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**Exploring Humor in Children's Literature : Case of  
Alice's Adventures in The Wonderland**

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of Master Degree in English  
Literature and Civilization

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**TO MY PARENTS NOUREDDINE AND KHEIRA**

**THE REASON OF WHAT I BECOME TODAY.**

**THANKS FOR YOUR GREAT SUPPORT  
ANDCONTINUOUS CARE**

**TO MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS**

**TO MY TEACHERS**

## Abstract

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Humor takes many shapes and forms. It can be as sharp as surgeon's knife or as gentle as a touch of silk. It can convey uncomfortable truths, point up life's absurdities, challenge the imagination, take us by surprise, release us from the fears and anxieties. And while it's true that we don't all agree about what's funny, it's also true that everyone of us find pleasure in some form of humorous literature. It differs from one to another, based on age and the nature of the person, for such reasons writers tend to add humor in children's literature with certain degrees using different styles of writing, *Alice's Adventures in wonderland* carries within its lines a harmonical writing style which combines humor with absurd, entertainment with nonsense and comedy with mystery.

### **Key words:**

Humor, children's literature, Alice's adventures in wonderland, comedy, nonsense.

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**General**

**Introduction**

## General Introduction

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Adults have been writing for children (a broad definition of what we might call children's literature) in many forms for centuries. Little of it looks much fun to us now. Works aimed at children were primarily concerned with their moral and spiritual progress. Medieval children were taught to read on parchment-covered wooden tablets containing the alphabet and a basic prayer, usually the Pater Noster. Later versions are known as "hornbooks", because they were covered by a protective sheet of transparent horn. Nowadays, children's literature spread broadly all over the world, despite the lack of interest in this field, publishers and home editions contributes increasing the production of children's books; in addition the Government uses these books for the educational system because of its educational and cultural value among children.

Moreover, fairy tales were often distrusted in the nineteenth century and *Alice in Wonderland* was no exception. Many people have pondered whether their children would be able to distinguish the fictitious world of Wonderland from the reality of the real world. *Alice in Wonderland* has proven that fiction and reality can be separated and has become a renowned piece of literature not only loved by children but also by adults. The fiction incorporated in *Alice in Wonderland* also portrays a sense of humor as shown in no other fairy tale. Humor in Wonderland is balanced between the animation of animals, Alice's thoughts, and the fluctuating differences between the worlds of reality and fiction.

The animation of animals becomes humorous from the very beginning of the story when Alice encounters the white rabbit until the knave of hearts' trial, in addition to her inner thoughts and what she thinks about the others characters she meets.

This research aims to answer the following questions:

What is the importance of humor in children's literature precisely in the case of Alice's adventures in the wonderland?

How did Lewis Carroll apply the strategies of humor in the story?

What are the effects of children's literature on the readers? The following hypothesizes are to answer the previous questions:

Humor has a vital role in literary writing in general, most of children's writers based on humor to release the tension of the young reader and relax him through funny lines or comic situations or any form of humor because the child in nature loves to play and laugh so the strategy of mixing reading with entertaining is



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absolutely effective to educate the child.

Carroll is creative writer who uses humor in wonderful way in his book when he describes the characters (each one has his qualities) and when he translate Alice's ideas about the imaginary world and the characters exist in it besides the events and the changes she faced when she fell into the hole.

Literature is good for children in their early ages because it improve their interaction skills and increase their linguistic account. It also enhance their intelligence and allows them to explore the real world and the events are surrounding them.

During this research I faced many obstacles to write this paperwork and the lack of recourses is one of them.

This topic was chosen because it is interested and because of the importance of literature in our life especially for our children in order to discover the world, culture and tradition, literature also permits to educate our children in entertaining way.

This research paper is divided into three chapters. The first chapter deals with children's literature, it include some important terms' definitions, this chapter also explain the techniques used in children's literature and its value to the readers besides the purpose behind this literature, the second chapter focuses on the humor used in literature dedicated to little readers, this chapter mentions the different genres of humor as well as the definitions of the concepts, it also determines the acceptance of humorous literature by young readers. Thus, the final chapter seeks to detect humor in Lewis Carroll's book *Alice's adventures in the wonderland*. Besides that, it states the importance of humor in our life and it affection on our behaviors.

# **Chapter one**

# **Children's Literature.**

## Chapter One: Children's Literature.

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### I.1.Introduction

People read in order to understand life. From the beginning, they tend to tell stories and read about them. However, some of these stories are real and the others are legends, this kind of tails were petted by children or what we calls it now“ bed time stories “which are shaped to fit the child’s mind in line with his feeling by many styles and different techniques. Furthermore, this literature for kids is considered as the window by which the child be introduced to the real world and face it, it is the primary tool of education presented by both the parents and the teachers in order to direct him on the educational track. Generally when a child born, he began automatically to hear random words and sounds, by the end of his first year, he starts to imitate these words with similar sounds in addition to unclear short words occasionally. During this period his parents tend to speak constantly in front of him and select their words carefully knowing his ability of storing and memorizing some words to repeat it as he grows and they began to ‘feed’ him the basic literature by telling the bed time stories and the daily talk on the table dinner, reaching his third year as he will be able to walk and talk, in fact he become more talkative than ever and his pronunciation gets better every day with the help of his family to correct his spelling mistakes beside his readiness to learn the ‘official literature’ before the pre-schooled phase, he start to make effort in reading and understanding any word he came across in kids stories, television, children magazines, street signs....ect.

Through this chapter we will discuss the strategies used in children’s literature along with the definition of literature for kids and its types, in addition to the definition of literature by different academic writers, finally a conclusion highlights the value of literature between the children and the acceptance of it.

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### 1.2. Definition of Literature:

In order to define literature, one definition is not enough to describe the scope of literature so to be more closer to the precise definition, it requires to argue on many definitions by different scholars, first Literature as a term is a Latin word “litera“ which means writing.(Bwalya, 2005) from this definition it can be concluded that literature is anything that is written, people who agreed to this background believe that literature is any written material as well as mathematical figures, on the other side there are some opponents who disagree claiming that a piece of art is literature and it doesn't need to be written and support their theory by adding that such definition is very limited because it exclude the oral literature. Generally, literature take many forms and that so by defining literature as the written form is considered as a career thinking because the contemporary literature exist in both written and oral forms. Furthermore, literature from the oxford English dictionary is “an aquitance with letters” (from the Latin litera means also an individual character ‘letter’), this word identify a set of texts, the term literature is a discerned noun means any written form like essay or poetry.(Mkandwire, 2011).

“Literature as a proper noun refers to a whole body of literally work, worldwide or relating to a specific culture”(Wikipedia, 2008).The previous definition agreed with Hancock when he states: “literature is a body of written works: the body of written works of a culture, language, people or a period of time”.(Hancock, 2006, ).

In his point of view Hancock explains that literature refers to something that is written and leaves out the hypothesizes of oral literature, to deepen in this definition we should highlight the historical facts that is written and it worth being called literature from this end, we can say that a history text book about the history of Europe is literature, this may be true if we follows the original meaning of the word ‘litera’ but we should point out to the disadvantages of this definition, as previously mentioned, it leaves out oral literature which is considered as a mistake on its part, in addition, it is known today that literature is attached to certain basic elements for example the language of literature is idyllic heightened and very tense from this side a mathematical text book can not be described as literature everyone agrees on  $2x+4y$  does not refer to any language qualify to be called literature .(Mkandwire, 2011). Moreover, the above definition also means that literature has it own criteria, this controverts with the original meaning of the word literature to be more specific the word literature refers to writing, basically any written material it is literature

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having criteria or not, indeed there are many pieces of writing do not have any criteria at all. (Mkandwire, 2011) Hancock also defines literature as:“fiction and non-fiction writing works in which compositional excellent and advancement in the art of writhing are higher priorities than are consideration of profit or commercial appeal”.(Hancock, 2006).Another similar definition by Davids:“literature is creative writing of artistic value”.(Davids, 1983).These two definitions confirms that literature doesn't follow the norms of the ordinary writing, therefore it follows a new creative one and has the component of compositional excellence this refers to the bad and good literature, it seems that good literature used all of the creative aspects while bad literature lacks or has a few creative aspects.( Mkandwire, 2011).

The multiple types of literature made it hard for scholars to conclude the right definition of literature, each one of these definitions has shortcomings this is so because literature is wide, it extend to both written and oral forms any definition is considered comprehensive is one that will includes all the genres and forms in their different levels. Henceforth, literature can exist in both oral and written forms. In addition, the word literature is defined from different point of view, for Aleksander Solzhenitsyn the Great Russian novelist literature is “the living memory of a nation”, and for Charles Dickens it was what gave him hope and an escape from despair in a childhood filled with grief and humiliation.(Naashia, 2015). However, Cramer sees it as:

“literature allows us to imagine ourselves as different persons than wearer to live different lives than we lead, to abide in different places than we are stationed in, literature allows us to live in places or hovels, cabins or penthouses, through literature we imagine ourselves bolder and braver, richer or poorer, kinder or meaner than we may be in daily life”. (Cramer, 2004).

The purpose of literature is to entertain and enlighten the reader by using his imagination, it also can terrifies, surprises or open the gate through another world for the reader sometimes, in spite of this definition is broad yet is doesn't include everything, it is important to note that this definition contradicts the traditional notion which believe that literature can exist only in the written form. It holds that for a piece of work to be called literature, it should not use only random words because according to the proponents of this point of view literature

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has its own unique writing style and certain words which carefully selected to achieve its purpose.

### **I.3.Types of literature:**

It's impossible to divide literature into many types because it is wide, but the literary analysts limited literature in two groups: the first group is called the fiction literature joins novels, short stories, films, myths, legends and fairy tales, they refer to the imaginary or fantasy literature, in addition fiction is not true story nor true events nor true characters in fact it is an imaginary writing, in general the writer is restricted to his imagination through his works with the purpose to entertain the reader this literature is made out from nothing. Furthermore the main goal of the fiction's writer is to make the reader believe that the events he reads or watch are actually happens, it is also hard to understand the fiction because it is symbolic, it depends on the reader's interpretation and his own translation of the story. Moreover, the writer of fiction literature can unleash his or her imagination, they can elaborate on a plot or character as far as their imagination takes them without any references required. (Kunwar, 2009) Children's literature is a branch from the nonfiction literature. Basically the writer in this field use his imagination to create another world for the young readers relying on their understanding of literature in order to solve the problems they encountered by in the real life.

As for the second group is called the non-fiction literature includes informative books, documentaries, autobiography, history books and journals, they also known as true literature because it based on real people, real places, real events and real writing, besides the writer of non-fiction literature is enchained with facts and focuses on ideas or events that took place in the real life. However, the non-fiction literature demands credibility to relate the events in the story with those which happens in reality, usually this literature has a solo meaning or interpretation and it comes out of something and the writer totally neglect his imagination to be more straightforward, it's also considered as the recollection of facts without adding any untrusted events, this type is characterized by directness and simplicity in-between the details. (Kunwar, 2009)

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### **I.4. Definition of children's literature:**

A comprehensive definition of children's literature can be summed as the literature that is meant for children at the growing phase and it is appropriate for their level of understanding and the capacity of their minds, this involves written forms for children that are not yet cared for adult literature or do not have adult reading skills. (Bak'aa, 2003). "Children's literature is the only literary category that defines an audience rather than a subject or an author". (Stahl, 1992, p12-21). Historians believed that the age extent for Children's literature begin from childbirth and particularly from the stories the child hears from his mother for instance oral literature can extend to when he reach 24 months which is the absolute childhood stage, in this case children's literature would involve both oral and written literature and consists songs, theatre, poems, cinema, television and story. (Yara, 2001). One question is still perturbs theorists of children's literature is does Children's literature an independent genre or it is exist as a part of adults literature?, in order to clear the area about the definition of children's literature there are many opinions corroborate both of these theories in the next point.

