

Isabelle Kerner
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English 102
Rick Clark
Research Outline



Alice in Wonderland

The novel *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll was written in 1865. Carroll was inspired to create *Alice in Wonderland* on July 4, 1862 after he went adventuring on a boat ride with ten-year-old Alice Liddell and her two sisters. In order to entertain the bored girls during their ride, Carroll tells the story of a girl named Alice, who is playing on the river bank and falls down a rabbit hole. Alice finds herself in Wonderland, a magical world containing quixotic characters and imaginary objects. The ten-year-old Alice Liddell was so amused by Carroll's story that she begged him to write it down (Browne). Carroll did as Alice wished, creating the manuscript of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Alice is portrayed in the story as a curious, bored young girl who is frustrated with the order and predictability of the world around her. After tumbling down the rabbit hole into the world of Wonderland, Alice is forced to face the uncertainty of Wonderland before she is able to understand it.

Immediately, the book was challenged and questioned by adults for its obscure plotline and mysterious meanings hidden within the plotline. Parents on the board of Woodsville High School in New Hampshire challenged the story in 1900 due to their belief that its content referenced sexual fantasies, religious rituals, and opposition to authority, which eventually resulted in the suspension of the novel

from the school's bookshelves. In 1931, the book was also banned from the Government of Hunan Province in China for the reason that "Animals should not use human language, and that it was disastrous to put animals and human beings on the same level. (Wolf)". The banning of *Alice's Adventure's in Wonderland* in China and New Hampshire is reflective of how freedom of speech is not a guaranteed right in all situations. Adults expressed fear because of their belief that if children were exposed to the *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, it would subconsciously corrupt their psychological and intellectual development because of the religious, political, and sociological meanings encrypted within the plotline. The fear exhibited by Alice while she is in Wonderland is metaphoric of the fear that adults expressed after reading the book and is suggestive of how human's nature will often cause them to fear the unknown.

In order to protect his identity, Charles Dodgson wrote under the pseudonym, Lewis Carroll. Dodgson was born in Daresbury, Cheshire on January 27, 1832 and was the first of 11 children; seven of which were girls. On his twelfth birthday, after being entirely homeschooled, Dodgson was sent to Rugby School and was supervised by the Anglican prelate Archibald Tait (Dodgson). Dodgson's academic performance and high IQ earned him a position at Oxford College in 1850 where he spent the next four years studying mathematics (Dodgson). He earned his BA in 1854 and was presented with an opportunity to teach mathematics at the Oxford College several years after graduating. In 1860 went on to become a Deacon at Christ Church, Oxford (Dodgson). It was during his time at Oxford that Dodgson met Harry Liddell, the Dean of Christ Church and his three daughters. Amongst one

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of the three sisters was ten-year-old Alice Liddell, the inspiration for the Alice in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Kehe). Those who new Dodgson recognized his obvious fascination with children and photography (Kehe). It is unknown entirely what dove Dodgson's obsession with them and some speculate that Dodgson was a pedophile (Kehe). One picture of Alice Liddell in particular drew attention from the public and continues to be widely disputed. Dodgson photographed Alice alone and dressed her in rags as if she were a beggar (Kehe). Since the photographed surfaced, it has remained controversial and is thought to be suggestive of a sexual attachment between Dodgson and Alice. Britain was a monarch during Dodgson's life and Queen Victoria was the ruler (Queen). Queen Victoria was very fond of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and asked Dodgson to present to her his mathematical findings, which she was very impressed by (Queen). During his life, Dodgson was popular amongst those who knew him, but in today's world has received criticism and speculation due to the suspicion that Dodgson was a sexual predator.

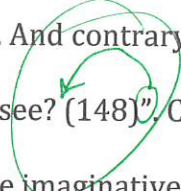
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Although Lewis Carroll's tale has been placed in the genre of 'literary nonsense' because of its illogical and bizarre plotline, Dodgson encrypted a multitude of mathematical concepts pertaining to logic within the story (Devlin). "In spite of the seeming illogicality, these instances of "nonsense" have their own rationality within the fictional text world" and reflect the theory of relativity; measurements and quantities involving objects in space and time are relative to the observer's velocities (Feng). The mathematical concepts regarding space, relativity, time, and matter are depicted in Wonderland through the scenarios, ideologies, and homonyms, which are relative only to Alice's (Antonic). Alice tells the black cat, "If I

