



Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland | Alice in Wonderland

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Lewis Carroll might be surprised by the odd shapes that Alice continues to assume. Castor's retelling promises 'curiouser and curiouser surprises' on its cover and uses Carroll's classic as the springboard for some playful, but not particularly inventive, paper engineering, none of which would be curious or surprising to a reader of one or two standard pop-up books. The text is arranged around Ba'i's tableau style double page illustrations in rectangular (playing card?) shapes with rounded corners, most often joined together as if unfolded from a pack. Because there are only thirteen double page spreads to use, the print is small; and incidents, puns and puzzles are taken out of the original narrative sequence and presented, mutilated, in even smaller print in *The White Rabbit's Guide to Wonderland*, a small booklet pasted to the inside cover. Alice doesn't benefit from any of this reshaping.

Chichester Clark's retelling (from an abridgement by Alison Sage) takes a lot more liberties with Carroll's original text: Alice even says 'Wow!' and 'Nice?' In this gentle modernising process, we lose the poems, much fascinating vocabulary and some of the strange flavour that comes from the contrast between the formality of the Victorian prose and the madness of the events it describes. But the book retains all the major episodes in the narrative, including the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon, which, Cheshire Cat like, all but disappears in Castor's version. And the spirit is definitely still there. Chichester Clark's illustrations are, as you would expect, elegant, sumptuously coloured, and marvellously detailed and characterised. Her Alice is an old-fashioned modern young lady with bobbed dark hair, black tights and a Laura Ashley dress. Chichester Clark varies the mood expertly, using light, tone, and some uneasy colour combinations, to move from humour, through queasiness 'Alice eating from the Caterpillar's mushroom' to the occasionally disturbing, as in the scene with the Duchess and the baby. Acknowledging inspiration from Tenniel's original illustrations, she re-works images that have become so fixed in our imagination, like the hunched-up giant Alice in the White Rabbit's house, that they demand to be included, and she retains the original writer and illustrator's mixture of the outrageous, the absurd, and the subtly menacing. It's a very attractive presentation. Each of the 48 pages has at least one illustration, whether single figures, half pages, or whole page and double page spreads. At a couple of

pounds less than the pop-up, this is amazing value. As a lovingly shrunk and beautifully dressed up Alice, it's hard to beat.

Running Order:

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