Lewis Carroll - Logician, Nonsense Writer, Mathematician and Photographer

A vicar's son, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson was born in 1832, in Cheshire, England. He studied at Christ Church College, Oxford. He would spend the rest of his life there as the main lecturer in one of his loves in life, mathematics.

His first published work was a poem he wrote at just 13 years of age, entitled 'My Fairy'. It told the story of a fairy who continually said 'you mustn't'. Although the piece was not overly nonsensical, it was similar in its light tone to things to come. He wrote many short pieces of prose and poetry for journals and magazines, as well as many essays on a multitude of subjects. He sometimes used the pen name of Lewis Carroll, deriving from the Latin translation of Charles Lutwidge, Carolus Ludovicus.

He took deacon's orders in 1861; at the time, this was a requirement of all Oxford lecturers.

Carroll's Influence on Today

Charles Dodgson died in 1898. Since then, his work has been enjoyed by millions who have read the books or watched the films. Alice has made it onto the big screen a number of times, in musical, live action and animated forms, most popularly in the Disney cartoon film, Alice in Wonderland. All the films were based mainly on the first book, although they did include characters from Looking-Glass Land, such as Tweedledum and Tweedledee. A film was even made out of 'Jabberwocky', and a set of songs based on The Hunting of the Snark. Carroll created stories that are among the most frequently referred to in the English language, and that have inspired paintings and other art works all over the world.

Alice's surreal adventures were a precursor of psychedelia, and in the late 1960s many looked into them for a life meaning. Two very psychedelic Beatles songs were specifically inspired by the Alice books, 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds' and 'I am the Walrus'. Band-member John Lennon's favourite books were the Alice stories. Lewis Carroll also featured on the front of their 1967 album, Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. Films and books, especially fantasies, such as Jim Henson's Labyrinth film and even some of the Harry Potter stories, include Wonderland-like aspects or styles of writing. And it's not just the English-speaking nations that have enjoyed their visits to Wonderland; the books have been translated into over 100 different languages. Lewis Carroll has helped shape our language too, creating portmanteaus such as chortle (chuckle, snort) and mimsy (filmy and miserable). Even the word portmanteau was an invention of Carroll's, and is featured in many dictionaries. It is fair to say that Charles Dodgson, as Carroll, has influenced the way today's culture thinks.
Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) was born in Berdichev, Ukraine, on December 3rd, 1857. He was born Polish but he would become renowned for his English short stories and novels. His father, Apollo Korzeniowski, worked as a translator of English and French literature, so Joseph had a significant exposure to literature while still a boy.

In 1861 his family was exiled to Northern Russia as a result of his father’s political activities. Then in 1869, both of Conrad’s parents died of tuberculosis and he went to Switzerland to live with his uncle. Conrad attended school in Kraków but he dreamed of the sea and in the 1870’s he joined the French merchant marines. While working on a ship Conrad made voyages to the West Indies and was even involved in arms smuggling. Eventually Conrad joined the British merchant navy and swiftly climbed the ranks. By 1886 he was commanding his own ship and was given British citizenship. It was at this time that he officially changed his name to Joseph Conrad.

Conrad spent the next part of his life sailing all over the world, it was this experience that provided him with material on the exotic locations of many of his novels. He visited Australia, various islands in the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific, South America, and he even sailed up the Congo River in Africa. In 1894 at the age of 36 Conrad finally left the sea behind him and settled down in England. Two years later he married an Englishwoman by the name of Jessie George, and it was with her that he had two sons.

Even though he was settled down and had a family Conrad still occasionally traveled, but for the most part he just wrote his novels, the first of which, Almayer’s Folly, appeared in 1895. That novel would be followed by many others including The Heart of Darkness in 1902 and Nostromo in 1904. Conrad continued to write until the year he died, publishing his last novel, The Nature of Crime, in 1924. He died August 3rd, 1924 of a heart attack.

Adapted from http://www.online-literature.com/conrad/
**FOCUS ACTIVITY**

Have you ever invented a brand-new word?

**QUICKWRITE** Make up a new word, write down its definition, and use it in a sentence. Read the sentence to a partner, and see if he or she can guess the meaning of your invented word.

**SETTING A PURPOSE** Use context and other clues to figure out possible meanings for the invented words in this famous poem.

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**BACKGROUND**

**The Story of Alice**

Dodgson often entertained the young daughters of Henry George Liddell, the dean of his college. One of the daughters, Alice Liddell, would later recall how she and her sisters used to sit on the big sofa on each side of him, while he told us stories, illustrating them by pencil or ink drawings. In 1862, Dodgson and a friend took the girls on a boat trip up the Thames River. Dodgson told an especially amusing tale that afternoon, and young Alice Liddell begged him to write it down for her. Eventually some writers who read the manuscript persuaded Dodgson to revise and expand his story for publication. In 1865 he published the story as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. This bizarre prose narrative, with songs and poems scattered throughout, delighted children in Victorian England. Six years later he published a sequel, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*, which includes the poem "Jabberwocky." While they remain popular among children, the *Alice* books have also become classic reading for adults.

