

**Show Me, Don't (Re)Tell Me: Jon Scieszka Revises *Wonderland***  
**an adaption of chapter 12**  
**in *The Place of Lewis Carroll in Children's Literature* by Jan Susina**

One of the many ways to gauge the influence and popularity of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures of Wonderland* (1865) within the world of children's literature is to consider the many times that the story has been retold by either revising the text, the illustrations, or both. Despite Tenniel's masterful illustrations, which are an essential element to the design and meaning of the *Alice* books, hundreds of illustrators have attempted to illustrate the books. John Davis has rightfully suggested that *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has probably become the most illustrated children's book in history.<sup>1</sup> When he and Graham Ovenden published *The Illustrators of Alice in Wonderland* in 1972, they estimated that, "well over a hundred artists have illustrated the *Alice* books."<sup>2</sup> To read an edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* without illustrations is close to unthinkable; it would be like trying to watch Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941) without sound. Ovenden and Davis provided a checklist of ninety English-language illustrated editions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, another twenty-one illustrators of *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), and thirty-three combined editions of the *Alice* books.<sup>3</sup> The number of illustrated editions of the *Alice* book has easily doubled since 1974, with a handful of new illustrated editions appearing every year as well as the re-publication of earlier editions. While children's book illustrators have created many of these volumes, artists for older readers also have designed a good number of these. This quantity of illustrated book editions does not take into account the many films, plays, computer games, comic books, and music that have been based on the *Alice* books. Seemingly every few years a new full-length film version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is released. The quirky film director Tim Burton is the latest to tackle Carroll's text with his *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), starring Johnny Depp. Allusions and spoofs to the *Alice* books that appear in children's films and television programming, in fact all forms of popular culture, are endless.

The number of various print adaptations, imitations, parodies, and revisions of the Alice books is immense. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* remains one of the most frequently quoted and reprinted books of children's literature. Carolyn Sigler, in *Alternative Alices: Visions and Revisions of Lewis Carroll's Alice Books* (1997), and Will Brooker, in *Alice's Adventures: Lewis Carroll in Popular Culture* (2004), have both charted how vast and diverse the influence of Carroll's Alice books have become within children's literature and beyond.

Many of the modern children's editions of the *Alice* books have been adaptations, simplifications, or retelling. They range from Mrs. J.C. Gorham's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland Retold in Words of One Syllable* (1905), which was an attempt to teach beginning readers to elaborate pop-up editions--both Robert Sabuda and J. Otto Seibold have created clever interactive editions in 2003, as noted in the chapter "Cyber Alice." Warren Weaver has written *Alice in Many Tongues: The Translations of Alice Wonderland* (1964), a book-length study on one-hundred-and-sixty translations of the Alice books into forty-two different languages. Warren's study makes it clear that the Alice books are not simply beloved icons of English-speaking children's literature, but have become important international children's texts.

Rather than looking at a range of modern adaptations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, I am going to take an in-depth look at a single contemporary retelling. In analyzing Jon Scieszka's well-intended, but in my view wrong-headed, retelling of Carroll's story, I am also attempting to identify some of the problems with many other contemporary adaptations. Sometimes less is more. When it comes to adaptations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, less is frequently simply less. Even gifted children's writers, such as Scieszka, in attempting to make a Victorian children's text more accessible to contemporary child readers, sometime stumble and remove much of the humor of the *Alice* books. In a similar manner, few artists have the skill of Tenniel. While their *Alice* illustrations may be more colorful and cute, their images usually are simply embellishments to the text, rather than an integral aspect of the story.

In addition to the many illustrated print versions, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has been a popular text to adapt to the screen; yet, it remains a surprisingly difficult book to

successfully undergo a cinematic transformation. The book is rather episodic and lacks a clear narrative structure, except when Alice falls asleep and then wakes at the conclusion. Most film adaptations become trapped in one of two types of problems: filmmakers either go overboard with special effects and elaborate costumes while filling in transitions with songs or dance numbers, or go in the other extreme as they dutifully attempt to reproduce the text. Many of these problems are present in Walt Disney's feature-length animated film *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), which is the basis of Scieszka's print version.

