

# Alice

a Wheelock Family Theatre Study Guide

prepared by Thecla Ree

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## Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (Lewis Carroll)

### A Walk Through Time . . .



The story of how a little Victorian girl named Alice inspired one of the most recognized books in children's literature is almost as well-known as the book itself: one sunny day in July, Alice Liddell's friend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson rowed Alice, age 10, and her sisters down the River Thames, all the while amusing the three little girls with a story that he made up about Alice. On more boat rides that summer, Dodgson's tale grew longer, and Alice asked Dodgson to write it all down for her. Dodgson wrote and illustrated that summer's entertainment, and two years later Alice Liddell was delighted to receive "Alice's Adventures Under Ground" for Christmas.

Not so long after, Dodgson's story about Alice was published and wore, like its author, a new name. With *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Dodgson stepped forward as Mr. Lewis Carroll, and he lives on forever in the imagination and appreciation of readers.

Charles Dodgson, however, was much more than just Lewis Carroll. Academia and the public knew Charles Dodgson not only as a writer of prose and poetry, but also as a photographer, Oxford mathematician, logician, and ordained deacon of the Church of England. Dodgson almost always denied any relation to his nom de plume; he was concerned that reviewers of his mathematical books would "shrug off" his work (*Lewis Carroll: A Biography*, Morton N. Cohen, p. 298) if they discovered he was Lewis Carroll, celebrated master of the absurd.

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was groundbreaking. The story included not a single moral—this was a first in children's books. Cornelia Meigs et al. called the book the "real beginning of modern literature for children" (*A Critical History of Children's Literature*, p. 194).

. . . Continues to Wheelock Family Theatre . . .

Wheelock Family  
Theatre opens,  
with *Alice in  
Wonderland*

1981



WFT presents the  
professional  
premiere of *Alice*, a  
musical

2014

Lewis Carroll's fantastical tale holds also a very special place in Wheelock Family Theatre's history: *Alice in Wonderland* was WFT's first-ever production. Nearly 35 years later, this new musical adaption is by one of our dear friends and colleagues, Andrew Barbato. Most frequently seen on local stages as an actor, Andrew has been playwriting since he was a teen, and WFT is proud to celebrate a young local artist and produce the professional premiere of his musical, *Alice*.

And now, "The time has come," the Walrus famously said. We invite you to join us for this timeless adventure of Alice that continues

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## Lewis Carroll's Poetry

### Jabberwocky

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Why, it's a Looking-glass book, of course! And, if I hold it up to a Glass, the words will all go the right way again." —*Through the Looking Glass*

Lewis Carroll entertained yet also baffled readers who sought to find meaning in his skillfully crafted nonsense. No doubt, "Jabberwocky" may sound like a familiar word to us today, but consider the stir that this word—and this poem, peppered with new words by Lewis—created way back in 1871. Curiouser and curiouser, indeed. Helpfully Carroll wrote a note that appears in later editions of *Through the Looking Glass*:

The new words .... have given rise to some differences of opinion as to their pronunciation: so it may be well to give instructions on *that* point also. Pronounce "slithy" as if it were the two words "sly, the"; make the "g" *hard* in "gyre" and "gimble": and pronounce "rath" to rhyme with "bath." —Christmas, 1896

Today, *jabberwocky* (lowercased) is a real word that dictionaries define as a speech or piece of writing that's, well, nonsensical. Other words that Carroll created, like *chortle*, are also in the dictionary and used in everyday speech.

#### Reading Suggestion

*Frindle*, by Andrew Clements

#### **Activity: Jabberwocky Contest**

In Wheelock Family Theatre's production of *Alice*, Alice and her sister make a game of reciting together three stanzas of "Jabberwocky":

*'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.*

*"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!  
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun  
The frumious Bandersnatch!"*

*One, two! One, two! And through and through  
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!  
He left it dead!  
He went galumphing back!*

- Use the handout *Jabberwocky for Two* (in the “Handouts and Worksheets” appendix to this study guide) and ask students to pair off and memorize as much of these three stanzas as possible—or even more!
- Hold a poetry recital and see which teams can remember the most lines.

**Activity: Nonsetymology<sup>1</sup> (n.). etymology of nonsense**

Reciting “Jabberwocky” might be easier if students understand as much as possible the meaning of this poem. Although Carroll made up these nonsense words, students are welcome to assign meaning to them. An exercise like Jabberwocky Fill in the Blanks (see worksheet) might help.

- First explain that etymology is the origin of a word and that Carroll made up some of the words (e.g., *slithy*, a combination of slimy and lithe; *frumious*, which means furious and fuming).
- As a follow-up activity to the worksheet, play a Jeopardy-style game.
  - Read aloud a definition, and have the class guess the word.

*Alternative Activity*

- Ask students to memorize and recite, in pairs, parts of another Lewis Carroll poem. They can choose poetry from *Poetry for Young People: Lewis Carroll*, ed. Edward Mendelson, ill. by Eric Copeland.

