

# **Introduction to the Sample Text**

## About the *Alice in Wonderland* Books

Written by Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass* is the 1871 sequel to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). Even though it is a sequel, there really is nothing you need to know about the earlier book to understand the selections I am using (primarily Chapter One, along with a later passage that discusses the “Jabberwocky” poem that is contained within Chapter One).

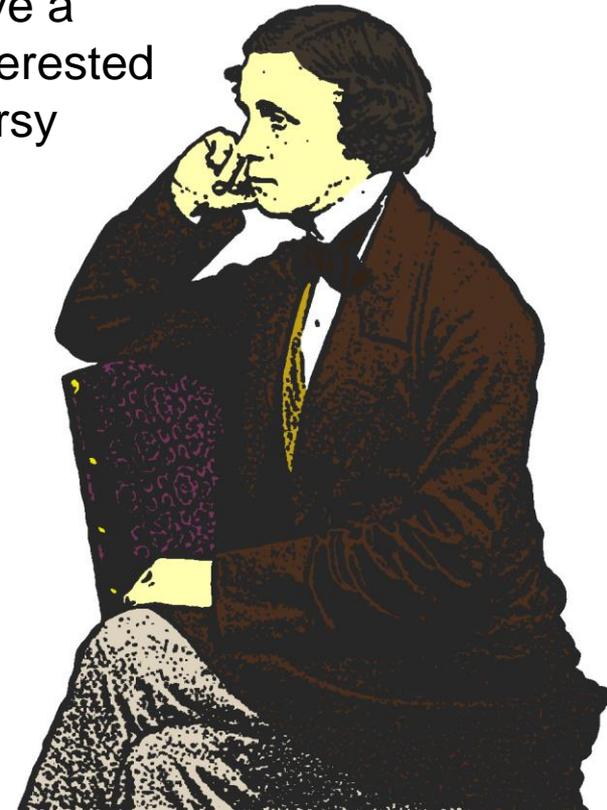
That said, I assume most everyone has at least a passing knowledge of the *Alice in Wonderland* books-- either through one of the many adaptations (most famously the Disney movie) or through general cultural knowledge. The concept of Wonderland really describes itself--accessed in the first book through following the White Rabbit down a rabbit hole and in the second book by passing through a drawing room mirror. If you didn't understand that these books were primarily written for children, you should quickly figure it out from the content and tone.



## About the Author

“Lewis Carroll” was the pen name of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-1898), an English mathematician and logician who taught at Christ Church, Oxford. The Alice books were written for Alice Liddell, a young girl that Dodgson befriended, and they are a loose adaptation of stories that he used to invent for her amusement. Shy and eccentric, Dodgson often had less trouble relating to girls and younger women than he did people his own age. Despite what you may have heard, though, he almost certainly did not have a sexual interest in these underage females. If you are interested in this controversy (to the extent that it is still a controversy after the literary detective work of Hugues Lebailly and Karoline Leach) look up Dodgson in Wikipedia for a concise summary.

This is really all you need to know about the text and the author.



## Why this text?

I have chosen this selection for a number of reasons.

First, I like the Alice books. Along with Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, and A.A. Milne's two Winnie-the-Pooh books, they are my favorite "classic" (read: old) British novels for younger readers. I still re-read them all from time to time, and if you don't know them, you should.

Second, because the text was written for younger readers, it is accessible. The complexity I will introduce in my discussion of this text is difficult enough without the example text being difficult as well.

Third, it is a text that works for almost all of what I will teach throughout the year. Rather than introducing different examples for each skill (like I do for my classroom models), these mini-lessons only require you to be familiar with a single selection.

Fourth, this chapter from the novel contains both prose and poetry, allowing me to talk about both modes of writing. All that's missing is dramatic forms, but I suppose one can't have everything.

## How are these mini-lessons different from the models?

The models are specific to a single assignment, and they are designed to show you one way of writing about a text using whatever approach the assignment prescribes.

These are more conceptual and will focus more on the skill itself, as opposed to how to create a particular product. Obviously, there will be some overlap.

Another difference is that any actual model writing I do in these examples will only be partial, as I intend for them to be less overwhelming than the models can sometimes seem.

I also hypothesize that these will be easier to use as review materials for the AP test in May.



## Do I have to read through these mini-lessons?

I will not assess whether you have read through the mini-lessons, though I will obviously hold you responsible for the skill in question. If you don't care or feel you understand the concept well enough without the review and additional explanation, skip them.

I think they are valuable and helpful (otherwise I wouldn't have bothered producing them). If you disagree, I have no interest in wasting your time. Of course, even if you know everything there is to know about the skill in question (a dubious proposition given your age and experience), I still believe you would benefit from the review. But what do I know?

To read or not  
to read?

You just do  
you.

