

LESSON 13.

ROMANTICISM AND VICTORIANISM IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Victorian Children's Literature for All Ages

AIM OF THIS UNIT: The unit explores the changing notions of childhood and the significance of children's literature in the Victorian era through a brief overview of a variety of subgenres ranging from nonsense fantasy through revisionary Christian myth to evolutionary fairy tale.

KEY FIGURES: Lewis Carroll, George McDonald, Charles Kingsley, RL Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, John Ruskin

COMPULSORY READING: Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

KEY WORDS & TOPICS: cult of the child, literary nonsense, portal quest fantasy, boys' adventure story, scientific fairy tale, religious fantasy

VICTORIAN PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDHOOD



Millais. Bubbles



Millais. Cherry Ripe

While the previous era's religious **Puritan** beliefs posited **childhood as a perilous**, ignorant, bestial period of the humankind born sinful as a result of the Biblical Fall, the **Victorians regarded children as innocent** beings celebrated for their **freedom, creativity, and inherent goodness**. The philosopher **Rousseau's** ideas on children's natural goodness (that should be allowed to develop freely towards its fullest potential, educationally and morally) and the **Romantic poets' idealisation of untamed infantile imagination, spiritual sensitivity, and instinctive affinity with Nature** were largely influential of Victorian notions of childhood. For the 19th century bourgeoisie children represented **hope, free-thinking, and purity**. For most artists of the times, childhood was a cherished memory, a lost Edenic phase **nostalgically yearned** for throughout one's entire life.

The cult of childhood had its odd **classist** aspects: **children of the poor** had to work from a very young age under miserable conditions to help their families, and a stunning number of street children roamed the streets of London struggling for survival.

Poor children were often portrayed sentimentally in Victorian art as **martyrs, sacrificial victims** of civilisation, too good for this world, who were rewarded for their kindness in Heaven. (see Andersen's Little Match Girl) Further clichés of fictional representation of children were often **gendered**: girlishness meant the **idealised innocence** of mysterious, angelic, asexual, aerial beings (see Ruskin's *Of Queen's Gardens*), while boys were often associated with the character of the **good bad child**, the **orphan ingénue**, criminalised by its social circumstances (see Dickens' Artful Dodger).

Even middle-class youngsters were strictly disciplined by **codes of politeness** of conduct books advising that “children should be seen not heard in the company of adults.” Still, children were very much in the focus of attention both as symbolical, metaphorical entities representing adults' abstract ideals and as embodied subjects with individual lived experiences.

It was a time when **public schools, children's journals and literary products**, and the **toy industry** began to rise. Adults felt a responsibility to educate and entertain the succeeding generation, beholders of their future, embodying the promise of social mobility, too. From the 1830s several laws and slowly progressing reforms were introduced to protect the wellbeing of children at work, school, and home.

Childhood was regarded as a **period of dependence and development in need of protection and surveillance**, as a **transient state of worshipped and other worldly innocence**. Contemplating the pure simplicity of children offered a healthy corrective to the scepticism of modern life. The introduction of Darwin's evolutionary theory gave rise to religious scepticism, so some cultural critics suggest that for the Victorians **the child replaced God as an object of worship**.

VICTORIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

The Victorian era is commonly referred to as the **golden age** of children's literature. Due to a national education reform, a **large new readership** emerged that demanded less didactic and more entertainment contents, as well as believable child characters they could identify with. Children's literature prospered in a rich variety of subgenres. Some of these books were initially not designed for children but because of their featuring child protagonists and their tracing coming-of-age narratives, they later came to be canonised as juvenile literature (Eg. Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*) Others were originally intended for a specific child muse and/or child-like readers of all ages, but because of their complex layers of meaning – which combined social criticism, metafictional commentaries, and voicing of specifically Victorian cultural anxieties – they became popular among adult readers, mature artistic repurposings, and scholarly analysis. (Eg. the surrealists' obsession with Lewis Carroll's Alice books). Many had **dual audiences** in mind from the beginnings (Eg Cristina Rossetti's “Goblin Market”). The rich diversity is Victorian children's literature is illustrated by the chart below.

