

Magic realism: a label given to works of fiction in which the realistic and the fantastic intermingle and are juxtaposed. Other characteristics include convoluted plotlines, dream imagery, and references to myths and fairy tales.

Reductio ad absurdum (“reduce to absurdity”): pushing an idea or argument to its extreme in order to show its absurdity or fallacy.

Parody: “a form of repetition with critical difference”.

Allegory: “a story with a double meaning: a primary or surface meaning and a secondary or under-the-surface meaning”.

Epigram: a short, witty statement.

Wit: the skillful and clever use of language (e.g., the epigram).

Farce: a broad, “low” comedy that includes physical humour, exaggeration of character and situations, characters in absurd predicaments, and surprises in the form of unforeseen twists and revelations.

Antiphrasis: the use of a word when the opposite meaning is implied (a specific device of irony). (E.g., “**dire** offence,” “A **Modest** Proposal” and “I [...] **humbly** propose”).

Persona: a character or role assumed by an author; a guise; an adopted voice.

The grotesque: in literature, the grotesque is a mode of representation characterized by exaggeration and distortion. Grotesque representations elicit reactions of disgust, but also sometimes laughter, from readers.

Black humour: humour that concerns shocking, macabre, and horrific subject matters; black comedy often “displays a marked disillusionment and cynicism” and even despair.

Ingenu(e): a naïve, possibly foolish, uncomprehending character. A conventional character in Menippean satires, the ingenu(e) is the traveller to the upside-down land. This character functions as both tool and target of satire.

Diminution: reducing the size and importance of something, often for satirical effect.

Epithet: “an adjective or phrase expressing some quality that is characteristic of a person or thing”; e.g., “fair Belinda”, “Th’adventurous Baron,” “glittering forfex,” “grave Clarissa”.

Anticlimax: A deliberate drop from the serious and elevated to the trivial and lowly for comic or satirical effect.

## The Victorian Period (1837-1901): Four Contexts

1. Industrialisation
  - The first transformation from an agricultural industry to an industrial one.
  - Caused changes in family structure, to want to be more poised and “royal”
    - Created much pressure for everyone, and was taken on the children especially.
2. Imperialism
  - A policy or ideology where extending a country’s rule over a foreign country through military action and political power to gain more economic control
    - Examples, US over Vietnam, Britain over India, and Germany over Poland.
  - Means “supreme power”
3. Darwinism
  - The theory of biological evolution
  - This brought the idea that the more important a person is, through evolution, that race becomes the “supreme” species.
4. Feminism
  - Started with Mary Wollstonecraft in the 18<sup>th</sup> century England,

## Victorian Attitudes Toward Children

“Children should be seen and not heard.”

“Spare the rod and spoil the child.”

## The Appeal of Alice for the Child Reader

- the work gives voice to children’s resistance to strictures of the adult world
- allows for vicarious, imaginative escape
- presents the world from a child’s perspective

‘How doth the little crocodile  
Improve his shining tail,  
And pour the waters of the Nile  
On every golden scale!  
How cheerfully he seems to grin,  
How neatly spreads his claws,  
And welcomes little fishes in,  
With gently smiling jaws!’ (Carroll 19)

Literary nonsense: Writers of nonsense depict absurd and fantastical predicaments and creatures. Made-up words (neologisms), word play, and puns are features of nonsense writing. Nonsense stories and verses defy rational understanding and challenge conventions of traditional storytelling; however, nonsense may have its own internal logic. This internal logic and unity is what separates nonsense fantasies like Carroll’s from pure gibberish.

## Targets of Satire in Alice

- Victorians’ Repressive Attitudes Toward Children
- corporeal punishment (“Spare the rod and spoil the child.”)
- approaches to education (e.g., learning by rote, didactic children’s literature)

- Victorian social practices (taking tea!) and beliefs (especially the middle-class “virtues”: duty, obedience, self-control, industry, propriety, and respect for social rules and hierarchies [the social order])
- The Upper Classes and the Monarchy

Tyrannical Queen of Hearts

Frog- and Fish-Footmen = Benjamin Disraeli and William Gladstone

“Who cares for you? said Alice (she had grown to her full size by this time). You’re nothing but a pack of cards!” (Carroll 109).

Menippus (c. 250 BCE)

- 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE
- A slave and satirist
- Became rich by begging
- He abandoned seriousness and conveyed a cynical, sarcastic prose, mocking institutions, ideas, and conventions with a strange setting, such as Hades in the underworld.