**I.4.1. Children's literature as a part of adult literature:** the general literature is the impact which is generated on the reader when he reads or hears the literature, it could be with the purpose to amuse or only an interest, or the effect that induce transform the individual's attitudes and perspectives of life like the one that breaks our hearts or brings us joy, to this point children's literature is a part of adults literature and consequently when we say the definition of adults literature is the same as the definition of children's literature except the small difference is that children's literature is directed to a particular group of audience in the society, furthermore, children's literature connect the tradition with the social experiences which is transmitted through generations over centuries, it is the window which allow us to live the real life and equip our children to face the world by teaching them about life through the different times, in addition to children's literature is attached to adults literature because the adults are in charge and responsible for the content of children's literature. (Abu Ma'al, 2000). Therefore, it is agreed that the impact of literature is the same on both adults and children, children's literature cannot be considered as an independent genre because it only differs from adults literature in children's concept

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On the other side, other theorists claim that children's literature is an independent genre and is completely separated from adult's literature in both definition and characteristics. Perry Nodelman supports this theory by adding:

“Children's literature is not just literature written for children in mind, nor is it just literature that happens to be read by children. It is a genre, a special kind of literature with its own distinguishing characteristics. Identifying those characteristics and defining that genre are the major tasks immediately confronting serious critics”.

(Stahl, 1992, p12-21)

In addition, children literature is the literary product that is meant for children without neglecting their properties, needs and level of evolving, however, even if children literature is simple and clear it cannot be seen as another version of adults literature because it possess its own characteristics that are attached to the children, naturally children are not young adults because of the difference on the level of the degrees and the direction of the development besides, children have different style of living and qualities which only them can possess in their age until they grow old and becomes adults too. Moreover, children literature writers must take into account the child's limits and abilities along with his degrees of social development, afterwards the supporters of this theory believe that is wrong to say that adult's literature can be shifted to children literature, by just translating the language to be more suitable for children. (Yara, 2001).

### **1.5. History of children's literature:**

The development of children's literature is passed by different phases which affected the direction of the track taken in defining its role and characteristics. In the ancient times literature was represented by the myths narrated orally and eventually evolved to stories to preserve the culture. (Bak'aa, 2003). Furthermore, historians concluded that children's literature exists in childhood because it is part of the child's daily life, however, there is no records of finding a children's literature documents due to children's literature was considered as everyday duties of the family, children's literature appeared at first in Europe exactly in France in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, authors used nicknames to avoid the public, there was some reservation at that time until Charles Perreaux came and wrote the children's story *Mother Goose* using a nickname as well and changed the general perception of children's author, the book received a great welcoming from the general



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public and inspired Perreaux to write another children' story series under his real name this time.(Abu Ma'al,2000)

By the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Jean Jack Rousseau start to study the identities of children which develop children's literature to take more serious form, after that, he translated books like *A Thousand Night and One* into the French language meanwhile the first magazine in the history was issued, these stories sought to entertain children and expand their imagination. After France, England came and continued to evolve children's literature by translating French stories, they used Sunday schools to educate the children then it developed and it led to create an educational system which increased the demands on children's school books. (Mdallel, 2003, p298-306).

Moreover, England contribute with a great share in developing children's literature especially when John Newberry create the first children's library in history to become the father of children's literature in England, he attempted to simplify adult literature for children and invite the writers to produce more in the children's literature field. Later on, the 20<sup>th</sup> century was considered as the golden age for children's literature due to the large number of printing and publishing houses which pave the way for children's literature to spread through many countries like Germany, Denmark, Italy, Russia, Bulgaria and Japan. (Yara,2001)

Reaching the Arabic world in the 17<sup>th</sup> century because of the circulating of children's literature from France and Europe in general, it emerged in Egypt especially through the translation of Mohammad Ali and Rafaa' Al Tahrawi, in addition to the first writer about children's literature Ahmed Shawqi. Due to the western colonization, the Arabic world has been affected by the Europe culture, this affection appeared in the replacement of the old Qur'anic schools by the European educational model. (Mdallel, 2003, p298-306) To mark the beginning of children's literature in the Arabic world, it start from the Islamic history since the Arabic community practiced it through their duties. (Kailani,1998). Al Faisal agrees with this theory when he explained that no matter how people controverts each other on this subject, the Arabic children's literature appeared first in form of written poetry and not in novels or short stories, she supports her idea by adding that publishing stories like *kalila wa Dumnaand*, *A Thousand Night And One* these stories were in the Arabic language originally and they were translated after in the purpose of the cultural exchange. ( Faisal, 2001, p340-363)

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Today, children's literature is more popular and vast than any time before, the development of technology paved the way to reach greater levels of entertainment, the present children's literature extends to many genres, from historical fiction to fantasy to science fiction, as well as reaching to all the age categories in the society, such as toddlers enjoy pop-up books, pre-teens have early readers and teenagers immerse themselves in graphic novels.

### **I.6. Types of children's literature:**

Over years, children's literature kept involving and developing from a bed story to a magazine and books with illustrations to introduce the child to the world of literature with a simple way, yet this kind of literature varies through its development into many types. In fact the traditional literature is the first kind that comes to mind when we talk about material that is written for children, it depends on the spoken word of stories passed through many generations and the writers of these stories are mostly anonymous. However, it usually contains direct plots, happy endings and occasionally involves magic like *Cinderella* and *Ali Baba and the forty thieves*. After that, the picture book is the perfect choice for the very young readers, these books should contain a harmonious mixture of picture and text to complete one another in order to enhance the meaning of the story like in the case of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle or Seuss's *The Cat In The Hat*. Furthermore, realistic fiction which processes the real life situation, it also sites a known location and real human characters. In addition to the fantasy literature which deals with children's imagination and forms a magical world for them to reach the creativity in their minds, such as *Alice's adventures in the wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, Roald's *Charlie and the chocolate factory* these books remain amusing to children till now in the universal scale, because they are close to reality for children despite of the use of imagination. Moreover one more kind is poetry, although it is not that popular among children but young children enjoy simple poetry and rhyme sounds along with the humor in it. Finally the wordless picture books which contain pictures only without a single word but the title, it is very lovable for young children such as Mary Sullivan's *ball*, David Wiesner's *Tuesday* and Bob Staake's *Bluebird*. (Lilia Ken, 2012, p08).

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### **I.7.The techniques used in children's literature:**

The writers of this kind of literature use the literary devices as a tool to simplify their writing style and create certain effects for their little readers. However, to write a piece of literature for a child it's very important to take in consideration his level of educating and his age in addition to make this literature easy for him to accommodate by using simple words, funny expressions and smooth style in addition to many techniques like alliteration this technique uses one letter or sound many times in a phrase or passage of the story, the purpose of using it is to grab the reader's focus, for example: peter piper picked a peck of pickled pepper. Another strategy the writers of children's literature uses is hyperbole, it also known as exaggeration, this technique can be used in an entire story, exaggeration make the story funnier for the reader, it mostly appear in "tall tales". Furthermore idioms is also a technique which support the nonsense because it take a joke seriously like in the book of Amelia Bedelia if someone tells her to dress a turkey, she put clothing on it. Some idioms are just expressions like: "it's raining cats and dogs" referring to "it raining heavily". Likewise imagery, it describe a situation with every detail using a meaningful words that paint a beautiful picture in the reader's mind, these words include adjectives, adverbs, nouns and verbs an example: " the aroma of freshly brewed hot chocolate filled the room making everyone feel warm and cozy". Next, irony, if we said something ironic, naturally it's the totally opposite of what we expected like in the book of caps for sale, for instance, the peddler tries and tries to get monkeys to take his caps off of their heads, ironically once he gets angry and throws his cap down, It's not at all what the peddler expected. It was ironic that they did what he wanted when he stopped trying. After that metaphors and similes are two techniques being used in comparison. However, metaphors make comparison directly without using the word "like or as". For example: "The store was gold of mine" or "the fog was a curtain". On the other hand, similes do use the word "like or as" to compare between things, like: "I was cold as ice" or "It felt like a razor on my back". These two elements enhance the style of writing and clarify the meaning for an easier reading. In addition to onomatopoeia, although this word sound difficult and long, onomatopoeia is an easy technique, to be simpler it's any word match it sounds like: "atchoo" for sneeze and "boom" for explosion. Ultimately, personification is when a non-human replace a human in story, for instance when a tree can think or an animal can talk, this technique is very common in children's literature like in the case of Sylvester and the magic pebble by William Steig the characters in the story are talking animals. (Cindy,2015)

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### **I.8.The value of children's literature:**

Children are never too young to be read to. In fact, some mothers start reading to their children before they are born. What is remarkable is that research indicates unborn babies hear their mothers and react to their voices. In addition to building a bond between parent and child, daily reading to preschool children maybe the single most important thing parents can do to improve their children's chances for success in school.

Children's book editor Janet Schulman described the educational and emotional benefits of reading to children with her metaphor that "books help give children a leg up on the ladder offline". Of course, nurturing parents should continue to read to their children after they start school and for as long as they will listen which, if all goes well, will be throughout the elementary school years, as long as they reads, children benefits greatly from this literature since it strength a bond between the child and adult reader, because the adult when he reads to the child he paints a fantasy world which the child jump into and live inside, in addition to that, literature allows the child to experience the pleasure of escaping into a fantasy world or an exciting adventure. Literature creates a favorable attitude toward books as an enrichment to his live and whenever a child like to read books, he evolves his mental and psychological abilities along with gaining new vocabulary and syntax. Furthermore, reading simulate the child's cognitive development and becomes familiar with the stories and text structures besides, it expand his imagination while stretching his attention span and make him empathize with other people's feelings and problems, besides that literature teach the child to find ways in order to cope with their own feelings and problems, as he vicariously learn about the world, literature wide the horizons in front of him to become more interested in new subjects and hobbies, it also help him to understand the heritage of his own and other cultures. Moreover, literature permits to acquire new knowledge about nature and brings history to life through stimulating aesthetic development by illustrations, and finally it shows him the way to explore artistic media used in illustrations. (Ken, 2012. P19-20)

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### **I.9.The aims and usages of children's literature:**

The advanced studies in child psychology revealed the change of the old belief that the main purpose of children's literature is education by using a big amount of information and ideas to fill child's brain. Today the research seeks to educate the child completely, taking into consideration his physical, emotional, mental and social aspect without interfering to each other, on its way to develop, children's literature has no limits when it comes to its aims which is related to the culture of children's literature and its characteristics, however children's literature has always been considered as a tool to teach the children using didactics methods in spite of the changes on the level of the approach followed by children's literature which is slowly diminishing in the western world while still existing in the Arabic community. (Mdallel, 2003, p298-306).

Generally, children's literature is designed to serve the child's mind at the same time when he lives the adventure of the story in addition to enrich his educational and linguistic balance through entertainment. Furthermore, the aim of children's literature are one of those three, either to entertain, didactics or a combination of them together, another perspective is that children's literature now and then target to teach the children good behave, while it should be aim on wider range by showing them how to live properly and how to strength their relation with their society. Therefore, the child will be able to make an advantage of it to explore his or herself and their environment as well. (Kailani, 1998).

