

Ballet Spartanburg's
Alice in Wonderland
Study Guide

With Choreography by

Artistic Director

Carlos Agudelo

Summary of *Alice in Wonderland*

Alice is sitting with her sister outdoors when she spies a White Rabbit with a pocket watch. Fascinated by the sight, she follows the rabbit down the hole. She falls for a long time, and finds herself in a long hallway full of doors. There is also a key on the table, which unlocks a tiny door; through this door, she spies a beautiful garden. She longs to get there, but the door is too small. Soon, she finds a drink with a note that asks her to drink it. There is later a cake with a note that tells her to eat; Alice drinks and eats, but she cannot seem to get a handle on things. She is either too large to get through the door or too small to reach the key.

While she is tiny, she slips and falls into a pool of water. She soon realizes that this little sea is made of tears she cried while a giant. She swims to shore with a number of animals, most notably a sensitive mouse, but manages to offend everyone by talking about her cat's ability to catch birds and mice. Left alone, she goes on through the wood and runs into the White Rabbit. He mistakes her for his maid and sends her to fetch some things from his house. While in the White Rabbit's home, she drinks another potion and becomes too huge to get out through the door. She eventually finds a little cake which, when eaten, makes her small again.

In the wood again, she comes across a Caterpillar sitting on a mushroom. He gives her some valuable advice, as well as a valuable tool: the two sides of the mushroom, which can make Alice grow larger and smaller as she wishes. The first time she uses them, she stretches her body out tremendously. While stretched out, she pokes her head into the branches of a tree and meets a Pigeon. The Pigeon is convinced that Alice is a serpent, and though Alice tries to reason with her the Pigeon tells her to be off.

Alice finally gets herself down to normal proportions and continues her trek through the woods. In a clearing she comes across a little house and shrinks herself down enough to get inside. It is the house of the Duchess. Inside the Duchess and the Cook are battling fiercely, and they seem unconcerned about the safety of the baby that the Duchess is nursing. Alice takes the baby with her, but the child turns into a pig and trots off into the woods. Alice next meets the Cheshire cat (who was sitting in the Duchess's house, but said nothing). The Cheshire cat helps her to find her way through the woods, but he warns her that everyone she meets will be mad.

Alice goes to the March Hare's house, where she is treated to a Mad Tea Party. Present are the March Hare, the Hatter, and the Dormouse. Ever since Time stopped working for the Hatter, it has always been six o'clock. It is, therefore, always teatime. The creatures of the Mad Tea Party are some of the most argumentative in all of Wonderland. Alice leaves them and finds a tree with a door in it: when she looks through the door, she spies the door-lined hallway from the beginning of her adventures. This time, she is prepared, and she manages to get to the lovely garden that she saw earlier. She walks on through, and finds herself in the garden of the Queen of Hearts. There, three gardeners (with bodies shaped like playing cards) are painting the roses red. If the Queen finds out that they planted white roses, she'll have them beheaded. The Queen herself soon arrives, and she does order their execution; Alice helps to hide them in a large flowerpot.

The Queen invites Alice to play croquet, which is a very difficult game in Wonderland, as the balls and mallets are live animals. The game is interrupted by the appearance of the Cheshire cat, whom the King of Hearts immediately dislikes.

The Queen takes Alice to the Gryphon, who in turn takes Alice to the Mock Turtle. The Gryphon and the Mock Turtle tell Alice bizarre stories about their school under the sea. The Mock Turtles sings a melancholy song about turtle soup, and soon afterward the Gryphon drags Alice off to see the trial of the Knave of Hearts.

The Knave of Hearts has been accused of stealing the tarts of the Queen of Hearts, but the evidence against him is very bad. Alice is appalled by the ridiculous proceedings. She also begins to grow larger. She is soon called to the witness stand; by this time she has grown to giant size. She refuses to be intimidated by the bad logic of the court and the bluster of the King and Queen of Hearts. Suddenly, the cards all rise up and attack her, at which point she wakes up. Her adventures in Wonderland have all been a fantastic dream! Alice has indeed been to Wonderland!

