Book report Alice in Wonderland
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Alice in Wonderland
by Lewis Carrol
1865

Summary
The story begins with Alice sitting by her sister on a bank. Alice was very bored, because she had nothing to do. She became very slow and sleepy. Suddenly a white rabbit ran close by and said: ‘Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be late!’ He then took his watch out of his waistcoat pocket, looked on it and hurried on. Out of curiosity, Alice followed the rabbit across a field and then into a rabbit hole. She fell into a very deep well. She could see bookshelves and cupboards at the side of the well, because she was falling very slowly. She was thinking about things, when suddenly she landed on a heap of leaves. She looked around and saw a long passage. The White rabbit was still in sight, so she followed him. When she came around the corner, the rabbit was gone. She was standing in a large hall with on both sides of her rows of doors. She tried every door there was, but they were all locked. In the middle of the room stood a 3 legged table with a key on it. All the doors had locks that were too big for the key. She found a tiny door behind a curtain. The key fitted the lock. She then drank a potion that made her smaller. She could now fit through the door, but she forgot the key on the table. She then found a small cake and ate it. It made her bigger, but she now was too big to fit through the door, so she started crying. Her crying created a large puddle around her. While she was crying, the rabbit came by again with his glove and a fan. Alice picked up the fan and started shrinking. She fell in the puddle and met a mouse. When she started talking about her cat and dog, the mouse got outraged with fear and left her behind. She promised not to talk about cats and dogs, so the mouse came back and led Alice and the other animals that had fallen in the puddle, to the shore. On the shore the mouse was supposed to tell why he hated cats and dogs, but began to tell a complicated historical story. Nobody was interested, so they did a “caucus race” to dry up. Alice had to give prizes to everybody. Luckily she had some candies with her. After the race, the mouse told a very long story Alice felt lonely and mentioned her cat Dinah. Everybody got scared and ran away. The rabbit passed along again. He thought Alice was his maid, so he told her to go to his house and get a pair of white gloves and a fan for him. In his house, she found another bottle and drank it, it made her grow again. She got stuck in his house. The rabbit, Pat the Goose and Bill the lizard tried to enter the house through the windows, but Alice kicked them out. They then threw little stones through the chimney. The stones turned into little cakes. Alice ate the cakes and grew small again. She then escaped into the woods. She met a puppy that she played with. When the puppy was done playing, she turned around and found a large mushroom on which sat a caterpillar smoking a hookah. He kept asking her who she was. She could not answer that question. He told her about the mushroom. Eating from one side makes you grow, eating from the other side makes you shrink. She tries one of the pieces and her neck grows very long. A bird thinks Alice is a serpent that is after her eggs. After figuring out which side made her grow and which side made her shrink and growing to the right size, she took two pieces with her. She then saw a house with two footmen in front of it, a Fish-Footman was bringing a letter to the Frog-Footman. The message was an invitation from the Queen to the Duchess to a cricket party. Alice asked if she could enter the house, the Frogman argued quite a lot with her, which made her think that everybody there argued a lot. She managed to get into the house. She met the Duchess, her baby, her cat and her cook. The cook was preparing soup and was using quite a lot of pepper, which resulted in the baby sneezing a lot and crying all the time. The cook threw pots and pans through the room. The cat appeared to be a Cheshire cat, and was grinning. She didn’t know that cats could grin. The Duchess threw her baby at Alice to nurse for a while. She took it outside away from its mother. Alice had problems holding it correctly, because the baby had arms and legs in all directions. When Alice finally found a way to hold the baby, the baby started turning into a piglet. Alice thought that it would grow up to be an ugly child and let it loose. She then saw the Cheshire cat and asked where she needed to go. The cat said it depended on where she wanted to get to. She said it didn’t matter. After a short confusing conversation, the cat told her that if she went to the right she would meet the Hatter and if she went to the left she would the March-Hare, but that it didn’t matter because they were both mad, because everybody is mad there. She went to the March Hare. He was drinking tea with the Hatter. In between them sat a dormouse. There were way more teacups than necessary, because they rotated when they were done with their tea, because they found that it was always tea-time. They had a very weird talk about time. The dormouse then told a story about 3 girls living in a well and dying there. Which is obvious because there is no food in a well. Alice left the party through a door in a tree. She was back at the hall with the many doors, but this time she managed better. She started by picking up the key and unlocking the door. She then ate a bit of mushroom, of which she had kept a piece in her pocket, to make her shrink and went through the door. She ended up in the beautiful garden. She saw a few living playing cards, painting roses red. The queen and king came by. The Queen told the guards to behead the playing cards. She then asked Alice if she wanted to join playing cricket. Alice did not decline, because she was scared of being decapitated. The game was very hard to play, because she had to use a flamingo to hit a hedgehog through playing cards that were bending over, but none of them cooperated. Every minute or so the Queen shouted ‘Off with his/her head’. After a while, only the King, the Queen and Alice were left. Alice asked the Queen where the duchess was. She said that the Duchess was in jail, but she was standing behind her. The Duchess brought Alice to a gryphon and asked it to tell her stories and take her to the mocking turtle. The mock turtle was crying and being depressed. Between crying he had discussions with Alice about education. He also told the story of the lobster quadrille, a dance in which all sea animals dance with a lobster, change lobster and throw them far into the sea and then start over. After that Alice went to a trial about who stole the Queens’s tarts. The Knight of Hearts was accused of stealing the tarts the Queen had made. The witnesses were the Hatter, the Duchess’s cook and Alice. Nobody brought in any evidence, so the Queen orders to cut off the head of the Knight of Hearts. Then Alice starts growing. She then wakes up and realises that it was all a dream. She thinks about how she will later tell this story to her children.

