Objectives

1. Engage students in the story, language, and themes of *Alice in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll’s timeless children’s novel, so that they are ready to discuss and write in-depth responses about the excerpt and/or the entire book.

2. Practice and reinforce the following Grade 5 ELA Common Core Standards for reading literature, writing, and speaking and listening:

   **READING: LITERATURE** – RL.5.1-7, 10
   **WRITING** – W.5.1-6, 8-10
   **SPEAKING AND LISTENING** – SL.5.1-6

Time

130 minutes (with up to an additional 240 minutes of extension possibilities)

Materials

SyncTV Premium Lesson on Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*

Overview

Written nearly 150 years ago, Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* is a timeless piece of children’s literature. This excerpt from the novel’s first chapter introduces us to our heroine, Alice, who follows a peculiar rabbit down a rabbit hole and into a strange and fantastical wonderland. In the full book, students will encounter the original appearances of a host of terms and characters that have become universal throughout popular culture (“down the rabbit hole,” the Mad Hatter, the Cheshire Cat, etc.). But *Alice in Wonderland* has had a lasting effect on more than just children’s fiction. It is one of the earliest and most honored works of fantasy and surrealism, as well, and its profound influence on 20th century literature and popular culture is well-documented. Close examination of this excerpt will offer students the opportunity to explore this classic work, and to write thoughtful and informed responses consistent with the ELA Common Core Standards for grades 4 and 5.
Background (10 minutes)

1. **Watch the Preview (SL.5.1, 4).** As a group, watch the video preview of the premium lesson. After viewing, use the following questions to spur a discussion:
   
a. The preview states that this story started as a kind of oral fairy tale the author told to children. What are some tales your parents have told you? Why do you think people like to tell these tales? Why do people like to hear them?

   b. Think about the images and music in the preview. What mood do they create? What are your impressions of the four characters shown? What can you tell about Lewis Carroll from his photograph?

   c. The story you’re about to read has “captured the imagination of generations.” What do you already know about Alice in Wonderland? What comes to mind? In what other places or versions have you heard or seen this story before?

Extension (additional 60 minutes)

d. **Read (RL.5.2, 4-5 and W.5.1-2, 9).** As a primer for the wonderland you’re about to enter, read “Jabberwocky,” a now-famous “nonsense poem” from *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, Carroll’s sequel to Alice in Wonderland. After reading the poem several times aloud, discuss: Is there any meaning to this poem, or is it just plain nonsense? Have students break down the language within, offering their best guesses as to what the made-up words could be. What are the parts of speech? What might be their connotations? How does the language make you feel?

e. **Create (W.5.2-3).** Have students create a young hero or heroine that they would want to follow on a series of adventures. First, have them describe the character in a short paragraph: What is the character’s name? Where is he or she from? What are some distinguishing personality traits? Then have students draw a rough sketch of the character. What are his or her physical features? Clothing? Does the character look happy, sad, tough, etc.? Create and draw your own character as well.

f. **Present (SL.5.1, 4-6).** Students will now have the opportunity to present their heroes or heroines before the class. You may choose to create a slideshow of their work and project it to the class, or photograph their drawings and post them online via Picasa (most other social media sites are 13+).

Engaging the Text (120 minutes)

2. **Read the Text (30 minutes)**

   a. **Read and Make Connections (RL.5.1-6).** Have students read the excerpt, making textual connections as they go along. If your classroom has a projector, you might want to model the three kinds of textual connections using the first couple of paragraphs:

      i. **Text-to-self:** Example, paragraph one: “I don’t like to read books without pictures or conversation either.”

      ii. **Text-to-world:** Example, paragraph one: “The sisters probably live out in a
rural area if they are sitting by a river bank.”

iii. **Text-to-text:** Example, paragraph two: “We read about why rabbits’ eyes are pink in Miss Barksdale’s class.”

If students are completing as a homework assignment, ask them to write any questions they have into the annotation tool—these questions are visible to you after the students submit their writing assignments or beforehand if you use the “Mimic” function to access the students’ accounts.

b. **Discuss (SL.5.1, 3).** Have students get into small groups or pairs and briefly discuss the questions and inferences they had while reading. As a class, discuss the following: What kind of world do you think Alice has entered into? How is it different from her “normal” life? What kinds or rules do and don’t apply?

**Extension (additional 20 minutes)**

c. **Listen and Discuss (SL.5.1-2, 4).** As a class, listen to the audio reading of the text. Ask students to share how their understanding of the text changed after listening. What additional images came to mind? What words did the author use to develop the setting?

d. **Comprehend (RL.5.1-6).** Have students complete the multiple-choice questions. Collect papers or discuss answers as a class.

