The adventures of lewis carroll’s alice

Linguistics, Language

From a young age Charles Dodgson’s fondness for writing was already made apparent. He had made several contributions to some national publications in England as well as to two local publications in Oxford (Karoline 31). It was in one of his contributions to the latter where he used the pseudonym by which he would be remembered: Lewis Carroll. It took some time before Carroll finally came out with a published version of his manuscript for Alice in Wonderland. Among other things Carroll was also a mathematician and a deacon in his church (Collingwood 22-23).

These occupations contributed to the delay in publication of the classic story of Alice. After its release and widespread acclaim however, it wasn’t long before Carroll published its sequel, Through the Looking Glass. The two texts have been popularized as children’s literature. However, closer analyses by critics have brought forth a string of explanations accounting for the uncommon descriptions and images in the texts. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding the creation of the stories, it cannot be denied that the same were written for the enjoyment and benefit of children.

Controversies Surrounding Alice The zeitgeist during the release of Alice in Wonderland was one ofdrug abuseresistance and a counter-cultureof dependence on psychedelic substances. Such an air led scholars to deconstruct the text based on the prevalent norms in society. It was easy for scholars to relate Alice’s mushroom-eating and herb-use to regular pot sessions. Some scholars have claimed that the imageries in the story are akin to the hallucinations experienced when under the influence of addictive substances.

From these factual circumstances arose the belief that Carroll himself was under the influence at the time that he wrote the text or that he was a habitual user. However, there is no evidence to show that at any point in his life Carroll was involved in drug abuse. There is evidence to support however that Carroll may have been ill thus prompting the hyperbolic descriptions in Alice in Wonderland and its sequel. It was observed that Carroll documented suffering from severe migraines which most often affected the ill person by skewing his or her perspective, such as making objects appear bigger then they actually were (Carroll 52).

It is surmised that Lewis Carroll suffered from such an affliction all his life and thus the vivid imagery in his popular texts. The disease has now become popularly known as the Alice in Wonderland Syndrome or, medically, micropsia and macropsia. This is a neurological disease which affects visual perception in humans causing illusions in size, shape and color (Cinibis and Aysun 316). Some scholars have attributed the creativity in Carroll’s text to the fact that he was ailing from this disease.

As regards the text Through the Looking Glass, critics have unanimously categorized the same as nonsense literature. It is not hard to imagine why, what with the text’s deconstruction of norms and the topsy turvy manner by which the text upends unquestioned customs – such as telling time for example. More than anything however, the text is a clear presentation on a play of words and wit. The Real Alice The first and strongest argument that Carroll’s stories were written simply for children to enjoy is an inspection of the life of Carroll. It has already been mentioned that Carroll was a deacon in his church.

This paved the way to his acquaintance with a little girl who sparked the creation of his children’s masterpiece. In her text, The Real Alice, Clarks shows that sometime in 1855 Carroll met the Liddellfamilywhose head, Henry Liddell, was the dean of Christ Church in Oxford. Because of his acquaintance with Henry Liddell, Carroll in turn became acquainted with Henry’s children. Alice Liddell was one of three girls belonging to the Liddell family. Carroll was quite fond of children and he often took the Liddell children to picnics and boat rides where he regaled the children with stories and make-believes.

It was on one such occasion that Alice asked Carroll to tell them a story and the ensuing tale is what is known today as Alice in Wonderland. Although Carroll had told the children other stories prior to this particular one, the difference this time was that Alice Liddell had asked him to write down the story for her. Several pieces of evidence show that indeed Alice Liddell was the model, or at least the inspiration, for Carroll’s Alice. One of the strongest proofs is that Carroll actually dedicated the book to Alice Liddell thus demonstrating that Alice played a part in its completion.

