

ГБОУ ГИМНАЗИЯ № 248 САНКТ-ПЕТЕРБУРГА

Командный конкурс эссе

**“Unity in Diversity: Russia and the English-Speaking  
World. Time for Equal Opportunities”**

Исследовательская работа (эссе)

**«МИР ИЛЛЮЗИЙ САМУИЛА МАРШАКА  
И ЛЬЮИСА КЭРРОЛЛА»**

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Group essay contest

**“Unity in Diversity: Russia and the English-Speaking  
World. Time for Equal Opportunities”**

Research work (essay)

**“WORLD OF ILLUSIONS: SAMUEL MARSHAK  
AND LEWIS CARROLL”**

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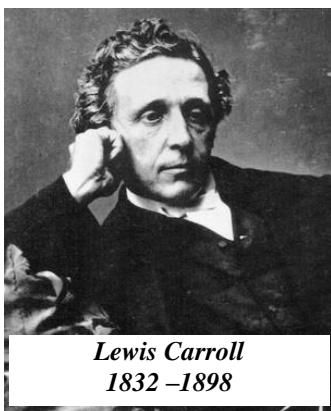
## **Theses**

1. Fairy tales are the best examples of illusions in literature.
2. Samuel Marshak and Lewis Carroll were the best to acquaint their readers to the world of illusions.
3. Lewis Carroll and his unusual characters. The main features of his oeuvre.
4. Samuel Marshak as an amazing master of the “play on words”.
5. The literal heritage of outstanding writers.

## WORLD OF ILLUSIONS: SAMUEL MARSHAK

### AND LEWIS CARROLL

**An illusion is something that is not really what it seems to be<sup>1</sup>. The best example of illusions in literature are fairy tales. Have you ever wondered what the people who created the most famous fairy tales are like?** Storytellers often appear in the image of a kind old man with a long grey beard sitting at a table in an old hat. However, it turns out that most of the great storytellers share at least two traits. Firstly, all of them were originally scientists (literary critics, linguists, and even mathematicians) and before they turned to the genre of fairy tales, they made a significant contribution to science or literature. Secondly, writers created their children's works not for the sake of fame and royalties, but for their own children or close acquaintances, who often became prototypes of their heroes. Undoubtedly, it is thanks to the warmth, love for young readers and sincerity that fills these works, their fairy tales have gained immortality and remain relevant at all times, without losing their charm even in translations into other languages. Samuel Marshak and Lewis Carroll are the best representatives of such authors. These writers were the best to acquaint their readers to the world of illusions. There is hardly anyone who is not familiar with their books which are full of absurdity. Let us try to understand their world of illusions.



Lewis Carroll (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, 1832-1898), the creator of "Alice in Wonderland" (1864) and "Alice through the Looking Glass" (1871), was an extraordinary personality — a gifted mathematician, deacon, philosopher and photographer, writer, poet and logician. That is why his works are filled with quotations, arguments and hints on all kinds of non-childish themes. The language of his

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<sup>1</sup> [www.dictionary.cambridge.org](http://www.dictionary.cambridge.org)

books is more like a mathematical equation, where there are a lot of complex formulas that require a lot of knowledge, ingenuity and deviant thinking from the reader. Despite the fact that Carroll's novels may seem "untranslatable", "Alice in Wonderland" and "Alice Through the Looking Glass" have become the most translated English novels since the time they were written. Moreover, they are still both widely read and analyzed today. These fairy tales, thanks to the principle of "double coding", are equally interesting and fascinating for both children and adults. The style of Carroll's works is directly connected with the writer's lifestyle who lived in his own imaginary world. He was strange and his stories seem to be strange, too. They are full of absurdity and nonsense. The great number of different weird heroes highlights that the writer had a rich imagination. "Alice in Wonderland" is a clear example of this. The entrance to the other world is the rabbit hole, which is unreal deep. "Would the fall NEVER come to an end! "I wonder how many miles I've fallen by this time?" she said aloud. "I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth." <sup>2</sup>

One of the main features of Charles Dodgson's works is that "he had a fascination with words, even creating his own pen name, Lewis Carroll. He created new words, different meanings, and inverted texts. In his novels, words can have more than one meaning and the text itself can be nonsensical. The worlds exist in alternate realities, next to the world that we live in. Carroll uses words distinctly, deepening theories about signifiers and their meanings. Words are used outside of their normal framework"<sup>3</sup>. For example, the Red Queen asks Alice if she knows, "The French for Fiddle-de-dee?"<sup>4</sup>. Fiddle-de-dee is a made up word, thus there is no translation for it. As a result, readers are incapable of identifying the word because it has no real significance. The author makes them to think up their own understanding of fiddle-de-dee and accept this made up

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<sup>2</sup> Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*, NY: Bantam Classics, 1984, p.5

<sup>3</sup> Hart, Angela. *Alice in Wonderland and Alice Through the Looking Glass by Lewis Carroll: Do Words Have Meaning? Lacanian Theory on Carroll's Writing*, International Journal of Arts & Sciences, 8(3), 2015, p. 425

<sup>4</sup> Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*, NY: Bantam Classics, 1984,p.215

word as an actual one. Lewis Carroll wanted readers to question the world around them thus making them to develop their minds. Yet, Carroll not only created his own fictitious worlds but welcomed the absurdity. In Wonderland, for example, during the croquet game, Alice gets a flamingo for a mallet, a hedgehog for a ball, and card soldiers as wickets. “The imagery becomes odd and unforeseen”<sup>5</sup>.