History of Alice in Wonderland

The Alice books, written by Lewis Carroll, were created during the Victorian era, a time now remembered for its stifling propriety and constrictive morals. Lewis Carroll was somewhat of an outsider who was shy and often stuttered. This position gave him tremendous perspective on his world. The creatures of his wonderland seem to have many arbitrary customs. Their behaviors are all defensible with strange logic, but the customs are still silly or even cruel. There are obvious echoes of the Victorian world, as the animals are opinionated and have strong ideas about what constitutes appropriate behavior. The creatures' preciousness and their arbitrary sensitivities mock the fastidiousness of the Victorian era. The Victorian era was full of stuffiness, rules, and etiquette.

The Alice books also mocked the children's literature of the day. In keeping with the character of the time, children's literature was full of simplistic morals and heavy-handed attempts to educate the young. Some of the books supposedly for children were quite dry, and at the least suffered from a lack of imagination. Lewis Carroll's tale was certainly a wild ride of creativity!

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was first published in 1865, and it was an immediate success. Carroll's sense of the absurd and his amazing gift for games of logic and language have made the Alice books popular with both adults and children, and they have remained some of the best-known children's books written in English. The books maintain their popularity through the well-known Disney adaptation which draws freely from both books, while retaining the basic structure of the first book and remaining faithful to the flavor and central themes of the story.

The Alice books deal with the sometimes precarious world of children; the reader should keep in mind that at the time of their writing, the advent of industrialization had raised people's consciousness of child labor and exploitation. Carroll sees the world of children as a dangerous place, shadowed by the threat of death and the presence of adults who are powerful but often absurd.

The books always retain a sense of mystery; even the characters who aid Alice have a dark edge to them. The hints of mortality and the sense of fear in the books have only contributed to their popularity. The books stand as evidence that children's literature need

not talk down to its audience. In fact, it is the depth and sophistication of the Alice books that has won them recognition as some of the best children's literature ever

Reading/Writing Activities for *Alice in Wonderland*

Read the following quotations from the book. What do you think they mean? Write your ideas in complete sentences with correct spelling and punctuation.

SC ELA Standards 1-R1.11/2-R1.10/4-R1.10/5-R1.9

Demonstrate the ability to draw conclusions and make inferences.

Alice: Alice in Wonderland Quotes

What is the use of a book, without pictures or conversations?

Rabbit: Alice in Wonderland Quotes

Oh my ears and whiskers, how late it's getting!

Alice: Alice in Wonderland Quotes

Curiouser and curiouser!

Alice: Alice in Wonderland Quotes

I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Let me think. Was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is 'Who in the world am I?' Ah, that's the great puzzle!

Alice: Alice in Wonderland Quotes

I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, Sir, because I'm not myself you see.

The Duchess: Alice in Wonderland Quotes

If everybody minded their own business, the world would go around a great deal faster than it does.

Alice: Alice in Wonderland Quotes

If it had grown up, it would have made a dreadfully ugly child; but it makes rather a handsome pig, I think.

The Mock Turtle: Alice in Wonderland Quotes

We called him Tortoise because he taught us.

The King: Alice in Wonderland Quotes

Begin at the beginning and go on till you come to the end: then stop.

Alice: Alice in Wonderland Quotes

You're nothing but a pack of cards!

Doorknob: Alice in Wonderland Quotes

Read the directions and directly you will be directed in the right direction.

Alice: Alice in Wonderland Quotes

It was much pleasanter at home, when one wasn't always growing larger and smaller, and being ordered about by mice and rabbits.

Alice: Alice in Wonderland Quotes

Well! I've often seen a cat without a grin; but a grin without a cat! It's the most curious thing I ever say in my life!

The Duchess: Alice in Wonderland Quotes

There's a large mustard-pie near here. And the moral of that is -- The more there is of mine, the less there is of yours.