Some popular subgenres of Victorian children's literature
Boarding school novel (Thomas Hughes' <i>Tom Brown's School-days</i> (1857))
Social problem novel/Bildungsroman 1 st targeting adult readers (Dickens' <i>Oliver Twist</i>)
Adventure novel (RL Stevenson's <i>Treasure Island</i>)
Revived fairy-tale tradition (Oscar Wilde's <i>The Happy Prince</i>)
Animal tales (Rudyard Kipling's <i>The Jungle Book</i> , Aesop's fables illustrated by Sir John Tenniel)
Nonsense fantasy (Edward Lear's limericks, Lewis Carroll's <i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</i>)
Scientific /evolutionary fantasy (Charles Kingsley's <i>The Water Babies</i>)
Christian, moralizing tale (John Ruskin's “The King of the Golden River”)
Sentimental didactic tales (Dinah Mullock Craig's <i>The little lame prince and his travelling cloak</i>)
Symbolical fairy-tale fantasy (George MacDonald's <i>The Princess and the Goblin</i>)
Nursery rhymes, lullabies
Children's magazines and periodicals (<i>Merry and Wise: a Magazine for Young People</i> , <i>Little Folks</i>)

NONSENSE FAIRY-TALE FANTASY



➤ *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) authored by **Lewis Carroll** (penname of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) is a unique text because it is one of the **first non-didactic, non-moralizing pieces of children's literature** that employed wordplay, puns, and riddles to amuse children instead of educating them. It playfully invited child readers to envision impossibilities of a topsy-turvy world and dare to "think for themselves."

➤ The story was **initially improvised as an oral narrative** on 1862 July the 4th by Dodgson – a professor of mathematics at Oxford University – at a rowing trip to entertain his child friends, the daughters of the dean of Christ Church College Oxford: Lorina, Edith, and Alice Liddell. Alice was Carroll's favourite "child friend." July the 4th is still celebrated over the UK as "Alice Day."

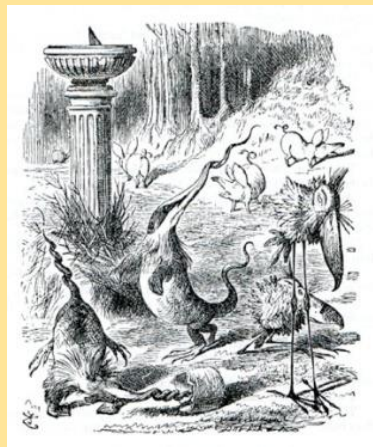
➤ The book and its sequel, *Through the Looking Glass and what Alice Found There* (1872) are **portal quest fantasies**: the little girl protagonist enters the curious world of the fantasy realms through openings – a rabbit hole, then a mirror – which connect and separate each fantasy realm from the mundane consensus reality without allowing magic to leak over into everyday ordinary existence.

➤ The talking animals, magical shapeshiftings, and enchanted journey theme **evokes the fairy tale genre**, but the stories are **closer to anti-tales** as they lack moral guidelines, good/bad oppositions, magic helpers, or the conventional happily ever after scenario.

➤ This pair of **girl's adventure stories celebrated infantile imagination**. The magical realms were brought into being in Alice's dreams. (The **episodic structure** of the tales resonated with the associative **illogic of dreams** and made the stories popular among surrealist artists of the 1920s.) Alice hopes (and in the end her sister confirms) that after waking up and returning to reality from this curious journey, **she will grow up to be a storyteller**, who will entertain children of future generations with tales of her Wonderland adventures.

➤ The books are **ludic narratives**. Although the Cheshire Cat claims that "We are all mad here." chaos coexists with rules: the stories' structural organising principles are **cards and chess games**. Several other playful activities feature in the text (caucus race, Queen's croquet game, lobster quadrille, hide-and-seek, origami). The oral quality of the **tales enhance interactivity** by addressing readers to playfully invite them to take part in the construction and deconstruction of meanings.