3. **Watch SyncTV (30 minutes)**

a. **Watch.** Either watch the SyncTV discussion as a class or ask students to watch it on their individual computers.

b. **Focus (SL.5.1-3 and RL.5.1-2).** Throughout the SyncTV episode, the students make inferences about Alice’s character based on the events in the excerpt. Focus on a couple of different portions, such as the stretches from 1:00 - 1:28 and 1:55 - 2:43, using these as examples of how to understand characters through their actions.

c. **Focus (SL.5.1-3 and RL.5.7).** The preview also shows many illustrated images from Lewis Carroll’s original text. View these original illustrations from 1:46 - 2:05, 3:53 - 4:10, and 7:58 - 8:09. What do they bring to the reading experience?

d. **Focus (SL.5.1-3 and RL.5.1-3).** Finally, have the students watch the portion of the episode from 6:55 - 7:47, wherein the students compare Alice’s character with that of her new surroundings. Think about how the setting is in stark contrast to Alice’s nature and how it presents obstacles and challenges for her to overcome.

e. **Discuss (SL.5.1-5 and RL.5.1-7, 10).** After watching the model discussion, have a conversation with the class about the ideas discussed in the SyncTV episode. What new thoughts do they have after hearing the students’ discussion? Next, divide students into small groups (3-4 students). Move around the room monitoring groups as students follow the SyncTV episode as a model to discuss some of the following questions:

i. Cite three points in this excerpt that give you a window into Alice’s character, based on something she does, says, or thinks. How do people’s actions tell us about their personalities, both in literature
In narrating a story, what is the difference between showing and telling? Why doesn’t Carroll always tell us what Alice is thinking or feeling? How might showing us these things make a story more interesting?

Consider the students’ brief debate in the SyncTV episode: Do you think Alice is brave or foolish? What does it mean to be brave? What does it mean to be foolish?

Why do you think Carroll chose to illustrate this story? What do the illustrations add to the experience of reading Alice in Wonderland? What might they take away?

What is the conflict in this excerpt, and between whom? Keep in mind that conflict does not necessarily have to be between two characters. It can also be between a person and his or her surroundings (hint, hint).

Do you think Alice is well-equipped to handle this wonderland she finds herself in? Or do you think that some of her personality traits will get her in trouble? Why or why not?

Extension (additional 60 minutes)

f. Illustrate (SL.5.1, 4 and ELL). Either individually or in pairs, have each student or pair of students draw an individual moment from the excerpt. When finished, arrange these illustrations randomly and have students work together to place these illustrations in their correct, linear order.

g. Free-Write (W.5.3, 8-9). Have students consider how Alice faces the challenges that confront her and free-write about a time when they used their own intellect or skills to solve a problem or navigate a tricky situation. Why was the situation so difficult? What strengths did they summon to overcome it? What was the eventual result?

4. Think (10 minutes)

a. Respond (W.5.1, 4). Ask students to read the “Think” questions, watch the corresponding video clips, and respond to the questions, either in class or for homework.

5. Write (50 minutes)

a. Discuss (SL.5.1-3). Read the prompt you have chosen for students, and then solicit questions regarding the prompt or the assignment expectations. Whichever prompt you have chosen, make sure you are clear about the assignment expectations and the rubric by which you and the other students will be evaluating them.

b. Organize (RL.5.1-6, 10 and W.5.1-2, 5). Ask students to go back and annotate the text with the prompt in mind. They should be organizing their thoughts and the points they’ll address in their writing as they make annotations. If you’ve worked
on outlining or other organizational tools for writing, this is a good place to apply them.

c. **Write** *(W.5.1-2, 4-6, 8-10)*. Have students go through the writing process of planning, revising, editing, and publishing their writing responses.

d. **Review** *(W.5.4-6)*. Use the StudySync “Review” feature to have students complete one to two evaluations of their peers’ work based on your chosen review rubric. Have the students look at and reflect upon the peer evaluations of their own writing. What might you do differently in a revision? How might you strengthen the writing and the ideas?

**Extension (additional 100 minutes)**

e. **Write** *(W.5.1-2, 4-6, 8-10)*. For homework, have students answer one of the other prompts you did not choose to do in class. Students should publish their responses online.

f. **Write Creatively** *(RL.5.1-6, 10 and W.5.1-2, 5)*. Using your hero or heroine from earlier, write a story in which your character goes on an adventure and faces a challenge or obstacle that he or she must overcome. The adventure can be realistic or fantastical, so long as the character faces adversity. The end of the story must answer the question: What skill or strength does this character use to overcome his or her challenge?

g. **Write Persuasively** *(W.5.1, 4, 8-9)*. Write a persuasive response of at least 250 words addressing the earlier issue brought forth in the SyncTV episode: In this particular excerpt from *Alice in Wonderland*, is Alice brave or foolish? Back up your opinion with three supporting examples from the text.
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Key Vocabulary