**Activity: Poetry and Tea for Two**

Have students write and illustrate a poem that’s meant to be read by two people.

- Read *Seeds, Bees, Butterflies, and More!* (by Carole Gerber, ill. Eugene Yelchin) for inspiration and examples.
- Hold a poetry reading and serve afternoon tea.
- Research what to serve at an afternoon tea in England.
- Have students plan the event, figure out quantities and a budget for the refreshments, make out a shopping list, and design and write the invitation in the style of the invitation in *Alice*, which reads:
  - “An invitation from the Queen of Hearts for the Duchess to The Queen’s Royal Ball”

Reading Suggestions

*Lewis Carroll, Author of Alice in Wonderland*, by Carol Greene

*The Young Lewis Carroll*, by Joanna Richardson

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<sup>1</sup> Not an actual word.

### **Activity: Create a Newspaper**

In the 1880s, “Jabberwocky” inspired *Jabberwock*, a newspaper at the Boston Latin School for Girls, edited by students, who sent letters back and forth to the famous Mr. Lewis Carroll, who lived all the way over in England. Carroll even wrote a poem for these lucky girls’ newspaper.

- As a class, start a newspaper, magazine, or blog inspired by some of your favorite authors or illustrators. Look at newspapers, magazines, and blogs to see the sections you’d like to include. Plan the content, and decide who will write, take photos, design/lay out the articles, and illustrate.
- Decide on a title.
- Choose a pen name for yourself.
  - Explain why you chose your name. (“Lewis Carroll” is a Latin version of Charles Lutwidge, with the two names reversed.)
- Correspond with the authors or illustrators if they’re still living. Perhaps they’ll contribute a poem, story, or illustration, just as Carroll did for *Jabberwock*.
- Interview an author or illustrator, and include the interview in the newspaper or magazine.

### **Lewis Carroll’s Correspondence**

Lewis Carroll/Charles Dodgson often used fun techniques when he wrote letters to children. Here are just two of his techniques, a mirror letter and a rebus letter.