➤ The perplexing, topsy-turvy worlds of Wonderland and Looking Glass realm hold a **humorous carnivalesque** quality that performs **social-cultural criticism** by poking fun of bourgeois social conventions and codes of conduct (the Mad



Tea Party is a parodic version of the ceremonious British 5 o'clock tea, nonsensical conversations ridicule the superficial small talk of Victorian drawing rooms, the croquet game played with flamingos as mallets and hedgehogs as balls is an absurd replica of popular 19th century sports activities).

➤ The poems embedded in the novels' prose narrative are **parodies of well-known didactic poems** taught at schools. [“How does the little crocodile?”](#) mocks “How does the little busy bee?”: the diligent bee praised for its hard work in the original is turned into an aggressive, rebellious, little beast who is not held responsible for his wrongdoings.)

➤ The stories combine **black humour** and **death jokes** with **nonsensical laughter for laughter's sake**.

➤ The **body horror** involved in Alice's unpredictable shrinkings and growings is counterpointed by her **innocent, empathic attitude** to the oddities she comes across, her tolerantly getting used to impossibilities in a delightfully/disturbingly curious realm.

➤ **Metamorphosis** is a major leitmotif of the text.

➤ The books fulfil an **egalitarian agenda** by unsettling hierarchies. The Red Queen obsessed with the beheading of her subjects ([“Off with their head!”](#)) pokes fun of the monarchy's tyrannical authoritarian government. The **subversion of conventional modes of meaning formation** by polysemic nonsensical word-games challenges adult wisdom. Alice is mocked by adult figures but she is eventually gifted with the potential to become a Queen.

➤ The Alice tales embrace the paradoxical genre of a **science fantasy in an age of epistemological crisis**, fictionalizing anxieties related to Darwin's emerging evolutionary theory, and new technological inventions such as photography or the railways.

➤ They **mingle real life references with mathematical abstraction and pure fabulation**: a private story to a particular child is full of public allusions to life at Oxford University & Victorian Britain.

- The Alice tales belong to the genre of **literary nonsense** fantasies. **Language games** challenge common sense, and toy with the elusiveness of meanings, they celebrate polysemy and ambiguity. Like Alice facing the mirror-written nonsense poem [“Jabberwocky,”](#) readers recognise that “language is taking place but there is something wrong with it.” Literary nonsense places sound over sense, and foregrounds the vocal, acoustic, **sonoric, transverbal qualities of language**, while it also offers **metalinguistic commentary** on the malfunctioning of meaning formation. Carrollian wordplay offers **language philosophical insights** on the **necessity of misunderstanding** and the **impossibility of meaninglessness**. Language emerges both as an instrument of discipline/power and of rebellion/play. The point of Carrollian puns is that they do not have a definite answer and rather propagate the proliferation of meanings, like the Mad Hatter's unanswerable riddle: [“Why is the raven like a writing desk?”](#)
- Alice's iconic scenes, characters, and sayings have entered [popular cultural imagination](#).

✚ The story performs a simultaneous **repetition & subversive challenging of a variety of genres**

fairy tale (talking animals, magic shapeshifting, enchanted journey)	↔	anti-tale (no moral guidelines, no good/bad distinction, no happily ever after)
<i>Bildungsroman</i> (trials and tribulations, getting used to strange things happening, growing up)	↔	no linear development of coming-of-age story, multiple metamorphosis, interchangeable dream fragments, growing up AND shrinking
<i>Künstlerroman</i> (Alice dreams adventures, will become a storyteller on her own right)	↔	Dreamchild dreamt into being by Carroll, adult male voice disrupts w ironic remarks the girl's sleepwalking
Portal quest fantasy	↔	Alice has no real appetite for quest
Children's book (infantile play w sounds, lulling nursery rhymes, visual humour of picture book)	↔	Adult text (Gothic death jokes, social-critical commentaries, existential-/ language- philosophy) → dual audience address
Non-didactic narrative	↔	Teaches of significance of curiosity and empathy
Social criticism (mimetic, referential)	↔	Dream vision (metaphorical)

