

ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND

by Lewis Carroll



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UNABRIDGED WITH GLOSSARY AND NOTES



Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

BY LEWIS CARROLL



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Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

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Notes

What is a literary classic and why are these classic works important to the world?

A literary classic is a work of the highest excellence that has something important to say about life and/or the human condition and says it with great artistry. A classic, through its enduring presence, has withstood the test of time and is not bound by time, place, or customs. It speaks to us today as forcefully as it spoke to people one hundred or more years ago, and as forcefully as it will speak to people of future generations. For this reason, a classic is said to have universality.

Lewis Carroll is the pseudonym of the English writer and mathematician Charles Lutwidge Dodgson. Carroll was born in Cheshire, England, on January 27, 1832. As a young boy, puzzles, logic, and mathematics fascinated him, and this interest continued throughout his life. His pen name, in fact, is an anglicized form of the Latin translation of his first and middle names, *Carolus Lodovicus*.

In 1855, while working toward becoming a priest, Carroll met Henry Liddell and his family, which included Alice Liddell, the young girl who provided the inspiration for both *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its sequel, *Through The Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*. By 1861, Lewis Carroll had already published a few volumes on mathematics and some short poetry. However, his most famous works were still ahead of him. He conceived of the *Alice* stories during a few boat rides with the Liddell children, when he would actually tell the stories aloud, making them up on the journey.

In 1865, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was printed, and it immediately became quite popular, providing Carroll with a substantial income. Six years later he published *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*.

Over the next thirty years, Lewis Carroll wrote numerous other books, including *The Hunting of the Snark* and *Sylvie and Bruno*, in addition to some discourses on mathematics and logic, but none ever quite matched the appeal and popularity that his stories of Alice did.

Carroll died on January 14, 1898, from complications of either bronchitis or pneumonia.

Pointers

READING POINTERS

Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights

To enjoy and understand *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the reader should note the following:

Lewis Carroll inserts various techniques into the story to make Wonderland incomprehensible to Alice:

- Illogical and inconsistent reasoning
- Reversals of normal thought processes
- Reliance on both truths and falsehoods
- Talking, singing, intelligent animals
- Nonsensical poetry
- Changes in Alice's perception as she grows and shrinks
- Animal behavior imitating human habits
- Irony, such as the Mock Turtle singing about eating turtle soup
- Inclusion and repetition of characters in the dream with whom Alice is familiar
- Puns, misspeaking, language, and the sounds and shapes of words being nearly as important as the plot

The use of humor, parody, and satire pokes fun at politics, power, class-consciousness, and rules of etiquette that were in favor during Carroll's lifetime:

- the complete authority of the Queen
- the absurd representations of British history
- the forced formality of trials and their outcomes
- the English obsession with proper tea drinking
- the portrayal of manners
- the need to comprehend and follow arbitrary and incomprehensible rules in order to participate in games

Carroll is also mocking what would be considered a proper education for children, especially girls, during Victorian times:

- Alice's answers are almost always incorrect.
- The Duchess says to Alice, "You don't know much."
- The Cheshire Cat calls Alice "mad."
- Alice says about herself, "But I don't understand."
- The Mad Hatter refers to her as "stupid."
- The Caterpillar says Alice's thinking is "wrong from beginning to end."
- She forgets the multiplication table, famous places, facts, and poems.

Note the following motifs and thematic concepts:

- Loss of identity
- Use of drugs to alter reality
- What is considered normal or sane
- Innocence versus power
- Coming-of-age
- Importance of play and imagination
- Riddles and nonsense as part of life
- Reality, as opposed to the absurdity of a dream world
- Dreams representing common fears
- Capricious and arbitrary violence



C H A P T E R I

DOWN THE RABBIT-HOLE

ALICE[†] WAS BEGINNING to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do; once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, “And what is the use of a book,” thought Alice, “without pictures or conversations?”

So she was considering in her own mind (as well as she could, for the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid), whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.

There was nothing so *very* remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so *very* much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself, “Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!” (When she thought it over afterward, it occurred to her that she ought to have wondered at this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural); but when the Rabbit actually *took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket*, and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it

[†]Terms marked in the text with (†) can be looked up in the Glossary for additional information.

flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket or a watch to take out of it, and, burning with curiosity she ran across the field after it, and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge.

In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again.

The rabbit-hole went straight on like a tunnel for some way, and then dipped suddenly down, so suddenly that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself falling down what seemed to be a very deep well.

Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her, and to wonder what was going to happen next. First, she tried to look down and make out what she was coming to, but it was too dark to see anything; then she looked at the sides of the well, and noticed that they were filled with cupboards and bookshelves: here and there she saw maps and pictures hung upon pegs. She took down a jar from one of the shelves as she passed; it was labelled "ORANGE MARMALADE," but to her great disappointment it was empty; she did not like to drop the jar for fear of killing somebody underneath, so managed to put it into one of the cupboards as she fell past it.

