

Course Description

Alice and the World of Children's Literature

Dates	Wednesdays 2 March, 9 March, 16 March and 23 March 2016
Times	14.00 – 16.00
Location	Harry M Weinrebe Learning Centre
Level	All levels
Class size	Maximum 16 participants

Course description

Lewis Carroll's Alice books were a landmark in the development of literature for children. Our current *Alice in Wonderland* exhibition shows how the texts have had a significant impact on wider culture since their first publication.

On this four-week course we'll explore Alice in the context of the development of children's book publishing since the mid-18th century. We'll delve into aspects of Carroll's books that have influenced other writers – nonsense and paradox, anthropomorphic fantasy and the psychology of the child. You'll hear from British Library curators, who will lead an exclusive tour of our popular *Alice in Wonderland* exhibition.

Week 1: Curiouser and Curiouser: Instruction with Delight in Children's Literature before Alice

Our course starts with a tour of the *Alice in Wonderland* exhibition, led by British Library curators Helen Melody and Alison Bailey. We'll explore examples of children's books from the late 18th and early 19th centuries, looking at the influence of educational theories of philosopher John Locke. According to Locke, children developed best by the stimulus to the imagination and intellect brought by an active interaction with books, not by having rote-learning imposed on them.

Week 2: Talking Animals and Wonderful Transformations: Alice and the Literary Fairy Tale

Lewis Carroll's 'Wonderland' did not come out of the blue. In week two we'll look at how the world of Alice emerged from a 19th-century tradition of literary fairy tale, a comparison with Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1863) will highlight how Carroll's particular contribution pushed the literary fairy tale in the direction of nonsense, paradox and linguistic play.

Week 3: Alice and the Cult of the Child

In our third session we'll examine how the Alice books, Carroll's remarkable photography, and the (contested) facts of Carroll's own life all point to his complex and ambiguous relationship with what is often seen as the late-Victorian idealisation and sentimentalisation of childhood.

Week 4: The Many Afterlives of Alice

Our last session will focus on the legacy of the Alice books, from the commercialisation of the Alice brand (overseen in part by Carroll himself) to the texts' influence on literary Modernism and its spawning of a mini-industry of psychological, philosophical and mathematical commentary.

Tutors

This course is led by Dr Adam Lively, with contributions from British Library curators Helen Melody and Alison Bailey. Adam has taught Children's Literature at Royal Holloway College, University of London. His academic research focusses on the perspective on literature afforded by the contemporary cognitive sciences and philosophy of mind. In addition to this academic research, he has published four novels, and is currently Lecturer in Creative Writing at Middlesex University.

Previous skills, knowledge or experience

None required. A willingness to participate in group discussion will help you get the most from this course.

Suggested reading

Lewis Carroll/Martin Gardner, *The Annotated Alice* (Penguin, 2001)

Marah Gubar, *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2010)

Robert S. Phillips (ed.), *Aspects of Alice: Lewis Carroll's Dreamchild As Seen Through the Critics' Looking-Glasses, 1865-1971* (Penguin, 1974)

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Multi-session courses offer high-quality, in-depth learning experiences that encourage discussion with both experts and fellow learners. To make sure you get the most from your time with us, we limit class sizes to 16 participants.

So if you want to develop fresh perspectives with leading thinkers or create with contemporary artists, our new programme is the place to start.