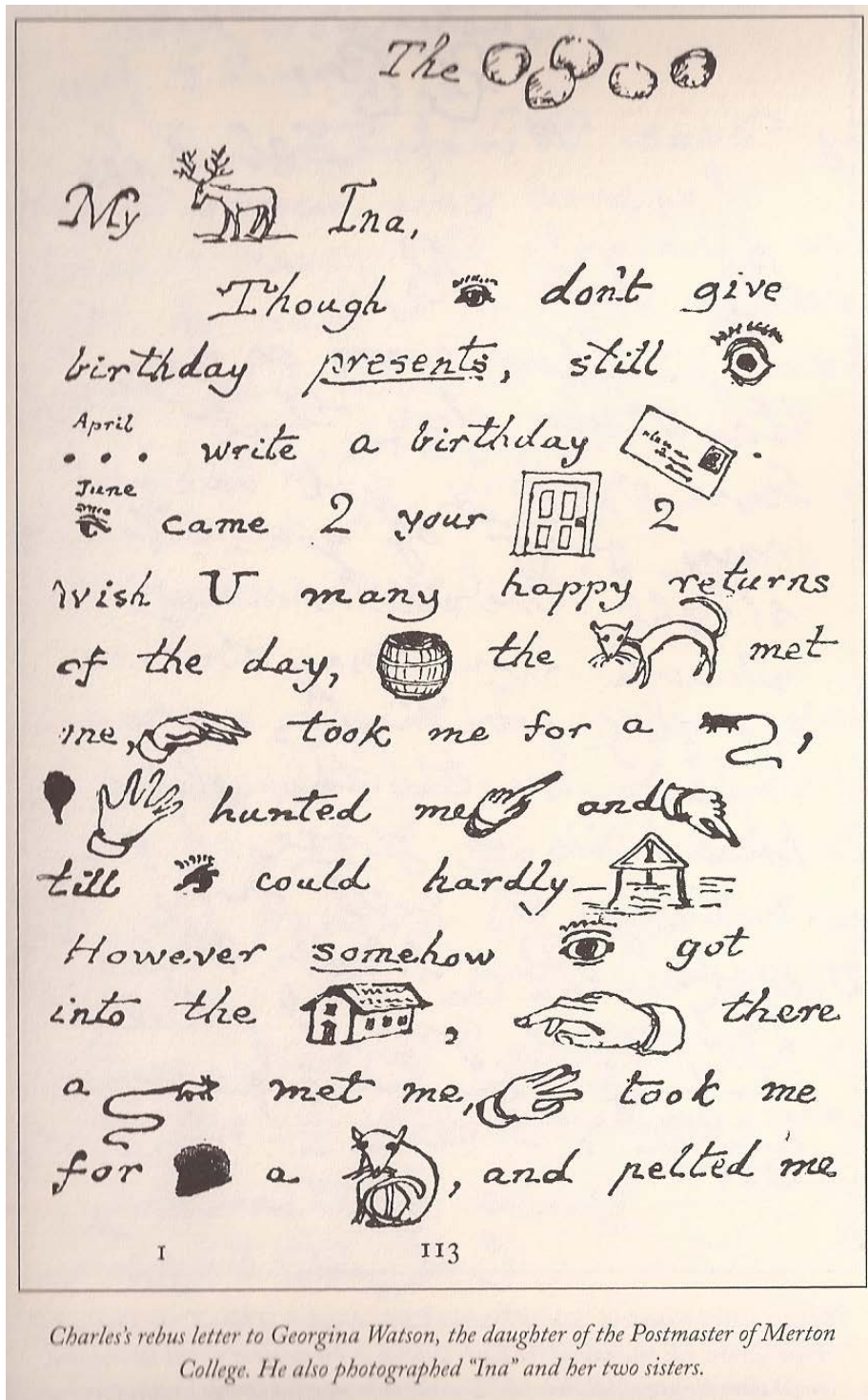
#### **Activity: Mirror Letter**

- Show students the letter that Carroll, as Charles Dodgson, wrote (next page), but don’t tell them it’s a letter just yet.
- Ask them to try to read this document, and then ask:
  - What do you think it is, and why?
  - What language could it be? Why do you think that?
  - What letters, characters, punctuation marks, or symbols do you recognize?
  - How might you be able to read it faster?
- When students have identified the document as a letter, ask them to write a mirror letter to someone.
- For younger students, try this activity with a shorter piece of writing that uses block letters.
  - Or, ask these questions about looking-glass letters:
    - Which letters look the same?
    - Which letters look like other letters (e.g., *b* looks like *d*)?
- Ask students to spell words or phrases that are palindromes.

No mirror handy? We’ve included the “solution” to Charles Dodgson’s letter—that is, the mirror image—as a handout.

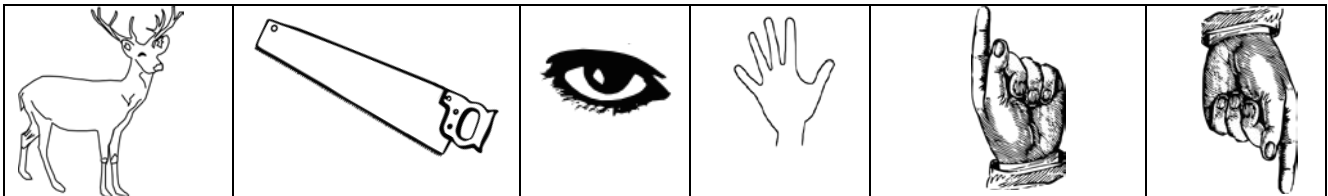
**Activity: Rebus Letter**

A rebus uses photos and symbols to represent words. A sample of a Dodgson rebus letter is below.



(Cohen, p. 177)

- Have students read the rebus letter and discuss it:
  - What did you notice?
  - Would it be easier or harder to write a letter like this?
  - What did you like or dislike about the letter?
- Have students write their own rebus letter. Suggest that they:
  - Use as many pictures as possible.
  - Draw homonyms and words that sound almost like often-used words. For example, Carroll drew these rebuses for *dear*, *saw*, *eye*, *and*, *up*, and *down*:



- Share the rebus letter with a classmate.
- The handout and worksheet *Keep an Eye and Ear Out for These Images; A World of Words* show images and words that will appear in Wheelock Family Theatre's production of *Alice*. Have students write a story or poem that includes as many of these pictures as possible.
  - Or use these words in Charades or Salad Bowl.
- Duplicate the images in the handout for a game of Alice-style Concentration.

## Games

Charles Dodgson (and Lewis Carroll) played and invented many puzzles and games, including a version of Scrabble and doublets.

### **Activity: Doublets**

- Have students try to solve some Lewis Carroll doublets.
- Use this as an example:
  - Start with the word *CAT*, and change one letter at a time to form a new word each time, until you end up with the word *DOG*:
    - *CAT*
    - (1<sup>st</sup> change) *cot*
    - (2<sup>nd</sup> change) *dot*
    - *DOG*
- Then, have students create their own doublets, or another game, for classmates to solve.

The doublets on the worksheet (*Lewis Carroll's Doublets*) are from *Doublets, A Word Puzzle*, by Lewis Carroll (1879), now in the public domain.



## Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Bat

### **Activity: Poetry Parody**

- Explain that a parody is a humorous imitation of the characteristics of a literary work.
- Read aloud Lewis Carroll's parody of a famous poem, but ask students to guess the rhyming words (i.e., the blank lines):

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

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

- Have each student create a parody of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" or a parody of another poem or song, for example:
  - "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Bat" (worksheet: Double Parody)
  - "Rain, Rain, Go Away," a song that the Frog Footman sings wistfully in *Alice* (worksheet: Poetry Parody)
- Hold a poetry parody slam.

