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Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland,* though classified as children’s literature, is quite complex and challenges some of the ways in which we see and understand childhood and the relationship between the childhood experience and the adult. I will be discussing some of the implications of this relationship in an attempt to analyze the function that children, especially children in literature, have for adults. Specifically, I want to try and answer the question: what do adults want from children? As well as explore the meaning of childhood when represented in a literary form. I will be looking at the Carroll’s Alice to help answer these questions as her character, while attempting to create her own identity, struggles to overcome the power asserted over her by adults in a fictive world created by a middle-aged man. I will also be exploring how adults recreate the childhood experience within literature in an attempt to address the nostalgia they feel and connect with a time that is otherwise impossible to return to. Children’s literature is a broad genre and interesting in that the works included are about children but nearly always written by adults. This genre allows for a space in which adults can return to childhood while also exploring the relationship that they have with children. Because ideas about childhood are so often instilled by culture, and many times there seems to be a sort of bewilderment regarding children, literature allows us to explore certain interactions between adults and children and the subsequent effect that relationship has on how adults view (and to an extent treat) children.

I will be exploring these issues through analyzing Lewis Carroll’s Alice during her adventures in Wonderland. The issues I intend to address regarding childhood, adulthood and nostalgia fit under the theme of growing up and coming of age. However, I would like to take more of a social criticism approach when analyzing the relationship between the adult and child because, as stated previously, childhood is often defined by the given culture and thus the way in which adults interact with children, what they want from them, may change slightly depending on the society which they are from. I will also be utilizing some historical criticism. In particular, focusing on the Victorian’s view of children as a way to understand the child-adult dynamic at the time Carroll was writing.

Christine Roth’s “Looking through the Spyglass: Lewis Carroll, James Barrie, and the Empire of Childhood” and Nina Auerbach’s “Alice and Wonderland: A Curious Child” both focus on the condition of the Victorian child. Roth analyzes the relationships that writers in the Victorian age had with the innocent child; a relationship which adults felt disconnected from. The Victorians attempted to repossess and reconnect with the nostalgic space of childhood by utilizing child characters as mediator’s between the spaces of childhood and adulthood. This idea of utilizing the child as a “space” is further developed in the essay “Power Struggle between the Adult and Child in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*” which looks at some of the ways in which Carroll portrays the power struggle between the adult and the child in *Alice in Wonderland*. He discusses the sympathy that Carroll displays for Alice when she enters the chaotic world of the adult. I will also be drawing from sources such as “The Wonderchild in Neverland” and “A past that has never been present: The Literary Experience of Childhood and Nostalgia” which explore Alice, and the utilization of children in literature, as a way to address adult’s nostalgia. My project will further develop these ideas and continue to explore how the adult yearning for a return to childhood influences the ways in which children are depicted in literature. The relationship that Alice has with adults, and her experiences in Wonderland, are not only a representation and challenge of the conventional understanding of the role of children, but they also offer some insight as to what adults want and can gain from children.

Thus far, I have read through and collected all the sources I will be using in my project. By the end of the day on the 8th I need to have an isolated thesis and/or claim as I intend to have all of my sources completely annotated and all evidence (i.e., quotes) that will be used in my paper collected by the end of this coming week (April 12th). The week of the 15th I plan to have completed an outline and started the rough draft so that by Monday the 22nd I have a draft ready for peer review and will be ready to finish the paper and presentation by Monday the 29th.