving beheading, guilt or innocence could be significant, if the Queen paused long enough to consider either concept amid her commands for swift punishment. Judgment and punishment are not unknown to children, and proving guilt or innocence can be a common occurrence; Alice, at least, insists on a consistent procedure.



The trial of the Knave of Hearts (Terriel)

Time

Alice first confronts the demands of time with the White Rabbit, who is always late. The concern with punctuality may figure differently in a child's life than in an adult's and is a significant part of socialization—learning to tell time and learning its importance to others and society.

Of course, in Wonderland Alice also meets the Mad Hatter, whose watch tells the day of the week but not the hour of the day. For the Hatter it is always six o'clock (four o'clock in the play)—tea time—because his watch is broken, and so for him all Time stands still, the timepiece enacting the abstraction. Note, too, that because the watch says it is tea time, the Hatter keeps taking tea; the watch rules his actions.

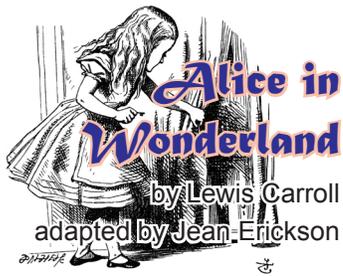


The White Rabbit, perpetually late

Morals and Education

Two pieces of Victoriana in this story are the concern with morals, since 19th-century children's literature before Lewis Carroll was beset with morals and didactic, edifying values, and also the discussion of education. The Duchess is a fanatic about attaching a *non sequitur* moral to every statement, for she believes "Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it," and she can.

Some of her morals seem to be fluff: "Oh, 'tis love, 'tis love, that makes the world go round!" but others are puns, such as "Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves" (playing on a money maxim in England: "take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves") and harsher views, "The more there is of mine, the less there is of yours."



Tenniel's illustrations for Alice's version of "Father William" and the Pepper Scene's "Speak Gently"



Making Nonsense

- What songs and rhymes do children now know that might be turned into nonsense? See what you—or they—might do to change the context of a known rhyme or song (try Disney songs for younger children, rock songs for older). Silly suggestions are OK when creating nonsense, but keeping rhythm and rhyme is important.
- Have your students write their own nonsense version of Carroll's "Twinkle, twinkle," using new nouns and rhyme words, as Carroll does.

Parody and Nonsense Verse

Lewis Carroll's greatest gift to children's literature is the power of fantasy and nonsense to delight without losing the ability to instruct. Exercising the imagination in these outrageous ways gives pleasure, surprise, and a fresh view of our world. Carroll's fertile mind laid the foundation for later writers such as Dr. Seuss or Roald Dahl. Students are well acquainted with the vibrant characters Dr. Seuss and Dahl create

and the exuberant language in their stories. Carroll had just as much fun spoofing poems for Alice Liddell, letting her hear familiar rhymes in unfamiliar ways. Since of his parodies only "Twinkle, twinkle, little star" is still well known, here is that parody, another included in the play, and one not included—in both their original and nonsense versions—that show how Carroll literally stands the sense on its head:

NOT IN THE PLAY:

"The Old Man's Comforts and How He Gained Them" by Robert Southey

"You are old, father William," the young man cried,
 "The few locks which are left you are grey;
 You are hale, father William, a hearty old man;
 Now tell me the reason, I pray."

"In the days of my youth," father William replied,
 "I remember'd that youth would fly fast,
 And abus'd not my health and my vigour at first,
 That I never might need them at last."

NOT IN THE PLAY

Lewis Carroll's version (Alice and Caterpillar)

"You are old, father William," the young man said,
 "And your hair has become very white,
 And yet you incessantly stand on your head,
 Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

"In my youth," father William replied to his son,
 "I feared it might injure the brain;
 But now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,
 Why, I do it again and again."

IN THE PLAY:

"Speak Gently" by David Bates

Speak gently! It is better far
 To rule by love than fear;
 Speak gently; let no harsh words mar
 The good we might do here!

Speak gently! Love doth whisper low
 The vows that true hearts bind;
 And gently Friendship's accents flow
 Affection's voice is kind.