Consequently, the main aim of children's literature is didactic basically and yet entertainment is important in the child's life because it permits the author to transmit his or her idea successfully, for this purpose the writer of children's literature should be characterized by creative writing skills which facilitate to realize his goal. Moreover, children's literature is required to attract children using entertainment as a method in good plot, characters and unique writing style. After providing that, the author will be able to deliver the message he wants to convey.

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### **I.10.Conclusion**

Children's literature is written with child readers in mind. It is often written with children of particular age group in mind, taking their reading ability into account. It is also written on topics that would most likely be of interest to children. However, Adult literature is not written with child readers in mind. The language does not make concessions to the reading ability of children, and the plots and characters are usually written with adult readers in mind. This difference does not negate that an adult can read children's literature or the opposite, it depends on the subjects and the themes of the book and the reader's interest, therefore entertainment is one of the most elements of children's literature, it is agreed that a child finds whatever is entertaining worth to be interested in, and this when the author's turn comes, to emerge entertainment with literature in artful writing style using mainly humorous events, characters and funny words.

# Chapter two

# Humor in children literature

## **Chapter two: Humor in Children’s Literature.**

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### **II.1. Introduction**

Children are like a blank page, you can write anything on it. This is why parents focus on teaching their children as much knowledge as they can due to their ability to memorize a sizable amount of information during this childhood phase. However, it’s not easy to deal with a child during this stage or teach him any piece of literature, teachers came up with a creative approach which allow them to ‘feed’ the idea they want to the child, this approach is about blending literature with fun and entertainment, because the child adore to play and have fun during his earlier ages, based on this idea children’s writers becomes more proficient in their book and writing style using different genre of humor in order to attach the young readers.

Moreover, children react on this type of literature with varying degrees, some are attracted to the colorful picture books, other to the funny way of word's manipulation, while there are a group of children who find the character's actions enjoyable, this response is relied on many criteria like child’s age and his level in the linguistic field.

In this chapter, we'll define humor based on many studies by different writers as a term and as a concept found in literature, in the next point we'll discover the various type of humor used as component in literature, after that we try to figure out how children response towards such literature through their different stages of childhood, finally with the evolvment of humor in literature all the way of its creation till now.



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### II.2. Definition of humor:

As a term, humor derives from the humoral medicine of the ancient Greeks, which taught that the balance of fluids in the human body, known as 'humours', control human health and emotion. Additionally, humor has an independent meaning, it's not related to laughter or any other specific action because we can be amused without laughing and it goes both ways like when a child find himself in trouble, he start to laugh spontaneously to escape from the situation and relieve the stress he feels, as the researcher Michele Landsberg describes:

“Children like all the powerless, find their best release and choicest weapon in humor, they are always ready to drop an armload of tension or anger to indulge in a liberating shout of laughter, and as the teachers are well aware, laughter is the reward that lures the most reluctant reader”. (Landsberg, 1992, p34).

To define the humor as a term, Nelson explains humor from his perspective as the following:” I like to think of humor being the quality that makes a person laugh or smile and consequently feel good”. (Nelson, 1973) he linked the concept of humour with the action of smiling or laughing. On the other hand, humor generates a duality in Shaffer's and Hopkins's definition when they wrote: “Humor is a magical thing that allows us to endure life's hardship such as death, sickness, hunger, pain and fear. It is the bond that can bring us together and if used as a weapon, tear us apart”. (Shaffer and Hopkins, 1988, p89). They relate humor with many opposites in life.

However, having a sense of humor is attached to our appreciation of humor as Ogden Nash showed:“In this foolish world there is nothing more numerous than different people's senses of humor”.(Mallan,1993, p7). In this definition Nash realize that humor exist inside those who have sense of humor in nature. Freud also value humor in the field of literature and consider it as an irreplaceable element in writing as he said: “you can always spot humor in books; I think people don't notice it but a book wouldn't be a book without some humor”. (Freud, 1960).Through this definition, Freud stated the fact that whenever a book of literature exist, there is humor involved. Furthermore, Martin viewed humor as the therapeutic function which plays an important role in human cognitive, social, emotional and moral development. (Martin, 2007)

In advanced research on the impact of humor on the learning field, studies shows that highly creative children have better sense of humor than their peers and vice

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versa.(Ziv,Shulman and Schleifer,1979).The scholar Nelson believes that humor is very important aspect of much of children's and adolescent literature. (Don Nelson, 1993)

Others relate humor to laughter claiming that humor is a laughter tool which induces amusement in order to relax the audience's nerves and eliminate the boredom in the air. Moreover, the literary researcher Raj Kishor Singh expose humor as 'a quality of being funny' and relate it to 'an ability to perceive and express a sense of the clever or amusing. Basically said Raj, it consists mainly in the recognition of incongruities or peculiarities present in a situation or character. In the literary level he considered humor as the heart of literature because it target the emotional aspect of the audience and differ from an individual to another. It depend on the age and the learning level for example when you tell a joke to an adult he react differently when you tell it to a child if he get it in the first place. So in order to include humor in children's literature, we should know the audience and how they will respond to it. (Raj Kishor Singh,2012,)

Consequently, humor is a tool to entertain and laugh and laugh is good, however the purpose of humor in literature should pass the level of entertainment, it should educate and teach the readers about different aspects of life, and help them to understand the true meaning of living, for many people humor is not just a tool it is a sense, we all have a sense of humor after all.

### **II.3.Types of humor in children's literature:**

There is a various types of humor exists in the literature for young readers, in her work with children and children's literature, Kappas established many types of humor found within children's literature. She writes: "Incongruity, then, is the basis of all forms of humor though it pervades each one with differing degrees of emphasis"(Kappas, 1967, p69) from her studies in this field she conclude that any form of humor was incongruity originally and this incongruity may or may not appear in the contest of the text depending on the style of the author.

Using Kappas's work as well as many other researchers, we can conclude six categories of humor frequently identified in children's literature. Which are: humorous characters, poking fun at authority, physical humor, nonsense, humorous language and verbal humor.

**II.3.1.Humorous characters:** writers uses exaggeration in human qualities and attributes is a tool used to create humorous characters, to exaggerate means to amplify an action or quality of person or something. Basically this element cannot be understood if the reader don't have a previous background about the person who is the characters making

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fun of such as teacher, police officer or someone else, generally teachers are the suitable choice for writers to satirize in children's books because children are considered as experts in telling tales about teachers like in the book of *Clark* by Max Dann, in addition comedy and tragedy are different sides of the same coin, thus writers of humorous children's books create character who makes the reader laugh and earn his sympathy at the same time for example *the secret diary of Adrian Mole* by Sue Townsend, furthermore this duality require a certain level of maturity in order to understand it, for the writers making the character innocent is a successful style to entertain the reader, this naivety makes the events around the character more funnier, however writers find it more challenging to make the reader laugh once the character gain the reader's sympathy, so they address such type to a specific group of audience whom are likely older than the character in the story, this selection permit them to laugh freely at the character's ignorance, however it should be a kind of distance between the reader and the character's identification because he can't be entertained by the character's suffering or his condition as he knows him closely, moreover animals and toys also can be used as funny characters especially for young children because they find them loveable like in the book of Gene Zion, *Harry the little dog*. Adults also can be portrayed as funny figures the book *me and Barry terrific* by Debra Oswald is a good example for that because children find some of adult's behavior funny and hilarious occasionally like the clown children find it funny because of the fact that he is old regarding his hilarious behaviors and manners.(Mallan, 1993)

Memorable characters include Amelia Bedelia, Pippi Longstocking, Fudge, Lilly, Milo, Tacky, Ramona, and many more. These characters are memorable because of the many different situations they experience. Children enjoy finding the incongruities within a character or the contrasts between characters. (Smith, 1967). There are many different reasons children are able to relate well to humorous characters. Monson describes why these characters appeal to children: "It concerns the laughter that comes from a 'sudden glory' at discovering we are better or smarter than others...character humor is often directed toward a comic character who is so stupid or absent-minded as to be ludicrous"(Monson, 1978, p5) this idea of superiority can be found in the majority of children's literature. Children are happy to laugh at mistakes made by other children, because they no longer make the same mistakes. The famous children's author Beverly Cleary supports this idea by adding that humor can relieve anxiety in children as well as make them feel superior to their younger selves, knowing they've grown. By challenging obstacles in their lives children are able to laugh at those that now experience the same

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events that troubled them earlier, laughing at what they experienced earlier in their lives allows them to release some tension that may have been created at that time. (Cleary,1982)

**II.3.2.Poking Fun at Authority:** this type is used by writers to make fun of a certain person who the children fears in and see them as invisible people. Usually writers address adults who take an important place in children's life. Numerous researchers used this type in their books. Mikhail Bakhtin described the importance of poking fun at authority in his discussion of Carnival. Using Bakhtin's work as a reference, Quantz and O'Connor explain: "Not only does laughter make no exception for the upper stratum, but indeed it is usually directed toward it. Furthermore, it is directed not at one part only, but at the whole" (Quantz and O'Connor, 1988, p102) Poking fun at authority can be directed at teachers, parents, it can reach even children's peers. Mallan asserts: "Teachers are the obvious choice for exaggerated portraiture in children's books, for children are experts when it comes to telling tales about this group". (Mallan, 1993,p9)

Teachers are the protagonists in many of these humorous books, yet they are simply one of many adults that hold this burden. Nilsen describe this idea when he states: "The teenager's need to achieve independence tempts writers to portray adults as coming out on the short end of their dealings with teenagers". (Nilsen, 1982, p62) In much humorous literature many adults are never able to match wits with a child. Furthermore, children would also love to challenge the authority they faces, in order to copy the characters they read about in literature. PippiLongstocking is a classic character who overcame authority. Another example for student vs. teacher is found in Andrew Clements' book, *Frindle* is another which talks about a story of a child dared his teacher. Gail Munde described this confrontation: "Many of the humorous fiction choices by children involved stories that either placed the main character in a position of power or allowed the main character to vent frustration at being powerless" (Gail Munde, 1997, p222).

**II.3.3.Physical Humor:** generally it depend on the character's actions in the story, physical humor is a category that is found quite frequently in children's literature. Smith confirms this point: "Probably the most common of all sources of children's humor is the physical situation with its obvious elements of contrast and surprise". (Smith,1967, p207) Bateman predicts that this idea of physical humor is one that appeals to children because due to the simplicity of visualizing what is happening in the story. By drawing picture of the character or situation in their minds, the children can better see the humor. (Bateman, 1967) The visual appearance of a character is also a genre of physical humor, by extremely

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exaggeration while describing characters. McGhee emphasizes this writing strategy in his studies. Younger children may laugh at a person who looks much different than the norm, but as children progress through McGhee’s stages to the final developmental stage they are more polite and wait until the person is gone before they laugh at the difference. (McGhee, 1979) This idea of physical humor also includes size differences and transformations, a classic example of this is Alice from her adventures in Wonderland. Alice not only meets many humorous characters, but she undergoes various transformations of size from large to small, Gary Paulsen’s *Harris and Me* is an example of physical humor, especially for older children, two adolescent boys’ summer adventures and practical jokes lead to many examples for this category. Wrestling pigs, or swinging from barn rafters on a rope, Harris and his cousin get into many humorous adventures where their bodies bear the brunt of their experiments. These are examples of physical humor and a more mature version of slapstick comedy. Kappas describes the slapstick type of humor as, “the form of humor that depends for its effect on fast, boisterous, and zany physical activity and horseplay...”. (Kappas, 1967, p68).

