

Comprehension Answers

1. What did Dodgson's father do for a living?

He was a curate.

2. What two things made Dodgson a target for bullies at school?

He was deaf in one ear and had a stammer.

3. What did Dodgson study at university?

Mathematics.

4. How did Dodgson come up with the name Lewis Carroll?

He reversed 'Lutwidge Dodgson' and translated it into Latin and then back again.

5. What inspired 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland'?

In 1862, Dodgson enjoyed a day out on the river Isis with the family of Henry Liddell, Dean of Christ Church. During this trip he made up a story for Liddell's ten year-old daughter, Alice, and she asked him to write it down.

6. What is the name of the sequel to 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' and when was it published?

'Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There' was published in 1871.

7. What games are the two 'Alice' novels themed around?

'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland': playing cards.

'Through the Looking-Glass': chess.

8. Aside from the 'Alice' novels, name two other publications by Lewis Carroll.

'The Hunting of the Snark' and 'Sylvie and Bruno'.

9. Where did Dodgson have a photography studio?

Christ Church College, Oxford.

10. Name two inventions by Dodgson.

a travel chess board

an early version of Scrabble

a device for steering a tricycle

a nyctograph – a tablet for taking notes in the dark

a way of memorising key dates by substituting consonants for numbers

The Wonderland Postage Stamp Case

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Why do you think Dodgson found it hard to concentrate at university?

Answers could include the death of his mother, his previous struggles at school with bullying, and his wide interests outside mathematics, such as creative writing, photography and inventing.

What do the different characters from the 'Alice' books tell you about Dodgson's personality?

Answers will explore the unusual attributes of the characters and the fact that they were often silly or nonsensical. The fact that some of them are based on expressions (Cheshire Cat, Mad Hatter) shows that Dodgson had a love of playing with words and phrases – which can also be seen in his inventions. The creation of nonsense words implies that Dodgson was highly inventive but also that he didn't necessarily abide by rules – he liked to make up his own ideas.

The poem 'Jabberwocky' uses some nonsense words. Can you make up three of your own nonsense words and write definitions for them?

Good answers will show an awareness of the origins of words and could include portmanteau words.