

**EVERYTHING HAS GOT A
MORAL IF YOU CAN
ONLY FIND IT.
—Lewis Carroll**

Unit 2—Lesson 4

Lewis Carroll

INTRODUCTION

Lewis Carroll was not born in 1832. However, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson was, and he later wrote under the *nom de plume* (“pen name” or pseudonym) Lewis Carroll. Dodgson was the third child of eleven in a family with a lot of literary interest and talent. The Dodgsons produced their own magazines, with many members contributing; and Charles demonstrated early that he was fascinated with parodies, acrostics, and other word puzzles.

Charles Dodgson attended Rugby, a prestigious secondary school, and then Christ Church College at Oxford University. He became a lecturer in mathematics in 1855. His most valuable

“When I say a word,” Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more or less.”

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.”

Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland

“Sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.”

—Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland

mathematical work was *Euclid and His Modern Rivals*, published in 1879. This was a rather amusing defense of Euclid and Euclidian geometry. Dodgson was also an avid amateur photographer. Among other subjects, he took some portraits of the sons of his good friend and fellow author, Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

Lewis Carroll’s best-known work, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, was published in 1865. This book started as a story Carroll made up during a boat trip with H. G. Liddell and his three young daughters—Lorina, Alice, and Edith. The simple story he made up on the boat was much expanded for the book, which was followed in 1871 by



LESSON PREVIEW

Rhyme is such a common element in poetry that we might not even think about it. However, there are different types of rhyme, and rhyme is used to create a variety of effects. We will look at some elements of rhyme in poetry in this lesson.

Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There. It was suggested at the time that these books were particularly popular with children because, unlike most children’s books of the time, they did not try to teach moral lessons. Other books by Lewis Carroll include *Phantasmagoria and Other Poems* (1869), *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876), and *Sylvie and Bruno* (volume 1 published in 1889 and volume 2 in 1893). Charles Dodgson and Lewis Carroll died in 1898.

“Be what you would seem to be—or, if you’d like it put more simply—Never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise.”

—Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland

THE SELECTION

Included in this selection are five poems. The first four of them (“Jabberwocky,” “Father William,” “The Walrus and the Carpenter,” and “Humpty Dumpty’s Recitation”) appeared in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and the fifth one (“The White Knight’s Song”) was included in *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*. Lewis Carroll was famous for the absurd, almost surreal, situations he invented, and these poems demonstrate that quality.

WHILE YOU READ

Here are some questions to keep in the back of your mind while you read these poems by Lewis Carroll.

- What kind of rhymes does Carroll use in these poems?
- What is the pattern of those rhymes?
- What effect do the rhymes in these poems have on the mood of the poems?

The eldest Oyster looked at him,
 But never a word he said:
The eldest Oyster winked his eye,
 And shook his heavy head— 40
Meaning to say he did not choose
 To leave the oyster bed.

But four young Oysters hurried up,
 All eager for the treat:
Their coats were brushed, their faces washed, 45
 Their shoes were clean and neat—
And this was odd, because, you know,
They hadn't any feet.

Four other Oysters followed them,
 And yet another four; 50
And thick and fast they came at last,
 And more, and more, and more—
All hopping though the frothy waves,
 And scrambling to the shore.

The Walrus and the Carpenter 55
 Walked on a mile or so,
And then they rested on a rock
 Conveniently low:
And all the little Oysters stood
 And waited in a row. 60

“The time has come,” the Walrus said,
 “To talk of many things:
Of shoes—and ships—and sealing wax—
 Of cabbages—and kings 65
And why the sea is boiling hot—
 And whether pigs have wings.”

“But wait a bit,” the Oysters cried,
 “Before we have our chat;
For some of us are out of breath
 And all of us are fat!” 70
“No hurry!” said the Carpenter.
 They thanked him much for that.

“A loaf of bread,” the Walrus said,
 “Is what we chiefly need:
Pepper and vinegar besides
 Are very good indeed— 75
Now, if you’re ready, Oysters dear,
 We can begin to feed.”

“But not on us!” the Oysters cried,
 Turning a little blue.
“After such kindness that would be 80
 A dismal thing to do!”
“The night is fine,” the Walrus said,
 “Do you admire the view?

“It was kind of you to come!
 And you are very nice!” 85
The Carpenter said nothing but
 “Cut us another slice
I wish you were not quite so deaf—
 I’ve had to ask you twice!”

“It seems a shame,” the Walrus said, 90
 “To play them such a trick,
After we’ve brought them out so far,
 And made them trot so quick!”
The Carpenter said nothing but
 “The butter’s spread too thick!” 95

“I weep for you,” the Walrus said;
 “I deeply sympathize.”
With sobs and tears he sorted out
 Those of the largest size,
Holding his pocket handkerchief 100
 Before his streaming eyes.