✚ Carroll realised the **adaptogenic quality** of his story & revisited Wonderland on multiple media platforms

1862 July 4: Oral performance of tale on rowing trip
1863 Christmas: <i>Alice's Adventures Underground</i> , „A Christmas Gift to a Dear Child in Memory of a Summer's Day, giftbook manuscript illustrated by author Carroll
1865: <i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</i> , with John Tenniel's illustrations, published by MacMillan
1870: “Puzzles from Wonderland” in <i>Aunt Judy's Magazine</i> , appetizer for impending sequel
1871 William Boyd set to music some verses of <i>Looking-Glass</i>
1872: sequel: <i>Through the Looking-Glass and what Alice Found There</i>
1872, theatrical play: <i>Alice in Wonderland: A Musical Dream Play</i> dir. Henry Savile Clark
1887, “ <i>Alice on the Stage</i> ,” Carroll's commentary on origins of the story
1890: <i>Nursery Alice</i> , abridged w colour illustrations for pre-readers
Looking Glass biscuit tin, Wonderland postage stamp case (tie-in products designed by Carroll)

✚ Examples for **literary nonsense's play with language**

Neological word coinage, referentless signifier, (“Name without a thing” (Bandersnatch))
Literalized metaphors, figures of speech inspire characters (Mad Hatter, Cheshire Cat)
Portmanteaux (slithy: slimy+lithe, chortle: chuckle+snort)
Sudden decontextualization, that's not what I meant (“One cannot help growing old. One can't, but two can.”)
Semantic/syntactic impossibilities (“A rose is a rose is a rose.”)
Logical twist (“Can you have more tea, if you haven't had any?”)
Homophones are synonyms (“We called him tortoise because he taught us”)
Homonyms are synonyms (the tree barks Boughwough!)
Antonyms are synonyms (hills are valleys)
Category mistakes naturalised (“I see nobody on the road. You must have terribly good eyes to be able to see Nobody from such distance.”)
Any word arbitrarily defined at whim (Humpty Dumpty makes words mean whatever he wants)
Semantically opaque categories (mock turtle soup)
Hyperlogic (I beg your pardon. It isn't respectable to beg.)

- Literary nonsense** defamiliarizes conventional (linguistic and pictorial) representation
Verbal & visual nonsense simultaneously challenge the boundaries of the Imaginable & the Speakable . The Jabberwocky emerges as a specimen of **imagetextual monstrosity**.



John Tenniel's illustration to Looking Glass 1872

JABBERWOCKY

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

Mirror written picture-poem of „Jabberwocky”

[CLICK here for Humpty Dumpty's explanation of „The Jabberwocky” poem](#)

“‘It seems very pretty,’[...]‘but it’s rather hard to understand!’[...] ‘Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas—only I don’t exactly know what they are!’”
 (Alice’s reaction on reading the poem)

Jabberwocky

Lewis Carroll (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson)

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

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
 The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
 Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
 The frumious Bandersnatch!"

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

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

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

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

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

[CLICK here to watch Jan Svankmajer's stop motion animation of The Jabberwocky](#)

EXPLORE



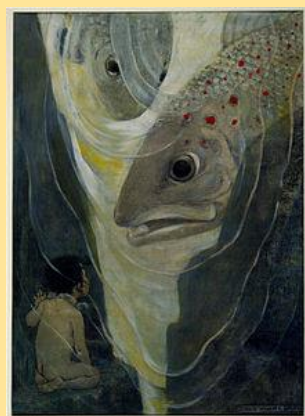
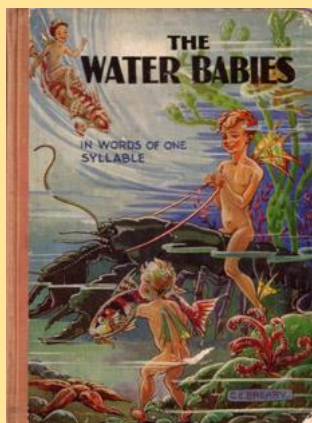
VISUAL EXTRAS