If it were merely a sign of the close relationship that he shared with the Liddell children, then Carroll should have dedicated the book to all of them and not just to one in particular. Moreover, a poem in Through the Looking Glass reveals an acrostic spelling out the name of Alice Pleasance Liddell. Although Carroll himself admitted using acrostics to spell out the names of young ladies with whom he was acquainted, the appearance of Alice Liddell’s name in both his books is quite significant.

No other acquaintance of his was mentioned in both Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass. Certainly it was more than just the similarity in names of his friend and his protagonist that prompted him to spell out Alice’s name in the sequel of his story. There is also evidence showing that Carroll set the story on dates significant to Alice Liddell. The first story was set on May 4, Alice’s birthday, and the second story was set on November 4, Alice’s half-birthday (Wikipedia Alice Liddell). Carroll certainly went out of his way to allude to such significant dates in both his stories.

Furthermore, when the fictional Alice stated her age it reflected the actual age Alice Liddell would have been at that time. Certainly that too could not have been mere coincidence. Although Carroll denied any association between his writings and Alice Liddell, the subtle hints that he planted in the story speak for themselves. A possible cause for the denial might have been the intrigue that eventually followed his intimaterelationships with children. Karoline Leach first raised such a point in her book, In the Shadow of a Dreamchild, when she attempted to deconstruct the Carroll Myth.

In essence, Leach insinuated pedophilia by observing that the relationship Carroll maintained with young girls was unnatural. Of course, with the stature and popularity that Carroll had attained, such statements, though founded with as much proof as other accepted historical facts regarding Carroll, were hotly contested and rebutted. This is not to say however that they have been debunked as such is not the case. Regardless of the relationship between Alice Liddell and Carroll, it is uncontested that the first book was dedicated to Alice Liddell while she was still a young child.

Above any other proof ofmotivation, this clear manifestation of intent reflects that the story of Alice in Wonderland was written for the fancies of children. It necessarily follows therefore that its sequel also catered to children’s delights. A Journey into Wonderland Apart from the biographical setting, one may also look at the fictional setting which Carroll developed. The story starts out with a random romp in the woods with a little girl’s closest companion, her pet. It is a dull day and, upon falling into the rabbit hole, Alice finds herself in a refreshing change of scenery.

The situation is not unlike the many dull summer’s days wherein children are wont to play make-believe. Wonderland itself is a crayon enlargement of pictures that are commonly drawn by children. The different colored trees and stark colors worn by the characters, both on their clothes and on their furs, shows a child’s easy use of colors. The scenery in itself has a nursery rhyme quality around it reflecting the target audience it was written for. The contrast in colors is very much the same manner by which children view the world.

It is only the adult-world that defines colors by hues of black, gray, and khaki. Such a variety of colors as is seen in Alice’s adventures is the world of young children. The mere fact that children often like to reverse colors in their portrayals of the world around them shows that they enjoy such mismatches. This only serves to reveal the delight they must have felt to have been launched alongside Alice into a world filled with mixtures of colors. Furthermore, the skewed perception of size of objects was entirely in line with the perspective of small children.

For children, size is magnified in proportion with their own size. More so, size is magnified in proportion to their understanding of the utility of a particular object. Take for example the larger-than-life portrayal of the chess board pieces. The game of chess is a game of knowledge and of skill. It is not unlikely therefore that a child would find such a game taxing, particularly so when he or she is free to enjoy the free terrain of nature. Another such example is found in the upturning of the concept of time telling in the story.

One of the most difficult things to teach a child is how to tell time. The importance of the long hand, the short hand, and the second hand are sheer mysteries to a child who needs only to keep track whether or not it is night or day outside. The mockery of timepieces in the story is entirely in line with such difficulty. The concept may be refreshing to adult readers but it also allows child readers to completely relate with the story. Apart from the setting, Carroll’s use of characters already familiar to children showed that the story was indeed intended for them.