IN THE PLAY:

Lewis Carroll's version (The Duchess and Cook)

Speak roughly to your little boy,
 And beat him when he sneezes;
 He only does it to annoy,
 Because he knows it teases.

I speak severely to my boy,
 And beat him when he sneezes;
 For he can thoroughly enjoy
 The pepper when he pleases!

IN THE PLAY:

from "The Star" by Jane Taylor

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
 How I wonder what you are!
 Up above the world so high,
 Like a diamond in the sky.

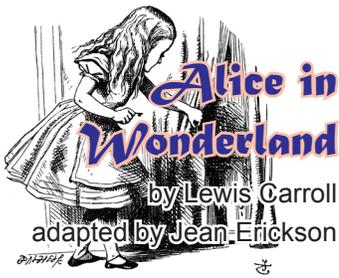
When the blazing sun is gone,
 When he nothing shines upon,
 Then you show your little light,
 Twinkle, twinkle, all the night.

IN THE PLAY:

Lewis Carroll's version (sung by Hatter)

Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!
 How I wonder what you're at!
 Up above the world you fly,
 Like a tea-tray in the sky.

Twinkle, twinkle....

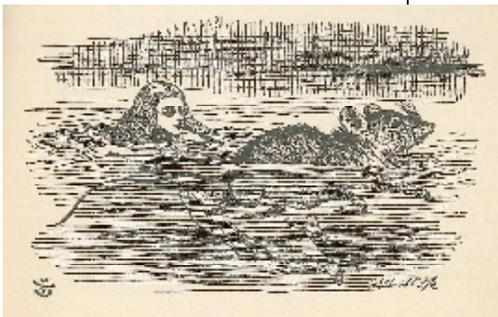


A Poetic Tale/Tail

Amid Alice's wild size shifts early in the story, once again tiny, she falls into a lake—which is the pool of tears she wept when she was nine feet tall. She is swimming with a mouse and other birds and animals. Once on shore, the mouse proceeds to dry them by reciting the "driest" thing he knows, a passage of English history (the very passage that Edith is reading at the top of the play)—as Carroll plays with two different meanings of *dry*. Carroll also plays with such differences when Alice is listening and cannot see how a word she hears is spelled, so she miscues. For instance, when the recitation doesn't work, they run a race, after which the mouse tells his own tale:

"Mine is a long and a sad tale!" said the Mouse, turning to Alice, and sighing.

"It is a long tail, certainly," said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse's tail; "but why do you call it sad?" And she kept on puzzling about it while the Mouse was speaking, so that her idea of the tale was something like this:— [see right]



Alice, very small again, and the Mouse swimming in her pool of tears (Tenniel)

Resources on shaped poems

Find examples:

- Search Google Images "shape poems" to find many examples
- A few quick simple examples @ <http://www.angelfire.com/ego/mr.f/SubjectLinks/english/shapepoems.html>

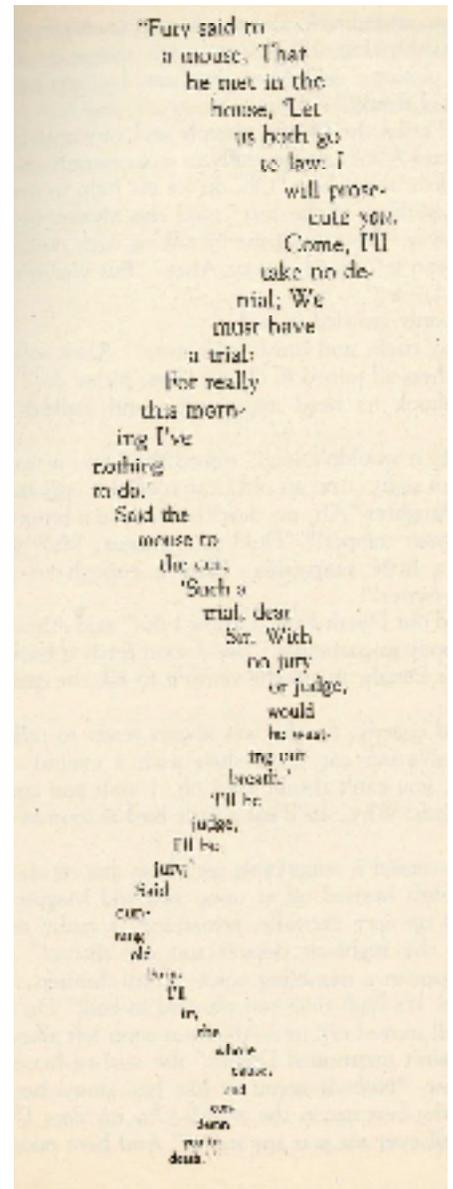
Carroll liked including poems in his fantasy stories for children; *Alice in Wonderland* is full of them. This one is an example not of nonsense but of shaped poetry, also known as emblematic or figured verse, terms that emphasize the visual or pictorial quality. The tradition of such verse dates from the ancient Greeks, and several famous instances dot English poetry, such as George Herbert's "Easter Wings" and "The Altar."