[CLICK to see Lewis Carroll's illustrations to Alice](#)

[CLICK to see John Tenniel's illustrations to Alice](#)

[CLICK here for Lewis Carroll resources](#)

SCIENTIFIC FAIRY TALE



Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies, a Fairy Tale for a Land Baby* (1862-3) was a popular children's book first published serialised in Macmillan's magazine. It is a **didactic moral fable** permeated by the author's views on faith, morality, and education, while criticising unjust Victorian socio-cultural practices, like child labour, dark pedagogy, classism. (The book is credited for the passing of the Chimney Sweeper's Act that outlawed the employment of climbing boys.) The book integrated moralizing within a faerial biology lesson: as an **evolutionary fairy tale** it supported Darwinian theory and mocked the era's pseudo-sciences. The author was a Reverend, university professor, social reformer, associated with **Christian socialism**. In his book he combined his **scientific views** with his **belief in wonder** and **religious faith**.

The story centres on **magical transformation**: a brutish, ape-like, ignorant chimney sweep, little Tom falls into a lake, and becomes a water baby. He familiarises himself with various animal species during his **picaresque underwater journey** to the end of the world that resembles a fairy tale quest, just as much as a religious pilgrimage, or a scientific expedition. Finally, as a reward of his good deeds, with the assistance of water fairies, he regains a human form. Eventually he grows up to become a great man of science who can "plan railways, and steam engines, and electric telegraphs, and rifled guns, and so forth."

Tom's **metamorphosis** after his falling into water is meaningful on multiple levels.

- **Christian allegory**: Water symbolizes cleansing, purification, baptism, the journey through purgatory, redemption. The story is ambiguous, Tom might die after his fall, and the whole story can be just a dream.
- **Defence of Darwinism** & satire on outraged reaction to evolutionary theory: amphibians are transitional beings, aquatic environment resembles intra-uterine development, evolution and degeneration coexist
- **Bildungsgroman layer**: story about Tom's moral education, reformation, from chimneysweep he becomes a man of science, believes in possibility of social ascension by virtue of knowledge

Kingsley's novel offers a **commentary on various belief systems**: scientific hypothesis seems just as much grounded in proofs invisible to the naked eye as religious faith or belief in fairies. The fact that we have never seen the human soul or water babies, does not entail that they do not exist. The commonsensical assumption of "seeing is believing" is challenged. In line with the era's **popular scientific fairy tales**, the world imperceptible to the naked eye, but discoverable through the lenses of microscope emerges as Wonderland. The biological realities of natural creatures (newts, fish, crabs) seem just as miraculous as the make-believe water fairies Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby, Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid, and Mother Carey. Kingsley contrasts Victorian pseudo-scientists' false confidence and short sighted prejudice with the **wisdom, faith, and imaginativeness of the innocent child**.

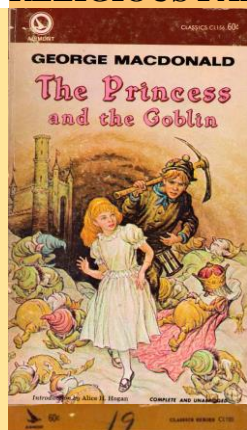


READ the extracts below. How does Kingsley offer a metainmaginative commentary on various belief systems? What are his rational logical arguments in favour of faith and imagination?