Jon Scieszka's *Walt Disney's Alice in Wonderland* (2008) is an exceedingly strange picture book. It is based on the initial sketches that served as the models for the Disney film. Scieszka is a famous and funny writer of children's picture books who often revises pre-existing children's classics with great success. In books--such as *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs!* (1989), *The Frog Prince Continued* (1991), and *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Fairy Tales* (1992)--Scieszka has cleverly put a decidedly postmodern twist on traditional fairy tales. *His Summer Reading is Killing Me!* (1998), a volume in his popular Time Warp Trio series, is a comic mashup that provides a hilarious jumble of famous characters from a first through eighth grade summer reading list of children's books, including Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. He and his frequent companion in crime, the darkly satiric illustrator Lane Smith, have successfully created wonderful parodies based on Aesop's Fables--*Squids Will Be Squids* (1998)--to canonical children's poetry in *Science Verse* (2004). When it comes to humorously illustrated children's books, Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith have become the modern, no make that postmodern, equivalent of Lewis Carroll and John Tenniel.

It would seem only natural that Scieszka might try his hand at a retelling or adaptation of Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* for a contemporary children's audience. Like Scieszka, Carroll enjoyed mocking previous children's texts as evidenced by his parodies of Isaac Watt's "Against Idleness and Mischief" that became "How Doth the Little Crocodile" or Robert Southey's "The Old Man's Comforts" that was revised to "You Are Old, Father William." Scieszka has explained that *Science Verse* was intended as a "tribute to another one of my

favorite funny writers--Lewis Carroll.”<sup>4</sup> In the volume, Scieszka parodies well-known poems, as Carroll did in *Wonderland*. Science Verse features, what Scieszka calls “ a parody of poem by the master of parody” called Gobblegooky, which reads: “Twas fructose and the vitamins/Did zinc and dye (red #8). /All poly were the thiamins/And the carbohydrate...”<sup>5</sup> Named the United States’ first National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature by the Library of Congress in 2008, Scieszka would seem to be the perfect children’s writer to successfully create a modern version of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* that would be both accessible and appealing to contemporary middle-school readers.

Scieszka would not be first children’s author to give it a try. That distinction would go to Lewis Carroll himself who created *The Nursery “Alice”* (1890), which was a picture book version of his modern fairy tale, as discussed in more detail in the chapter “Too Gaudy or Not Gaudy Enough.” With *The Nursery “Alice”* Carroll simplified and reduced the text of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* to about one-fourth of its original. More significantly, Carroll reduced Tenniel’s forty-two *Wonderland* illustrations to twenty, which he then had enlarged and colorized for his picture book adaptation. Carroll’s own adaptation is carefully structured around Tenniel’s illustrations. His picture book adaptation of *Wonderland* even provides frequent references in the text to the colorized illustrations.

In creating his adaptation of *Wonderland* around illustrations, Scieszka follows the process that Carroll used in his own picture book version. But the key difference is that Scieszka structures his retelling not around Tenniel’s illustrations, but those created by Mary Blair, who was one of the chief artists involved in Walt Disney’s 1951 film adaptation, *Alice in Wonderland*. In choosing to retell *Walt Disney’s Alice in Wonderland*, Scieszka’s adaptation is twice removed from the original Victorian literary fairy tale. According to John Canemaker, Blair was the artist who provided the Disney films of the early 1940s through the mid-1950s with their stylish and vibrant color.<sup>6</sup> The three major Disney films that she contributed to were *Cinderella* (1950), *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Peter Pan* (1953). More artist than animator, her pastel and watercolor sketches became the storyboard concepts from which the animators