The poem used in the printed version of *Alice in Wonderland*, the one to the right, is not the original version he hand-lettered into the copy he made for Alice Liddell, however. The text of the original poem, which also had a "tail" shape, reads:

We lived beneath the mat,
Warm and snug and fat,
But one woe, and that
Was the cat!

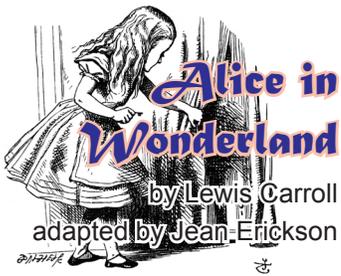
To our joys a clog
In our eyes a fog,
On our hearts a log
Was the dog!

When the cat's away,
Then the mice will play.
But, alas! one day;
(So they say)



Came the dog and the cat,
Hunting for a rat,
Crushed the mice all flat,
Each one as he sat,
Underneath the mat,
Warm and snug and fat.
Think of that!

When the Mouse scolds Alice for being inattentive, she tells him he had gotten to the fifth bend. "I had not!" he cries, and Alice begins looking for a knot in his tail, yet another in this line of aural confusions surrounding Carroll's shaped poem.



Above, Victorian ladies taking tea as a social event; below, a poor family eating porridge for dinner



The English Tradition of Taking Tea (except the Mad Hatter)

A History of Tea

- The Chinese were drinking tea in the third century BCE
- Nautical trade routes between West and East opened in the Renaissance
- Tea in England became popular when Charles II and his Portuguese queen introduced it to their court in the 1660s, and tea began to replace ale in popularity
- Tea (expensive due to high import taxes) was served at all the coffee and chocolate houses in 18th-century London
- Up to the 18th century, the world worked by the sun's clock, so most English ate two main meals a day, a breakfast of bread, beef, and ale and a dinner in the middle of the day, grabbing a bite of cold leftovers before going to bed near sundown. But in the middle of the 18th century, the upper and responsive middle classes moved dinner to an long evening meal beginning about 8 p.m. and had a very light lunch at noon.

- In 1840, the Duchess of Bedford found she needed a pick-me-up in the late afternoon and had her servants bring her tea and some small cakes or finger sandwiches in her bedroom. Once she began inviting her friends, the "tea party" moved to the parlor where the ladies sat on sofas and chairs with refreshments on low tables, thus having "low tea," a social event. Ladies began to dress in "tea gowns," gloves and hats to attend these parties or receptions
- But working folk in industrialized England did not have a big meal at night; when they got home from a 12-hour shift they promptly ate some cold meat, bread and butter, pickles, and cheese with a mug of tea at the kitchen table, thus having "high tea," their only evening repast. The "height" of the tea was all about the table on which it was served and thus the ambience of the event, the class/status of the tea takers, and whether they will have another meal after tea.