## Growing Up, Changing

### **Frog Footman:**

It's just really special to get to watch someone grow right before your eyes, you know?

Rather than letting go of her childhood dreams, Alice discovers that growing up means bringing her dreams into reality.

### **Discussion and Activity: Growing Into Your Dreams**

- Define and explain the difference between dreaming while you're asleep and having a dream that you aspire to.
- Interview someone, or read a biography in the *Who Was/Who Is* series (or another biography), to learn more about someone who achieved his or her dreams.
  - Give a presentation or write a book report on the person, explaining what his or her dream was and how that person turned a dream into reality.

- What are your dreams, for now or for later?
  - Make a collage representing your dreams.
- How do you bring your dreams into reality?
  - Create a map of what you need to do to reach your dream.

### **Change and Caterpillars**

Alice says to Caterpillar: “Well, perhaps you haven't found it so yet, but when you have to turn into a chrysalis—you will some day, you know—and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you'll find it a little queer, won't you?”

Caterpillar responds, “Not a bit.”

### **Activity: Flora and Fauna**

- Study the changes of the caterpillar (from egg to butterfly) or the changes of another creature in Wheelock Family Theatre’s production of *Alice*. See the lists below.
- Create a timeline or growth chart.
- Research how long it takes for caterpillars to travel:
  - If a caterpillar takes \_\_\_\_\_ long to travel a foot, how long would it take to travel the width of your desk? to travel from one side of the class to the other? from the classroom to the playground? from your school to Wheelock Family Theatre? from Wheelock Family Theatre to Oxford, England, where Lewis Carroll lived and worked?

#### *Flora in Alice*

Rose  
Tiger lily  
Tulip  
Violet

#### *Fauna in Alice*

Caterpillar  
Cheshire Cat  
Dinah (a cat)  
Dormouse  
Frog Footman  
March Hare  
Mouse  
Pig  
White Rabbit

### **The Loveliest Garden**

The Tulips sing:  
THE DIRT’S LOVE  
IS KEEPING US GROWING  
A PART OF  
THE LOVELIEST GARDEN

ALICE sings in response:  
THE LOVELIEST GARDEN I EVER HAVE SEEN

**Activity: *Grow the Loveliest Garden***

- October is an ideal time to start planting tulips. Go outside to plant some bulbs. While you wait for leaves to sprout in spring, learn how the tulip is changing underground, thanks to the “dirt’s love.”
- Grow chocolate mint, or another plant.
- Keep a plant journal and chart your plant’s growth.
- Investigate why the earthworm is important to gardening.
- If you’re growing chocolate mint, use the leaves to steep some fragrant tea for a tea party.
- Or use the mint to garnish a “dirt’s love” cake. See below.

**Activity: *Make a Dirt’s Love Cake***

- Hold the earthworms, but dig into a pot of chocolate cookies and gummy worms. Find the recipe for a dirt cake: <http://allrecipes.com/recipe/dirt-cake-i/>

**Birthdays**

Alice sings:  
IT’S MY BIRTHDAY

Mother:  
A LITTLE LESS PLAYING  
A LITTLE MORE GROWING  
YOU’RE GROWING AND KNOWING—

Alice:  
MOTHER, WHERE IS THIS GOING?

Nothing says growing up, and changing, like a milestone birthday. This adaption of *Alice in Wonderland* opens on the morning of Alice’s 13th birthday.

**Activities**

- Make and display a class calendar of birthdays and other notable dates like holidays.
  - Mark each birthday or notable date with a picture that grows or changes as that month progresses—for example, for May, mark the dates with a tulip bulb that becomes a sprout, and eventually a tall tulip in full bloom.
- Research how birthdays are celebrated around the world. What are important birthdays (e.g., sweet sixteen, quinceañera)?

**“A Little More Growing”—and GROWING**

Alice drinks a potion labeled simply “Drink Me” and almost instantly grows into a giant. She tries to explain to the Caterpillar, “I sort of knew who I was when I woke up this morning. But I’ve changed several times since then. . . . I can’t understand it myself to begin with. And being so many different sizes in a day is *very* confusing.”

Help Alice explain to the Caterpillar what it's like to be a different size suddenly.

**Activity and Discussion: Make a pair of stilts and get a new perspective.**

Materials: 2 clean, empty cans the same size, opened at one end (tall juice cans work great), clothesline or thin rope, punch can opener (to make holes)

- First, make holes in the cans to thread the clothesline through. To do this, turn the can over so the closed end is up. Use the can opener to make two openings, one each on opposite sides of the can.
- Before you thread the rope through the holes, you need to measure for the correct length of clothesline. Stand with one foot on the clothesline and bring both sides of the line up to your armpits. Mark with your fingers the place where the line reaches your armpit and cut the line there.
- Finally, thread each end of the clothesline through a hole from inside the can and pull up.
- Ready? Stand one foot on each can, wrap your hands around the ends of the line, and pull up to maintain pressure and keep the cans on your feet as you walk.