Alice in Wonderland

Writing Activity for First and Second Grades

ELA Standards 1-W1.6.1/2-W1.5.1

Demonstrate the ability to write simple compositions, friendly letters, and expressive and informational pieces with peer or teacher support.

Write a letter to Mr. Agudelo and the dancers. Thank them for a good performance. Tell them what you liked best about going to the ballet. Include descriptive words about the choreography, costumes, lighting and sound. Tell them about your arts classes at school. Be sure to tell them what school you attend and your first and last names!

Alice in Wonderland

Writing Activity for Third, Fourth and Fifth Grades

ELA Standards 3-R2.1/4-R2.1/5-R2.1

Demonstrate the ability to analyze **characters**, **setting**, and **plot** in a literary work.

Using the ballet's interpretation of Alice in Wonderland, analyze the characters portrayed by the dancers. Was the interpretation of the story a literal one? Why or why not? Describe the setting using Mr. Agudelo's interpretation. Was it different than the written story? Why? Which did you like better? Why? Did the ballet literally interpret the plot? Why? Which version do you like better? Why?

Alice in Wonderland

Responding through Creative Dramatics

Theater Standards STORY MAKING/SCRIPT WRITING. Script writing by the creation of improvisations and scripted scenes based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history. B. Create characters, environments, dialogue, and action through improvisation and writing, both individually and in groups.

ELA 3-R1.15/4-R1.16/5-R1.15

Demonstrate the ability to respond to texts through a variety of methods, such as **creative dramatics**, writing, and graphic art.

Using characters from the ballet, recreate the story in the classroom by having students act out scenes. Which part did you like to play? Why? Have Alice play the part of the

White Rabbit. How would she play the role? What about the Mad Hatter? What if he played Alice? How would the story change?

Alice in Wonderland

Movement Lesson Plan 1

Dance Standards PreK-12 II. CHOREOGRAPHY. Understanding choreographic principles, processes, and structures. B. Improvise, compose, and perform dance **phrases** based on a variety of stimuli (e.g., sensory cues, ideas, moods).

Objective The student will explore the contrasting movement characteristics of Alice, the White Rabbit and the Queen of Hearts.

Warm up

In a circle the teacher will introduce movements for the characters of Alice, the White Rabbit and the Queen of Hearts through a warm up.

Alice

turns and swirls as she falls down the rabbit hole (8 counts)
grows larger creating a stretched out shape (4 counts)
shrinks in to a small shape (4 counts)

The White Rabbit

runs on the spot 8 times (8 counts)
jumps around in a circle clockwise (4 counts) and anti-clockwise (4 counts)

The Queen of Hearts

takes 4 slow steps forward (8 counts, i.e. 2 counts per step)
makes 3 chopping actions (as if to say 'off with their heads') with her hands and arms, stepping on the right towards the right, right arm extended high up to the right diagonal (2 counts)
stepping on the left with the chopping action low to the ground (2 counts)
stepping on the right, turning on the spot for 1 rotation (2 counts)
placing left foot on floor and slicing both arms out the side from the centre at chest height (2 counts)

Movement Exploration

1 Move around the space responding to the mood of the music. The sections of music chosen should suggest the movement qualities of the characters, e.g. spinning and falling (Alice), rushing and hurrying (White Rabbit), regal and commanding (Queen of Hearts).

2 Learn three simple traveling phrases that represent each of the three characters

e.g. Alice

runs forward, stops then shrinks in to a small shape (8 counts)

grows in to a big shape and ends with a big turn or turning roll (8 counts)

The White Rabbit

runs forward then travels back about ½ the distance (8 counts)

jumps 4 times in a circle clockwise, repeating jumps anti- clockwise (8 counts)

The Queen of Hearts

takes 4 slow steps forwards (8 counts, i.e. 2 counts per step)

takes 2 slow walks around in a circle (4 counts)

curtseys and does a ‘chopping’ action with both arms (4 counts)

Explore these characters further through improvisation using some other ways of traveling and moving in a similar style to the original. How would Alice move if she were small? Big? Tall and stretched? How would The White Rabbit travel if he were always late? What about if he were on time? How would The Queen of Hearts travel? Would her movements be slow and sustained or choppy and quick?

