



5-13-2017

Metacognition and Escape in Golden Age Children's Literature

Ashley Mastrorilli

Follow this and additional works at: http://vc.bridgew.edu/honors_proj



Part of the [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mastrorilli, Ashley. (2017). Metacognition and Escape in Golden Age Children's Literature. In *BSU Honors Program Theses and Projects*. Item 219. Available at: http://vc.bridgew.edu/honors_proj/219
Copyright © 2017 Ashley Mastrorilli

Metacognition and Escape in Golden Age Children's Literature

Ashley Mastrorilli

Submitted in Partial Completion of the
Requirements for Departmental Honors in English

Bridgewater State University

May 13, 2017

Dr. Kathleen Vejvoda, Thesis Director
Dr. Kathryn Evans, Committee Member
Dr. Ellen Scheible, Committee Member

Metacognition and Escape in Golden Age Children's Literature

Introduction

A pervasive motif in children's literature is the child protagonist's desire to escape their immediate world. Escapism is "the tendency to seek, or the practice of seeking, distraction from what normally has to be endured" (OED). Childhood is a critical period in one's life. Not only is it a highly individualized experience, it is also largely undocumented by those who are actually experiencing it. Even if they are old enough to be able to read and write on their own, children do not always document their personal experience in ways that are recognizable to adults. From an anthropological approach "[research done by anthropologist Charlotte Hardman in 1973] suggested that children were literally 'muted' because their perspectives on society were not heard by adults; indeed, adults occupying positions of power and authority over children often silenced them" (James 25). Thus, children often times communicate their thoughts and feelings with each other in ways that the adult will not pick up on at first glance. Adult authors of children's literature do their best to capture the appeal of childhood in picture books, short stories, and novels. An author could attempt to do so by creating a carefree mood in the narrative, or by having the protagonist experience a familiar feeling of defiance toward adult characters. Of course, the escapes of the child protagonist in children's literature are not necessarily an accurate depiction of what goes on in a child's mind or world, and a common misconception is that children desire to escape simply because they are bored. Often, authors will interview children and young adults to get a more accurate viewpoint for their writing. But this method presents another problem: "[m]ost existing sources that document children's reading are opaque because they are produced within institutional settings. When children write about books—as opposed to when they act out or play with books or when they write within them—

they typically do so for adults. Young people assigned to write about books typically aim to please a parent, a teacher, or an author” (Schwebel 282). Here, the child readers are not being completely authentic—they are writing what they believe the adults evaluating them would want to read.

Since the nineteenth century, children’s literature has evolved to include a variety of different genres, enabling a greater diversity of representation in the characterization of the child. The child protagonist’s age and motivation for seeking adventure vary widely depending on the target audience. This factor alone has expanded the range and appeal of children’s literature. It is evident that these characters escape because they are seeking stimulation, but it is necessary to examine more closely this need for simulation and its implications.

Stimulation through creative and imaginative play is essential to child development. It gives children the opportunity to make sense of the world around them through role play. It also allows them to reenact behaviors they have seen in society, which help them to develop an understanding of social norms. Charlotte Hardman points out that “[the culture of children’s play] should be seen as representing a children’s social world, one that has its own internal order and sets of rules and that is semi-autonomous from the wider adult world” (James 118), and she also “cited examples of the ways in which children, through the games they play, designate different areas of [their play space] with special names and characterize some places as having magical properties. Children share this knowledge with one another and abide by these special cultural rules” (James 118). Thus, what the child protagonist is experiencing through their imagination is essential to their development. In addition, any examination of the motivation for escapism as well as the modes of escape in any given text bring up questions of representation versus reality. Representation refers to “the linguistic or figurative process by which ideas are

given significance and meaning in society” (James 98). The tension between representation and reality is vital to remember in any study of children’s literature: “[i]n relation to children and childhood, understanding the power that these discourses, or sets of representations, can have is important because they shape children’s everyday lives and experiences” (James 98). In narratives of escape, representations of child characters dramatize and reinforce concepts that are central to the study of the life experiences. These concepts include the child as a social actor, egocentric perspectives, resilience and survival, the line between fantasy and reality, and the limits as well as uses of the imagination.