(Materials and instructions for stilts from *Go Outside!* by Nancy Blakey)

- Ask students to:
  - Try walking on different heights of cans.
  - Try to walk as quickly as possible.
  - Have a relay race.
  - Try to walk backwards.
  - Stand on one leg for as long as possible.
- For a math activity: have students measure the ropes, cans, and students' heights, time the relays, and chart the results.
- Discuss how it feels to be suddenly taller:
  - What was difficult? What was easier? What was different? What do you notice that you may never have seen before?

**... And Then Shrinking too much**

Later, Alice starts to shrink back to her original size—but, oops, in a moment, she's shrunk much too much. Now the size of a mouse, Alice learns that seeing things from a different perspective has its challenges but is also a gift.

**Activity and Discussion**

- The class can divide in half and take turns being the "mice."
- Tell half the class to drop to the floor (or grass or playground if you try this outside) and to keep their eyes as low to the floor as possible (i.e., mouse-height). Ask:
  - What do you see that you never noticed before?
- Tell the other half of the class to walk around (making sure not to step on any mice!).
- Ask the mice:
  - Could you identify your classmates?

- How did you identify them?
- How would it feel to be so small?
- What are the benefits of being the size of a mouse or caterpillar?
- Turn this into a game by seeing which mouse identifies the most people.
- Make a diorama using everyday objects to furnish a home fit for a mouse or caterpillar.

### Take It Outside

The following activity is from *Spinning Tales Weaving Hope: Stories of Peace, Justice & the Environment*. Edited by Ed Brody, Jay Goldspinner, Katie Green, Rona Leventhal and John Porcino (p. 204):

- Have all the students lie on their bellies in the grass—it is best if they wear long pants and shirts. With index cards and pens in hand, students use their imagination to look into the grass, and write five or six sentences that describe what they see. For instance, one person may see a jungle with 1000-foot trees; another may see a leprechaun village, and so on.
- (Alternatively, this could be done verbally with each student sharing one or two thoughts.)
- Take these sentences back to the classroom or meeting-place and write poems or a story, using the sentences.
- Try a bird's eye view for the opposite perspective. Have the children look down from a picnic table or a tree they have climbed.

### Reading Suggestions

- *The Witches*, by Roald Dahl
- *James and the Giant Peach*, by Roald Dahl
- *Stuart Little*, by E.B. White
- *The Borrowers*, by Mary Norton

### Activity: *Mouse Beautiful and Other Publications*

As a child, Charles Dodgson made magazines for his family. One of them, *Useful and Instructive Poetry*, was appropriate for the Dodgsons, who enjoyed poetry and useful instructions.

- Make a magazine full of useful articles for Alice, the residents of a fantasy world beneath ours, or your younger siblings or schoolmates:
  - For siblings or schoolmates, include advice on growing up.
    - What does growing up mean to you?
    - Suggest books you like and explain why you recommend them.
    - Publish interviews with grownups or older students.
    - Include photos of yourself then, and now.
  - For Alice, make a travel magazine.
    - Include directions and a map, so that Alice can make her way in the new world into which she fell.
    - Suggest activities that she can do to prepare for her adventure before she follows the White Rabbit.
    - Tell her what to pack for her different sizes and the weather (it will rain).

- Recommend local sights to see.
  - Think about what would interest the people who live underground: for example, tips on gardening and soil.
- Work in groups and divide the tasks.
- Also think about:
  - What sorts of stories, illustrations, and photos will interest your readers, in addition to useful articles?
  - What would be a good title for your magazine? What would reflect the content or the reader? For example, in *Alice*:
    - The White Rabbit who is always late might enjoy *Time* magazine, so he can keep current on the news.
    - The Cook and the Baby/Pig might subscribe to a magazine titled *Food and Swine* for recipes, and stories about pigs.

## Self-Acceptance/Learning to Celebrate Yourself

Alice sings:  
 MOTHER WANTS A PERFECT GIRL  
 WHO PLAYS PIANO PERFECTLY  
 SO GOOD AT AVOIDING DANGERS

I'M TALL AND I'M AWKWARD  
 I'LL NEVER FIT IN  
 YES, THAT'S HOW MY LIFE SEEMS TO GO

Alice learns to accept herself, even without perfectly fitting into the roles that her mother and society would like her to assume. The following activities focus on students' celebration of themselves and on their individuality.

### Who AM I?

Alice: Who are you?  
 Mouse: Oh, that's no fun, lassie. Ask me who I was.

On the contrary, Captain Mouse. Answering Alice's question *can* be fun.