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**RESOURCE MANAGER**

- Performance Assessment, p. 66
- Spanish Summaries, p. 69
- Spanish Translations
- Inclusion Strategies
- English Language Learners Sourcebook
- Transparencies
- Selection Focus 69
- Literary Elements 70

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**Objective**

- To read and analyze a nonsense poem
- To identify the elements of nonsense verse
- To compose nonsense verse

**Skills**

Writing: Nonsense Verse
Collaboration: Multimedia Presentation

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**Motivating OPTIONS**

Selection Focus Transparency 69: Have students view the transparency and then discuss the question provided.

Focus Activity: As an extension of the Focus Activity, ask partners to write their words on the board and give charade-style clues as the other students try to guess meanings.
Jabberwocky

Lewis Carroll

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?"
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.

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

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And as in unfish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

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

"Twit Brillig, and the slthy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

Additional Resources

Active Reading Guide, p. 83
Audio Library
Spanish Audio Library

Literary Elements

ONOMATOPEIA Remind students that onomatopoeia is the use of a word to imitate or suggest the sound or action described. Ask students to identify examples of onomatopoeia in the poem. (whiffling, burbled, snicker-snack, and galumphing) Encourage students to reproduce the sounds as they perceive them.

Teaching Options

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTION

Algebra According to one story, Queen Victoria liked Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and asked for another book by Carroll. He sent her a copy of An Elementary Treatise on Determinants. A determinant is a complex algebraic function. One dictionary definition of determinant takes up seven lines and contains 84 words.

Activity Have students interested in mathematics research the meaning and function of determinants in algebraic equations. Have students present their findings in a poster to be displayed in the classroom.
Glorious Nonsense

Jabberwocky, of course, is a poem from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*. Despite the Alice books being often thought of as children's books, I didn't get around to reading them until I was 22. When I did, I was spellbound.

I was reading away, with quiet enjoyment, when I came across [Jabberwocky](http://www.jabberwocky.com/carroll/jabber/). I read it, paused, and read it again. Pondered for a while, then read it again. Jabberwocky beautifully skates the thin edge of being understood and being nonsense. But such glorious nonsense! As Alice put it,

"It seems very pretty," she said when she had finished it, "but it's rather hard to understand!" (You see she didn't like to confess even to herself, that she couldn't make it out at all.) "Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas--only I don't exactly know what they are! However, somebody killed something: that's clear, at any rate---"

Jabberwockies seem to pop up all over the place...

...in print... ...in my email... ...on the big screen... ...on the little screen... ...on stage... ...in schools... ...in translation... ...in stores... ...in art... ...in games... ...in sports... ...on vacation... ...in food... ...in song... ...as pets... ...hopefully NOT on your disks... ...on FidoNet... ...even on the net... ...hey! You forgot one!

[Back to Jabberwocky](http://www.jabberwocky.com/carroll/jabber/) where the photography and other fun stuff is.

...in print...

- In 1943, there was a fun science fiction story called "Mimsy Were the Borogoves", written by a Lewis Padgett (pen name for [Henry Kuttner](http://www.jabberwocky.com/carroll/jabber/) and his wife [C.L. Moore](http://www.jabberwocky.com/carroll/jabber/)) in which a group of children begin to actually understand the poem, which leads them shortly thereafter into a new world... The story has been reprinted in *The Golden Years of Science Fiction: Third Series*, among other places, and I highly recommend it.

- Judith informs me via email that there is an excellent detective / fantastic novel called "Night of The Jabberwock". I haven't been able to find a copy though - it's out of print. (But, as usual, it can be [ordered from Amazon.com](http://www.jabberwocky.com/carroll/jabber/)).

- Mandi wrote in to tell me about "The Mansion in the Mist" by John Bellairs, where the word "wabe" (for the grass around a sundial) was used as an important clue to solve the mystery.

...in my email...
After I put this page online, I started getting interesting mail from people around the world. Sometimes it is suggestions for a Jabberwocky that I missed, and I add them here. More often though, I get letters like this:

Dear Mr. Shaw,

I am currently analyzing works of Lewis Carroll for my 10th grade English class. My two works of choice are "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" and "Jabberwocky." However, I seem to be having great difficulty in analyzing this poem. When I read it I am unable to find if it's true.

I usually answer "Yes."

That's it.

(Occasionally I add a smiley face.)

...on the big screen...

- According to the Internet Movie Database there have been two movies based on the poem.
  - A surrealist Czechoslovakian dimensionally animated film. This is a really nice site, with photographs and a synopsis (in English) of the film, along with interviews with the director and links to related works.
  - A comedy version made by Terry Gilliam (of Brazil and Monty Python Fame).