What is more, the lack of grammar shows that the text can be symbolic. For example, when Alice is stretching tall, she cries, “Curiouser and curiouser”<sup>6</sup>. Having used this word, Carroll clearly shows his reader at what extent Alice was amazed at her transformations. It is not the only example. When the White King wished to know if anyone was on the road approaching the castle and asked Alice to look, she replied, “I see nobody on the road.”<sup>7</sup> The King, in turn, said, “I only wish I had such eyes”<sup>8</sup>. Grammar is thought to be a stable structure that needs to be learned by anyone who reads and writes. The reader cannot help but question the importance of language. Using different grammar structures, Carroll baffles readers and allows them a unique literary experience. He wants them to believe in the impossible and develop a creative mind.

Analyzing the oeuvre of Lewis Carroll, we cannot but mention a Russian poet Samuel Marshak. The literary heritages of these writers are closely connected. Marshak’s translations of Carroll’s books are considered to be the best ones. Samuel Yakovlevich Marshak (1887-1964) is known to a wide range of readers thanks to his fairy tales and poems for children (“The Tale of a stupid mouse”,



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<sup>5</sup> Hart, Angela. *Alice in Wonderland and Alice Through the Looking Glass by Lewis Carroll: Do Words Have Meaning? Lacanian Theory on Carroll's Writing*, International Journal of Arts & Sciences, 8(3), 2015, p. 428

<sup>6</sup> Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*, NY: Bantam Classics, 1984, p.15

<sup>7</sup> Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*, NY: Bantam Classics, 1984, p.186

<sup>8</sup> Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*, NY: Bantam Classics, 1984, p.186

"Cat's House", "Luggage", "Mustachioed-striped", "That's what scattered", "The Story of an unknown hero"). He not only proved himself as a poet, literary critic, translator and playwright, but also achieved the highest recognition among his contemporaries. His translations (from more than six languages) are still considered as a standard today, and the works of Lewis Carroll, William Shakespeare, Robert Burns and William Blake in his interpretation have already become classics. Throughout his life, Marshak was an active public figure, an inexhaustible creator who did a lot for the development of children's creativity.

S. Marshak is an amazing master of the “play on words”, which is far from the same as the Carroll’s “wordplay”. The latter involves the use of different meanings of equally sounding words. Marshak’s “play on words” is a joyful or playful, mischievous or mocking interweaving of sounds, juggling words and funny rhymes; poems in which there is such a game, you want to memorize by heart. This explains the special effect of poems that seem to beckon the readers, promising them something fabulously unprecedented. “My most dearest wagondrivearest! Wagondearest most drivearest!”<sup>9</sup>

One of the most important features of S. Marshak's poetry is its extreme naturalness. You will not find any artificial substitutions in his books. His verses are characterized by transparency, and, reading stanza after stanza, you marvel at their inner completeness. Marshak's rhyming is especially striking: it seems that his words have always existed in the language in rhymes, that these rhymes do not even need to be searched for, they exist by themselves. “Mr. Absent-minded Man. He’s put on a frying-pan. Could you just imagine that? On his head it’s like a hat!”<sup>10</sup> It seems a miracle that these precise, essential words with such sonority and depth echo each other, rhyme with each other. This feature of Marshak's poetry surprises even more in comic poems. Poets often strive to impress the reader's perception with the surprise of a rhyme never used by

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<sup>9</sup> Маршак, Самуил. *Вот какой рассеянный и другие любимые стихи*, М: Малыш, 2017, с.6

<sup>10</sup> Маршак, Самуил. *Вот какой рассеянный и другие любимые стихи*, М: Малыш, 2017, с.6

anyone before. Samuel Marshak strikes not with the extraordinary rhyming, but with the naturalness and at the same time a wonderful, magical rollcall of words, as if they need each other and, therefore, are invented for each other. The naturalness and obligation of the phrase, intonation, rhyme, which is the internal law of Marshak's own poems, is also the main characteristic of his translations for kids. What is more, Samuel Marshak, as well as Lewis Carroll, was not afraid to be considered absurd. His “absent-minded” man looks so unreasonable and foolish, that this situation seems ridiculous and illusory. Just imagine the man wearing a frying pan instead of a hat and gloves instead of shoes! Absurdity and illusions are the main features peculiar to the oeuvre of both authors.

**In conclusion, Lewis Carroll and Samuel Marshak were able to create their own worlds of illusions. That made them excellent writers. After all, it is the illusion that makes people to reread these books during their lives again and again, each time discovering something new.**



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Appendixes



Illustration to Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland"



Illustration to Lewis Carroll's "Alice Through the Looking Glass"



Illustration to Samuel Marshak's "Absent-minded Man"



Illustration to Samuel Marshak's "Poems for Children"