Tea Propriety and Manners

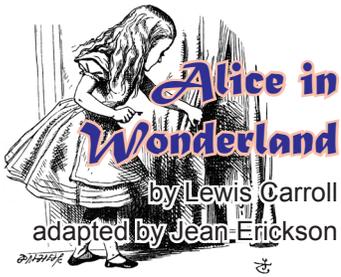
- Tea is served with milk (not cream) or thin lemon slices (never wedges). In England it is customary to pour the milk into the cup first, then the tea. (Never combine milk and lemon; the lemon curdles the milk.)
- Milk should be folded into the tea front to back, not stirred into it in circles
- Fine porcelain tea cups are held with one finger in front of the handle and one behind it, never with one finger through the handle. The raised pinky finger offers balance.
- Tea is not used to wash down food. It is sipped separately.
- After being sipped, the teacup (held in the right hand) is returned to the saucer (if held, it is in the left hand on the lap), not left in the air
- A teabag is a sacrilege in making or taking "proper" tea (loose tea only)
- Americans and other tourists expect a "high tea" to be posh (confusing class with table height). Although they may be at "high" restaurant tables, they want the social tradition of cucumber finger sandwiches, scones with clotted cream and preserves (a 20th-century addition), and some sweets. Hotels now cater to their delusion.



How NOT to take tea! Tenniel's illustration of what Alice sees as she leaves the Mad Hatter's tea party

Sources include:

- <http://whatscookingamerica.net/History/HighTeaHistory.htm>
 - <http://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/afternoon-tea/>
- See also "What Time Is Dinner?"
@ <http://www.history-magazine.com/dinner2.html>



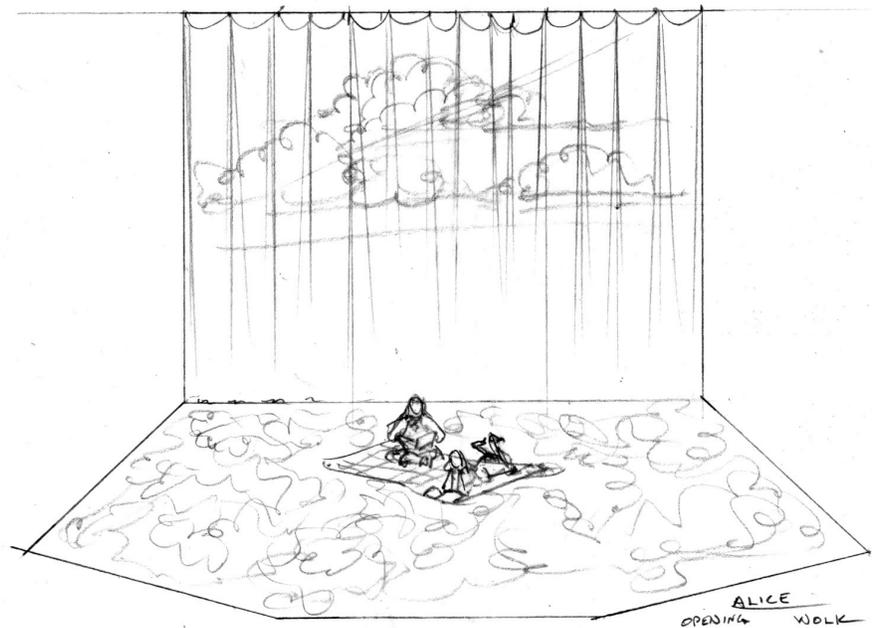
Set Design for ASF's *Alice in Wonderland*

The original Wonderland was a space a storyteller created in the imagination of three young girls with words. In James Wolk's set design, the ASF production honors that original "place" by offering open space and a suggestive natural environment.

