

Such a Curious Dream! Adapting Text and Illustration for Pre-Readers in *The Nursery "Alice"*

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, better known by his pseudonym Lewis Carroll, is author of one of the most famous English literary works, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). Illustrated by John Tenniel, it is a tale of a young girl named Alice who falls down a rabbit hole and discovers a fantastical world filled with curious creatures, a prime example of the literary nonsense genre and a work which continues to influence literature and various media to this day. Hoping to reach a younger audience, Carroll collaborated with Tenniel to adapt the tale into a nursery edition called *The Nursery "Alice"*, which was published by Macmillan & Co. in 1890 and notably less popular. Gertrude Thomson and Edmund Evans also worked on this project, contributing the cover art and colored print production respectively. It's easy to say that the illustrations take center stage and provide a lot of information in the work. *The Nursery "Alice"* was the first colorized edition of Tenniel's illustrations, which were also enlarged in the picture book, and color had a large impact not only on the illustrations but also the text. Tenniel's drawings were engraved onto blocks of wood, which were then used in print production. Carroll's focus on illustration as opposed to plot influenced his storytelling technique, and so in this picture book Carroll simplifies the storyline and structures the text to be read aloud to pre-readers, often asking questions of the reader and directly referencing the illustrations.

Lewis Carroll's *The Nursery "Alice"* is heavily informed by illustration, demonstrating the importance of visuals and oral narrative over plot for pre-readers, as well as the danger of focusing on illustration to the point that the text is overshadowed. In this paper, I hope to return to the

original *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to explore the specific changes that made this nursery edition pre-reader friendly, and how those changes might have harmed or aided the picture book's impact. Carroll was deeply involved in the production process of his works, so I hope to delve into his relationships with his illustrators and printers. As Carroll referred directly to the illustrations in *The Nursery "Alice"*, the collaboration between himself and Tenniel was especially important. It seems a large factor in this picture book is color, so I want to focus on how implementing color in the illustrations deeply impacted the illustrations, text, and production. The color red made the scene of painting the roses red more effective, for instance. However, the increased complexity of the illustration and decreased complexity of the text sometimes seem imbalanced, even if the story still serves the needs of pre-readers.

Works Cited

Carroll, Lewis. *The Nursery "Alice"*. Illustrated by Sir John Tenniel, 1890. Mayflower Books Inc., 1979.

Clark, Beverly Lyon. "What Went Wrong with Alice?" *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Volume 11, Number 1, Spring 1986, pp. 29-33.

Clark argues the revision of the *Alice* stories for *The Nursery "Alice"* was a failed work of art by comparing the original text and illustrations to the nursery edition's.

Cohen, Morton N. and Edward Wakeling, editors. *Lewis Carroll & His Illustrators: Collaborations & Correspondence, 1865-1898*. Cornell University Press, 2003.

This collection speaks to Carroll's relationships with his illustrators, namely John Tenniel and Emily Gertrude Thomson, who both contributed to *The Nursery "Alice"*.

Morris, Frankie. *Artist of Wonderland: The Life, Political Cartoons, and Illustrations of Tenniel*. University of Virginia Press, 2005.

The book talks about Tenniel's relationship with Carroll as well as Tenniel's illustration and reproduction methods, such as wood engraving.

Susina, Jan. *The Place of Lewis Carroll in Children's Literature*. Routledge, 2010.

Susina's book provides context on Lewis Carroll as an author more broadly while focusing particularly on *The Nursery "Alice"* in Chapter 6. The chapter recognizes the limitations of the picture book but explores how it as an early example of a picture book for pre-readers.