A child protagonist can escape their world through their imagination, through an actual physical journey, or both. If the escape of the child protagonist takes place solely in their mind, they are practicing metacognition because they are consciously thinking about the elements of their escape. They could be imagining another world, other characters in it, and even a change in their own appearance. If their escape takes place physically, the child protagonist uses the resources they have in their immediate reality to escape. This sets the stage for them to explore their potential as a social actor. The child as a social actor is “[a] concept that recognizes the active part that children can play in everyday social life” (James 114). As a social actor, the child is able to use metacognition in order to influence the context of their escape, as well as their method of play with themselves and with their peers.

The use of metacognition by the child protagonists is important because it shows that they have the ability to reason and rationalize. Metacognition is “the knowledge and control children have over their own thinking and learning activities, including reading” (Cross 132). A child that engages in metacognition is aware that their brain is able to process their thoughts, which allows for internal conversation, or the ability to talk to oneself in one’s head, so to speak.

Essentially, it is the process of thinking about thinking, and it indicates that a child is aware of their own thought process. This term differs from ‘memory or the act of remembering’ because with metacognition, critical thinking is involved, including not only the recall of previous situations but also processes of cause and effect that shaped those situations. In contrast, if one was to simply remember, it is just remembering a moment in time without such context. In the texts written for children that are explored in this thesis, metacognition is important because it aids in the conceptual development of the child protagonists. It is the agent through which they create their alternate realities.

This thesis will examine characters in major works from the Victorian and Edwardian “Golden Age” of children’s literature, arguing that the child protagonists in each text not only understand but make constant use of metacognition in their pursuit of escape. In these texts, moreover, egocentrism is closely tied to metacognition. Egocentrism is defined as “a cognitive state in which the individual (typically a child) sees the world only from [their] own perspective, without the awareness that there are other perspectives” (Boyd and Bee 479). An egocentric child does not understand the reality of the world around them in most cases because they have not been exposed to the process of reflecting on an experience or solving a problem through critical thinking.

These child characters need metacognition to fuel their imaginations in order to create their escapes. Where egocentrism is present, it shapes metacognition, and metacognition can in turn drive egocentrism. As social actors, these child protagonists try to adapt to new situations “and the social structures that organize and constrain their lives” (Wells 2). An indispensable component of being a social actor is the child character’s ability to monitor and refine their egocentric behavior. This ability is vital to their resilience, which is “[t]he quality or fact of being

able to recover quickly or easily from, or resist being affected by, a misfortune, shock, illness” (OED). Resilience enables the child protagonist to cope with semi-traumatic situations and keep moving forward, and it ultimately leads to their ability to survive on their own. Essentially, resilience enables the child to return to what they consider to be a normal level of functioning despite having experienced suffering. The child protagonist’s desire to escape therefore seems to center around two important factors—metacognition and egocentrism. While the characters exhibit varying degrees of egocentrism, it is nevertheless the case that these narratives depict metacognition and egocentrism as mutually dependent.

Alice, of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), Sara Crewe of Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *A Little Princess* (1905), and Anne, of L.M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* (1911) all exhibit metacognition and egocentrism while acting on their escapist impulses. While the characters have different reasons for seeking an escape from reality, all are represented as aware of their personal thoughts and the role these thoughts play in their pursuit of escape. Alice is egocentric but unaware of her egocentric ways, as her behavior is the result of her attempts to fit in while in Wonderland. Unlike Alice, who has slipped into a dream, Sara Crewe and Anne Shirley make wakeful, deliberate use of their imaginations, and are clearly aware of the link between metacognition and escapism. Both Sara and Anne use their imaginations to enhance their realities and satisfy their aesthetic needs, relying on beauty and romance to help them adjust to their new environments. The most egocentric character in the novels explored here is Anne, who relies on egocentrism in addition to metacognition to close herself off from the seemingly unaccepting people in her world. Sara Crewe is the least egocentric of the three characters, but she is egocentric in the sense that she does not understand that not everyone has such a vivid imagination to entertain their desires as she does.

The fact that egocentrism and metacognition are such important aspects of characterization in these classic works of children's fiction suggests that these authors recognize on some level their role in child development. In all of these texts the child protagonist's egocentric ways of thinking help to teach them lessons in the end. Child psychologists and educators continue to learn more about the role of metacognition in child development. Given the fact that these works of children's literature were written in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is striking that Golden Age children's fictions feature such compelling representations of child protagonists whose development is tied to the use of metacognition.