Grossness is mentioned by Mallan and Shannon in their studies citing the work of Roald Dahl as a prime example. Nilsen joins them when he states: “Teenagers abhor sweetness and adore grossness”.(Nilsen, 1982, p60). This could be the reason why Roald Dahl’s work is so appealing to older readers. *The Big Foot Giant* contains numerous instances of burping and farting. Dav Pilkey’s *Captain Underpants*, is also appealing to children, especially the nickname chart found in some of the Captain Underpants books. He combines both nonsense and humor in his work, and takes it to a new dimension. The name Captain Underpants by itself is enough to appeal to children. Physical and gross humor appeals to both young children and teenagers. Smith notes how this type of humor appeals to everyone: “Obviously, physical humor causes people of all ages to laugh—instinctively, unreasoningly, with unintellectual belly laughs”.(Smith, 1967, p271).

While some adults may not agree with this type of humor, and find it more offensive than funny, children do find physical humor funny.

**II.3.4.Nonsense:** it is a type of humorous literature used to describe events based on the writer’s imagination randomly, this type is considered weird among children because it has no meaning and it contradicts the logic, it’s only used to add humor to the story, nonsense is an essential component of humor found in children’s literature and it comes with a vast list of examples. Kappas refers to it as absurd, Smith uses Lewis Carroll’s “Jabberwocky” as an example, Mallan and Shannon cite Roald Dahl’s books as

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examples that use nonsense and gross, children are attracted by the utter nonsense in humor. It appears in McGhee's third stage, children are willing to play with language and pronounce random words simply because they sound funny. Jalongo also accords with the importance of nonsense humor especially for the younger child when he said: "The nonsensical, slapstick, and comic mishap are all elements of children's books suitable for primary level children" (Jalongo, 1985, p111).

The nonsense and absurd characters that Dr. Seuss created, lures both children and adults. Shaffer and Hopkins attempt to explain the reason for Seuss's success in saying, "One reason for the popularity of the Dr. Seuss books is the abundance of nonsensical characters with their extraordinary names, fantasy figures and ridiculous antics".(Shaffer and Hopkins,1988, p91). The crazy jokes found in Seuss books have a strong influence for other ridiculous characters as well; both characters and language can be zany in these books. Kappas believes nonsense humor contains the "nonsensical use of logic and language..."(Kappas, 1967, p68)

One of the key ways language is used in nonsense humor is with exaggeration of characters and tall tales, sometimes these categories will blend together as the case with nonsense and language.

**II.3.5. Humorous language:** it also called Language Play, Which is a category of humor that has been identified by researchers as well as critics, if young children just learn the language or a child in the adolescent years, word play appeals to them all, McGhee found this in young children as they began to learn new words and master language.

Landsberg describes how this fits with children's literature and the young child: "Linguistic invention is another form of humor that wears equally well. Indeed, the earliest forms of humor in children's literature are nursery rhymes, with their absurd juxtapositions and delight in patterns of rhythm, sound, and rhyme". (Landsberg, 1992) During their development children are drawn to the words. Children listen to words until they become ready to play with them, one aspect of children's early play with words is to create nonsense words that rhyme with known word. (McGhee 1979).This type of language play creates a mixture between language play and the nonsense category, in addition the first type of word play children experiences is the pun, Schwartz describes this appeal: "One finds punning in most of the joke forms to which children are attracted". (Schwartz, 1977)

In spite of the diversity of jokes, children love the idea of word play.

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The appeal of word play continues as children pass the primary years. Sid Fleischman is a master of words, who found that not only funny metaphors, but humorous character names as well. In his book *Chancy and the Grand Rascal*, we meet a character so thin “he could take a bath in a shotgun barrel”.(Sid Fleischman, 1966) Another character is “so thin she could fall through a stove pipe without getting sooty”(Sid Fleischman, 1960). With character names like, “Hold Your Nose Billy”, “Jamoka Jack”, “Pitch-Pine Billy Pierce”, and “Mississippi MacFinn,” children are represented to the more developed form of word play Fleischman has created. Furthermore, older readers are also drawn into more complex verbal play in Norton Juster's *The Phantom Tollbooth*, Landsberg has high praise for this work, calling it, “the purest verbal comedy for older children” (Landsberg, 1992, p38). Language play include also the older reader, Nilsen realize this idea in his study of adolescent literature: “look at the titles of some books popular with young readers. The books are not necessarily humorous, but the word play in titles has evidently interested teen readers”. (Nelsen, 1982)

A recent book also matches well with Nilsen's claim is the title of *Angus, Thongs, and Full-Frontal Snogging* is bound to attract adolescents to the book, the examples of language play in children's literature are numerous. Furthermore this type of humor is not always funny, it can be challenging for children as well. For further understanding about the word play, the students must be able to distinguish the humor. (Shaeffer and Hopkins, 1988). Smith explained this idea, “It is evident, from this brief breakdown of language humor, that language play is a staple in children's fun but also that children vary in their responses to it”. (Smith, 1967)

**II.3.6. Verbal humor:** this type based on the characters' line in the book, the writer use it mostly in their books in form of riddles to solve puzzles in entertaining way for example:

Q: “why is six afraid of seven?”

R: “because seven ate (eight) nine”

In addition verbal humor include also anecdotes, which are legends or tales nobody can confirm that they are really happened, an example for it is the tale of Harry Smirvnock. Mr. Smirvnock was going to a club when a cop sirened him to stop along the side. He stopped, but the cop car didn't. Instead, the cop car continued along the highway. The cop later realized that the Toyota Camry that was expected to stop along the side of the road was actually another different car. "T hats how many damn toyata's there are. Jesus." the cop said. Besides that, writers uses limericks in their humorous stories, limericks are

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poems in origin shaped to fit the comedian case in the book or the story like the following verse:

The limerick packs laughs anatomical  
In space that is quite economical,  
.But the good ones I've seen  
So seldom are clean,  
And the clean ones so seldom are comical.

Bloopers is often used by the writers of humorous literature as a type of verbal humor, it means the awkward situations or the mistakes committed by a character in the story. The final genre of verbal humor is puns, it based on the play with words that exploit a multiple meaning of a term or similar sounding words for an intended humorous effects.

### **II.4.The development of children's humor:**

From the day he speaks, the child is able to practice humor orally, like when a baby is repeating random words most of adults consider it humorous and funny besides his actions and movements. Martha Wolfstein conducted a research in her book children's humor and came up with the result that children's humor was grounded in their repressed sexual feelings and emotions. By trying to outlet these feelings, children were able to create humor through their physical play or even with their play of words. Wolfenstein has similar views of how humor helps cope with the trials of daily life: "Joking is a gallant attempt to ward off the oppressive difficulties of life, a bit of humble heroism, which for the moment that it succeeds provides elation, but only for the moment". (Wolfstein, 1954, p11) this leads to the fact that children attack authority with humor, and make fun of younger children who are learning new things the older ones have already mastered.

Paul McGhee's extensive studies of children's humor produced four stages of children's humor development. His main emphasis was that humor, and mainly children's humor, was grounded in incongruity. McGhee believes that children understand particular types of humor when they are able to grasp its cognitive incongruities. McGhee states: "prior cognitive mastery or a firmly established expectation of 'how things should be' is a basic prerequisite for humor". (McGhee, 1979, p38). From this view, humor require prior knowledge to understand the funny meaning hidden between words. McGhee strongly believes that incongruity and cognitive abilities are related to each other.



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The first stage McGhee noted was the physical stage. McGhee calls this stage, "Incongruous Actions toward Objects." This usually begins around the child's second year. Children begin to imagine that an actual object is a different thing, for example, calling a block a phone or a pencil a comb. Children become comfortable with their "fantasy" setting for their play, realize that it's pretend, and are able to laugh at combing their hair with a pencil. They are aware that this does not match with "reality," and therefore find it humorous.(McGhee, 1979).In this primary stage children experienced their first humorous case. As children enter the second stage of humor development, "Incongruous Labeling of Objects and Events, "children become more verbal. This stage usually begins around the end of a child's second year. During this time the young child will point to an object and call it something completely different.

A child might point to a rock and call it a dog, or point to a cat and call it a pig. At this point in their development children are beginning to play with the language they are beginning to acquire. Throughout this stage McGhee finds that children are looking for "play signals" from adults or other children so they know this type of play is acceptable.

If an adult gives them a strange look after they have misnamed an object the child becomes aware the adult may not approve of this type of humor. Likewise, if an adult jokes with the child in a similar fashion, the child needs to see some form of "play signal" to be assured that the adult is joking. While later on in a child's life they will no longer need these play signals, in the early stages of humor development, McGhee believes these signals are necessary for the child. (McGhee, 1979)

At approximately three years of age children enter the third stage of development, "Conceptual Incongruity", in this stage children create a larger class for specific objects. When they label an object a cat, they are more aware of the specific features of a cat (i.e.. head, tail, four legs, fur, whiskers, and the meow sounds cats make). Now when a child uses incongruity to mislabel a dog as a cat, they may also add a "moo" as a completely different sound for what a cat makes, at this stage in development, children are extending beyond simply mislabeling objects found in earlier stages. Also at this stage their language develops further, children now become curious about sounds of words, and how they rhyme. Children begin to repeat words they hear, and then create more words that rhyme with the initial word. For example, if a child hears the word "happy", they would repeat the word and add more words with a similar sound pattern to the initial word. Thus "happy" would lead to "happy, dappy, pappy, sappy, gappy. (McGhee, 1979, p 62)

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By around the age of seven, children enter the fourth stage of development, "Multiple Meanings, or the First Step toward Adult Humor". At this point children understand language may have two meanings. "A child then understands that, although this second meaning does make sense in one respect, it nonetheless creates an incongruous set of circumstances—which of course, is exactly what makes it funny".(McGhee, 1979, p76).

At this stage children might begin to understand the classic joke:

"Order, order in the court!" "Ham and cheese on rye, your honor."

While at stage three, children would still be confused by the double meaning found in the word "order". During stage four children begin to understand puns and other jokes based on a word's multiple meanings.(McGhee, 1979, p79).Children are able to think back about previous details found in a joke while still grasping what is occurring at the same time the joke is being told, more advanced cognitive ability helps them understand multiple meaning jokes. From this point on children develop more into adolescent forms of humor.

According to McGhee, stages can no longer be defined at this level. He notes: "After Stage four, then, individual differences in patterns of humor appreciation become more prominent than any changes related to the child's age or developmental level". (McGhee, 1979, p 79) Because children enter McGhee's fourth stage at age seven, there is a large span of years that lacks categorical definition in relation to McGhee's stages of humor development.

Gesell and Ames studied the adolescent years from age ten through sixteen and established stages for each of those years. Beginning with age ten they found slapstick humor to be the main enjoyment. Some common themes they find through these years are the use of taboo subjects for humor as well as poking fun at authority. The researchers also found that as children aged they were subtler with their uses of humor. Finally, near the end of these stages, adolescents are able to poke fun at themselves and later are able to participate in "adult jokes". Times have changed. In the 1950s the term "adult jokes" would refer to jokes that were developmentally appropriate for the adult. While Gesell and Ames were well before McGhee's time, their work did establish the importance of paying attention to changes occurring over a child's complete span of development. This is one aspect of McGhee's work that merits further research. (Gesell, Ilg, and Ames, 1956)

A final piece of research that is quite notable is the work of Katherine Kappas. While her work is dated, it is still influential in the field. Kappas not only described three

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stages of humor development, she also proposed ten different types of humor that appeal to children. While her first two stages correspond well with McGhee's stages, her third stage deals specifically with adolescence. Kappas's first stage is found in five year olds. During this stage she claims that children enjoy more physical or slapstick humor, and there is very little verbal humor found here. The second stage is found in nine year olds, at this point the humor is more cognitively developed and requires increased verbal skills. The topics of humor are more taboo as well. Her final stage is located in the adolescent time period around fourteen years. Here the humor is directed at adults or even upon the adolescent themselves. Kappas's work is not as extensive as McGhee's, yet presents some similarities. While her work does have many gaps in time between each stage, it does include the adolescent child.