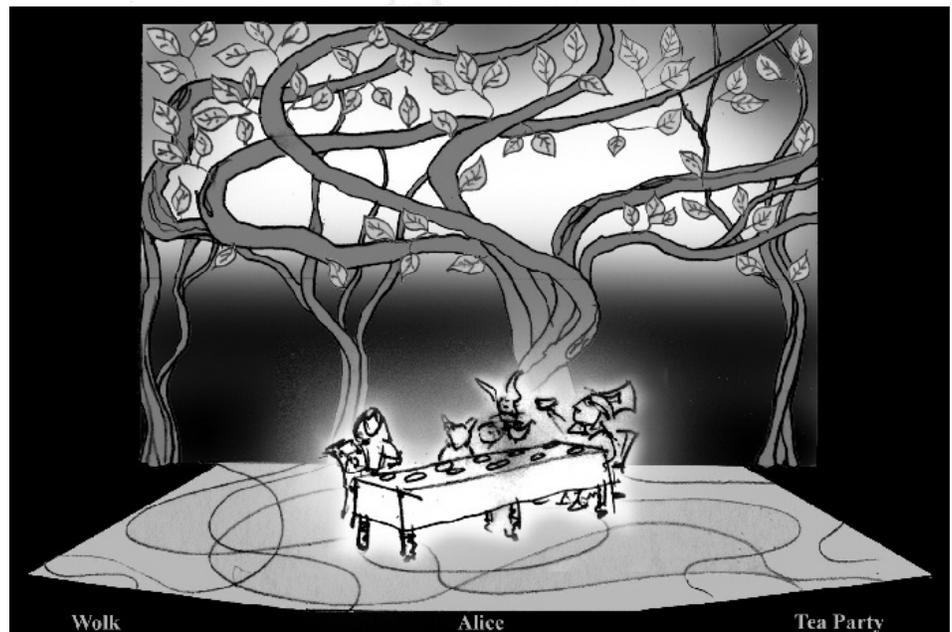
The play's frame story of sisters sitting outside offers a hint of land and sky, but lets the revealed Wonderland become the more

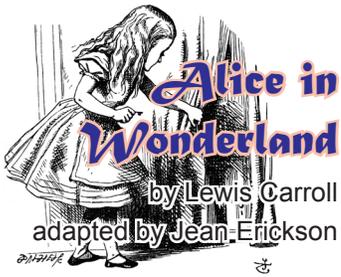
defined visual space once Alice transitions there. Perspective games are important as Alice alternates between large and small, but for the most part the large tree and a group of small set pieces (such as the tea table and the throne; the Cheshire Cat even has a "catwalk" in the tree) define the magical space of the imagination and lets the audience's imaginations work.

James Wolk's initial design sketch for the play's opening



James Wolk's design sketch for the basic Wonderland set, showing setup for the Mad Hatter's Tea Party scene





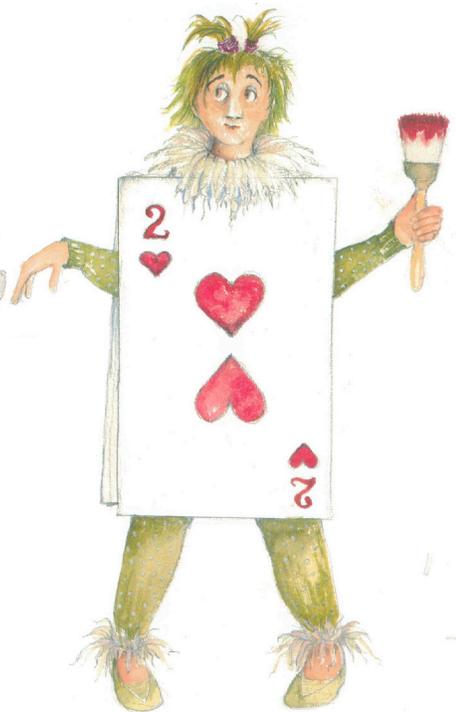
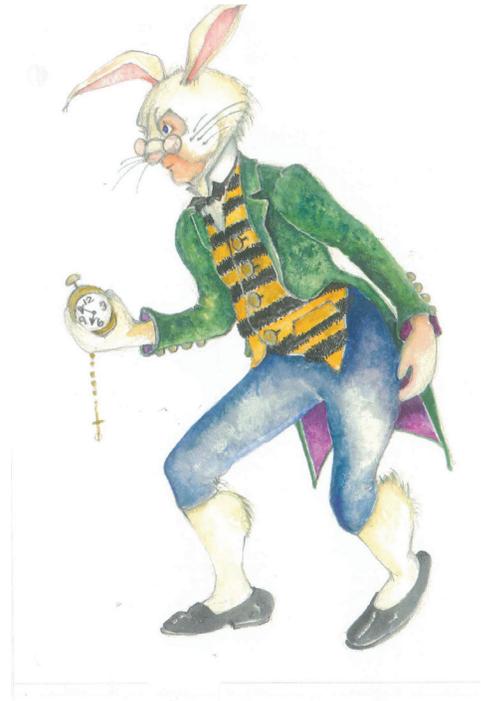
Costume Design for ASF's *Alice in Wonderland*