"Well," thought Alice to herself, "after such a fall as this, I shall think nothing of tumbling down stairs. How brave they'll all think me at home! Why, I wouldn't say anything about it, even if I fell off the top of the house." (Which was very likely true.)

Down, down, down. Would the fall *never* come to an end? "I wonder how many miles I've fallen by this time?" she said aloud. "I must be getting somewhere near the center of the earth. Let me see: that would be four thousand miles down, I think" (for, you see, Alice had learned several things of this sort in her lessons in the schoolroom, and though this was not a very good opportunity for showing off her knowledge, as there was no one to listen to her, still it was good practice to say it over) "yes, that's about the right distance—but then I wonder what latitude[†] or longitude[†] I've got to?" (Alice had not the slightest idea what latitude was or longitude either, but she thought they were nice grand words to say.)

Presently she began again. "I wonder if I shall fall right *through* the earth! How funny it'll seem to come out among the people that walk with their heads downward! The Antipathies,[†] I think" (she was rather glad there was no one listening this time, as it didn't sound at all the right word), "but I shall have to ask them what the name of the country is, you know. Please, ma'am, is this New Zealand or Australia?" (and she tried

to courtsey as she spoke—fancy *courtseying* as you're falling through the air! Do you think you could manage it?) “And what an ignorant little girl she'll think me for asking! No, it'll never do to ask: perhaps I shall see it written up somewhere.”

Down, down, down. There was nothing else to do, so Alice soon began talking again. “Dinah'll miss me very much to-night, I should think!” (Dinah was the cat.) “I hope they'll remember her saucer of milk at tea-time. Dinah, my dear! I wish you were down here with me! There are no mice in the air, I'm afraid, but you might catch a bat, and that's very like a mouse you know. But do cats eat bats, I wonder?” And here Alice began to get rather sleepy, and went on saying to herself, in a dreamy sort of way, “Do cats eat bats? Do cats eat bats?” and sometimes, “Do bats eat cats?” for, you see, as she couldn't answer either question, it didn't much matter which way she put it. She felt that she was dozing off, and had just begun to dream that she was walking hand in hand with Dinah, and was saying to her very earnestly, “Now, Dinah, tell me the truth: did you ever eat a bat?” when suddenly, thump! thump! down she came upon a heap of sticks and dry leaves, and the fall was over.

Alice was not a bit hurt, and she jumped up on to her feet in a moment: she looked up, but it was all dark overhead; before her was another long passage, and the White Rabbit was still in sight, hurrying down it. There was not a moment to be lost: away went Alice like the wind, and was just in time to hear it say, as it turned a corner. “Oh, my ears and whiskers, how late it's getting!” She was close behind it when she turned the corner, but the Rabbit was no longer to be seen: she found herself in a long, low hall, which was lit up by a row of lamps hanging from the roof.

There were doors all round the hall, but they were all locked, and when Alice had been all the way down one side and up the other, trying every door, she walked sadly down the middle, wondering how she was ever to get out again. Suddenly she came upon a little three-legged table, all made of solid glass; there was nothing on it but a tiny golden key, and Alice's first idea was that this might belong to one of the doors of the hall; but alas! either the locks were too large, or the key was too small, but at any rate it would not open any of them. However, on the second time round, she came upon a low curtain she had not noticed before, and behind it was a little door about fifteen inches high; she tried the little golden key in the lock, and to her great delight it fitted!

Alice opened the door and found that it led into a small passage, not much larger than a rat-hole; she knelt down and looked along the passage into the loveliest garden you ever saw. How she longed to get out of that

dark hall, and wander about among those beds of bright flowers and those cool fountains, but she could not even get her head through the doorway; “and even if my head would go through,” thought poor Alice, “it would be of very little use without my shoulders. Oh, how I wish I could shut up like a telescope! I think I could, if I only knew how to begin.” For, you see, so many out-of-the-way things had happened lately that Alice had begun to think that very few things indeed were really impossible.

There seemed to be no use in waiting by the little door, so she went back to the table, half hoping she might find another key on it, or at any rate a book of rules for shutting people up like telescopes: this time she found a little bottle on it (“which certainly was not here before,” said Alice), and tied round the neck of the bottle was a paper label with the words “DRINK ME” beautifully printed on it in large letters.

It was all very well to say “Drink me,” but the wise little Alice was not going to do *that* in a hurry: “No, I’ll look first,” she said, “and see whether it’s marked ‘poison’ or not”; for she had read several nice little stories about children who had got burned, and eaten up by wild beasts, and other unpleasant things, all because they *would* not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them, such as, that a red-hot poker will burn you if you hold it too long; and that if you cut your finger *very* deeply with a knife, it usually bleeds; and she had never forgotten that, if you drink much from a bottle marked “poison,” it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later.

However, this bottle was *not* marked “poison,” so Alice ventured to taste it, and finding it very nice (it had, in fact, a sort of mixed flavor of cherry tart, custard, pine apple, roast turkey, toffee, and hot buttered toast), she very soon finished it off.