- In Disney's Alice in Wonderland, the Cheshire Cat sung Jabberwocky. I guess they couldn't really have swords and killing and such in a movie intended for kids, but really now - kids have been reading Through the Looking Glass for generations. What's the problem? Anyway, here's the clip on Disney's site. The video is available from Amazon.com.

- The famous British actor Nicol Williamson said once:

  "The mome rath isn't born that could outgrabe me!"

...on the little screen...

- The 5th and last season (1980) of the late, lamented, and very sorely missed Muppet Show had an episode starring Brooke Shields which covered bits and pieces of both Alice books. The high point (to me, anyway) was their take on Jabberwocky, with Rowlf (the dog) fighting a giant puppet Jabberwock which looked exactly like the Tenniel illustration!

  Narrator: ...and with its head, he went galumphing back.
  Rowlf: galumph! galumph! galumph! galumph!

- When I was a kid I never missed the Doctor Who rebroadcasts on PBS. Imagine my surprise all these years later to tune into "The Silurians" (a classic about ancient reptile-men trying to take over the Earth) to find the good Doctor, repairing Bessie while singing "Twas brillig..."!

- In the Star Trek episode "Plato's Stepchildren", Kirk and Spock sing:

  I'm Tweedledee, he's Tweedledum.
  We're spacemen marching to and from.
  We slythe among the mimsy troves,
  And tire among the borogroves.
...on stage...

- The Brigham Young University Children and Teen Creative Dance group performed a Jabberwocky dance in 1995. Say, folks, planning on going on tour to Johns Hopkins anytime?

...in schools...

- David Godfrey wrote in to tell me about his high school:

  Scarsdale High School, in New York, has many a Jabberwocky reference within its walls. Our school mascot is a large maroon dragon named Bandy. Our yearbook is called Bandersnatch. We have 2 nights of student bands performing, one in the spring and one in the fall, named Jabberfest. Our Literary magazine is named Jabberwocky.

  Bravo Scarsdale! I wish I could have gone to a place like that. Dear 'ol Scotch Plains-Fanwood High wasn't much fun.

...in translation...

- One of the heights of geek humor ever since Digital put their Altavista Babelfish translation service online, is to feed text to the computer translator, translate it into a foreign language, and then translate it back. Here is a stanza of Jabberwocky, translated into German, and then translated back to English:

  `Beware Jabberwock, my son! The Kiefer, which beien, the grip arms, which intercept! Watch out the bird Jubjub, and avoid you frumious the Bandersnatch! ', he took its vorpal to blade into the hand: Long time manxomefeind, which it looked up -- in such a way stood still it by the tree Tumtum, and confessed one while in the thought.

- Keith Lim's "the jabberwocky variations" is a really neat collection of Jabberwocky translations. Have you ever wondered what Jabberwocky would look like in Latin (Hora aderat briligi. Nunc et Slyphia Tova....)? Look no further.

- Keith doesn't have it yet, but my cousin Dani, my friend Yah-el, and I, got together to do Jabberwocky in Hebrew.

- Here's a version in Yiddish from Raphael Finkel at the University of Kentucky.

...in stores...

- When I was a kid I used to just love the ritual yearly book fair at my elementary school. I'd walk among the tables, a glazed look in my eye, debating the merits of "Danny Dunn and the Homework Machine", to "I, Robot". Oh, yes! It's nice to see the tradition continues with Jabberwocky Books for Kids.

- There is a Jabberwocky Antiques in festive San Dimas, California. No mention of Bill and/or Ted though.

- Shayna, a young (13!) Jabberwocky and book fan wrote in to say there is a really cool store in Hudson, Ohio, called "Jabberwocky Toys and Games" owned by Richard Harrison.

...in art...

- Scott wrote in to tell me that Ral Partha miniatures (they make miniature models of dragons and wizards and such for gaming fans) has a Jabberwocky miniature. It's quite more ferocious looking than the fairly whimsical Tenniel version (it's not wearing the vest, for instance).
Nick Bantock, the artist behind the wonderful "Griffin and Sabine", did an illustrated version of both Jabberwocky and The Walrus and The Carpenter. Alas, both books are now out of print, but can be ordered from Amazon.com.

The Holoshop has a Jabberwocky hologram for sale. I bought one of these - very, very, cool.

Graeme Base drew "Jabberwocky", a book of fun illustrations for the poem. Even better is his "Jabberwocky: A Book of Brillig Dioramas". (I have this on my desk in the lab here) This is a delightful book that unfolds into a series of three-dimensional dioramas - one for each stanza of the poem.