Composition

In small groups, create a short dance based on one of the characters. The dance may involve the character motifs from the warm up, the taught traveling phrases and should include ideas from the improvisation. The dance doesn't have to tell a story, but should have a beginning, middle, and end. Allow the students time to compose the new sections of dance.

Performance and Appreciation

Have half the class sit down and watch the character compositions. Do they reflect the characteristics identified? Which movements work well in representing each character and why? Perform different character dances side by side. Discuss the differences and reflect on the effectiveness of contrast and chance moments of interaction. Which look best together? Why?

Alice in Wonderland

Movement Lesson Plan 2

II. CHOREOGRAPHY. Understanding choreographic principles, processes, and structures. **B.** Improvise, compose, and perform dance **phrases** based on a variety of stimuli (e.g., sensory cues, ideas, moods).

Objective

The student will explore the actions, dynamics and relationship of the croquet ball, mallet and hoop.

Warm up

Swinging and bouncing

With the feet in parallel position, take 8 small knee bends, swinging the arms in opposition to each other passing the sides of the body swinging in front and behind (8 counts)

Jump the feet out to second position and take 8 small knee bends swinging the arms side to side in front of the body to the right first (8 counts)

Jump the feet back in to parallel and reach the arms high creating 2 parallel lines (2

counts)

Keep the arms extended and sweep them down in front of the body taking the head with them,

causing the whole back to curve and dropping the head and arms down to the floor. Let the

arms swing past the legs (the body can move no further) and like a pendulum (2 counts)

Reverse the whole action taking the body back up (2 counts)

Continue to allow the arms to initiate a rise on to tip toes (2 counts)

Now perform your own swinging and gliding movements to change places in the room and then be ready to repeat the whole sequence again (8 counts)

Movement Exploration

Traveling Improvisation

1 Move across the space as the 'ball' exploring different ways of turning, rolling & jumping.

2 Hoop and Ball relay. In pairs, person A runs forward to make a Hoop shape, person B (the ball) turns, rolls or jumps over, under or around the Hoop finding a place to stop in stillness creating a Hoop shape so that the roles can change

Composition

Divide the class into trios and use the ideas from all the movement material explored. find three different ways of moving as the Ball, Mallet and Hoop making sure each person experiences being each one. Consider the dynamics of the movements and vary these within the dance. Also include moments of contact with each other.

In the same 3's create a sequence based on several chosen ways of swinging the whole body or parts of the body. Dancers do not have to dance in unison. They can use canon, work at different levels or face different directions.

Using all the material created so far, each trio should decide on a structure for the dance. Perhaps the swinging sequence is performed first, followed by the Ball, Mallet and Hoop sequence and ending the dance with a selection of movements from the swinging sequence. Ensure that there is a continuous flow from one section to the next and that the dance has a clear starting and ending position.

Performance and Appreciation

Perform the trios for the rest of the group. Are the movement characteristics clear? Is there a good variety of dynamics? Are the still shapes clear? Is there good interaction/relationship between the dancers?

Technology Links

www.ruthannzaroff.com/wonderland/index.htm This is an interactive site. Ask the Caterpillar questions, make the Queen's Strawberry Tart, or play a number of games. This is a fun website!

www.the-office.com/bedtime-story/classics-aliceinwonderland.htm Beautiful illustrations by 9 historical and 2 contemporary artists illuminate this read-aloud classic. All pictures are suitable for young children. Includes definitions of old English words.

www.cartooncritters.com/wonderland.htm This site has printable pages for youngsters to color.

www.rblewis.net/technology/EDU506/WebQuests/wandering/wandering.html This site is a webquest for Grades 3-5.

www.alice-in-wonderland.net Contains drawings and scripts from the original book, the Walt Disney movie, and a stage play. Shopping is available, but the shopping link is unsuitable for children. All other links are ok for all ages.