The Golden Age of Children's Literature: Entertainment and Escapism

The Golden Age, which spanned from the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries, received its name because the production of children's books reached an all-time high: "The 1880s and 1890s were an age of romanticism and escapism. The National Review (1891) repeated the description of the period as 'The Age of Children' [Sutton 507]. Good Words (1904) described the nineteenth century as 'the Children's Century,' ...[Maccunn 341]" (qtd. in Lundin 49). During the Golden Age, children were not only celebrated by publishers who catered directly to them, but adults were also given the opportunity to relive their childhoods by reading to their children. During this period a dual audience becomes apparent in children's literature. A dual audience means that the author is writing to entertain both children and the adults most likely reading to them, which created a meaningful experience for the child: "[Parents] engage in rich discussions and animated conversations with their children...[and through this,] adult and child work out the meaning of a text [Morrow 2005]" (qtd. in Combs 12). However, in any discussion of children's literature, it is useful to consider the tension between the adults who read

to or with children and the publishing industry. The shift from predominately moralizing and didactic messages in children's books to entertainment was not taken lightly by parents.

Traditionally, before the Golden Age, children's books were given as gifts but were not intended to entertain. According to Hintz and Tribunella, during the Golden Age "children's culture expanded with the spread of industrialism and the rise of mass production, more children attended school and learned to read, more families attained middle class status and could afford books for children, children themselves came to be seen as precious objects to spoil, and more writers looked to children as a viable audience" (Hintz and Tribunella 68). Based on this historical account, it is clear that before the Golden Age, literature was only popular in the homes of wealthier, more literate families. Hintz and Tribunella describe what they refer to as the emergence of the 'Sacred Child' during this period: "childhood [was] seen as a time and space of play, imagination, and formal education was the province of only the most privileged children of the middle and upper classes who could afford to keep these young people out of the workforce and provided with the toys, games, books, leisure, and irresponsibility that now characterize[s] childhood" (Hintz and Tribunella 23). The availability of children's books both during and after the Golden Age allowed for more opportunities for children to become literate. Lundin notes, "The late Victorians envisioned childhood as a preserving the innocent world that adults had lost. Childhood was considered a separate state of life, and the child had become the focus of major imaginative and philosophical speculation—as well as a commercial exploitation" (Lundin 49). This is important because it allowed for adults to investigate the mysteries of childhood which can be a concept difficult to grasp due to "the argument that childhood is not universal since its social, cultural and historical location will vary" (James 15). Ultimately, it was unclear how

children would benefit from such a change, as well as how adults would implement these works in the lives of their children and families.

A further shift in children's literature came once illustrations began to be included in books. Lundin explains "Contemporary children were now able to have their instruction by itself and their amusement by itself, 'unspoiled by any dread of being trapped in 'lessons' in midst of 'play'" [*Graphic 590*]" (qtd. in Lundin 45). Adding illustrations to children's literature allowed the child reader to engage the visual as well as literary aesthetic of the text, contributing to their use of imagination, which could spark the desire for more literary experiences. The aesthetic movement played a monumental role in children's literature during the Victorian period, transforming children's books into beautifully colorful, engaging aesthetic objects. Taking place in the 1880's, the aesthetic movement recognized the importance of both the visual arts and literature for children.

Both children and adults enjoy children's literature. Occasionally, children's literature will contain dark themes and concepts that will go over the child's head and that are meant to be enjoyed by the adult reader. Authors know that there is a dual audience when it comes to children's books because younger children are unable to read independently: "*The Art Journal* (1881) distinguished between two classes for children's books: those actually written for children and those catering to 'the pleasure of grown-up as well as infantile minds' and noted the continuing trend of publishing high-class works 'nominally intended for the little ones, but also catering to the grown up folks' [*Art Journal 380, 408*]" (qtd. in Lundin 41). Parents and guardians reading to their children do so to promote a love for reading and imaginative play. While there is the assumption that all children's books are upbeat and whimsical, it is important to remember that some children's books contain clear underlying dark themes and concepts that