(Katherine Kappas, 1967)

How children respond to humorous literature is an idea that deserves to be closely explored.

### **II.5.The appreciation of humorous literature among children:**

To address a child with a piece of literature require certain conditions, adding fun to this literature is the most important one because once the author makes the young reader laugh or even smile, he will gets his full attention. A few researches have been conducted in order to find out how much the child appreciates humor in literature and how he responds towards it. Reader response theory as it applies to children has been ignored by critics and scholars in the past two decades. In her study of children's response to humorous literature, Shannon found very little research done in this topic. In 1978, Monson had also noted the lack of research in children's response to humorous literature, both researchers discovered two areas of humorous literature that have been examined, research either focused on a content analysis of humor in children's literature as Kappas did in 1967, or examined children's responses to literature by Beckman in 1984.This limited research in the field of children's responses to humorous literature is quite troubling. Shannon and Monson agree on the need for more research to be done in this area.

Modern studies about humor and children revealed that researchers limited themselves by using only jokes, cartoons, and quite rarely, an excerpt from a story. Monson reports this

## Chapter two: Humor in Children's Literature.

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fact: "Most of the research reported by psychologists has been based on responses to cartoons and jokes and has not really dealt with literary responses". (Monson, 1978, p16).

Moreover, cartoons and jokes provide researchers with a quick example of humor that may not challenge the child too much but still allows for testing a specific facet of humor, even more troubling is research containing only excerpts from books for children's responses. (Shannon, 1999) Beckman notes how she only used excerpts of books: "Each selection was an entire episode, sometimes a portion of a chapter, sometimes an entire chapter" (Beckman, 1984, p4). Using only an excerpt from a book derails the picture of the child's response to the whole book, because of the complexity of a text, exposing a child to an excerpt, does not allow him to respond completely to the text, only a few studies of response to humorous literature have examined children's transactions with entire books.

(Wendelin, 1980)

Monson's work is simply a summary of a few studies that had been done previously, she describes a study that examined humor and a child's intelligence level from 1962, as well as studies from 1966 and 1972 in which the researchers simply describe what types of humor children enjoy, she also describes Bateman's work on children's responses to humorous literature based on selections read to them in class. Monson's work help to examine the previous research, and it gave away the limited number of studies available at that time. Shannon's work builds upon previous studies in 1999, she examined how fourth and fifth graders responded to nine different humorous books. The children had the option to read any book of the collection she selected, or none at all. She found the children identified four different categories of humor they enjoyed:

"The first is competence, superiority, or sense of accomplishment, the second category is the physical events and appearances, while the third one is the scatological and other words or incidents perceived as taboo or crude, the final category that students prefer to read is language and wordplay". (Shannon, 1999, p129).

These categories correspond with the five representative categories used earlier to discuss humor found within children's literature, although this work is a good example of children's response to humorous literature, it also contains some problematic features.

One of the main difficulties that Shannon faced during her study is the book selection. While some studies use only excerpts from stories, those studies use actual books, which often select titles that may not seem humorous to the intended audience.

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In her study, Shannon chose books that include many different specific criteria. She selected books that were: “classified or described as ‘humorous’ or ‘funny’ by at least two of the following: *Elementary School Library Collection*, *Best Books for Children*, NCTE’s *Adventuring with Books*, or the ALA “Notable Books for Children” lists”.(Shannon, 1999).

She also held the requirement that the books be “favorably reviewed by at least two recognized professional journals”, while using quality books is important in any study, Shannon has taken out one key voice, the young reader, in her study.(Shannon, 1999) Children prefer to choose the titles and authors they find humorous, an even more problematic component of a study by Karla Wendelin is her inclusion of books, “chosen from a working list of titles compiled jointly by the NCTE and the Children’s Book Council from publisher’s suggestions regarding *what children might find humorous*”. (Wendelin, 1980)

This method of book selection, using publishers’ opinions rather than children’s preferences, is reliable but does not seem to be typical for research with children. Munde’s examined the variations between children’s and adults’ preferences of humorous books found in children’s literature adds another phase to the discussion of book selection for research, in further research she noted that children and adults differs on what is humorous in children’s books, and their choices reflect on this. Munde’s findings show the big difference between adults and children while selecting humorous texts, this difference is important because children will respond quite differently to a humorous text chosen by adults, when children enjoy a humorous text, they often respond with laughter.

As Landsberg mentioned: “Laughter is the reward that lures the most reluctant reader” (Landsberg,1992, p34) Humorous literature helps educators to bring more children into literacy experiences. Educators need to focus on the genre that will reach large numbers of children; children’s authors know the importance of humorous literature, as Alvin Schwartz wrote: “Children tend to be more playful than adults; as a result, they are inclined to laugh more readily and more frequently”. (Schwartz, 1977, p282).To benefit from children’s desire to laugh as described by Schwartz is crucial for classroom teachers, by creating more opportunities to read humorous literature, teachers may be better able to reach more students and create a life-long desire to read.

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### **II.6. Conclusion**

Humor is a genre that can support children to read, it motivates them, requires them to use various reading strategies, and encourages social interaction so they can share what they have read, it also develop their ability to feel other's pain or joy, thus become more civilized generation.

These reasons and others more qualifies humor to be the essential element in literature, Lewis Carroll is one of the many writers who successfully mix the literature with the entertainment in order to produce well writing books and stories to young children, Alice's adventures in wonderland is good example for this combining in children's literature, which I find it the best humorous book for children of all ages.

# Chapter three

**Humor in Alice's adventures in the wonderland**

## Chapter Three: Humor in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

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### III.1. Introduction:

During their daily lives children encounter many forms of humor in a variety of settings; they hear jokes and riddles, have funny stories and read aloud to them watch cartoons on television, and read books that contains humorous events and situations. Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is one of the most loveable book for children in all ages, this work is not simply tale about a girl who discovers worlds. Throughout this story the reader becomes more and more conscious of how language works. Despite being a mathematician, Lewis Carroll successfully manage to blend humor within the book of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* defying his lack of knowledge about humorous literature and inspiring by his tales addressing the young readers which amplifies the acceptance of this story by the adults as well.

Through the lines of this chapter we'll analyze how Lewis Carroll used the types of humor in his work. After that we'll deepen into the funny lines used in the story and extracting humor from it. Finally we'll shed the light on the importance of humor in literary writing and how it impacts our life.



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### III.2. Aspects of Humor in Alice's Adventures in the Wonderland:

Alice adventures in the wonderland is a humorous book originally, Carroll manage to use many genre of humor in this book in balance with his ideas and thoughts all over the story. In the next point we'll extract the six types of humor which previously explained and mark the humor in the chapters of the book except for the type of poking fun at authority it doesn't exist in our book.

#### III.2.1. Humorous characters:

In his book, Lewis Carroll used many characters and portrait them as funny figures started from the mouse who is the first creature Alice met when she fell into the hole, the humor in the character of the mouse lies when he tell the driest stories he know to get dry himself and others after they fell into Alice's pool of tears<sup>1</sup>, in this story Carroll apply exaggeration on many characters especially Alice when cries in the beginning of the story, she is also portrayed as innocent character to earn the reader's empathy<sup>2</sup>, another character with exaggeration is the queen of hearts as she order to behead anyone she dislike<sup>3</sup>, the white rabbit is also portrayed as funny character when he appears first in the garden<sup>4</sup>. In addition to the playing cards two, five and seven are considered as humorous characters in the story when they paint the white roses with red after planting them with mistake<sup>5</sup>. In addition to that, the dormouse is another humorous character with his constantly sleeping<sup>6</sup>. Flamingos and hedgehogs are used in the story as mallets and balls by the queen of hearts to play croquet is hilarious for the reader<sup>7</sup>. Later on Lewis Carroll uses the cook as funny character portraying her as a cooker who adds a lot of pepper in the food she made and throws kitchen stuff at the duchess and her baby and even Alice when she meets her later<sup>8</sup>, the last appearance of a humorous character in the story was by the mock turtle, a turtle with head of a calf the funny thing about him is that he is always exceedingly sentimental and self absorbed and seems very sad when he tells Alice about his schooldays<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter I from the book Alice's Adventures in the Wonderland(A.A.W).

<sup>2</sup> See chapter I (A.A.W).

<sup>3</sup> See chapter XI (A.A.W).

<sup>4</sup> See chapter I (A.A.W).

<sup>5</sup> See chapter VIII (A.A.W).

<sup>6</sup> See chapter XI (A.A.W).

<sup>7</sup> See chapter VIII (A.A.W).

<sup>8</sup> See chapter VI (A.A.W).

<sup>9</sup> See chapter VIII (A.A.W).

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### **III.2.2. Physical Humor:**

The characters of the story are represented in funny way, however each character have his own qualities and clothing, physical humor is based on the physical appearances of the character for example in our book when Alice transform in her size whether she get bigger or smaller is funny for many young readers<sup>10</sup>, Carroll draws the character of white rabbit as the animal rabbit wearing waistcoat and looking to his pocket watch while running in hurry<sup>11</sup>. For children it’s hilarious when they see someone dressed differently than the norms, the writer also uses playing cards to portrait many characters in the story like the gardeners two, five and seven and the ruthless queen and her incompetent husband as the queen and the king of hearts playing cards. In addition to that, the mad hatter is pictured by the author as a mad-hats maker who host infinite tea parties and enjoys to frustrate Alice along with his friend the march hare and when she gone they disturbs the dormouse<sup>12</sup>. Flamingos and hedgehogs are also included in physical humor because they are replaced the mallets and balls in the game of croquet this role is laughable to children<sup>13</sup>. Moreover the lizard bill plays the role as the dumb servant in this story he appears when the enormous Alice stuck inside the white rabbit’s house then he get summoned by the white rabbit enter inside the chimney in order to make Alice go out<sup>14</sup>. Another case of physical humor when the pigeon mistakes Alice with the serpent due to her long neck after she ate the mushroom<sup>15</sup>.

### **III.2.3. Nonsense as an expression of humor:**

The most dominant type of humor in this book is nonsense and absurdity from characters to events, Carroll unleash his imagination and take nonsense to a another level, the events in the story getting weirder and weirder and they are beyond Alice’s understanding, starting with the idea of a girl fits into a rabbit whole before she finds a whole new world underground, the white rabbit is repeating “I’m late” in hurry and later on he appears to Alice as a maniac, timid and occasionally aggressive the mouse telling the driest story he knows to dry himself and others (the duck, dodo, Lory, Eaglet, old crab with daughter and several birds), after that they participate in the “caucus race” and got scared when she tells them about her cat Dinah. Then there are the servants of the white rabbit who tries to

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<sup>10</sup> See chapter I (A.A.W).

<sup>11</sup> See chapter I (A.A.W).

<sup>12</sup> See chapter XII (A.A.W).

<sup>13</sup> See chapter XIII (A.A.W).