The characters Tweedledee and Tweedledum for example, jump right out of the nursery rhyme to meet Alice in her adventure. This is very significant because to no other audience would these two characters hold strong bearing than to children. The language used in the story is also reflective of the genre for which the texts were intended. To most the language is mere nonsense. But the play of words, particularly in Through the Looking Glass, presents so much more than just play. The manner in which Carroll communicates his feelings with non-words is reflective of the way children themselves attempt to express themselves to adults.

For example, in the poem Jabberwocky, Carroll uses the combination of words and the emotions evoked by non-words to paint out a story for his audience. Such mixture of words to express a new feeling or thought is most often observed in children who, for lack of vocabulary, resort to such splicing when the need arises. Furthermore, children often take meaning from the feelings that a particular word arouses in them, particularly so when they don’t know the meaning of the word. The use of language in the two stories is a play on suchpsychologyof children.

Finally, the variety of sounds that Carroll brings to life in his stories presents good exercise for children’s linguistic abilities. The spectrum of sounds that his stories present is good training ground for improved diction and muscle memory for his young readers. Finally, let us examine Alice herself. Alice’s disposition is that of an obedient young girl who is both shocked and amused by the play of the characters she meets. Alice presents the character of a child who has learned to believe the teachings of her elders without fully understanding why she should do so.

This very character of Alice persists from her falling into the rabbit hole to her arguing against the disruption of norms. Yet every time that Alice is forced to explain her stands, she finds herself running out of thoughts and words. Such blind obedience is common in children, particularly those startingeducationbut not yet fully being taught about the concepts behind the lessons being learned. It is argued that Alice’s adventures had a darker undertone to it, with Alice finding each of her hopes being crushed throughout the story.

However, such anobservationdoes not discount the fact that Alice’s story still holds for the benefit of child readers. If nothing more, such an undertone elevates Alice’s story to apply even to young adults. It seems that Alice’s realization that her fantasies anddreamsare not always in line with reality and therefore must be discarded shows a coming of age theme in the story. As with most coming of age stories, it is not uncommon that adults themselves find the issues they face being addressed.

However, the benefit that children may derive from the story is not undermined because the issues portrayed are particularly addressed to the ones that they themselves face. A Child’s Wonderland Scholars have applied the themes present in the stories to everyday life of more mature audiences. Moreover, numerous criticisms have been aimed at Carroll’s stories reflecting them to be no more than the products of a hallucinating mind. Despite these judgments regarding the source of the idea of Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass, it cannot be denied that both pieces have had a tremendous impact on its young readers.

There is no doubt that these stories were created primarily for the enjoyment of children and for their beneficial understanding. This intention is the focal key in understanding the disjointed world that Lewis Carroll painted. To most adults and to the scholarly world, an in-depth analysis of the text was needed, particularly so when considering the intellect and the capacity of the man who rendered the same. But it is undeniable that the very reason why Alice’s Adventures are still loved today is borne of a deep affiliation between children and Alice herself.

Carroll’s depiction of Alice and her Wonderland embodies the make-believe world that children often find themselves voiceless to express. In his masterpiece, Carroll is not only able to express the world of a child but he is able to impact the viewpoints of adults as well. Works Cited Alice Liddell. Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia. April 2008. 16 April 2008 . Carroll, Lewis. The Diaries of Lewis Carroll. London: The Lewis Carroll Society, 1993-2007. Carroll, Lewis. The Complete, Fully Illustrated Works.

New York: Gramercy Books, 1995. Cinibis, M. , and Aysun, S. “ Alice in Wonderland syndrome as an initial manifestation of Epstein-Barr virus infection. ” British Journal of Ophthalmology, 76, 316, 1992. Clark, Anne. The Real Alice. New York: Stein And Day, 1982. Cohen, Morton N. Lewis Carroll: A Biography. London: Macmillan, 1995. Collingwood, Stuart D. The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1898. Leach, Karoline. In the Shadow of the Dreamchild: A New Understanding of Lewis Carroll. London: Peter Owen Publishers, 1999.