“O Oysters,” said the Carpenter,
 “You’ve had a pleasant run!
Shall we be trotting home again?”
 But answer came there none— 105
And this was scarcely odd, because
 They’d eaten every one.

HUMPTY DUMPTY'S RECITATION

In winter, when the fields are white,
I sing this song for your delight—

In spring, when woods are getting green,
I'll try and tell you what I mean.

In summer, when the days are long, 5
Perhaps you'll understand the song:

In autumn, when the leaves are brown,
Take pen and ink and write it down.

I sent a message to the fish:
I told them "This is what I wish." 10

The little fishes of the sea
They sent an answer back to me.

The little fishes' answer was
"We cannot do it, Sir, because—"

I sent to them again to say 15
"It will be better to obey."

The fishes answered with a grin,
"Why, what a temper you are in!"

I told them once, I told them twice:
They would not listen to advice. 20

I took a kettle large and new,
Fit for the deed I had to do.

My heart went hop, my heart went thump;
I filled the kettle at the pump.

Then some one came to me and said 25
"The little fishes are in bed."

I said to him, I said it plain,
"Then you must wake them up again."

I said it very loud and clear;
I went and shouted in his ear. 30

But he was very stiff and proud;
He said “You needn’t shout so loud!”

And he was very proud and stiff;
He said “I’d go and wake them, if—”

I took a corkscrew from the shelf: 35
I went to wake them up myself.

And when I found the door was locked,
I pulled and pushed and kicked and knocked.

And when I found the door was shut,
I tried to turn the handle, but— 40

He said “I hunt for haddocks’ eyes
 Among the heather bright,
And work them into waistcoat-buttons
 In the silent night.
And these I do not sell for gold
 Or coin of silvery shine, 45
But for a copper halfpenny,
 And that will purchase nine.

I sometimes dig for buttered rolls,
 Or set limed twigs for crabs:
I sometimes search the grassy knolls 50
 For wheels of Hansom-cabs.
And that’s the way” (he gave a wink)
 “By which I get my wealth—
And very gladly will I drink
 Your Honour’s noble health.” 55

I heard him then, for I had just
 Completed my design
To keep the Menai bridge from rust
 By boiling it in wine.
I thanked him much for telling me 60
 The way he got his wealth,
But chiefly for his wish that he
 Might drink my noble health.

And now, of e’er by chance I put
 My fingers into glue, 65
Or madly squeeze a right-hand foot
 Into a left-hand shoe,
Or if I drop upon my toe
 A very heavy weight,
I weep for it reminds me so 70
Of that old man I used to know—
Whose look was mild, whose speech was slow,
Whose hair was whiter than the snow,
Whose face was very like a crow,
With eyes, like cinders, all aglow, 75
Who seemed distracted with his woe,
Who rocked his body to and fro,
And muttered mumblingly and low,
As if his mouth were full of dough,
Who snorted like a buffalo— 80
That summer evening long ago,
 A-sitting on a gate.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

“Jabberwocky”

1. Where did the slithy toves gyre and gimble?
2. What three creatures did the father warn his son about?
3. What weapon did the boy have?
4. Where did he rest while he was thinking?
5. What did the Jabberwocky do as he approached?
6. Did the boy defeat the Jabberwocky?

“Father William”

1. Why doesn't Father William worry about standing on his head?
2. What acrobatic move does Father William achieve, even though he is fat?
3. How is he able to do that?
4. What does Father William eat to prove his jaws are not weak?
5. What did he do to improve his jaws?
6. What does Father William balance on the end of his nose?
7. What threat does he make if the boy keeps asking questions?

“The Walrus and the Carpenter”

1. Why was it strange for the sun to be shining on the sea at the beginning of this poem?
2. Was the sea wet or dry? How about the sand?
3. Were there any clouds or birds?
4. What do the Walrus and the Carpenter wish could be done with the beach?
5. Who do the Walrus and the Carpenter invite to take a walk with them?
6. What are three of the things the Walrus suggests they can talk about?
7. What do the Walrus and the Carpenter eat along with the seafood?

“Humpty Dumpty’s Recitation”

1. To whom did the speaker in this poem send a message?
2. What is the response?
3. What is the response to the second message?
4. What does the person who comes to the speaker in this poem tell him about the fish?
5. What did he do when he found the door was locked?