Costume designer Pamela Scofield and director Nancy Rominger sought a clear and highly textured look for the characters in *Alice in Wonderland*. The White Rabbit is a fine example: of course he has a fuzzy head and ears, but his striped vest is also furry as are his calves below his knee breeches. Bright colors and juxtaposed patterns in all the Wonderland costumes keep the show lively and animated. Alice, however, stays dressed as a proper Victorian child, a stranger in a very strange land.

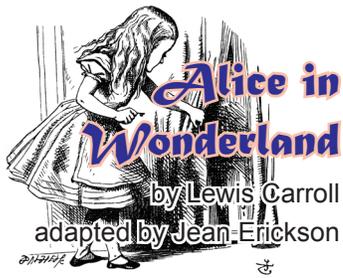
In Wonderland the wigs also bring an exuberant and colorful style to the play (see the Mad Hatter and Two below). The Mad Hatter's jacket also includes the checkboard pattern that is so important in *Through the Looking Glass*, another *Alice* reference.



Above, the costume design for Alice, and far right, the design for the White Rabbit.



Left to right: Pamela Scofield's costume designs for The Queen of Hearts, the Mad Hatter, and playing card Two (who will be in Spades on stage)



Nonsense and Fantasy

- What are the best uses of Nonsense in modern children's literature? What is your favorite nonsense tale and why?
- Create a nonsense character.
- In recent years, fantasy series such as *Harry Potter*, *The Hunger Games*, and *Twilight* have proven quite popular. What is the power of fantasy as a story vehicle? Is it useful or dangerous? What would the Duchess say its moral is? What do you say?

Carroll-Like Activities with Words and Language

Tell a "Tail"!

- Have students write some couplets or quatrains that fit the Mouse's tail shape. Or have them write a short tale, rhyming if possible, in another shape they choose. Any shape can work, and it need not be animal related.

There is a long tradition of shaped verse, such as George Herbert's "Easter Wings," which looks like a butterfly (it was originally printed sideways to enhance the effect).

Pun!

- Live dangerously—let the students watch how the Mock Turtle uses re-naming puns for school subjects, then let them find re-naming puns for the food in the school cafeteria (if they haven't already), for their own school subjects, or for sports. Here's the Mock Turtle's "curriculum":

- ancient and modern mystery (*history*),
- drawling and stretching and fainting in coils (*drawing, sketching, and painting in oils*), as well as
- the basics of reeling and writhing (reading and writing)

- and the various skills in mathematics: ambition, distraction, uglification, and derision (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division).

Older students may know musical groups whose names are puns—how do those work?

Homonym Alert!

- Perk up your ears as Carroll does and go on "homonym alert" and listen for words that sound alike; extend the alert to include words that change meaning depending on usage—see where these words and meanings could

lead if you were in Wonderland.

Nonsense

- Ask your students what makes Dr. Seuss and Lewis Carroll's stories such fun, and have them write and illustrate their own short nonsense story, inventing the characters and action in a fantasy world. Older students may be helped if they consider younger students or siblings as their audience: tell pre-K through 1 a story.

Sneak Your Name into a Poem (Acrostics)!

- At the end of *Through the Looking Glass*, Lewis Carroll writes an acrostic poem, in which the first letter of each line, when read vertically, spells out Alice's full name: Alice Pleasance Liddell. (see below, emphasis added)

Have your students write an acrostic using their first name, or if they're daring their first and last names. Any verse form—couplets, tercets, quatrains, quintains... preferably rhymed.

- How would you describe the theme and mood of Carroll's Alice acrostic poem? Why is this poem the end of the tales?

A BOAT, beneath a sunny sky
Lingering onward dreamily
In an evening of July—

Children three that nestle near,
Eager eye and willing ear,
Pleased a simple tale to hear—

Long has faded that sunny sky:
Echoes fade and memories die:
Autumn frosts have slain July.