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“What a curious feeling!” said Alice, “I must be shutting up like a telescope.”

And so it was indeed; she was now only ten inches high, and her face brightened up at the thought that she was now the right size for going through the little door into that lovely garden. First, however, she waited for a few minutes to see if she was going to shrink any further; she felt a little nervous about this, “for it might end, you know,” said Alice to herself, “in my going out altogether, like a candle. I wonder what I should be like then?” And she tried to fancy what the flame of a candle looks like after

the candle is blown out, for she could not remember ever having seen such a thing.

After a while, finding that nothing more happened, she decided on going into the garden at once, but, alas for poor Alice! when she got to the door, she found she had forgotten the little golden key, and when she went back to the table for it, she found she could not possibly reach it; she could see it quite plainly through the glass, and she tried her best to climb up one of the legs of the table, but it was too slippery, and when she had tired herself out with trying, the poor little thing sat down and cried.

“Come, there’s no use in crying like that!” said Alice to herself, rather sharply; “I advise you to leave off this minute!” She generally gave herself very good advice (though she very seldom followed it), and sometimes she scolded herself so severely as to bring tears into her eyes, and once she remembered trying to box her own ears for having cheated herself in a game of croquet she was playing against herself, for this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people.[†] “But it’s no use now,” thought poor Alice, “to pretend to be two people! Why, there’s hardly enough of me left to make *one* respectable person!”

Soon her eye fell on a little glass box that was lying under the table; she opened it, and found in it a very small cake, on which the words “EAT ME” were beautifully marked in currants. “Well, I’ll eat it,” said Alice, “and if it makes me grow larger, I can reach the key; and if it makes me grow smaller, I can creep under the door; so either way I’ll get into the garden, and I don’t care which happens.”

She ate a little bit, and said anxiously to herself “Which way? Which way?” holding her hand on the top of her head to feel which way it was growing, and she was quite surprised to find that she remained the same size; to be sure, this is what generally happens when one eats cake, but Alice had got so much into the way of expecting nothing but out-of-the-way things to happen, that it seemed quite dull and stupid for life to go on in the common way.

So she set to work, and very soon finished off the cake.

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GLOSSARY

CHAPTER I

Alice – Alice’s character represents Alice Pleasance Liddell, who was one of three daughters of Henry Liddell, professor and Dean of Christ Church College in Oxford, England.

latitude – the distance north or south of the equator, measured in degrees

longitude – the distance east or west on the earth’s surface, measured in degrees

Antipathies – a pun on *Antipodes*, which was a 19th-century term that applied to Australia and New Zealand; prior to the discovery of these islands, it was thought that people who lived in these unknown countries had their heads where their feet should be and vice versa.

* * * * * – These symbols are indications Carroll uses to show the passage of time.

“...**this curious child...two people.**” – This quote emphasizes Alice’s loss of identity. During the early chapters, Alice is portrayed as a child who has a poor sense of self; she lacks confidence and decisiveness because she is still growing and learning about herself. Alice’s poor self-image lends to the thematic concept of identity that runs through *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*.

Throughout the novel, Carroll uses third-person limited omniscient narration, revealing only Alice’s emotions and feelings as she experiences them. Therefore, some critics believe that the narrator represents a level of Alice’s personality.

CHAPTER II

Esq. – esquire; a title given to an Englishman who ranks directly below a knight

“**How doth the little...smiling jaws!**” – a parody of the poem by Isaac Watts, “Against Idleness and Mischief”

Nile – a river located in Egypt

bathing machines – These devices were created in the 19th-century to allow people to wade into the ocean without offending Victorian morals. It was considered improper at this time to see members of the opposite sex in bathing suits; therefore, the bathing machines served as changing rooms as well. These machines were frequently drawn into the water by horses.

VOCABULARY

CHAPTER I

croquet – a game in which players hit wooden balls through hoops

curious – strange

currants – berries

earnestly – seriously; sincerely

fancy – imagine

poker – a metal rod used to stir ashes in a fireplace

ventured – took a risk

CHAPTER II

bristling – ruffling (causing hair to stand on end)

capital – great

carrier – the mail carrier

doth – does

fender – the metal frame placed in front of a fireplace to keep hot ashes and logs inside

hearthrug – a rug laid in front of a fireplace

inquisitively – curiously

lodging houses – places to stay; hotels

notion – an idea, opinion, or understanding

queer – strange

savage – ferocious, barbarous

shan't – won't

shrill – high-pitched; unpleasant

spades – gardening tools similar to small shovels

vulgar – disgusting

CHAPTER III

adjourn – to conclude, end; leave

audibly – loudly enough to be heard

comfits – pieces of fruit or nuts covered in sugar and eaten as candy

condemn – to sentence; order

consultation – a meeting

cur – a mixed-breed dog, mutt; a stray

draggled – wet and dirty

duchess – a noblewoman who is married to or a widow of a duke

gravely – seriously; formally

humbly – respectfully

insolence – rudeness, disrespect

magpie – a type of bird