would develop their drawings. Blair considered her contribution to the films as, “working with the writers and helping to create the ideas of the picture graphically right . . . its basic beginning.”<sup>7</sup> Canemaker writes that Blair’s figures “float surrealistically, as part of the overall textures, interlocking shapes, and patterns in nearly abstractly compositional structures.”<sup>8</sup> This was a form of modernism that reduced flat areas into shapes, color, and line that Disney was comfortable with, although Blair’s striking sketches were often altered to conform to the more rounded Disney cartoon style. Leonard Marcus suggests that Disney considered Blair “his creative conscience,”<sup>9</sup> although her original designs were often modified and failed to appear in the completed films. Blair’s art career extended beyond the work she did with Disney films and included advertising, illustrations for Golden Books, theatrical sets, murals at hospitals and Disney theme parks: she is perhaps most famous for the “It’s a Small World,” the 3-D boat ride, which was first exhibited at the 1964 New York World’s Fair; it was subsequently moved and reassembled at Walt Disney World in 1971. “It’s a Small World”--with its myriad of big eyed, colorful, and terminally cheerful children--forms a dramatic contrast to Tenniel’s curious, but proper, Alice.

Szieszka’s adaptation of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* is the second book in a series produced by the Disney Corporation using an established contemporary children’s author to add text to Blair’s designs; Cynthia Rylant retold *Walt Disney’s Cinderella* in 2007. Nor is Szieszka’s adaptation the first time that the Disney Corporation has created a print version of *Wonderland* based on the film. In collaboration with Golden Books, which had a long-standing licensing agreement with Disney from the 1930s, Jane Werner’s *Alice in Wonderland Meets the White Rabbit* (1951) was published in conjunction with the initial film release. The title page provided the complicated transformation of Lewis Carroll’s story to Walt Disney’s film and then repackaged as a Golden Book. While the story is “retold by Jane Werner,” it is also “adapted by Al Dempster from the motion picture based on the story by Lewis Carroll.”<sup>10</sup> Neither of these Golden Books versions of *Wonderland* uses Blair’s art as the illustrations; instead, they feature images based on the film. However, Blair did illustrate a Golden Book, Ruth Krauss’s *I Can Fly*

(1951), which was released the same year as Disney's film version of *Alice in Wonderland*.

Adding to the multiple Disney adaptations, when the company re-released the film, Disney, in collaboration with Golden Books, published *Walt Disney's Alice in Wonderland*, which was adapted by Teddy Slater with illustrations by Franc Mateu. This Golden Book version, based on the film, is more simplistic in text and more cartoonish and garish in color than the publisher's 1951 book.

With the 1974 re-release of the film, Disney attempted to link the film to the psychedelic zeitgeist of the period with a bright and slightly trippy film poster.<sup>11</sup> Like a photocopy of a photocopy of photograph, the original image gets a bit blurry and hard to recognize in the multiple reproductions. Walter Benjamin has famously argued in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" that while in principle art has always been reproducible, it is in the process of mechanical reproduction that some essential aspect of the artwork's authenticity is lost. As in the adaptation that moves from print to film and back again, the aura, or power, of the original is greatly diluted.<sup>12</sup> Like a literary version of the children's game "telephone," the original message becomes distorted, if not completely transformed. Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is transformed through the process of mechanical reproduction to become *Walt Disney's Alice in Wonderland*. The adaptation also resembles the awkward transformation of the baby that Alice saves from the Duchess' kitchen. Alice is surprised to discover the crying baby that she is carrying in her arms has become a grunting pig. She abandons it, philosophically observing, "It would have made a dreadfully ugly child, but it made a rather handsome pig, I think."<sup>13</sup> This curious scene nicely summarizes the differences between Carroll's book and Disney's film, in that they are very different sorts of animals.

In the opening paragraph of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Carroll has Alice complain about dull books when she glances at what her older sister is reading: "and what is the use of a book...without pictures or conversation?"<sup>14</sup> To modify Alice's question in relation to John Scieszka's adaptation, "what is the use of an *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* without Tenniel's pictures or Carroll's conversations?" Scieszka's adaptation is an example of the

withering away of the aura, or spirit, of the original that Benjamin warns against in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." He also observed that film is the most powerful agent in this process of transformation.<sup>15</sup> However, an adaptation of *Wonderland*, such as the one produced by Scieszka, which is devoid of Carroll or Tenniel, does greatly mute the spirit, or aura, of the original text.