Adam Jenkins runs Bandersnatch Bears, an "Artist Designed, Hand Made Teddy Bears" company in Australia. Check out the Indiana Jones bear and the Dimetrodon teddy bear-a-saurus.

There is a guy named Brad Foster who runs a "Jabberwocky Graphix", which seems to be fairly well known in the graphic novel world. (does anyone have any links for this?)

...in games...

Dave (or is it Andrew?) Thompson wrote in to tell me that:

There's a video game called Secret of Mana (Seiken Densetsu 2 in Japan) by Squaresoft, and there's an enemy called Jabberwock. It has two heads and doesn't look much like the illustration, but Squaresoft is known for having all sorts of mythological referances and stuff (one of the games named 4 main bad guys after demons from Dante's Inferno :)

...in sports...

The Colgate Ultimate Frisbee team (known as "Jabberwock Ultimate") uses a very interesting frisbee design.

A gentleman in San Francisco, California constructed an ultralight airplane of his own design known as the Frumious Bandersnatch.

...on vacation...

In Monterey, California, there is a bed & breakfast inn called The Jabberwock. This place has rooms named "The Wimsey", and "The Tulgey Wood". Even their phone number is "(888) I BURBLE"! If I ever visit California in my post-graduation "real life", I know where I'm staying..

...in food...

Tempe, Arizona has a "Brewery & Restaurant" known as the Bandersnatch.

...in song...

In 1970, for the movie-documentary "You Are What You Eat", Peter Yarrow (more commonly seen along with Paul and Mary) wrote and performed a song called "The Wabe". I don't want to violate anyone's copyright too badly, so here are just the opening lyrics as a 159k AU or a 318k WAV.

I believe the album (Columbia OS 3240, I was told, but mine says Columbia CK 3240) is out of print now, alas. All in all, though, it's a good album - where else can you hear Tiny Tim singing "I Got You Babe"? : )
• **Tales & Scales**, a "musetelling group" (no, I don't know what that is either, but it sounds pretty neat), has a 45 minute musical version of the poem where "a budding young trombonist finds himself transported through his computer screen onto the Internet. Here he must rid cyber-space of the Jabberwock, who is trying to take control." The concert also "deals with themes of freedom, courage and Net navigation." I've often thought the three go together.

• Johns Hopkins is big on a cappella music, so this one struck me as particularly nice: Brown University's oldest a cappella group is known as (not much suspense here, folks, after all this is a Jabberwocky page) The Jabberwocks.

• Marianne Faithfull did a musical Jabberwocky on her 1965 album "Come My Way" (Decca LK4866). I'm going to try and hunt this one down.

• Hailing from Sacramento, California comes a blues/folk/rock guitar/vocal duo known as Acoustic Bandersnatch. They write, perform, record, and even brew their own beer!

• The band Blues Traveler have an unreleased song which is Jabberwocky set to music. Scott Nichols wrote in to tell me that "...this is a song that Blues Traveler only plays live. John is big on all sorts of literature and many stories find their way into the music of Blues Traveler." Back in my Steadicam days, I worked briefly on a Blues Traveler video. (For the curious, I think the song was "But Anyway"). As it turned out, the director changed the concept of the video, and I didn't get to do a single shot. Fooey.

• There was a music club named Jabberwocky in Syracuse, N.Y., which has seen such performers as Bonnie Raitt, Hot Tuna, and Roger McGuinn. The club, alas, closed in 1985.

• A 60's band from Haight-Ashbury was known as "Frumious Bandersnatch". They have a CD out there entitled "A Young Man's Song".

• More Jabberwocky and Carroll inspired music.

...as pets...

• Brian Lee keeps pet rats - his names for them can get a trifle interesting though. Meet Bandersnatch and Jabberwock. (Some pictures of Jabberwock).

...hopefully NOT on your disks...

• Some rather naughty person seems to have created a Jabberwocky virus.

• Another naughty person came up with a Bandersnatch virus.

...on FidoNet...

• FidoNet node 1:104/258 in Aurora, CO is named Jabberwocky. Give them a call at 303-766-3104.

...even on the net...

• The poem itself! I'm sure that after all those references above this, you had thought I'd forgotten about it. : )

• The California State University, Chico College of Engineering, Computer Science, and Technology (whew, that's a mouthful!) has some very interestingly named xterms

• Josh and Joel Birenbaum's outstanding The Lewis Carroll Home Page. What can I say? This is a serious
piece of research. Kudos to them for making it.

- The alt.adjective.noun.verb.verb.verb folks came up with alt.frabjous.'Jabberwocky'.aanvv-ise.update.admire :)

- Jwocky's page. Stretch your browser window to full screen size, and enjoy. It's gorgeous.

- Clare has some fun versions, including a spell-checked jabberwocky, and one that was handwritten on an Apple Newton.

- The Jabberwocky chat server. I found out about this one when a mailer error sent all their mail to me : )