- Have the class come up with 10 questions they'd like to answer about themselves. Not the usual "What's your favorite sport or color?" questions, but questions like:
  - If you were a food, what food would you be?
  - If you were an animal, which animal would you be?
  - If you were a sport, what would that be?
- Tell students to write their answers down on a sheet of paper and then switch papers with a classmate to discuss their responses together.
- You can turn this into a guessing game by gathering the papers and choosing one randomly.

- Read the answer to the first question aloud, and ask “Who am I?”
- See if the class can guess the student’s identity. Most likely they can’t, so read aloud each subsequent answer and ask “Who am I?” each time.
- If no one can guess the student’s identity at the end of the 10 answers, the student can identify himself or herself.

**Activity and Discussion: Collage**

- Have students create a collage that portrays themselves and also shows what makes them unique.
- Without identifying students, display each collage with a sheet of paper under it. Tell students:
  - Walk around the room and look at each collage.
  - Under each collage, write down at least one thing that you admire about the collage (i.e., the person it depicts).
- When everyone has finished viewing the collages, give each student the list of things that his or her classmates admire about him or her.
- Or, have students swap their collages with a classmate with these instructions:
  - Explain why this collage portrays you.
  - Look at both collages, and point out similarities and differences.
  - Name three things about your partner’s collage that you admire.

Reading Suggestions

*Clementine*, by Sara Pennypacker, ill. by Marla Frazee

*Ellray Jakes Walks the Plank*, by Sally Warner, ill. by Jamie Harper

*Harriet the Spy*, by Louise Fitzhugh

*Jack Adrift: Fourth Grade Without a Clue*, by Jack Gantos

*Ramona the Pest*, by Beverly Cleary

|                                      |
|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Overcoming Fears and Mistakes</b> |
|--------------------------------------|

Alice (sings):  
 AND EACH NEW SURPRISE IS A DOOR  
 THAT HAS OPENED FOR ME

I WONT BE AFRAID IF I FALL

Alice’s circuitous route through an unknown world makes her journey to adulthood more difficult. In the real world, students need not fear that a rainstorm of tears can cause a flood or that they’ll cross paths with talking bugs, but they still battle their own bugaboos.

Though Alice makes errors, she’s determined to face her fears and to steer her own path. The mistakes and mishaps in her journey lead her where she needs, and wants, to be.

### **Activity and Discussion: Overcoming Fears**

- As a class, develop a list of frightening things—for example, a monster in the basement, getting a shot at the doctor’s, the flying monkeys in *Wizard of Oz*.
- Read a book in which the protagonist learns to overcome fears. For example:

*Alvin Ho: Allergic to Babies, Burglars, and Other Bumps in the Night*, by Lenore Look

*Dragonbreath*, by Ursula Vernon

*Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, by Jeff Kinney

*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, by J.K. Rowling

*Just Grace*, by Charise Mericle Harper

- Write a description or draw a picture of what the characters do to try to overcome that fear.
- Discuss what the characters do to conquer their fear. For example: Danny the dragon in *Dragonbreath* practices visualizing techniques to try to breathe fire; later he’s able to face his fears, breathe fire, and save his best friend.
- Discuss other possible techniques that might work for the character. For example:
  - Danny practices thinking “hot thoughts” like jalapeños and gargling with kerosene to breathe fire. What are some other “hot” ideas?
  - What if Danny had the opposite problem and needed to think “cold thoughts”? What foods and objects should he visualize?
- Can imagining something hot or cold actually change how you think or feel? Why or why not?
  - Imagine yourself biting into a wedge of juicy lemon or a very sour pickle.
    - How did that make you feel?
    - Did you notice any change in your mouth?
- If you practice combatting your fear, could that make your fear less powerful?
- Return to the list of fears.
  - Imagine ways that someone could face a fear by practicing a visualizing technique like Danny’s, or another of the solutions in the books.
  - Draw or write a description of how to combat that fear.



## Bends in the Road

Alice's journey takes many bends and dips, but, in losing her way, she gains so much in the search that leads to the garden of her dreams. Alice and the White Queen sing with hope and promise, "It's only around the bend"—but which bend is the right bend?

### Activity: Mazes

- Follow one of the bends, and lead Alice to the garden. (Worksheet: Alice Finds the Garden)
- Then, make your own maze that takes Alice to the garden.

## Music and Theatre

### The Sounds of Music

*Alice* makes use of different sound effects, tempos, and musical styles. The audience will also hear an assortment of instruments: bells, a penny whistle, a washboard, and a tin whistle or spoon.

And, with the White Rabbit running breathlessly behind schedule, expect to hear the sounds of different timepieces throughout the musical—bells, the *tick tock, tick tock* of a grandfather clock, the Westminster chimes, the White Rabbit's pocket watch, and an oven timer.