„How do you know that? Have you been there to see? And if you had been there to see, and had seen none, that would not prove that there were none ... And no one has a right to say that no water babies exist till they have seen no water babies existing, which is quite a different thing, mind, from not seeing water babies.” (from *The Water Babies*)

*I have tried, in all sorts of queer ways, to make children and grown folks understand that there is a quite miraculous and divine element underlying all physical nature, and nobody knows anything about anything, in the sense in which they may know God in Christ, and right and wrong. And if I have wrapped up my parable in seeming Tomfooleries, it is because so only could I get the pill swallowed by a generation who are not believing with anything like their whole heart, in the living God. (Kingsley on *The Water Babies*)*

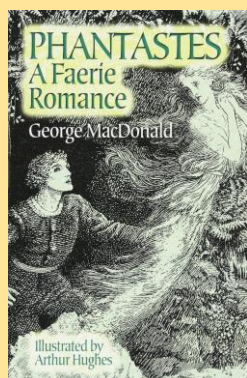
RELIGIOUS FANTASY



George MacDonald (1824-1905) was a Scottish author, poet, Christian minister, a pioneering figure of modern fantasy literature, a mentor of Lewis Carroll, and an inspiration for later generations of fantasy writers, among them CS Lewis and JRR Tolkien. His most famous books include children's fantasies *At the back of the North Wind* (1871), *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and its sequel *The Princess and Curdie* (1883), *The Light Princess and other Fairy Stories* (1890), as well as fantasies for adults like *Phantastes: A Faerie Romance for Men and Women* (1858) a tale inspired by German Romanticism about a young man seeking for ideal beauty in a dream world, and *Lilith. A Romance* (1895), a darker story tackling questions of life, death, and universal redemption, featuring Adam's demonic first wife, Lilith.



MacDonald excelled in reproducing the **strange atmosphere of dreams**, and in creating **fictional universes “hovering between the allegorical and the mythopoetic.”** His **Christian religious fantasies** used Biblical tropes like the Fall, the figures of Adam and Eve, angels, and Satan, the descent to Hell, a glimpse of Heaven as a road to awakening. He gained inspiration from **children's imaginative faculties** while attributing to **fantasy an intergenerational appeal**. He famously claimed: “I write not for children but for the childlike whether they be of five, or fifty, or seventy-five.”



The Princess and the Goblin is set in a fairy-tale world inspired by medieval times. The once-human, evil race of **Goblins** try to undermine the royal castle, but Princess Irene saves the Kingdom with the help of a miner boy Curdie, the ghost of her fairy great great grandmother, and the **magical powers of song**. The book **revives fairy tale, mythical, and Biblical traditions**: the Magna Mater guides the youngsters out of the subterranean labyrinthine caverns of the castle onto the right path with the help of her magical silk thread. (She fuses figures of the Fairy Godmother, Ariadne, and the Virgin Mother.) Irene can see her because she believes in her.

The **Goblins** embody anxieties related to the Victorian evolutionary theory of **degeneration** (propagated by Morel, Lamarck, Nordau, and Lombroso, among others) that suggested that physical, psychic, and moral deterioration coexist, and multiply crippled creatures cause hindrances to social progress. The extremely vulnerable feet of the goblins also refer to their being stuck on a transitory evolutionary stage between humanity (walking on hind limbs) and bestiality (crawling on all fours). It is the **in-betweenness of their deformed humanity** that turns goblins truly monstrous. Like cobs creatures, expelled from the kingdom, their pathologisation can also be traced back to a mysterious ancestral grudge. Hence, MacDonald introduced **moral ambiguity** in the story to raise the empathy and mercy of the readers by showing that villains are not always to be blamed for their monstrosity.

The **subterranean world** where Princess Irene and the miner boy Curdie struggle to find their way represents the **repressed other side of consciousness**, but its darkness can also be related to the **fear of working classes, and even racial difference**. Nevertheless, MacDonald communicates an **egalitarian, democratic message**. Irene is not a princess because she was born so, but because she behaves like one (--she is brave and trusts her grandmother). **Shared values of courage, faith, hope, and solidarity** do away with the class distinctions between the two child protagonists, and make them equal partners on their mission to save the Kingdom.