truly call into question which audience the work is for. An example of this would be J.M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* (1911), where one critical interpretation of the novel has been that the children of Neverland do not grow up because they are all deceased. Lundin also notes that "[s]ome critics acknowledged the distinction between books for and books about children. The *Art Journal* (1883), recounting the history of children's books, noted that *Alice in Wonderland* appealed to both adults and children, and its enormous popularity and commercial success encouraged authors to write for both... [*Art Journal*, 21]" (qtd. in Lundin 41-42). Not surprisingly given the existence of the dual audience in children's literature, or the recognition of "...children and their parents as a distinct consumer group" (Hintz and Trubunella 55), Lundin points out that adults in the period also enjoyed fairy tales. In fact, "Fairy tales became fashionable fare in many literary magazines of the period. Even publications that normally did not cover children's literature included pieces on fairy tales as reading for adults" (Lundin 48). The enjoyment and connection that Lundin speaks of could be due to the possibility that adults find the motif of escapism as compelling as children do. As previously stated, escapism stems from the desire to seek out distractions. Alice escapes because she is seeking more stimulation than is available in her ordinary, everyday world; Sara seeks comfort in the midst of neglect and poverty; and Anne, who has suffered from emotional neglect and had been exploited for her labor, seeks an alternative world that lives up to her romantic ideals. Child readers may be especially drawn to the idea of escapism in literature because they are intrigued and fascinated by the independence of each of the child protagonists in their desire to escape, as well as by their imaginations; child readers may also feel empathy for these characters. Ultimately, the theme of escapism appeals to child readers because they are able to imagine what their own life would be like if they experienced a similar escape.

The Link Between Egocentrism and Metacognition: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) tells the story of a girl who dreams away her reality because she is lacking stimulation. At the beginning of the novel she is beside a river with her sister, who is reading a history book to her: ““and what is the use of a book,’ thought Alice, ‘without pictures or conversations?’” (Carroll 9). Alice’s unappealing reality inspires her to look for something out of the ordinary: “So she was considering, in her own mind (as well as she could, for the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid), whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies” (Carroll 9). At this point, the adult reader will most likely pick up on the idea that Alice is falling asleep due to the extremely warm temperature, but also because she is succumbing to her boredom. Directly after this sentence in the text, Alice initiates her search for stimulation when she observes and then decides to follow a white rabbit carrying a pocket-watch. The subsequent events in the narrative are understood to be Alice’s dream of a world created solely in her mind. Through her encounters with the creatures in Wonderland, it is implied that maturity is synonymous to self-regulation because Alice matures a little more each time she interacts with a character from Wonderland. Immediately after she begins to drift off, she starts to imagine Wonderland. The narrator suggests that Alice has a difficult time distinguishing between her immediate reality and the fantasy she is imagining for herself in this scene.

In her article “Lewis Carroll’s Dream Child and Victorian Child Psychopathology,” Stephanie L. Schatz observes that in the Victorian period it was thought that daydreaming could cause mental illness in children—making them permanently delusional: “[w]hile psychologists increasingly pathologized dream-states in children as delusional, Carroll links his ‘dream-child’ with ‘wonder,’ that is, an expression of creativity, ingenuity, and complexity” (Schatz 96). Here,

Schatz is arguing that Carroll was depicting the “simple and loving heart of [Alice’s] childhood” (Schatz 94) when he wrote the text. Because there was a belief that children could become too lost in their fantasies and daydreams, possibly resulting in delusion, it does make sense that characters and events in Wonderland are so wild and unpredictable. Alice does eventually make her way out of Wonderland, which would mean that she does not go insane. Schatz notes that “[t]he creative imagination that Carroll’s Alice stories inspires in children is closely tied to their intellectual development, and so it is no accident that he chose to situate his dream-child protagonist in ‘Wonderland’” (Schatz 112-113). Here, it is important to realize the possibility of the child reader engaging with the text because it is so creative and entertaining. In reference to the beginning of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, Schatz claims that “[in the text,] [t]he term ‘White Rabbit’ is capitalized here, which may suggest that is *the* White Rabbit, in which case Alice may already be in Wonderland, so to speak, and perhaps asleep. But if Alice sees a real rabbit, and then, in her half-dreaming state, imagines that the real rabbit is speaking, then this is an example of a conflation of reality with fantasy. We are not told which is the case” (Schatz 106).