“The White Knight’s Song”

1. Who was sitting on a gate?
2. What question does the White Knight ask the old man more than once?
3. What does the old man do with butterflies?
4. What was the first plan the knight talks about in this poem?
5. How much does the old man say he is paid for Rowland’s Macassar-Oil?
6. What food does the White Knight think would make one fatter?
7. How does the old man use haddock eyes?
8. What is the price of the waistcoat buttons?
9. Where does the old man hope to find the wheel from Hansom cabs?
10. The white Knight has a plan for keeping a particular bridge from rusting. What is that plan?
11. Name one of the three occasions when the White Knight remembers the old man.
12. Name two elements of the White Knight’s description of the old man.

LITERARY LESSON: RHYME IN POETRY

One of the first things that comes to mind when most people think of poetry is rhyme. In fact, some people think that rhyme is required in poetry, and if a piece of writing doesn't rhyme, it must be something other than poetry. We have already seen that this is not true, having studied the blank verse of Alfred, Lord Tennyson and his *Idylls of the King* in the previous Unit. In fact, rhyme is only one element of poetry, one among many. Rhyme is a tool which can enhance a mood or create a particular atmosphere in a poem. Rhyme can be humorous or moody, bright or sad. But it is not the only tool. Rhythm, emotion, figures of speech, and several other devices are available to the poet to perform these functions as well.

Documenting Rhyme Scheme

Before we can talk about the effects of rhyme, it is necessary that we determine how it is being used. The rhyme scheme, pattern of rhyme, is indicated by an alphabet letter for the words which rhyme. To see how this works, look at the first stanza of “Jabberwocky”:

‘Twas brillig, and the slithy **toves**
Did gyre and gimble in the **wabe**;
All mimsy were the borogroves,
And the mome raths out**grabe**.

The rhyme scheme in these four lines is *a b a b*. Each letter stands for a particular rhyme. Now let's look at a different example: the first stanza of “The Walrus and the Carpenter.”

The sun was shining on the sea,
Shining with all his **might**;
He did his very best to make
The billows smooth and **bright**—
And this was odd, because it was
The middle of the **night**.

Here, the rhyme scheme is *x a x a x a*. Xs are usually used for words that don't rhyme with anything else in the stanza.

End Rhyme and Internal Rhyme

The rhymes we have been looking at so far are *end rhymes*, rhymes which come at the end of the lines. *Internal rhymes* occur when two or more rhyming words appear in a single line of poetry to emphasize the rhyme even more. Lewis Carroll did not use internal rhyme in any of the poems included in this lesson. Here's an example of internal rhyme:

In my **hand** I held a rubber **band**,
A potato **chip** and a paper **clip**.
I sat and **scanned** the broad green **land**
And took a **sip** from a mint **julep**.

So the end rhyme pattern is *a b a b*, but each line contains an internal rhyme, as well, emphasizing those end rhymes.

Feminine and Masculine Rhyme

The rhymes we have seen so far have all been masculine rhymes. That is not because Lewis Carroll and I are male. Masculine rhyme refers to words that rhyme on a single syllable. (Remember, in our poetry study in the last unit we became sensitive to the number of syllables in each word.) Look again at the stanza from “The Walrus and the Carpenter” containing the rhyming words *might*, *bright*, and *night*. These are all single-syllable words and therefore are used here in masculine rhymes. Now look at the rhymes in the first stanza of “Jabberwocky.” Here, *toves* rhymes with *borogroves* and *wabe* rhymes with *outgrabe*. Though *borogroves* and *outgrabe* both have more than one syllable, this is another example of masculine rhymes, because the actual rhymes are only single syllables: *toves* with *groves* and *wabe* with *grabe*.

There aren’t many feminine rhymes in Lewis Carroll’s work; he tended to focus on simple words (though some of them were invented). Here are a couple of examples of feminine rhymes from “Father William”:

“In my youth,” said the sage, as he shook his gray locks,
“I kept all my very limbs **supple**
By the use of this ointment—one shilling the box—
Allow me to sell you a **couple**.”

The rhyme scheme here is *a b a b*, and the *b* rhymes are *supple* and *couple*. Both of these words contain two syllables and both syllables of *supple* rhyme with both syllable of *couple*.

Can you spot the feminine rhymes in fifth and seventh stanzas of “Father William”?

“You are old,” said the youth, “and your jaws are too weak
For anything tougher than suet;
Yet you finished the goose, with the bones and the beak—
Pray, how did you manage to do it?”

“You are old,” said the youth, “one would hardly suppose
That your eye was a steady as ever;
Yet you balanced an eel on the end of your nose—
What made you so awfully clever?”

The fifth stanza is slightly different—the *b* rhymes are *suet* and *do it*. This is also a feminine rhyme. Even though *do* and *it* are both single syllable words, the rhyme here is on two syllables. In the seventh stanza the feminine rhymes are *ever* and *clever*.