This is not to suggest that all adaptations are doomed to be pale imitations of the original. Neither am I suggesting that the aura of Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is limited to a specific time and place nor that subsequent artists and writers ought to resist the impulse to play with it. A notable and creative adaptation and transformation of Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* would be L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), which was the author's attempt to create an American *Alice*. Another successful adaptation is Victor Fleming's *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), the subsequent film version of Baum's novel that many viewers find superior to the original book.

Carroll himself was not opposed to creating multiple versions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* during his own lifetime. Building on the success of *Wonderland*, Carroll produced a sequel: *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872). Carroll later published the collector's edition, the first draft of *Wonderland* titled *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* (1886), which is a facsimile of the hand-written manuscript that featured his earlier version of the text and his own rough drawings, rather than those by Tenniel. *The Nursery "Alice"* was Carroll's picture book version in which Carroll had artists add color to Tenniel's black- and-white illustrations. Carroll also approved and contributed lines to Henry Savile Clarke's operetta *Alice in Wonderland: A Dream Play for Children*, which premiered in 1886. If the technology existed, one could imagine that Carroll might have approved a film adaptation of his novel. Indeed, magic lantern versions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* were produced during Carroll's lifetime without his approval.

Walt Disney considered for many years how to turn *Alice in Wonderland* into a film. Some of his earliest short films made in Hollywood between 1923 and 1927 were the *Alice Comedies*. Disney initiated the series with *Alice's Wonderland* (1923), which combined the live

action of a young actress who entered a wonderland of animation.<sup>16</sup> Disney had originally planned to begin his first feature-length cartoon with *Alice in Wonderland*, but the release of the 1933 live-action film version of *Alice in Wonderland*, directed by Norman Z. McLeod for Paramount, delayed the project. Disney shelved his *Alice* project and chose to begin his feature-length, animated films with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). After World War II, Disney returned to the *Alice* project with the intention of using Tenniel's artwork as the model for the characters. According to Leonard Maltin, the Disney studio initially began the film in the style of Tenniel's illustrations, but Disney worried, "When you deal with such a popular classic, you're laying yourself wide open to the critics."<sup>17</sup> This eventually turned out to be the case with Disney's film as it received mixed reviews, especially in England. Blair has said that she based her images on Tenniel, but "Walt would not let us go completely in that direction."<sup>18</sup> Blair originally used a more black, white, and gray spectrum, but when Disney saw the sketches, "he gave it a thumbs-down" and asked the animator Ward Kimball to give the characters the more typical Disney animation.<sup>19</sup> As is the case of most Disney films based on a children's texts, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was transformed into Walt Disney's *Alice in Wonderland*; the film has more in common with previous Disney films than it does with the original book. Unlike many other Disney films that are based on children's texts--such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), or *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree* (1966)--*Alice in Wonderland* does not begin with a shot of a book, but opens with a scene of Alice and her older sister in a meadow. Clearly, Disney wanted to distance himself from Carroll's text in his film adaptation. Blair's cute and colorful characters replace Tenniel's dramatic and sometime menacing black-and-white figures. Yet Blair's dramatic and effective use of color is similar to Carroll's decision to colorize Tenniel's illustrations in *The Nursery "Alice"* for a younger audience. It was with *The Nursery "Alice"* that Carroll also began the use of illustrators other than Tenniel for the *Alice* books, allowing his friend E. Gertrude Thomson to design the cover art for the book.