<sup>14</sup> See chapter IV (A.A.W).

<sup>15</sup> See chapter V (A.A.W).

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make the huge Alice go out of the house by throwing rocks at her which they turns into cakes and meet the “wise” caterpillar who smoke the hookah, later on she ran into the house of duchess who is nursing a squealing baby and turns later into a pig as well as the Cheshire cat who is constantly appear and disappear until only his grin remains and the cook who puts so much pepper in the soup she made. Moreover, she meets the mad hatter and his friends in the tea party (the march hare and the dormouse) before she ran into the three gardeners and save them from the queen temper in her way of attending a croquet game with living flamingos and hedgehogs replacing the mallets and the balls with the queen's order of beheading her subjects who are a deck of cards and finally she attend the trial for stealing the queens tart's by the knave of hearts. All the animals (except the pig/baby) have the nagging, whining, complaining, and peevish attitudes of adults. The nonsense is all over wonderland, Alice understand that nothing happens there is like the real world that she used to live in.

### III.2.4. Humorous language:

Carroll master the language game or word play in his book Alice's adventures in wonderland, language-games are not fixed. When they become obsolete, that is when they cease to represent language in use, they disappear and new ones arise.

Wittgenstein's association between language and games should not be surprising. After all, both games and language function according to rules recognized by the players/speakers. Yet, as the author underlines, nothing should stop a restless player or an imaginative speaker or an inventive writer from neglecting, partially altering or completely subverting those rules. It is part of the game! It is what happens, for instance, in the unruly croquet match described in Carroll's text. As Marina Yaguello brilliantly observes:

“Everybody has the right to create a world of sense and nonsense. It is precisely the violation of syntactical and semantic rules that gives rise to poetry (...). Linguistic competence includes both the observance of rules and the ability to subvert them. Nothing should keep one from speaking of green ideas full of insomnia sleeping furiously”. (Yaguello, 1991)

Moreover, Alice is usually the one who stares and gapes while all the other creatures seem perfectly at ease in that linguistic nonsensical wonderland. The dream context creates an alternative reality in which common sense references are constantly challenged and

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figurative meanings are often taken literally, producing ludicrous situations and funny altercations between Alice and the many creatures she encounters. Indeed, as Jacqueline Flescher points out, in “The Language of Nonsense in Alice”, “Conversation, or more precisely, argument, is the essential vehicle of nonsense in Alice, but it is a conversation of an unusual kind” (Flescher, 1969).

An example of quite an unusual conversation is certainly to be found in “The Mad Tea-Party” episode. Four characters intervene: Alice, the Hatter, the March Hare and the Dormouse, who is mostly asleep. The main topic of conversation, and misinterpretation, is ‘time’: Alice had been looking over his shoulder with some curiosity, ‘What a funny watch!’ she remarked. ‘It tells the day of the month and doesn’t tell what o’clock it is!’

‘Why should it?’ muttered the Hatter. ‘Does your watch tell you what year it is?’ ‘Of course not,’ Alice replied very readily: ‘but that’s because it stays in the same year for such a long time together.’

‘Which is just the case with mine,’ said the Hatter.

Alice felt dreadfully puzzled. The Hatter’s remark seemed to have no meaning in it, and yet it was certainly English. ‘I don’t quite understand,’ she said, as politely as she could.

‘The Dormouse is asleep again,’ said the Hatter, and he poured a little hot tea upon its nose. (*Alice’s adventures in the wonderland*, p72)

Alice associates English with “coherence and meaningful language” (Flescher, 1969), but the Hatter’s reply, though uttered in English, appears to be nonsensical. The truth is that she ignores an important fact: it is always six o’clock at the March Hare house. In consequence, a regular clock is worthless, but, though the information is different, the function of the object remains the same: to indicate time. Despite Alice’s bewilderment and the Hatter’s attempt to change the subject, misinterpretations over the concept of time proceed: ‘Have you guessed the riddle yet?’ the Hatter said, turning to Alice again. ‘No, I give it up,’ Alice replied: ‘what’s the answer?’ ‘I haven’t the slightest idea,’ said the Hatter.

‘Nor I,’ said the March Hare.

Alice sighed wearily. ‘I think you might do something better with the time,’ she said, ‘than waste it asking riddles with no answers.’

‘If you knew Time as well as I do,’ said the Hatter, ‘you wouldn’t talk about wasting it. It’s him.’

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'I don't know what you mean,' said Alice.

'Of course you don't! the Hatter said, tossing his head contemptuously. 'I dare say you never even spoke to Time!'

'Perhaps not,' Alice cautiously replied: 'but I know I have to beat time when I learn music.'

'Ah! that accounts for it,' said the Hatter. 'He won't stand beating. Now, if you only kept on good terms with him, he'd do almost anything you like with the clock. (*Alice's adventures in the wonderland*, p73)

Alice tries to control language, but sometimes words deceive her. That's what happens when the March Hare kindly invites her to drink more tea:

'Take some more tea,' the March Hare said to Alice, very earnestly.

'I've had nothing yet,' Alice replied in an offended tone, 'so I can't take more.' 'You mean you can't take less,' said the Hatter: 'it's very easy to take more than nothing.' (*Alice's adventures in the wonderland*,p76)

Using the word 'more' generally implies that something has already happened. After all, more of nothing is still nothing. There is, however, a great difference between 'more of nothing' and 'more than nothing'. This linguistic nuance is cleverly explored by the Hatter who deconstructs Alice's world of references. As Marina Yaguello shrewdly points out:

The rules of conversation of Alice's world are constantly ridiculed and their stereotyped nature becomes evident. The courtesy formulas and the phrases destined to establishing or keeping contact are voluntarily misinterpreted. The automatism of language have no place in Wonderland. (Yaguello, 1991)

Being unable to argue with the Hatter, Alice resorts to a rather childish reply: "Nobody asked your opinion", she says. At this moment, Alice's honest attempt to be civil and polite is spoilt as a result of her loss of control over language.

From the Tea Party we move on to the "Mock Turtle's Story" chapter. Just before, Alice is introduced to the Queen of Hearts. That's when she utters the famous sentence: "Why, they're only a pack of cards, after all. I needn't be afraid of them!" (*Alice's adventures in the wonderland*,p82). She plays croquet and meets the Duchess again. The latter seems very happy to see Alice, who blames her former bad temper on the pepper. In spite of her sympathy, Alice is very annoyed by the Duchess' fondness of morals.

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Still, among all her morals, the Duchess makes a rather curious statement: "Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves" (*Alice's adventures in the wonderland*, p90). This is, in fact, a very important advice given that in Carroll's text almost every paragraph contains some sort of play on words, their sounds and their multiple senses. When, following the Queen's orders, the Duchess disappears, Alice is told to go and meet the Mock Turtle to hear his story. Taken by a Gryphon, she ends up landing on a truly pun realm.

To make a pun is to exploit double meanings of a word for humorous purposes or effects. Sometimes the play is on different senses of the same word; sometimes it is on the similar sense or sound of different words. In the "Mock Turtle's Story" episode, the puns are usually of the second type, but not exclusively:

'When we were little,' the Mock Turtle went on at last, more calmly, though still sobbing a little now and then, 'we went to school in the sea. The master was an old Turtle – we used to call him Tortoise –'

'Why did you call him Tortoise, if he wasn't one?' Alice asked.

'We called him Tortoise because he taught us,' said the Mock Turtle angrily: 'really you are very dull!'

'You ought to be ashamed of yourself for asking such a simple question,' added the Gryphon; and then they both sat silent and looked at poor Alice, who felt ready to sink into the earth. (*Alice's adventures in the wonderland*, p94-95)

This simple excerpt of conversation reveals effectively the two types of pun previously described. The first one revolves around the exploitation of different meanings of the word 'school'. Alice's world of references immediately leads her to think of 'school' as a place where children go everyday, hopefully to learn lots of interesting subjects guided by their teachers. Still, a turtle's home is the sea and 'school' also stands for a group of fishes or whales swimming together.

The second example explores the sound similarities between the word 'Tortoise' and the phrase 'taught us'. As far as the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon can see, following the implicit rules of sense is quite a tedious practice. They rather follow some sound reasoning of their own. If the Master Turtle taught us, then it becomes a Tortoise even though it does not belong to the terrestrial turtle family at all. The important thing is the sound resemblance between words and not their actual meanings or their accurate application to

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the context. Other examples of this concurrence of different semantic fields include the pairs 'lessons' / 'lessen', which can be found in this same chapter, and 'purpose' / 'porpoise', introduced in "The Lobster Quadrille" episode:

'And how many hours a day did you do lessons?' said Alice, in a hurry to change the subject.

'Ten hours the first day,' said the Mock Turtle; 'nine the next, and so on.' 'What a curious plan!' exclaimed Alice.

'That's the reason they're called lessons,' the Gryphon remarked: 'because they lessen from day to day.'

This was quite a new idea to Alice, and she thought it over a little before she made her next remark. 'Then the eleventh day must be a holiday?' 'Of course it was,' said the Mock Turtle.

'And how did you manage on the twelfth?' Alice went on eagerly.

'That's enough about lessons,' the Gryphon interrupted in a very decided tone: 'tell her something about the games now.' (*Alice's adventures in the wonderland*, p97)

The idea that lessons are named so because they lessen, that is because they become shorter, from day to day, puzzles Alice. Again, the sound resemblance between the words is taken for granted by the Gryphon and the Mock Turtle who keep following an illogical logic. Still, this time Alice is able to interrogate their logic by posing some difficult questions. Indeed, when she seems intrigued about the 12<sup>th</sup> day, they aren't able to come up with a proper explanation and therefore they simply change the subject to games and songs. Besides, talking about school is usually a dull theme for children and this also seems to apply to the creatures of Wonderland.

Changing the subject is, furthermore, a quite recurrent expedient in Carroll's text. Just as much as putting an end to the conversation by throwing in a sulky reply, as Alice had done in "The Mad Tea-Party", and as we shall see in the subsequent quote:

'If I'd been the whiting,' said Alice, whose thoughts were still running on the song, 'I'd have said to the porpoise, "Keep back, please: we don't want you with us!"' 'They were obliged to have him with them,' the Mock Turtle said: 'no wise fish would go anywhere without a porpoise.'

'Wouldn't it really?' said Alice in a tone of great surprise

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'Of course not,' said the Mock Turtle: 'why, if a fish came to me, and told me he was going on a journey, I should say "With what porpoise?"' 'Don't you mean "purpose"?' said Alice.

'I mean what I say,' the Mock Turtle replied in an offended tone. (*Alice's adventures in the wonderland*,p102)

This time, it is the Mock Turtle who ends the discussion, a bit rudely, when Alice's questions threaten to deconstruct his misuse of the word 'porpoise'. The play here lays between the common sense perspective that all journeys should have a purpose, a plan, a goal, and the existence of porpoises, small dolphins which cohabit with turtles and all sorts of fishes in the sea. Thus, though the Mock Turtle uses the word 'porpoise' belonging to the semantic field of sea, the implied meaning, highlighted by Alice's comment, does bring to mind the word 'purpose', thereby creating another comic situation. Carroll's characters are always ready to play on language and they become very annoyed either when they are questioned or ignored. In the trial chapter, for example, the King gets very upset when nobody laughs at his attempt to make a pun on the word 'fit'. "It's a pun!" (*Alice's adventures in the wonderland*, p121), he screams in despair.

