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In Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, the central character is of course the young girl Alice. Her reaction to the absurd nature of the fantastic Wonderland reveals a number of her qualities. She attempts to apply her knowledge from the outside world — from her “lessons in the school-room” (8) and her notions of logic and reason — to this unusual realm, where much of it does not apply in the same way. Her attempts to communicate with the other characters often meet with failure. For example, when she speaks with the Mouse, her references to her cat Dinah and dogs nearly drive the Mouse away; the cat Dinah is one of the only direct references she makes to the real world, and her frequent mentions of the cat are met with disdain. This reinforces the separation between the real world and the fantasy world. Similarly, the bizarre croquet game with flamingos and hedgehogs and arches made of soldiers confuses her greatly; she cannot make sense of a disordered environment where “they don't seem to have any rules in particular: at least, if there are, nobody attends to them” (67).

Throughout the story, Alice's height forms an important theme. She quickly discovers that she is able to adjust her height by consuming various food and drink, such as the bottle and cake that make her smaller and larger respectively. Her current height rarely satisfies her: when she is tall she wishes she “could shut up like a telescope” (10) so she can fit through a doorway into a garden, and when she is small she is brought to tears because she cannot reach the top of a table. This seems to be a metaphor for the process of growing up and the difficulties associated with each age. When the caterpillar gives her the mushroom that can make her either smaller or larger, she achieves a control over her height that is only possible in this fantasy.

Alice also questions her identity at various points. Confronted with all of these changes, she notes that “I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is ‘who in the world am I?’ Ah, that's the great puzzle!” (15). She then questions herself, and in an odd twist of logic concludes that she must have become someone else: “I must be Mabel after all” (16). Ultimately she notes that she “was a different person [yesterday]” (81). This theme seems to

have similar symbolism.

Finally, the revelation at the end of the story that all of these adventures were in fact a dream is not without significance. This implies that all of the characters and events were the product of Alice's imagination, which lends further credence to the metaphorical interpretations suggested above. It also suggests that the remainder of the story can be subjected to similar analysis.