At least more than two hundred illustrated versions of Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* have been published, which makes it one of the most frequently illustrated children's books; yet, most illustrators simply borrow from Tenniel's imagery. While they often take liberties with Tenniel's work, few artists are able to devise an original or different way of looking at Wonderland and its inhabitants. Blair's sketches present colorful and cuter variations of the models established by Tenniel. The original illustrations are an essential aspect of the book--as are Carroll's prose and poems. In fact, the only bit of poetry from *Wonderland* that appears in Scieszka's adaptation is the Dormouse's "Twinkle twinkle, little bat." Scieszka's reluctance to include Carroll's parodies of other children's books hints at his own reluctance to take liberties with Carroll's work. This is odd for Scieszka since in his other more successful adaptations of fairy tales it is the voice of the characters that dominate the text; these include A. Wolf who narrates *The True Story of 3 Pigs!* and Jack who keeps interrupting other characters' stories in *The Stinky Cheese Man*. Scieszka mutes both Carroll's voice and his own in this adaptation.

The problems of the Disney/Scieszka adaptation are not limited to Blair's colorful, but stylized modernist approach to *Wonderland*. Her sketches give a more fearful and menacing tone to *Wonderland* than the subsequent Disney animation, which were based on her illustrated. Scieszka's text serves as a summary of the characters and actions; what is lost are the "conversations" that Alice originally sought in books. Scieszka's role here becomes that of an omniscient narrator, rather than creating comic dialogue between characters, which is at the heart of both *Alice* books. While Scieszka includes the Mad Tea-Party, he deletes the telling of riddles. He does include a brief discussion of unbirthdays. The Disney film did create the popular "Unbirthday Song," but readers familiar with the *Alice* books will realize that the conversation of birthdays and unbirthdays takes place between Alice and Humpty Dumpty in *Looking-Glass*. Carroll's *Wonderland* is a book composed of pictures and conversation; the story unwinds very much like a play, specifically a Victorian pantomime, in which Alice meets a set of unusual creatures with whom she converses and then moves on to the next group of characters.

In contrast, Disney's *Wonderland*, like most of his other full-length animated features, functions as a musical, with songs expressing characters' emotions and advancing the plot. Carroll's *Wonderland* is episodic in terms of plot, but masks this weakness with clever dialogue.

The problem with Scieszka's adaptation is that it is a plot summary without Carroll's dialogue. Scieszka's retelling comes out of details that appear in Blair's illustrations. But in *Wonderland*, the Tenniel illustrations and Carroll's text work together to tell the story. Most of the imagery of the characters in *Wonderland* is derived from Tenniel's illustrations, rather than Carroll's prose, which provides very little description. Michael Hancher in *The Tenniel Illustrations to the "Alice" Books* has shown how carefully Carroll designed the pages of *Wonderland* so that the illustrations are placed appropriately in physically relationship to the text.<sup>20</sup> Frequently, the precise placement of carefully constructed design elements is lost in other artists' subsequent editions of the *Alice* books. Similarly, just as the arrangements of the pages are significant in the *Alice* books, they are also important to the success of Scieszka's and Smith's picture books. Much of the humor of *The Stinky Cheese Man* is typographical with the clever use of multiple typefaces of varying size that are carefully arranged by Mary Leach. Scieszka has acknowledged her essential contribution to his picture books, arguing that "the design tells as much of the story as the text and illustrations do."<sup>21</sup> The careful placement of design elements at play in both Carroll's *Wonderland* and many other of Scieszka's picture books is lacking in Walt Disney's *Alice in Wonderland*; the assumption seems to be that a full-page reproduction of Blair's text across from a page of Scieszka's spare text is sufficient.

In this adaptation of *Wonderland*, Scieszka inverts the process by which Carroll and Tenniel produced their text. It also inverts the process by which Scieszka creates his own books, where the illustrations are created after his text is completed. Scieszka's text emerges out of Blair's artwork. Carroll frequently made artistic suggestions to Tenniel, the star cartoonist of *Punch*, which caused tension between the author and illustrator. When *Wonderland* was first published in 1865, it was Tenniel, not Carroll, who had the name recognition. Carroll had always envisioned *Wonderland* as an illustrated text as the original manuscript, *Alice's*

*Adventures Underground*, with his own artwork confirm. The Tenniel-Carroll relationship remained one of mutual respect. Carroll's limitations as an artist forced him to seek an established illustrator. He deferred to Tenniel's modifications, even agreeing to delete the character of a wasp in a wig when Tenniel argued against the impossibility of illustrating it in *Looking-Glass*. When Tenniel complained of the poor printing of the illustrations in *Wonderland*, Carroll had the first edition recalled and reprinted at his own expense. It was this working collaboration between the artist and illustrator that helped to make both *Alice* books masterpieces of the illustrated book.