In addition to puns, the order of words in a sentence and the processes of word formation are also pretexts to play with language in Wonderland. A good example of both these techniques can be found in the Mock Turtle schooling description:

'We had the best of educations – in fact, we went to school every day –'

'I've been to a day-school, too,' said Alice; 'you needn't be so proud as all that.'

(*Alice's adventures in the wonderland*,p96)

In the above quoted fragment, it is Alice who misapprehends the Mock Turtle's comment about going to school everyday, by introducing the concept of day-school, which is not all the same thing. Her rather childish desire to compete with the Mock Turtle leads to a reversal in the words order and, consequently, in the words sense.

The subjects taught at school are a subterfuge to further competition:

'Ah! Then yours wasn't a really good school,' said the Mock Turtle in a tone of great relief. 'Now at ours they had at the end of the bill, "French, music, and washing – extra".'

'You couldn't have wanted it much,' said Alice; 'living at the bottom of the sea.' 'I couldn't afford to learn it,' said the Mock Turtle with a sigh. 'I only took the regular course.' ; 'What was that? enquired Alice.



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'Reeling and Writhing, of course, to begin with,' the Mock Turtle replied; 'and then the different branches of Arithmetic – Ambition, Distraction, Uglification and Derision.'

'I never heard of "Uglification",' Alice ventured to say. 'What is it?'

The Gryphon lifted up both its paws in surprise. 'What! Never heard of uglifying!' it exclaimed. 'You know what to beautify is, I suppose?'

'Yes,' said Alice doubtfully: 'it means – to – make – anything – prettier.'

'Well, then,' the Gryphon went on, 'if you don't know what to uglify is, you must be a simpleton.' (*Alice's adventures in the wonderland*, p96)

Amidst the wide range of thematic subjects presented by the Mock Turtle, some are quite conventional – 'Arithmetic', 'Music', 'French' –, but others are rather unexpected – 'Ambition', 'Distraction', 'Derision'. The one that puzzles Alice the most is 'Uglification'. We don't need a dictionary to understand the meaning of the word. The game-like process is simple. We take a recognizable everyday word, such as 'ugly', and, using the rules of word formation, we turn it into a verb, 'uglify', or a noun, 'uglification'.

### III.2.5. Verbal humor within the context of the book:

Instead of listing explicit statements on linguistic matters, the Alice book elicits ideas with the help of verbal humor. It is like a test: the writer is testing language by deforming it. He draws it apart, plays with the components and then shakes them up, all levels of linguistics are involved in this game which is played between the writer and the reader. My purpose in this point is to show how wonderfully Carroll exploited the possibilities offered by different linguistic levels: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics in Alice's Adventures in the Wonderland.

**III.2.5.1. Phonology:** the phonological level of linguistics the hardest to represent in a written literary work. Lewis Carroll was not striving for the illustration of these phenomena consciously; phonological mechanisms can be detected through his constant playing with sounds. The way he handled minimal pairs and homophones shows his obsession with pronunciation. Minimal pairs occur when two words differ only in one sound segment that appears in the same phonological environment in both words. The great number of minimal pairs attracted the reader's attention when he reads *Alice's adventures in wonderland* at the first time. These pairs serve as elements of puns that Carroll weaves into the flow of conversations in *Alice's adventures in wonderland*.

(Sutherland, 1970)

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When Alice is falling down through the rabbit-hole, the words "bats" and "cats" get mixed up in her mind; she uses the two terms interchangeably: "Do cats eat bats?" and "Do bats eat cats?". (*Alice's adventures in wonderland*, I, p28)

The Cheshire Cat associates "pig" and "fig" on the basis of their sound sequences:

"Did you say 'pig,' or 'fig'?" said the Cat.

"I said 'pig,'" replied Alice; "and I wish you wouldn't keep appearing and vanishing so suddenly: you make me giddy!"

(*Alice's adventures in wonderland*, VI, p90)

Associations based on phonological resemblance often help the reader understand the puns involving minimal pairs. In the discussion on school-subjects between Alice and the Mock Turtle. (*Alice's adventures in wonderland*, IX, 129-130) only one of the word-pairs is mentioned; the other one has to be guessed from the context: Reeling (Reading), Writhing (Writing), Derision (Division), Mystery (History), Fainting (Painting), Grief (Greek).

Homophones are two words differing in graphic form but sharing the same pronunciation. They may deceive the ear of the listener; thus, they often lead to misunderstandings. Carroll played with the potential ambiguity created by these words. The role of homophones in the creation of humorous effect will be discussed in the section on semantics. (Sutherland, 1970) Stress operates as a meaning differentiator in the texts of the book; it implies contrast in the meanings of compounds and sentences. Phrase stress usually occurs in expressions making meaning more precise. In the conversation between Alice and the White Knight the expressions "next course" and "next day" are in the focus of the author's play:

"In time to have it cooked for the next course?" said Alice. "Well, that was quick work, certainly!"

"Well, not the next course," the Knight said in a slow thoughtful tone: "no certainly not the next course."

"Then it would have to be the next day. I suppose you wouldn't have two pudding-courses in one dinner?"

"Well, not the next day," the Knight repeated as before: "not the next day."(*Alice's adventures in wonderland*,VIM, p304-305)

When the primary stress falls on the first word in "next course", the Knight is indicating that it was not the next but presumably a later course for which he cooked the

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pudding. The switch of the stress to the second word implies that it was not a following course for which the pudding was ready but for a different occasion. That is why Alice wants to clarify what the Knight wanted to say, presupposing it must have been the next day. However, the same problem is responsible for the ambiguity again. The disambiguating role of contrastive stress is turned upside down. Carroll always indicates deviation from the normal stress pattern of sentences. (Sutherland, 1970)

**III.2.5.2. Morphology:** playing with words was one of Lewis Carroll's favorite activities. He was the inventor of several word-games, puns, anagrams and riddles in which he exploited and enriched the lexical inventory of the English language. His interest in the formation of new words was that of a logician; Carroll's neologisms are the results of an attempt to create and analyze words from the point of view of pure logic. According to Sutherland, the linguistic era of the nineteenth century contributed a lot to Carroll's lexical sensitiveness. Lewis Carroll reflected upon the work of etymologists and gave a humorous description of language change. His hidden intention may have been to satirize the self-confidence of historical linguists (Sutherland, 1970, p52). Lewis Carroll's etymological explanations that appeared in one issue of his self-written periodical *Mishmash* (1885) can be found in the annotated version of *Alice's adventures in wonderland* (Gardner, 1967, p191). Although there are not too many derived words among Carroll's neologisms in his literary works, examples such as "beamish", "un-birthday", "brillig" or "uglification" give a sample of his experimentation with the combination of bases and affixes. Carroll also created words by clipping off the first syllable. In a letter to a child-friend he wrote that "uffish", for example, reminds him of "a state of mind when the voice is gruffish, the manner is roughish, and the temper huffish" (Gardner, 1967, p196) All of the three words end in phonologically way, which leads to the association of the three meanings with one form. (Gardner, 1967, p195)

**III.2.5.3. Syntax:** structure refers to order, arrangement and organization; thus, it always implies some kind of logic. In *Alice's adventures in wonderland*, the logician Lewis Carroll intuitively displays the structural characteristics of the English language in different ways. He makes Alice and the reader rely on their syntactic knowledge for the interpretation of incomplete, nonsense and ambiguous utterances. (Sutherland, 1970, p215).

Structure can be helpful in the understanding of sentences containing new words. English belongs to those languages characterized by a relatively fixed word-order; there are certain grammatical patterns that determine the creation of utterances.

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However reliable it seems, structure can easily be misleading, especially if only the surface structure of a sentence is taken into account. It seems very likely that Carroll liked to play with word-order to make use of the humor originating from syntactic ambiguity. At the mad tea-party this phenomenon becomes a matter of debate: "Then you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on.

"I do," Alice hastily replied; "at least — at least I mean what I say that's the same thing, you know."

"Not the same thing a bit!" said the Hatter. "Why, you might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see!'"

"You might just as well say," added the March Hare, "that 'I like what I get' is the same thing as 'I get what I like!'"

*(Alice's adventures in wonderland, VII, p95)*

Structure can be responsible for ambiguity: the linear order of words can imply different interpretations depending on the presumed function of the words in the sentence. One further example of this: "But you'll stay and see me off first?"

*(Alice's adventures in wonderland, VIII, p314)*

"To see somebody off" means to take leave of someone setting out on a journey; accompany to the place of departure. The Knight asks Alice to see him off in this sense. The same phrase gets a different interpretation if "off" is a preposition: to see somebody falling off from somewhere as Alice sees the Knight falling off from the horse when he is leaving.

**III.2.5.4.Semantics:** being a logician, Lewis Carroll must have been an enthusiastic researcher of the semantic phenomena in language. His works provide an insight into the problems of meaning, the operation of naming and the consequences of ambiguity.

As Sutherland points out, he was familiar with John Stuart Mill's Symbolic Logic (1843), a book that formed the basis of further doubts and inferences for him. All the same, one would not call Carroll a semiotician; his "semantic theory" is by no means consistent, complete or deliberate. (Sutherland, 1970). Lewis Carroll's interpretation of meaning must have been a provoking approach in his time; he questioned the relevance of the definite relationship between the signifier and the signified and provided an interesting definition of meaning

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In the Semantic Mechanisms of Humor Victor Raskin proposed a semantic theory of humor to explain what semantic properties of the text make it funny. He interprets the meaning of a word as follows:

"In fact, there is no contradiction between meaning as an inherent property of the word and meaning in use. The meaning of every word can be successfully and non-circularly defined as a set of units of meaning each of which is the ability of the word to be used in a different phrase of the language". (Raskin, 1985, p79)

Meaning is always meaning in use as Carroll stated. Raskin describes the mental lexicon with the concept of the "script". The script is an internalized cognitive structure constituting a part of the native speaker's lexical knowledge. It is represented in the form of a graph which consists of nodes connecting the different semantic domain corresponding to a word. Every word evokes a script or more scripts with which it is associated. An ambiguous word will evoke more domains and more scripts. It is the role of the combinatorial rules to find the compatible scripts of the words in a sentence and combine them to produce semantic interpretations. According to Victor Raskin's Main Hypothesis, a text is humorous if it is compatible with two scripts which are opposite. The switch from one script to the other is signaled with a trigger that can either be based on ambiguity or contradiction. The role of the trigger is to introduce the second script and suggest a second interpretation of the text. Most lexical triggers are ambiguous words and phrases.

Raskin analyzed English jokes from the point of view of this theory and I would consider it equally applicable to the analysis of some instances of verbal humor in *Alice's adventures in wonderland* .

"And how many hours a day did you do lessons?" said Alice, in a hurry to change subject.

"Ten hours the first day," said the Mock Turtle: "nine the next, and so on."

"What a curious plan!" exclaimed Alice.

"That's the reason they're called lessons," the Gryphon remarked: "because they lessen from day to day." (*Alice's adventures in wonderland*, IX, p130)

Script A is the script of learning supported by the previous passage of the conversation (what the Mock Turtle learnt at school) and by the expression "hours a day". The switch to script B is prepared with the gradual lessening of the hours from day to day

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and is finally accomplished in the explanation of the Gryphon, which puts meaning 1/2 in the foreground. The appearance of script B is unexpected and quite late; script A is the dominant one until the last remark.