Although it is not clear if Alice is still in reality at this point or if she has already arrived in Wonderland, what is clear is that she is now fully engaged and has begun the journey. Furthermore, the reader’s attention and curiosity are also more engaged at this point. A child reader in particular would be excited at the prospect of adventure, and will willingly follow Alice’s escape and imagine themselves in Wonderland. In regard to her escape, Peter Hunt argues:

One of the most fascinating aspects of the ‘Alice’ books is Carroll’s technique of ‘layering’ meanings as he books and the way in which, as a consequence, readers

are included or excluded at various stages. The question of what meanings can be made, and what effect those meanings have becomes a matter of balancing the conscious and unconscious input of the author with the factual and emotional decoding of the readers. (Hunt 42)

At this point in the text, it is up to the reader to decide if Alice has entered Wonderland, because although we know that she is drifting off to sleep, it is not clear whether she is conscious or unconscious. Here, the text could be pointing out a state between the conscious and the unconscious. After this scene, Alice is in Wonderland, and she relies explicitly on her metacognition to rationalize her way through situations.

Without her sister or any adult supervision, Alice is forced to navigate through an interesting, topsy-turvy world complete with numerous animal characters and other strange creatures. Her encounters with them are composed of pure nonsense, and she struggles to make sense of her surroundings. In this world of her escape, she relies on metacognition to reason through situations, and her egocentric personality plays a large role in this. Alice's combination of these two functions exemplifies the link between them. Without the two functioning concurrently, Alice would not be able to create an alternate reality for herself. Because of these combined functions, she has the ability to rationalize about the events around her and *then* react based on her understanding of Wonderland. To the child reader, these run-ins with silly characters are enjoyable: "Scenarios like this are open-ended questions, the purpose of which is to inspire curiosity, imagination, and reflection in the child reader rather than to provide her with concrete answers or closure. The point is not for Alice to 'learn' the answer (a difficult task in such a carnival-like environment), but rather, for the child reader to consider the question" (Schatz 109). To the adult reader, most likely reading to the child, these encounters exemplify

Alice's egocentrism as she deals with social norms and tries to grasp a sense of societal reality within her dream.

Through situations where Alice learns about the importance of moderation, the reader does as well. By adapting attitudes and emotions from her familiar world, Alice experiences a range of emotions as she learns how to exist socially. The concept of moderation is important for children to grasp because it introduces them to the idea of how to adapt to unfamiliar social norms quickly. Essentially, it allows for children to experiment with different quantities of acceptable and unacceptable behavior in unfamiliar settings. Through trial-and-error-like behavior, they will be able to find a balance of what is socially acceptable. Alice's ability to understand and act upon the emotions she experiences is important because it proves that she is able to mature. She has the ability to regulate her emotions appropriately in situations that are emotionally challenging during her time in Wonderland based on her experiences and interactions with those around her. The first conflict centering on the problem of moderation is when Alice finds herself unsure of how to get through a door because of her height. While trying to devise a plan to get herself through the tiny door, Alice discovers a bottle containing liquid on a table nearby.

'No, I'll look first,' she said, 'and see whether it's marked '*poison*' or not'; for she had read several nice little stories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts, and other unpleasant things, all because they *would* not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them: such as, that a red-hot poker would burn you if you hold it too long; and that, if you cut your finger *very* deeply with a knife, it usually bleeds; and she had never forgotten that, if you

drink much from a bottle marked 'poison,' it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later. (Carroll 13-14)

Here, Alice is recalling past experiences through metacognition to help her determine what she should do. What she is doing in this moment is different from remembering because with metacognition, she is thinking critically about her previous thought processes in similar situations. If she was only remembering, she would be recalling a series of moments in her memory without thinking critically about them. She makes the decision to drink the entire bottle of liquid because there is no label suggesting that it is poison. After drinking all the liquid, Alice finds herself to be just inches tall—she drank too much. She now faces the fact that she has forgotten to hold onto the key to the door. Upset, Alice begins to cry, but then she quickly self-talks her way out of her emotional episode because she needs to continue on with her adventure. Alice's ability to self-talk signifies that she is able to regulate her emotions in order to process and manage her way through difficult situations. Under the table, she finds some cake with a note instructing her to eat it: "Well, I'll eat it," said Alice, "and if it makes me grow larger, I can reach the key; and if it makes me grow smaller, I can creep under the door: so either way I'll get into the garden, and I don't care what happens!" (Carroll 15). Through the experimental processes of drinking the potion and eating the cake, Alice is developing a general understanding of moderation—doing too much or too little of something can have unsatisfactory effects. Her perseverance to keep exploring the mysterious world suggests that Alice is learning how to modify and manage her attitudes and emotions under in unfamiliar circumstances, as well as relying on metacognitive experiences from her prior thoughts to ensure her survival in Wonderland.

