

The Alice, Peter, and Mole Trilogy

A Four-Level Literature
Parent Manual

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Table of Contents

1.	Four-Level Literature: General Comments . . .	5
2.	Vocabulary Prestudy	25
3.	<i>Alice in Wonderland</i>	29
4.	<i>Peter Pan</i>	49
5.	<i>The Wind in the Willows</i>	69

Four-Level Literature: General Comments

The purpose of this literature program is to immerse children in great books so that they experience literature as literature and not as a drudgery of tedious school activities. I want children's minds on the books themselves and not on attendant assignments. It is by loving to read that children become literate.

The pedagogy of this program is grown-up and reflective; it is deliberately simple, focusing entirely on the reading of the book and avoiding all traditional worksheet activities in favor of rich discussion and thoughtful writing. Busywork has been eliminated. The activities that are included are flexible options, not a rigid system requiring every step every time. In the end if the child does not love reading, we have failed.

This manual is for the homeschool parent. The homeschool environment is different in many dimensions from the traditional school environment, and these recommendations take full advantage of

the unique flexibility and purity of concentration that occurs in the homeschool setting. In writing a manual for homeschool use, however, I am mindful that the homeschool environment itself exists in many variations. Some children are homeschooled individually, others in small groups or classes. There will be homeschool children using this literature trilogy who are eight or nine years old and others who are of middle school age. There will be homeschool parents who want a grade-free, creative environment and others who want to establish a classical academic rigor that they may feel is lacking in the school system.

My strategy in this manual, therefore, is to provide paths for all of the above. I present options for a third grader, and I present options for a seventh grader, who is by no means too old to read *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, or *The Wind in the Willows*. Every activity in this manual can be conducted as an ungraded, creative activity, or it can be graded by a parent who wants the child to learn how to navigate a grading system. I do not provide any system for grading.

It is important that the approach to literature be literary, focused on the texts, and simple. I do not want

a noisy panorama of activities, worksheets, and other busywork to be the program. The program is the books. I want our approach to be deft and quiet, rather than loud. I want us to behave with literary grace. I want our activities to cuddle up to the books. We will do some creative and academic work in conjunction with the books, with our hearts turned at all times toward the books.

Accordingly, we can think about the program strategy in terms of four simple levels. The four levels are preparing, reading, creative thinking, and writing.

1. Preparing

Prior to reading the book, we might look up the author and learn about the author's life and the place of the book in cultural history. This content, however, is secondary to the content of the book itself; it would not be important if the book were not important. An alternative is to do this research after reading the book, when the child may be even more curious about the details.

We might also prestudy the vocabulary by studying the words common to all books in the trilogy and then

STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

For each title in this trilogy,
you will find:

1. A Comment
2. Language Illustration Questions
3. Quotations for Quote Quizzes
4. Creative Questions and Activities
5. Academic Writing Practice

Alice in Wonderland

Language Illustration Questions

The following questions concern the language illustrations that appear in this edition of *Alice in Wonderland*. These questions will promote a thoughtful involvement with what the illustrations reveal about Carroll's writing.

1. Which two of the language illustrations in Chapters One through Four are your favorites? Why?
 2. Explain, in your own words, the point of the first language illustration in Chapter Three, concerning a sentence about the Dodo.
 3. There are two illustrations in Chapter Four. Which of these three is most important? Why?
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Alice in Wonderland

Quotations for Quote Quizzes

Here are quotations that may be used for quote quizzes. I do not provide any certain number per chapter; you may select from them as seems good. I have adjusted capitalization and other details slightly for formatting purposes, but I have not changed any words. Each quotation begins with the number of the chapter in which it is found. I encourage you to use these as models and to enjoy finding more. In practice I did not give quote quizzes every day; when I did give one, I would use three to five quotes, reading each one carefully two times. All the students had to do was to write the name of the character whose words these were.

Notice that the quotations are always the words of a character, never the words of the narrator. If you want to choose some of your own quotations, here are some tips: find quotations that are famous, that have clues in them such as grammar or ways of speaking unique

2. Would YOU like cats if you were me? - Mouse
 3. EVERYBODY has won, and all must have prizes.
- Dodo
 3. Mine is a long and a sad tale! - Mouse
 4. When I used to read fairy-tales, I fancied that kind
of thing never happened, and now here I am in the
middle of one! - Alice
 4. Well, I hardly know—No more, thank ye; I'm better
now—but I'm a deal too flustered to tell you—all I
know is, something comes at me like a Jack-in-the-
box, and up I goes like a sky-rocket! - Bill
 5. Who are YOU? - Caterpillar
 5. I can't remember things as I used [to]—and I don't
keep the same size for ten minutes together! - Alice
-

5. I've seen a good many little girls in my time, but never ONE with such a neck as that! No, no! You're a serpent; and there's no use denying it.
- Pigeon

 6. Oh, you can't help that; we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad. - Cheshire Cat

 6. Well! I've often seen a cat without a grin, but a grin without a cat! - Alice

 7. Not the same thing a bit! You might just as well say that "I see what I eat" is the same thing as "I eat what I see"! - Mad Hatter

 7. He's murdering the time! Off with his head!
- Queen of Hearts

 7. I've had nothing yet, so I can't take more. - Alice

 8. Would you tell me why you are painting those roses?
- Alice
-

Alice in Wonderland

Academic Writing Practice

Very young readers read *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, and *The Wind in the Willows*. These are among the favorite titles of children who are beginning to read classics. Children of lower elementary age may not yet be ready to write actual essays and may just be encouraged to address some of these questions either in a nice discussion or in less structured writing.

If the child is advanced enough in academics, we might follow the reading with more formal academic writing practice. Use the standard conventions of formal style: no contractions, no first person. *Essay Voyage* and the *Advanced Academic Writing* books provide the guidelines. I like to provide four or five study questions in advance, and I give the child several days to prepare for the essays. The actual writing will contain three of the questions, with one being mandatory. The child will chose one of the remaining two to answer. In this

4. Is Alice naive? Do her false assumptions and misunderstandings play an important part in the story?
 5. What words or phrases appear repeatedly in the story? Why?
 6. Which two characters in the story, not including Alice, are most different from each other? In what ways are they different?
 7. Which character in the story, not including Alice, is the most admirable?
 8. In what way is the Queen of Hearts's view of the world different from Alice's view of the world?
 9. In what way is Alice different from every other character in the story? This should be a personal difference of personality or character, not a general difference such as that she is a normal human being and the others are not.
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10. Is there a point in the story when Alice could have and should have done things differently? Were there some better alternatives for behavior available to her?

These examples demonstrate the kinds of open-ended questions that lead back to the story itself. You can use these, or some of these, or you can use these as models and write questions yourself.