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had a world of my own, everything would be nonsense. Nothing would be what it is because everything would be what it isn't. And contrary-wise; what it is it wouldn't be, and what it wouldn't be, it would. You see? (148)" Carroll is indirectly referring to opposites as they are applied in both the imaginative and realistic world. One opposite does not exist without the other in math and metaphorically Alice cannot have a world of reality without having a world of imagination. Another instance in which math is applied to the scenarios included within *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* takes place during the scene of the mad tea party when the Mad Hatter says to Alice, "it's always tea-time, and we've no time to wash the things between whiles," in which Alice responds saying, "Then you keep moving round, I suppose?" (58). Dodgson was very interested in the work of William Hamilton, a mathematician whose experimental work involved quaternions. Hamilton's work involved reviewing numbers with rotations and he found that by removing the parameter the complexity is reduced. (Devlin, 2013). Hamilton said that if the time parameter is removed, than the numbers rotate around infinitely in the same way that the characters at the tea party continuously rotate around the table (Devlin, 2013). The "Tea" in tea party is symbolic of the variable t , which stands for time in math (Beer). After she first arrives in Wonderland, Alice attempts to regain control by attempting to recite her multiplication tables and by trying to rename the capitols of European countries.

"I'll try if I know all the things I used to know. Let me see: four times five is twelve, and four times six is thirteen, and four times seven is—oh dear! I shall never get to twenty at that rate! However, the Multiplication Table



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doesn't signify: let's try Geography. London is the capital of Paris, and Paris is the capital of Rome, and Rome—no, THAT'S all wrong" (Carroll, 14).

In saying this, Alice exemplifies one way that math and logic are used to provide humans with a sense of control. By being able to measure and quantify nonliving and living things, or by creating 'facts', humans are given a sense of understanding of the external world and the ways in which it works. Lewis Carroll's novel was different from other works reflecting literary nonsense because the illogical and unrealistic elements did not replace logical and realistic ideas; they only encrypted them (Feng).

One of several reasons that parents on the board at Woodsville High School removed Carroll's novel from the school's bookshelves was due to their assumption that the novel referenced religious ritual and sexual fantasies (Banned). Dodgson once commented that the rabbit hole in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is symbolic of the stairs that are in the back of Christ Church (Browne). Alice Liddell's father, Henry Liddell, was the dean of Christ Church, and Alice spent a great deal of her childhood at and around the church ("Lewis Carroll and Alice"). Christ Church can be analogized to the rabbit hole through the way that both can metaphorically convey that Alice is lost in her past. Alice's lack of control in Wonderland is also similar to the lack of control she has over past. Alice cannot change her past or control that she is in Wonderland, she can only focus on understanding her past and/or Wonderland in order to proceed to the future. *Alice's Adventure's in Wonderland* shows a number of similarities to Buddhist beliefs and ideas, which address human's nature to fear the unknown. "How often are we willing to accept

that we do not know the answer to something? We'd rather know and be right than live in a state of wonder and uncertainty" (Silberberg). Similarly, religion provides humans with a sense of life purpose through the way that it provides answers to unanswerable questions. Although, religion has been beneficial to many individuals and also keeps them from moral corruption, religion has also resulted in political and cultural context. The characters in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* seem to see things differently than she does even though they are both in wonderland.

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Wonderland can be analogized to 'One Mind'; the state of mentality all humans experience when everything they know is removed (Silberberg). When Alice arrives in Wonderland, she is uncertain of where she is and who is surrounding her because she has never experienced it before. In wonderland, the laws, order, and language are different than they are in the world that Alice is accustomed to because they do not follow the same order (Carroll). What Alice has been previously told is no longer relevant in Wonderland, as the laws, order, and language are different than they are in the world that Alice is accustomed to. When Alice says, "I can't go back to yesterday, because I was a different person then," the themes of loss of innocence and coming of age are indicated as Alice understands that every event and interaction she has experienced has determined her perception of reality (Carroll 99).