EXPLORE



VISUAL EXTRAS

[CLICK to watch trailer of the Hungarian animation adaptation of *The Princess and the Goblin*.](#)

ADVENTURE NOVEL



[To learn more about RL Stevenson CLICK to take a look at the RLS website.](#)

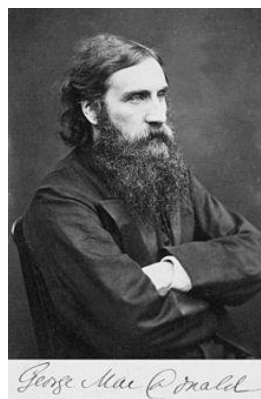
Scottish author **Robert Louis Stevenson's** *[Treasure Island](#)* was initially published serialized in the children's magazine *Young Folks* (1881-2) under the title *The Sea Cook. A Story for Boys*. The "rip-roaring tale of treachery, swordfight, and murder" tells Jim Hawkins' **boyhood adventure** on a quest for treasure buried on Skeleton Island. The novel's characters had a considerable impact on the representation of the figure of the pirate in popular culture, commonly visualised as a one-legged buccaneer with an eye-patch and a parrot on his shoulder, who hides his gold on a distant tropical island, and marks the spot on the treasure map with an X. The book combined **pirate lore**, with **coming of age story** (Jim navigates life-and-death situations and learns moral lessons), as well as popular genres of **sea novels**, the **navy yarn** (tells the adventures of capable navy officer in a more realistic, historical context), and the **desert island romance** (a fantasy story in which a shipwrecked person is threatened by savage natives or pirates, as in the literary predecessor: Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, 1791, and RM Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*, 1857).



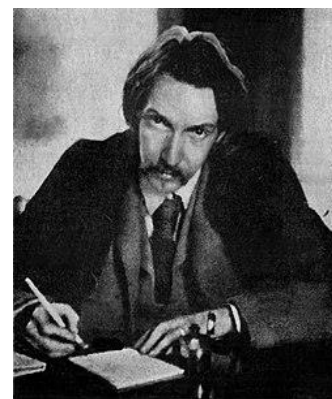
Lewis Carroll
1832-1898



Charles Kingsley
1819-1875



George MacDonald
1824-1905



Robert Louis Stevenson
1850-1894



READ a fragment of the conversation from the Mad Tea Party below. **THINK:** Identify narrative strategies of nonsensical wordplay. How do they subvert logic?

The Hatter opened his eyes very wide on hearing this; but all he *said* was, “Why is a raven like a writing-desk?” “Come, we shall have some fun now!” thought Alice. “I’m glad they’ve begun asking riddles.—I believe I can guess that,” she added aloud.

“Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?” said the March Hare.

“Exactly so,” said Alice.

“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. “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’!”

“You might just as well say,” added the Dormouse, who seemed to be talking in his sleep, “that ‘I breathe when I sleep’ is the same thing as ‘I sleep when I breathe’!”

“It *is* the same thing with you,” said the Hatter, and here the conversation dropped, and the party sat silent for a minute, while Alice thought over all she could remember about ravens and writing-desks, which wasn’t much.

The Hatter was the first to break the silence. “What day of the month is it?” he said, turning to Alice: he had taken his watch out of his pocket, and was looking at it uneasily, shaking it every now and then, and holding it to his ear.

Alice considered a little, and then said “The fourth.”

“Two days wrong!” sighed the Hatter. “I told you butter wouldn’t suit the works!” he added looking angrily at the March Hare.

“It was the *best* butter,” the March Hare meekly replied.



Read more about Victorian children's literature at [The Victorian Web](#) and [The British Library](#).



LISTEN

Click and listen to a few musical adaptations of Alice in Wonderland by [Tom Waits](#), [David del Tradici](#), [Jefferson Airplane](#), [The Royal Ballet](#), [Avril Lavigne](#), [Tom Petty](#)



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE WITH A QUIZ BY CLICKING HERE

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