A second situation in which Alice learns to manage her temperament is when she encounters the Caterpillar. The lesson he teaches her is how to pick up on social cues from conversation while maintaining her composure. The way the Caterpillar engages in conversation with Alice is much like the way a young child might engage in a conversation with an adult. However, in their interaction, the roles are reversed. Alice symbolizes the adult's role in a conversation because she does her best to answer the Caterpillar's questions no matter how repetitive or intrusive they are, and the Caterpillar symbolizes the child's role because he becomes belligerent when the questions he asks are not answered to his liking. He does not have a conversational filter; he says exactly what he is thinking. This aspect of his character links to metacognition and egocentrism. In terms of metacognition, he is planning out what he is going to say to her in advance. In terms of egocentrism, he says what he wants but does not take the opinions of others into consideration:

Alice felt a little irritated at the Caterpillar's making such *very* short remarks, and she drew herself up and said, very gravely, 'I think you ought to tell me who *you* are, first.'

'Why?' said the Caterpillar.

Here was another puzzling question; and, as Alice could not think of any good reason, and the Caterpillar seemed to be in a *very* unpleasant state of mind, she turned away.

'Come back!' the Caterpillar called after her. 'I've something important to say!'

This sounded promising, certainly. Alice turned and came back again.

'Keep your temper,' said the Caterpillar.

‘Is that all?’ said Alice, swallowing her anger as well as she could. (Carroll 41)

The Caterpillar’s suggestion to Alice to watch her temper is interesting because of the way the Caterpillar has been behaving throughout their conversation. This acknowledgement shows the reader that Alice is successfully handling her own temper even though she may feel like she is having an extremely difficult time adjusting to the social politics of this strange world.

A third example of Alice navigating unfamiliar social norms without the presence of adults is when she comes across a Tea Party and attempts to join without an invitation. She assumes that because there are empty seats at the table, she will be able to sit down and join the Tea Party. This assumption highlights her egocentric way of thinking as a child: because the adults in her world are responsible for caring and for accommodating the needs of children, she expects these characters to do the same. Because there are not any other kids in Wonderland, she thinks of the characters as adults because they behave authoritatively toward her:

The table was a large one, but the three were all crowded together at the corner of it. ‘No room! No room!’ they cried out when they saw Alice coming. ‘There’s *plenty* of room!’ said Alice indignantly, and she sat down in a large arm-chair at one end of the table.

‘Have some wine,’ the March Hare said in an encouraging tone.

Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea. ‘I don’t see any wine.’ She remarked.

‘There isn’t any,’ said the March Hare.

‘Then it wasn’t very civil of you to offer it,’ said Alice angrily.

‘It wasn’t very civil of you to sit down without being invited,’ said the March Hare. ‘I didn’t know it was *your* table,’ said Alice: ‘it’s laid for a great many more than three.’ (Carroll 60)

The characters at the Tea Party are condescending to Alice and point out her ignorance of the social norms of Wonderland. Because Alice does not take that into consideration, she repeatedly offends the inhabitants of Wonderland over and over again. Due to her egocentric way of thinking, she appears abrasive and ignorant. Her behavior differs from abrasiveness and ignorance, however, because it is through her egocentrism that she fails to understand the thoughts and feelings of those around her. She does not take anything into consideration except for her own thoughts and feelings. Thus, her behavior is not abrasive and ignorant because she is just trying to fit in.

The courtroom scene in which Alice stands to the Queen exemplifies her growth in terms of maturity through her loss of egocentrism. While in the courtroom, she learns about how unjust the judicial system is in Wonderland: first, the sentence is decided, and then a trial is held, making the ruling of any case unjust. Because she does not agree, and believes it is unfair, she speaks up: “Stuff and nonsense!” said Alice loudly. ‘The idea of having the sentence first!’ ‘Hold your tongue!’ said the Queen, turning purple. ‘I wo’n’t!’ said Alice. ‘Off with your head!’ the Queen shouted at the top of her voice. Nobody moved. ‘Who cares for *you*?’ said Alice (she had grown to her full size by this time)” (Carroll 109). In this altercation, Alice feels powerful enough based on her prior learning experiences in Wonderland to stand up for herself and others. This situation is symbolic of how brutally honest children are to adults sometimes due to their egocentric thinking. For example, if a child thinks that an adult is doing something unethical or out-of-the-norm, the child will most likely comment on it, causing the adult to reconsider their

actions. Here, Alice is doing just that. This scene also demonstrates Alice's resilience because in it she returns to her normal size without eating or drinking anything, signifying her ability to exist confidently in this world.