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After its release, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* received criticism for the possibility that it encouraged opposition to authority and political power. Queen Victoria was the monarch of the United Kingdom from June 1837 until January 1901 and is believed by some to be the main inspiration behind the Queen of Hearts who

rules Wonderland violently and predominantly (Queen). The Queen of Hearts responds to those who disobey her, saying, "Off with their heads!" (Carroll, 175). Although Queen Victoria was fond of Dodgson, evidence suggests that Dodgson was not equally impressed by her (Dodgson). Queen Victoria was uncomfortable with children, hated childbirth, and disregarded social issues (Queen). In one scene Alice

Carroll's novel contrasts reality and imagination through symbolism, metaphors, and analogies; all of which ironically represent realistic conflicts and past historical occurrences. Alice is trapped in her mind because she cannot face the inevitable fate she is presented with and her world seems rather boring (Silberberg). Before she is able to understand what is happening to her, Alice is forced to accept what is happening to her (Silberberg). The Buddha spoke about "the other shore," a place where illusions fall away and we can see the world clearly (Silberberg). Ironically the world of Wonderland can be similar to "the other shore" in the way that the illusions imposed by reality are different than the illusions imposed by imagination. Imagination is metaphoric to reality but the interpretive understanding is different, depending on the observer and their point of view (Devlin).

"And what is the use of a book," thought Alice, "without pictures or conversation?" (6).

Alice is referencing the inconsistent definitions of terminologies due to each individual's unique association of specific terminologies. The pictures in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland significantly contribute to the reactions from the public because they clarify the meanings in the book.

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This is also an issue when translating the story into other languages (Feng).

“More importantly, *Alice* is a resource book in philosophy and logic, since it involves many issues that have implications for the serious philosopher, logician, and mathematician, not just for the popular reader. It is under the disguise of comic fiction that *Alice* has not been taken as “serious” literary work” (Feng)

The novel was suspended from bookshelves at Woodsville High School in New Hampshire in 1900 due because it was believed that the content referenced sexual fantasies, religious rituals, and opposition to authority (Baldassarro). Adults did not entirely understand the messages encrypted in the novel, but knew that they existed and referenced real life scenarios (Bode). Adults wanted to control and restrict what children were exposed to, in order to avoid loss of control over how the child would develop and form their own values, ideas, and opinions as they came of age (Baldassarro). It was believed that if children were exposed to the story, they would subconsciously associate the visual ideologies with hidden terminologies (Baldassarro). Children were not experienced enough to understand the meanings of the story as well as adults, therefore viewed it as entertainment while some adults found it a threat. (Feng). Lewis Carroll once stated to John Tenniel, the illustrator of the pictures included in the novel, “with such pictures, the book will be famous at once” (Bode, 56). It is likely that those who were not in favor of Lewis Carroll’s novel, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, practiced different religious rituals than the

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ones believed to be depicted in the story and also were threatened by the lack of regard for tradition the novel demonstrated.

In 1931, the book was also banned from the Government of Hunan Province in China for the reason that Animals should not use human language (Banned). Because of the rhythm, rhyme, and figurative language that Carroll included in the novel, when the story was translated into Chinese, the meanings and dialogue were interpreted differently by the Chinese after the novel was translated into Chinese (Feng). "While Carroll presents Alice as unable to speak correct English, Chao's recreation metalingually reconstructs a vivid instance of Alice's inability to speak correct Chinese. (Feng)" It is likely that the book was highly disapproved in China because of the translation errors that suggested American superiority and disrespect to Chinese culture. Because Alice was unable to demonstrate correct speaking of Chinese, the animals probably proved to be more intelligent and accurate than humans, which aggravated Chinese authority.

Lewis Carroll's fictional tale, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* received a multitude of criticism from society after being published. While the literary piece contains imaginative, illogical, and unusual scenarios, all are reflective of Alice's hopes, dreams, fears, and human flaws. Alice's lack of ability to control Wonderland is due to her inability to understand it as a projection her past. Similarly, those who challenge the story illustrate fear stemming from the unknown intentions, meanings, and references that Lewis Carroll included in the story. Despite attempts to control and limit accessibility to the story, as was the case in New Hampshire and Hunan, *Alice's Adventure's in Wonderland* remains today one of the most popular

stories among children. Freedom of speech has no consistent national or global definition in which it is applied to different situations. However, the banning of books, particularly *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, is reflective of how the attempt to control situations can also result in the loss of control. Despite attempts to conceal Carroll's novel because of the potentially threatening mathematical, religious, political, and sociological messages encrypted in the context, *Alice's Adventure's in Wonderland* is even more popular in modern day than it was when it was first introduced.

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Coming along nicely, now, Isabelle:

- Use more great quotes.
- Fix in-text citations and citation punctuation.
- Smooth choppy areas with transitions and explanatory connections.
- Break giant paragraphs at logical points.
- Double indent block quotes; remove quot. marks if not in original.
- Back opinion with concrete evidence or authoritative quotes.