1. remarkable (adj.) – Especially worthy of notice; surprising, unusual
2. curiosity (n.) – An internal desire to learn more about something
3. marmalade (n.) – A sweet fruit jelly
4. latitude (n.) – Any of the imaginary lines circling the earth parallel to the equator that measure the distance north or south of the equator
5. longitude (n.) – Any of the imaginary lines circling the earth that measure the distance east or west of an imaginary line passing from the north to south poles through Greenwich, England
6. curtsey (n.) – A respectful greeting in which a woman bends her knees and bows
7. antipathy (n.) – A strong dislike or feeling of aversion (note: Alice here is mispronouncing Antipode, a British term for Australians and New Zealanders)
8. ignorant (adj.) – Having a lack of knowledge, wisdom or information
9. earnestly (adv.) – Done with seriousness and sincerity
10. alas! (interjection) – (old fashioned) An interjection used to express sorrow or disappointment (e.g., *Alas, I was unable to solve the equation.*)

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. We can infer from the first paragraph that Alice’s sister is ____________.
   a. older
   b. younger
   c. the same age
   d. bored
2. Alice’s initial reaction to the White Rabbit is that of ____________.
   a. shock
   b. curiosity
   c. unconcern
   d. antipathy
3. Alice becomes most interested in the White Rabbit when ____________.
   a. she observes its pink eyes
   b. she hears it speaking to itself
   c. she sees it take a watch from its waistcoat pocket
   d. she sees it pop down a rabbit-hole
4. The White Rabbit is primarily worried about ____________.
   a. Alice catching up to it
   b. falling and falling down the rabbit-hole
   c. Alice dropping the empty jar and killing somebody
   d. being late for an important function
5. As she continues to fall down the rabbit-hole, Alice is primarily worried about ____________.
   a. how she will ever get out of the rabbit-hole
   b. her knowledge of words and facts
   c. meeting foreign people in Australia and New Zealand
   d. getting hurt once she hits the bottom

6. Which of the following words would NOT be used to describe Alice? (Use a dictionary, if necessary!)
   a. precocious
   b. restless
   c. irritable
   d. pragmatic

7. When Alice says, “Oh, how I wish I could shut up like a telescope!” she probably means to express that ____________.
   a. she wishes she could see great distances
   b. she wishes she could be quiet
   c. she wishes she were able to become small and narrow
   d. she wishes she could get out of the rabbit-hole and look at the sky

8. The last line of the excerpt (“Alice had begun to think that very few things indeed were really impossible”) seems to suggest that Alice will ____________.
   a. climb back out of the rabbit-hole
   b. find a way to get her cat Dinah to join her on her adventure
   c. ask the White Rabbit for help
   d. find a way to get through the small doorway

9. The narrator uses (parentheses) in the text to ____________.
   a. express Alice’s emotions
   b. add comments about the events
   c. offer a personal opinion of Alice
   d. give clues as to what is coming next

10. Based on her quotes in the excerpt, one of the things we can conclude about Alice is that ____________.
    a. she is afraid of sounding or looking stupid
    b. she is worried about her safety and well-being
    c. she believes she is smarter than her sister
    d. all of the above

Answer Key

1. A
2. C
3. C
4. D
5. B
6. C
7. C
8. D
9. B
10. A

Further Assignments

1. For a longer reading assignment, have students read the entirety of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, keeping a reading journal and practicing the annotation exercises outlined earlier in the lesson. (*RL.5.1-7, 10 and W.5.9*)

2. Screen for the class either the animated Disney version of *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) or the modern, live-action *Alice in Wonderland* (2010). Have students write a short response of at least 250 words comparing the filmed version they watched with the original text. Ask: Do you think the film version is a faithful adaptation? How does the film version alter or reinterpret the original text? (*RL.5.7 and W.5.9*)

3. For a fun creative writing exercise, have students compose a poem in the style of “Jabberwocky” using made-up words and language but following a similar pattern of verse. Using iPads or similar computer platforms, record readings of their poems and publish them online via SoundCloud. If students are shy or reluctant to share, consider composing and recording a “nonsense poem” of your own. (*W.5.3, 9 and SL.5.5-6*)

4. *Alice in Wonderland*’s influence extends well beyond the realm of literature. Play Jefferson Airplane’s famous song “White Rabbit” [here](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWWsfrfq69A) and have them note (best used in conjunction with Further Assignment 1) each individual reference to Carroll’s book contained within the song, along with the corresponding section and/or chapter. (*SL.5.1-4 and RL.5.1*)

5. Pretend you are a real-life newspaper or TV reporter covering the story of Alice’s eventual return from Wonderland. Write a short news article summarizing the events that took place, keeping in mind any doubt or skepticism a journalist might have about Alice’s version of the story. (*W.5.3, 8-9*)

6. If you could ask Alice ten questions, what would they be? Assign students to compose a list of ten questions to ask Alice about her adventures (e.g., Were you ever scared? What was the hardest challenge you faced?). As an extension to this, pair students boy-girl and have them conduct a recorded interview of Alice. (*SL.5.4, 6 and ELL*)