Still she haunts me, phantomwise,
Alice moving under skies
Never seen by waking eyes.

Children yet, the tale to hear,
Eager eye and willing ear,
Lovingly shall nestle near.

In a Wonderland they lie,
Dreaming as the days go by,
Dreaming as the summers die:

Ever drifting down the stream—
Lingering in the golden gleam—
Life, what is it but a dream?



The Mad Hatter's Tea Party
(Tenniel colored)

Alice in Film and on Television

Since its first silent film in 1903, Alice has been performed for the camera, with its most recent outing being Tim Burton's 2010 film. Wikipedia has a complete list of productions.



The river between Oxford and Godstow



Discussion/Writing Topics on Character, Themes—and Math

Control and Size

- If your family keeps a growth chart on a door jamb or wall, note your measurements for the past two years and now, bring them to school, and make a class growth chart—where we were, where we are, where we hope to grow. Do a comparable class growth chart for knowledge and ability as well as height. What can you do now that you couldn't do two years ago? What do you know now that you didn't know two years ago? What do you want to be able to know and do in the future?

- Do we all have an "inner child" no matter how old we get? If so, what is that inner child—a sense of wonder and discovery, a sense of privilege and self-indulgence, a sense of confusion, a need for security?

Identity

- How much of identity is genetic, how much family, how much social environment? To what extent must/should individuals learn to conform—to what, and who decides?
- What do we gain by individualism, standing on our own and defining ourselves as one person, and what do we gain by being part of a group and defining ourselves through shared traits or values? Is one more important than the other? Do we need each at different times or circumstances? What does *Alice* imply about individuation and the social self?
- Alice at times considers what others have to say and tries to learn the ways of her new surroundings, and at other times she acts on her own convictions or knowledge despite what she is told. Is one route better than the other? Does each have advantages depending on situation? If you've ever changed schools or states or countries, how much adaptation is involved in starting anew? How like Alice might one feel? Why?



The girls who first heard the story, Edith, Lorina, and Alice Liddell, shown here in 1859

- Everyone confronts barriers in growing up—"you're too little to...", "you're not old enough to...", "wait until...." What specific barriers or "size" rules have you confronted, do they seem reasonable (why or why not), and how did you respond? Did you try to negotiate the rules? How can you gauge from inside if you're "big" or "old" enough for something you've never done? If you have siblings, what happens when older siblings have different rules and opportunities than you do? How do you assess the readiness of younger siblings regarding rules and opportunities you have?

- What does it mean to be "adult"? Is it based on size/biological maturation, i.e. I'm fully grown physically? Is physical growth the major or only consideration in defining adulthood or maturity? What else is involved? Does emotional/psychological growth mature at the same time and at the same rate as physical growth? If human reasoning ability (as scientists now think) only reaches maturity at the age of 24, how does or should that impact rules and behavior in the preceding ten years? And do you believe the scientists' finding? Justify your view.

Rules and Manners

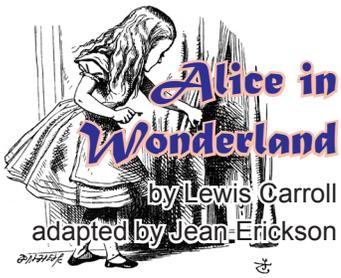
- How many rules are necessary for all of us to live together peaceably and safely? Could we live without rules and laws? Can we just trust our own good sense and respect for each other?
- Working as individuals or in groups, decide which are the three most important rules in your school and which are the three least important and why you think so. What would happen if these rules changed?

Biology and Color

- Not all flowers or birds or animals are "painted" one color. How does nature use color? What are the most colorful plants or creatures? Why?

MATH in Alice!

- @ <http://www.lewiscarroll.org/carroll/math/>
- @ <http://thinks.com/puzzles/carroll/carroll.htm>
- @ <http://blog.modernmechanix.com/lewis-carroll-mathematician/>
- @ http://www.maa.org/external_archive/devlin/devlin_03_10.html



ASF's unique duplicate of John Quincy Adams Ward's Shakespeare statue in Central Park (Photo: Alamy)

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Puddle Jumpers
by Glenda Goodacre
Photo: Haynes