In contrast, Szieszka defers too much to Blair's illustrations, which dominate the book. For readers who appreciate Blair's style, the book may be satisfying, although the majority of her *Wonderland* sketches have been previously published in John Canemaker *The Art and Flair of Mary Blair* (2003). But readers who appreciate Szieszka's ironic sense of humor, which is an essential aspect of his adaptation of earlier children's texts, will be greatly disappointed. The mocking humor by which he deconstructs and revises fairy tales is absent. Szieszka has previously felt free to parody pre-existing stories with abandon. Even Carroll in *The Nursery "Alice"* was able to toy with the illustrations, questioning where Tenniel has actually provided three legs of a table where Alice is seeking the golden key, or whether he has provided the proper number of jurors at the trial of the Knave of Hearts.<sup>22</sup> At two points in the text, Carroll encourages the reader to shake the pages of *The Nursery "Alice"* book to give a sense of action to the characters. This is a very primitive form of animation.

But Carroll's wit in the original *Wonderland* has disappeared like the Cheshire Cat's tail from this retelling. All that's left is a faint grin. Neither Tenniel's name nor art is present in this version, nor does Carroll's name appear in the book. The original author's name only appears once--on the dust jacket. Remove the dust jacket and Carroll and Tenniel disappear from the book like the Cheshire Cat. Carroll's invention of the dust jacket here is used to extract him from his own story. The sum of this retelling is clearly less than the whole of its parts.

Scieszka's narrative, while more than mere captions for Blair's illustrations, serves primarily as a frame to give them order and context.

In his illustrated biography, *Knucklehead: Tall Tales & Mostly True Stories About Growing Up Scieszka* (2008), Scieszka tells of growing up in a family of six brothers. In the chapter "What is So Funny, Mr. Scieszka?" he recalls his life-altering decision in fifth-grade religion class at Catholic school to become a joke teller. An earlier and longer version of the same essay appeared in the Nov./Dec. issue 2005 issue *Horn Book* where Scieszka expands on the nature of humor. Humor defies explanation, Scieszka explains and "you either 'get it' or you don't."<sup>23</sup> He shows this by his failed attempt to host a "Tell Your Favorite Joke Day" when he was a teacher in his second-grade class, which reveals the complex process of successful joke telling. The telling of a simple joke involves "setting the scene, using dialogue, introducing conflict, then resolving it with a funny punch line."<sup>24</sup> The same joke can be told by one person and receive a hilarious response while narrated by a different person and met with indifference. The key is the telling, the timing, the voice, and the order of the events that lead to the punch line. Scieszka explains that the way most children share humor is to repeat it: "The humor is in the exact retelling."<sup>25</sup>

This, then, is the key problem with Scieszka's adaptation of *Wonderland*. He forgets that summarizing a joke isn't the same as telling the joke. He has eliminated most of Carroll's voice and his own voice as well. He has deferred too much to Blair and Disney.

In the chapter "Strange Books" in *Knucklehead*, Scieszka recalls how he learned how to read in school with the help of "some very strange books,"<sup>26</sup> such as William S. Gray and May Hill Arbuthnot's *Fun with Dick and Jane* (1951), which was a volume of Scott Foreman's once widely used *Dick, Jane and Sally* textbook series. But he preferred the humor found in Dr. Seuss's *If I Ran the Circus* (1956) and Ruth Krauss's *The Carrot Seed* (1945), which he read at home. He complains in "What's So Funny, Mr. Scieszka?" that the stories in *Fun with Dick and Jane* were bizarre, but not laughable: "Funny, but not really funny-ha-ha. Not Scieszka funny."<sup>27</sup> What the *Dick, Jane and Sally* readers lacked in humor they made up for in beautiful and

memorable artwork by Eleanor Campbell, which dominated the rather simple texts of the basic readers.