### Activity: Play On

- Play music from the Victorian era. Students may already be familiar with the music of Wagner, Liszt, Brahms, and other composers from watching cartoons.
- Gather instruments to play and listen to—the ones mentioned above if possible, plus any instruments that students are learning.
- Choose a simple tune from *Alice*—for example, *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* (see handout: Excerpt from Tea Party)—and play it on an instrument.
- The following list includes musical directions and descriptions in *Alice*:

freely  
flowing  
jaunty  
slow  
wistful

Allegro  
andante  
Classical  
colla voce  
espressivo  
glissando  
march tempo  
misterioso  
moderato  
poco meno mosso  
poco piu mosso  
presto  
rubato  
tranquillo

Bluesy  
gospel  
sea shanty  
waltz, fast waltz

- Have each student research a musical direction, tempo, or style to teach to the class, either by demonstrating it or by playing a library CD or MP3 file.
- A student can demonstrate “jaunty,” for example, by ringing bells, clapping to the tune of *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, keeping time with a stick, singing, or playing an instrument.
- If you have enough instruments, bells, and chimes: Form a class orchestra (or smaller groups) to play or clap out a simple tune. For smaller groups, consider having each group play the same piece but in a different musical style or tempo.
- If you’re reading aloud *Alice in Wonderland* or *Through the Looking Glass*, have students listen for appropriate moments to accompany the story with a few notes from an instrument or a bell tone.
  - Discuss what kind of music would be a good match for certain scenes.
- If students have completed a poetry activity, they can set their poem to music or compose new music for their poem.
- Write new lyrics for the sea shanty *With the Sea as Our Guide* (music and lyrics included in “Handouts and Worksheets”) sung by Alice and Mouse.

## Portable, Affordable Theatre for All

### *Activity: Make a Matchbox Theatre*

#### Materials

- A matchbox for each student
- Toothpicks or cupcake toppers (these will be the “actors”)
- Paint and other art supplies to decorate the matchboxes and to draw little “actors”
- Glue or hot glue
- Small flashlights, a lamp, or tiny tree lights
- Optional: fabric and music

Students should write a short one-scene play and then:

- Remove the inside tray of the matchbox from the outer box.
- The outer box will be the outside of the theatre. Find the center of the box and cut it into 2 equal halves, the short way. Slide the two pieces back together over the inside box.
- Decorate the outside with the name of your theatre, or cover the box with folds of fabric to suggest heavy theatre curtains. (The 2 sides of the decorated box will be pulled apart to reveal the “stage.”)
- The inside tray will be the stage. Lay the tray on its side, and paint the inside (and inside edges) with a tiny scene.

For the actors:

- Draw and cut out small figures, or just heads, and glue them to the toothpicks. Or use ready-made cupcake toppers.

On opening night

- Place the theatre on the edge of a desk or table.
- Place a small lamp, flashlights, or tiny tree lights near the matchbox; these will serve as the stage lights.
- Dim the room.
- Perform the play with the toothpick actors; play music or create sound effects if suitable for the scene.
- Film the play, and then hold a festival to showcase each student’s matchbox performance.

#### *Other Types of Matchbox Theatres*

- For directions on making a puppet matchbox theatre and a puppet, see <http://www.artistshelpingchildren.org/kidscraftsactivitiesblog/2013/09/how-to-make-a-mini-puppet-theater-with-a-matches-box/>
- Paul Fleischman, author of *Weslandia*, creates matchbox theaters with moving wire parts: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZW0YmkliZFY>

### **Adaptation and Fantasy: Beyond the Rabbit Hole**

Children's classics and more recent books have used different means to transport their unsuspecting characters through space and time—whether to a fantasy world; by way of a large wardrobe or small pools of water (the Narnia books); or to the future, through a physics wormhole (*Herbert's Wormhole*).

Explain to students that *Alice* is a musical adaptation of a book of fantasy, in which a human enters a new world by traveling through a rabbit hole.

#### ***Activity: Adaptation and Fantasy***

- Write a story or play in which a character steps from one world into another. Be sure to consider:
  - How does the character move from one world to the other?
  - What is the first thing the character encounters?
  - Who inhabits the new world? Are they human?
  - What time (year or hour) is it in the other world?
  - What language is spoken?
  - What are the rules or laws?
  - How does the character feel?
  
- Write a story or play in which a character from one book travels into the world of another book. Be sure to consider:
  - How does the character get into the other book?
  - Where in the book does the character arrive (i.e., when in the story line)?
  - Whom does the character meet first?
  - Does the character want to return to his or her own book? Why or why not?
  - How does the character feel?

#### Reading Suggestions

*Herbert's Wormhole*, by Peter Nelson and Rohitash Rao

*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, by C.S. Lewis

*The Magician's Nephew*, by C.S. Lewis

For more Theatre activities: See also the Poetry section of this study guide.

## Costumes

### **Lisa Simpson, WFT's Costume Designer**

If you take a tour of Wheelock Family Theatre, you might be lucky enough to meet Lisa Simpson, one of the creative minds behind our heavy velvet curtains. Lisa puts in a full day as a financial aid officer at Harvard University before crossing the Charles River and donning her other hat as—appropriately—costume designer at WFT.