True and Slant Rhyme

So far, we have been talking almost exclusively about true rhymes. True rhyme occurs when words sound exactly like each other. Some rhymes are not quite perfect, though. Look at the *b* rhyme in our example of internal rhyme:

In my **hand** I held a rubber **band**,
A potato **chip** and a paper **clip**.
I sat and **scanned** the broad green **land**
And took a **sip** from a mint **julep**.

Here, *chip*, *clip*, and *sip* are all rhymed with *julep*. The last syllable of *julep*, though quite similar, is not an exact rhyme with the other three words. This, then, is a slant rhyme.

Most of Lewis Carroll’s rhymes are true or exact rhymes. But look at the fourteenth stanza in “Humpty Dumpty’s Recitation.”

I said to him, I said it **plain**,
“Then you must wake them up **again**.”

Here, *plain* is rhymed with *again*. Rhyme is, of course, based on pronunciation. And one could choose to pronounce *again* with a long-*a* sound in the second syllable and make this a perfect rhyme, but most people in America these days do not pronounce that word that way naturally. This can be considered a slant rhyme since most typically those two words would not be pronounced in the same way. *Again* may be the most common slant rhyme, perhaps because it looks so inviting. People want to pronounce *again* to rhyme with *gain*.

Effects of Rhyme

If we concentrate only on the five poems included in this lesson or only on Lewis Carroll’s poems, we will not see the full range of effects that rhyme can have. Sounds induce or enhance moods, and different sounds affect us differently. The rhymes in the first stanza of “The Walrus and the Carpenter” use the long-*i* sound:

The sun was **shining** on the sea,
 Shining with all his **might**:
He did his very best to make
 The billows smooth and **bright**—
And this was odd, because it was
 The middle of the **night**.

It is a quick, bright sound which lifts us up. Lewis Carroll generally wrote happy, whimsical poems. For contrast, here is a stanza from “The Raven” by Edgar Allan Poe:

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the **floor**.
Eagerly I wished the **morrow**;—vainly I had sought to **borrow**
From my books surcease of **sorrow**—**sorrow** for the lost **Lenore**—
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name **Lenore**—
Nameless here for ever**more**.”

Throughout this poem, Poe frequently uses words with an *or* sound (*floor*, *sorrow*, *Lenore*, *nevermore*, etc.) This is a slower sound and naturally conveys a “down” or depressing mood. Rhyme uses these different sounds and the emotions they bring with them, and emphasizes them through repetition.

This is only one way in which rhyme is used to create or emphasize an emotion or other effect on the reader. Sometimes, rhyme is humorous simply by being present, or by being extended. Here is the end of “The White Knight’s Song.”

And now, of e’er by chance I put
My fingers into glue,
Or madly squeeze a right-hand foot
Into a left-hand shoe,
Or if I drop upon my toe
A very heavy weight,
I weep for it reminds me so
Of that old man I used to know—
Whose look was mild, whose speech was slow,
Whose hair was whiter than the snow,
Whose face was very like a crow,
With eyes, like cinders, all aglow,
Who seemed distracted with his woe,
Who rocked his body to and fro,
And muttered mumblingly and low,
As if his mouth were full of dough,
Who snorted like a buffalo—
That summer evening long ago,
A-sitting on a gate.

Here, the stanza structure present through the rest of the poem breaks down so that Carroll can include many extra rhyming lines. It is not the repetition of a particular sound which is being used here but the multiplication of ridiculous circumstances, all rhyming with each other, which makes this passage humorous. There are many purposes for rhyme and many effects can be created with it.

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Write a poem at least 16 lines long. Use a strong and definite rhyme scheme. You can pick whatever rhyme scheme pattern you like, and you can also choose your topic: an event, a description of nature, a psalm, etc.
2. Write a poem at least 16 lines long. You can use a rhyme scheme or not, but include at least one masculine rhyme, one feminine rhyme, one perfect rhyme, one slant rhyme, and one internal rhyme.
3. Write down the complete rhyme scheme of one of the poems included in this lesson (or some other poem you know which is at least 20 lines long). (“Complete rhyme scheme” means that if there are 50 lines in the poem, you need to include 50 letters indicating the rhyme scheme of every line and every stanza.) If you use a poem which is not included here, you must submit a copy of that poem so that we can see whether your work is correct. Write one to two paragraphs explaining how the rhyme scheme affects the tone or content of the poem.
4. Choose five verbs and five nouns, and then collect ten rhymes for each of the ten words. Finally, write five couplets (lines which rhyme. The stanzas in “Humpty Dumpty’s Recitation” are couplets) using some of these rhymes. These couplets can all be in one poem or each can be its own little poem.