In what is the most effective sketch in Walt Disney's *Alice in Wonderland*, Blair draws Alice falling down the rabbit hole as she sees herself reflected in a mirror falling up. The images are cleverly reversed. While Scieszka may consider Carroll one of his favorite funny writers, his picture book picture adaptation of *Wonderland* is one strange book, closer in feeling to *Fun with Dick and Jane* than *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. He manages to transform a very funny book into a very boring one. Alice's sister might be satisfied with the results, but not Alice. I suspect that even the young Jon Scieszka, who according to *Knucklehead* preferred reading Dr. Seuss, *Mad* magazine, and comics, would be disappointed in this adaptation as well. To create a version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* without Carroll or Tenniel is just bizarre. This book is "Not Mr. Scieszka funny," knucklehead! Scieszka is a great children's writer, but he has suggested sometimes that the most effective way to share humor is found "in the exact retelling." In other words, you don't need to do write an adaptation of *Wonderland* to appeal to contemporary middle school readers, just give them a copy of the original book.

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#### Notes

1. Graham Ovenden and John Davis, *The Illustrators of Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972), 15.
2. Ovenden, *Illustrators*, 5.
3. Ovenden, *Illustrators*, 83-6.
4. Jon Scieszka, "What is So Funny, Mr. Scieszka?" *Horn Book*, Nov./Dec. 2005, 665.
5. Scieszka, "Funny," 666.
6. John Canemaker, *The Art and Flair of Mary Blair: An Appreciation* (New York: Disney Editions, 2003), viii.
7. Canemaker, *Mary Blair*, ix.

8. Canemaker, *Mary Blair*, xi.
9. Leonard Marcus, *Golden Legacy: How Golden Books Won Children's Hearts, Changed Publishing Forever, and Became an American Icon Along the Way* (New York: Golden Books, 2007), 140.
10. Jane Warner, *Walt Disney's Alice in Wonderland Meets the White Rabbit*, adapted by Al Dempster, pictures by The Walt Disney Studio (New York: Golden Book, 1951), n.p.
11. Disney Press has even extended its own Alice brand by reprinting Tommy Kovac and Sonny Liew's six-issue *Wonderland* anime-style, comic book series, which emphasizes the character Maryann who the White Rabbit mistakes Alice for at the beginning of the story. The main connection with other Disney *Alice* works is that are all cartoon-style riffs. Tommy Kovac, *Wonderland* (New York: Disney Press, 2009).
12. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Ardent (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 220-1.
13. Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Alice Through the Looking-Glass* 1865/1871, ed. Hugh Haughton (New York: Penguin, 1998), 56.
14. Carroll, *Wonderland*, 9.
15. Benjamin, "Mechanical Reproduction," 220-1.
16. Russell Merritt and J.B. Kaufman, *Walt in Wonderland: The Silent Films of Walt Disney* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 15.
17. Leonard Maltin, "Alice in Wonderland," *The Disney Films*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (New York: Hyperion, 1995), 102.
18. Canemaker, *Mary Blair*, 47.
19. Canemaker, *Mary Blair*, 48.
20. Michael Hancher, *The Tenniel Illustrations to the "Alice" Books* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985), 120-32.
21. Jon Scieszka, "Design Matters," *Horn Book*, Mar./Apr. 1998, 197.

22. Lewis Carroll, *The Nursery "Alice" 1890*, introduction Martin Gardner (1890; reprint, New York: Dover, 1966), 6, 52
23. Scieszka, "Funny," 655.
24. Scieszka, "Funny," 655.
25. Scieszka, "Funny," 656.
26. Jon Scieszka, *Knucklehead: Tall Tales & Mostly True Stories About Growing Up Scieszka* (New York: Viking, 2008), 37.
27. Scieszka, "Funny," 664.