**III.2.5.5. Pragmatics:** conversations constitute the basis of *Alice's adventures in wonderland*. As Patrice Salsa points out in her conversational analysis on Alice, dialogues have a determining role in Carroll's texts, as the focus is not on the actions but on the speech. According to her, Alice's adventures are actually getting into discourses with the characters. (Salsa, 1994, p159) The way human linguistic communication works is usually illustrated by models. It must rely mostly on the pragmatics chapter of the book written by Akmajian, in which the general description of talk exchanges is accomplished by comparing the Message Model and the Inferential Model of linguistic communication, proposing that the discourses in Alice's worlds do not only support the inferential nature of talk-exchanges but humorously show the problems that might come up in its absence. To overcome the defectiveness of the Message Model, the Inferential Model was created to prove the importance of a shared system of presumptions and inferential strategies in human linguistic communication. This applies to our book where communication often breaks down because Alice and the creatures not only live in different dimensions but also use language in different ways. In Wonderland the characters have a separate system of beliefs and inferences. Misunderstandings seem to occur either because they tend to use language according to the Message Model, that is forgetting about ambiguity, nonliteral and indirect communication, or because Alice does the same when not realizing their inferential strategies. In both cases, the humorous effect dissolves the tension.(Akmajian et al., 1984, p390-427) To illustrate the common problems listed in Linguistics using the book *An Introduction to Language and Communication* (Akmajian et al., 1984, p395-398) with examples from the Alice books. In the case of ambiguous expressions it is up to the listener to decide which meaning was intended by the speaker in that particular situation. Such decisions are easier if the context itself suggests which meaning is in question. In *Alice's adventures in wonderland*, however, it is the context that creates confusion:

"Mine is a long and a sad tale!" said the Mouse, turning to Alice, and sighing. "It is a long tail certainly," said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse's tail; "but why do you call it sad?" (*Alice's adventures in wonderland*, Ill, p50)

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Besides ambiguity, inadequate reference details may cause difficulties in decoding messages. The meaning of the expression rarely covers enough information to refer to particular things. When Alice meets the Caterpillar, she can not make use of its advice without asking for further details:

"One side will make you grow taller, and the other side will make you grow

shorter. 'o"One side of what? The other side of what?"thought Alice to herself.

*(Alice's adventures in wonderland, V, p73)*

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has a lot of surreally funny moments; however, I must say that the funniest moments are probably at the white rabbit's house, the "serpent" bird, the mad tea party and the trial (especially considering that the Queen of Hearts becomes funnier at that point.)

Alice's comments while she's falling down the rabbit hole. For example:

Alice: After such a fall as this, I shall think nothing of tumbling down stairs. How brave they'll all think me at home! Why I wouldn't say anything about it, even if I fell off the top of the house!" (Which was very likely true.)

After finding the empty jar of marmalade, we get this very blunt line:

"She did not like to drop the jar for fear of killing somebody underneath."

The White Rabbit sending one of his servants, a lizard named Bill, to dispatch the "monster" in his house (actually Alice, having grown ridiculously huge) only for said "monster" to kick him out of the chimney. The White Rabbit and his other servant, Pat, see Bill shooting out of the chimney and simply say "There goes Bill", as though stuff like this happens to him all the time.

The Mad Hatter and the March Hare!

"Your hair wants cutting!"

This exchange between Alice and the March Hare:

March Hare: Have some wine.

Alice: *(looks around)* I don't see any wine.

March Hare: There isn't any.

Alice: Then it isn't very civil of you to offer it

March Hare: Wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited.

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The Mad Hatter's famous riddle, "Why is a raven like a writing desk?" What's really funny about it is the way it gets resolved; Alice ponders the answer while the Hatter repeatedly derails the conversation and eventually Alice gives up and asks the Hatter what the answer is. His response?

The Mad Hatter: I haven't the slightest idea.

When the Dormouse falls asleep, the Mad Hatter pours hot tea on his nose to wake him!

How the cheering guinea pigs are suppressed at the trial:

(As that is rather a hard word, I will just explain to you how it was done. They had a large canvas bag, which tied up at the mouth with strings: into this they slipped the guinea-pig, head first, and then sat upon it.)

"I'm glad I've seen that done," thought Alice. "I've so often read in the newspapers, at the end of trials, 'There was some attempt at applause, which was immediately suppressed by the officers of the court,' and I never understood what it meant till now."

### III.3. The importance of humor:

Humor has tremendous value. It's an art form. But it's not a puzzle it has structure and formula. You can learn this creative art for your own personal enjoyment or for financial gain. Admittedly, some widely known authors feel that humor writing skills are mystically inherited rather than learned, and likely molded by such factors as ethnic characteristics, early childhood maternal influence, and insecurity. But the truth is that anyone can learn to write humor. Although some individuals are naturally funnier than others, just as some individuals are more athletic or more musically gifted, humor writing can be taught and humor-writing skills can be acquired. Humor is not a mystery, because (like stage magic) it is possible to demystify it. Humor is more than entertainment or joke telling it's a powerful social lubricant that eases and enriches communication, interpersonal relations, and education. Humor is a universal speech opener because it immediately earns the speaker respectful attention. It's psychologically impossible to hate someone with whom you've laughed. (Helitzer, 2008)

Humor can also help you gain success and respect in nearly every profession. For example, teachers facilitate instruction with humor, advertising executives use humor to sell products, and politicians rely on humor to promote their candidacies. Humor doesn't just get you attention it gets you favorable attention, and respect. (Chatz, 2008)



## **Chapter Three: Humor in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.**

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### **III.4.Conclusion:**

The year 1865, was the turning point for children's literature due to the production of the masterpiece *Alice's adventures in wonderland* by an unexpected writer, who managed to create a memorable work based on his stories in real life, many characters are named after real people, which make this work both mysterious and interesting at the same time, however this story contains many surprises for the reader especially when he discover that the whole story is just dream and he was deceived and token into another world of the writer's imagination along with the language used in the book all of this elements build a wonderful story adored by the adult before the children.

**General**

**Conclusion**

## General Conclusion

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*Alice's adventures in wonderland* summarize the good use for humor in children's literature despite of the nonsense and the absurdity it contains, this story received great popularity. Literature is necessary tool to explore life and earn the suitable skills to live in the right way, humor is valuable quality in our life without it life is meaningless and absurd it is the gas-station in our journey; it breaks the routine in our life and make it colorful.

From the first chapter we know that children need books for their language development and to facilitate their education. The melodies of lullabies and the rhythm of poetry stimulate a child's sense of rhythm and body awareness. Children need picture books, thymes, stories and easy reading books. Books also make their leisure time more meaningful. They need to become familiar with books from infancy. Literature influences us. We need books that show us meeting each other as human beings. It is important that we get acquainted with each other, in books and in real life.

From the second chapter, we conclude that books given over to humorous situations and characters provide children with much appreciated source of laughter. In addition to that, children need to be given more than the most obvious forms exploited by children's shows or cartoon, in fact they need to see that even in life's more serious moments humor has its place not humor of belly-laugh kind, but the sort which shows that life can be viewed through different lenses

The objective of this work is to explore humor in children's literature especially the case of Lewis Carroll's work *Alice's adventures in wonderland*; this story contains numerous funny lines and comic situations furthermore, this book cannot be read without noting the author's mastery of wit. The creativity and insight permeating the humor in this text are so clever and artful that the parody, pun, and nonsense are themselves the topic of many a critical essay. Most literature on the subject claims one of two things: either that the humor in his writing is inspired by his mathematical inclinations, or that it is a byproduct of an astounding innate linguistic aptitude. It appears, however, that these two approaches are motivated by the same analysis and that the concepts underlying mathematical and linguistic thought are equivalent.

## General Conclusion

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This research is part of few studies conducted in the field of children's literature, because literature is very important to our children , we should put all our effort and time in to help with spreading of the young literature; It is time for humorous literature to receive more respect, humor is a genre that can engage children in reading; it motivates them , requires them to use various reading strategies, and encourages social interaction so they can share what they have read.

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# APPENDIXES

### Appendix A

#### A short biography of the author (Lewis Carroll)

Lewis Carroll, pseudonym of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, he was born in January 27, 1832, Daresbury, Cheshire, England, he was an English logician, mathematician, photographer, and novelist, especially remembered for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and its sequel, *Through the Looking Glass* (1871).

His poem *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876) is nonsense literature of the highest order.

Dodgson was the eldest son and third child in a family of seven girls and four boys born to Frances Jane Lutwidge, the wife of the Rev. Charles Dodgson. He was born in the old parsonage at Daresbury. His father was perpetual curate there from 1827 until 1843, when he became rector of Croft in Yorkshire; a post he held for the rest of his life, the Dodgson children, living as they did in an isolated country village, had few friends outside the family but, like many other families in similar circumstances, found little difficulty in entertaining themselves. Charles from the first showed a great aptitude for inventing games to amuse them. He was known for using ambiguity and nonsense in his writings through funny characters and events until he eventually died in January 14, 1898 in Guildford, England at the age 65.



### Appendix B

#### A Short History of the Book

In 1856 the classical scholar Henry Liddell, moved into Christ Church, Oxford, where he had been appointed dean, along with his wife and their sizeable brood of children, Alice was their second daughter. The family soon became close friends with one of the Christ Church bachelor dons, the mathematician Charles Lutwidge Dodgson. Himself the eldest brother of eight siblings, Dodgson got on well with children and also liked to tell them strange, exotic stories. When Alice was ten, she and two of her sisters went for a picnic in a rowing boat with Dodgson and his friend, a Trinity College don called Robinson Duckworth, on the way the girls asked Dodgson to tell them a story and he responded with a tale he made up as he went along about the fantastic world that a girl called Alice discovered when she went down a rabbit-hole. The real Alice was so delighted that she asked him to write it down for her, which he presently did, with some extra episodes added, as well as his own illustrations. He later showed *Alice's Adventures under Ground* to his friend, the Scottish author George Macdonald, whose children were so taken with it that Dodgson was encouraged to look for a publisher. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* duly came out from Macmillan in 1865 under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll, which was derived from the Latin name Carolus Ludovicus. The book had the benefit of amazing illustrations by John Tenniel. *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* followed in 1871. The two works are among the most popular and most famous children's books in the English language and, they are also loved by adults as well. An authority on the subject and a children's writer himself, the late Roger Lancelyn Green, called them 'the perfect creation of the logical and mathematical mind applied to the pure and unadulterated amusement of children...'

There is no doubt that Alice Liddell gave her name to the fictional Alice, though Dodgson always denied that he intended a portrait of her. The fictional Alice had the same birthday as the real one, May 4th and, in the poem in *Through the Looking Glass* that starts 'A boat beneath a sunny sky,' the first letter of each line spells out the real Alice's full name – Alice Pleasance Liddell.

In 1876, another masterpiece came to existence, *The Hunting of the Snark*. Dodgson also published other volumes of poetry, besides learning books on mathematics, and he invented gadgets, puzzles and games, he remained a bachelor to his death in 1898, a few

## Appendixes

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days before his 66th birthday. He was an excellent photographer who loved taking pictures for young girls and he took a lot of them for Alice Liddell.

As she grew up a beautiful girl Alice Liddell seems to have attracted Queen Victoria's youngest son, Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany, but nothing came of it, though he was later godfather to one of Alice's sons. In 1880 she married a man called Reginald Hargreaves. Dodgson sent them a wedding present. When Hargreaves died in 1926 Alice was so short of money that she put the manuscript of Alice's underground adventures that Dodgson had given her up for auction at Sotheby's. It fetched £15,400 (equivalent to £450,000 or more today). In her last years she said she was 'tired of being Alice in Wonderland'. She died in 1934 at the age of 82.