Lisa often thought about, designed, and sewed her own costumes and clothes when she was a child. Inspired by a photo in *National Geographic*, she once sewed a Tahitian outfit for herself out of new batik bedroom curtains. (She didn't have permission from her mother, though, so this isn't a theatre activity that Lisa recommends.)

Designing costumes for *Alice* has been especially interesting for Lisa, because of the era (circa 1900) and the opportunity to create two different worlds: the real world, which Alice lives in, and the fantasy world that she enters. "I like being creative and I like the challenge of solving problems," she says. "Sometimes those problems can be complicated and take a while to develop a solution to. It's a great feeling when you have solved a problem or created something beautiful."

### ***Activities: Research and Design***

Lisa wasn't particularly fond of studying history or math in school, but today she regularly uses—and enjoys—both subjects. As a designer, she researches the clothing of a bygone era, along with the hairstyles, shoes, and accessories of the times. Then, to plan how to "build" or shop for each new costume and to ensure that the costume fits the actor, she applies those geometry and algebra concepts that used to seem boring.

Researching the clothing and styles of an era is a typical part of a costume designer's job, but Lisa also digs deeper and studies what each character—specifically and particularly—would have worn.

"The actor makes one first impression. When he walks on stage, you should know him," she says. So, long before an actor puts his or her boots on to step out on that stage, Lisa has researched the time and place of a play, its climate, what a character does for work, what his or her world is like. The result is that the audience sees clearly who this character is when he or she steps in front of the lights.

- Have students choose an era that interests them and research its clothing, hairstyles, and shoes. Pick a character (fictional or real) from another era,

and design a costume, hairstyle, and shoes for that character to wear. Present the designs to the class to discuss:

- Who do you think this character is?
- Where is the character from?
- When did the character live and where?
- How do we know all this?

Actors who play the role of animals in *Alice* won't be wearing furry costumes. Instead, Lisa has planned for actors to wear human clothes, with design details that suggest the animal—for example, the rabbits will wear knickers, which are subtly reminiscent of muscular rabbit legs.

- Design a costume for an animal or flower in *Alice* based on ordinary clothes that we wear today. For example, students could think about a type of hat, other than a Mickey Mouse hat, that suggests a mouse, by adding or changing a detail. (Hint: Lisa's design uses feathers for "ears.") Present the designs to the class and have the class guess the animal.

It's nearly Halloween—the perfect time to design a costume.

- Design a costume for yourself. Then have someone outline your body on a large sheet of paper.
  - Cut out your outline and draw your costume, life-size, on the cutout.
  - Display the costumes in the hallway for others to enjoy.

#### Reading Suggestions

*Clothes and Crafts in Victorian Times*, by Philip Steele

*Costume Designer*, by Helen Mason

*Farmer Boy*, by Laura Ingalls Wilder

*High Fashion in Victorian Times*, by Andrew Brownfoot

*These Happy Golden Years*, by Laura Ingalls Wilder

### **Coffee, and Make It a Double!**

The costumes in the real world and in the fantasy world underground are from the same era, but the underground clothes would be dingier, says Lisa. "It's like you took things from the real world and aged them 30 years," she explains. "The costumes have the same style but a different 'feel.'" She achieves this dingy feel by staining some costumes with plain old coffee.

Alas, the WFT coffeemaker only makes 6 cups at time.

Not one to sit around watching coffee drip, Lisa makes a trip to Dunkin' Donuts, where she buys two big boxes of ready-made coffee and dumps all that hot coffee into a large plastic container.

The clothes get tossed in and swirled around. The end of a broom does a nice job of swirling the clothes, not unlike the way clothes used to be laundered before washing machines. When the garment reaches the desired state of darkness, she'll squeeze it, rinse it, and toss it into a dryer.

Then, Lisa awaits the result—and can leave all the freshly brewed coffee from the machine for her deserving colleagues at WFT.

### ***Activity: Stain Something***

Adapt Lisa's techniques with fabric to get just the right look for your own costume or play:

- Design a costume, and use coffee or tea to dye the fabric or the prop (e.g., a letter or treasure map can be stained to look old).
  - Try different teas for different hues.
- With Halloween approaching, dye a sheet for a dingy ghost, or darken a white pirate's shirt or the Bride of Frankenstein's nightgown.
- Fray garments and make them look older.
  - Lisa uses a serrated knife, shears, or wire brushes to wear away the fabric.
- If your costume needs stains, copy Lisa's method for making the WFT costumes look dirty:
  - Mix acrylic paint and water in a spray bottle.
  - Spray the mixture right on the garment.
    - Lisa recommends having another person wear the garment while you spray it. You can try spraying the garment while it's lying flat, but the other way is easier.
  - Consider where the stains or fabric wear would occur (e.g., on the elbows).