Character Description
The protagonist is Alice. Alice is a seven year old girl from Great Britain with lot of imagination. She is well raised and educated and likes to show that to others. She is also polite, and interested in others, but sometimes says things that offend others and is easily offended by rudeness. The character of Alice is based on a real girl. Alice Liddel, a child friend of the author. The book does not really have an antagonist, but the Queen of Hearts, also known as the Red Queen is the character that comes closest, during the game of cricket she tries to get Alice beheaded. The only other character that has an important recurring role, is the white rabbit. He shows up multiple times and contributes to the story, because he does something that results in Alice going somewhere. The white rabbit is always nervous and in a hurry. He does not have problems with his confidence. He contradicts the King of Hearts during the trial.

# Personal opinion

I chose to write a book report about Alice in Wonderland, because I had heard a lot about it and because there is not much English literature at my local library, so I didn’t have much choice.
Another reason I chose Alice in Wonderland is because I saw 2 films about Alice in wonderland. One with Johnny Depp and one by Disney. The one with Johnny Depp was not about the same story as the book I read. The Disney film was about segments from the first book, but also from the second book. I have only read the first book about Alice in Wonderland, so I will only write about the parts from the first book. I liked the movie because it had most of the story in it, but they focused on the adventures and left most of the mono- and dialogue out of the movie. I think they did this because the movie is meant for kids, so the dialogues would be too complicated for the target audience. I think the movie would have been better if they would have included that more. I also find that the movie has more chaos and abstract things, like the mad hatter and the rabbit. In they make abstract statements, but in the film the only thing they do is scream and be hyperactive. In the book things were abstract, but had logic behind them, you can think about what they say. In the film things are just weird for the sake of being weird. I think the book is very different from the book and I prefer the book.

I found the story easy to read, because the story is subdivided into 12 smaller adventures that follow each other. The effect this had is that I didn’t get bored reading it, but I also had more trouble getting into the story. The version of the book I read had had notes at the side. The notes were interesting, but they kept distracting me from the story. I liked reading the story a lot. A thing I especially like a lot are the many references and plays on words and sayings. The book is easy to read, but harder to understand completely. Most of the story is mono- and dialogue and description of locations. The chapters are very short, which compensates making it not too tedious to read. I would recommend the story to others, just not for a book report. The story is quite abstract, which makes it hard to connect it with a time and setting. I would advise them to get a copy of the book without notes on the side. I don’t like the ending of the story. I did think the ending, in which the protagonist wakes up and realises that it was all a dream, is overused, but I would have done the same thing. Overall I liked the story and I might read the other books about Alice in Wonderland. A thing I liked a lot in the story is the many references and plays on words and sayings.

# Themes and motive

An important theme in Alice in wonderland is growing up. Alice in wonderland is about a child’s struggle of growing up and living in the confusing world of adults, to become an adult she has to get rid of her open-mindness. Throughout the story, she meets creatures with a way of living and reasoning that is very unsimilar to her own way of living and reasoning. Throughout the book, she learns to understand the creatures and how to deal with the differences. She is growing up. This is also shown by her literally growing and shrinking. At the end of the book, she realises that everything around her are just toys and not real. She is all grown up and can’t stay in Wonderland anymore, so she wakes up. A motif of the story is identity, Alice is often struggling with her identity in the story. After arriving in wonderland she starts thinking about who she is, she starts testing her knowledge by saying lessons, so she can find out if she is still herself. Later in the book other creatures mistake her for someone else. The rabbit thinks she is his maid and the bird thinks she is a serpent. She doesn’t correct them because she doesn’t know who she is. Alice is not the only one that is struggling with identity problems, the Duchess’s baby turns into a piglet after Alice takes it outside. Another motif is curiosity. She follows the rabbit down the rabbit hole because she is curious. Throughout the book, she gets into more situations because she is curious, every time she goes to a new place in Wonderland it is because she is curious. Both motifs are of course a part of the theme. A child that is growing up has problems with its identity and discovers the world because of curiosity.

# Time and setting

The adventures of Alice take place in the magical place of Wonderland. A dream world were animals can talk and size and time is relative. There is Personification, as inanimate objects and animals can talk and act like humans. The story also partially takes place in the real world, where Alice falls asleep and wakes up. There is no mention of time and/or place. The author told the story to a girl he knew, so there is a big chance it is about the time and place he lived in. Lewis Carrel lived in Great Britain and lived from 1832 until 1898. The time and setting is probably Great Britain somewhere between 1832 and 1898. The time and setting have little to none effect on the story because it takes place in a dream world. If it would take place in a modern age or in the far past, the only difference would be the clothes and speech.