The representation of resilience is an important in this scene because it teaches the child reader to persevere in their goals. Here, the reader sees Alice as a fighter because she refuses to give up. As she journeys through Wonderland, she observes the world around her, processes what she sees and hears, relates it to her past experiences, and tries to adapt those previous situations to what she is experiencing. She proves to herself that she can function independently without the help of an adult or an older sibling. Alice survives because she has learned how to cope and adapt in unfamiliar situations without the fear of making a mistake through experiences that emphasize the importance of moderation, processing, and adapting—qualities that reinforce self-control, which is important to mental and emotional development.

As mentioned previously, Carroll implies that maturity is synonymous with self-regulation in this text. Alice learns to regulate her behavior when she speaks with the characters, which results in her being able to handle unfamiliar situations. "The creative imagination that Carroll's Alice stories inspires in children is closely tied to their intellectual development, and so it is no accident that he chose to situate his dream-child protagonist in 'Wonderland'" (Schatz 113). At the end of the text, it is clear that the need for stimulation is behind Alice's impulse to escape, and both are essential to her development. Although it has been speculated that Alice's experiences in Wonderland are a daydream rather than a fully unconscious dream, it is important to note that daydreaming was also linked to mental impairments. Schatz observes, "the child's imagination was limited to pathological reverie: the dreaded daydream" (Schatz 101). If Alice was daydreaming, she would be in a trance-like state. Because her escape to Wonderland is so

vivid and stimulating, it is clear that she escapes to fulfil her desire to play both imaginatively and creatively. Alice's egocentrism and reliance on metacognition help her to make decisions numerous times throughout her journey in Wonderland. Through this, she is able to return to reality—satisfied and stimulated.

Anne of Green Gables: It's All About Perspective

Metacognition and egocentrism are also linked in the mental and physical escape of Anne Shirley in L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1911), which tells the story of an orphan girl adopted by an older woman, Marilla Cuthbert, and her brother, Matthew. When Matthew picks up Anne at the train station, he is thoroughly surprised to see Anne waiting for him because he was expecting to be taking home a boy. Marilla and Matthew want to adopt an orphan boy because they need help on their farm. When Anne converses with Matthew for the first time, he quickly learns that she has a vivid imagination for someone so young. Anne constantly uses her imagination because she wants to make the world a more enticing and 'romantic' place due to her misery-ridden past as an orphan, which she refers to as a "...perfect graveyard of buried hopes" (Montgomery 54). Throughout the novel, Anne relies on metacognition in order to satisfy her boredom and distract her from remembering how she was treated by caregivers in the past. In order to make the world around her a more romantic place in her eyes, she changes the names of both people and places to make them more appealing. She even reimagines herself:

I don't mind the other things so much [in addition to her red hair]—the freckles and the green eyes and my skinniness. I can imagine them away. I can imagine that I have a beautiful rose leaf complexion and lovely starry violet eyes. But I

cannot imagine that red hair away. I do my best. I think to myself, ‘Now my hair is a glorious black, black as the raven’s wing.’ But all the time I *know* it is just plain red, and it breaks my heart. (Montgomery 24)

Anne depends on her imagination to imagine away her insecurities. Lesley Clement argues that “[t]he metaphor of periscopic vision is appropriate because *Anne of Green Gables* explores various ways of seeing that pierce—or fail to pierce—the imprecise boundaries and liminal spaces between the seen and unseen, the visible and invisible” (Clement 53). What Anne imagines for herself throughout the novel often remains unseen, invisible, and misunderstood by adult characters—mainly Marilla. Through her metacognitive escape from the people and places she dislikes, Anne’s vivid imagination is fueled by her egocentric personality. Through her escape, she allows herself to see a more romanticized version of the world, which highlights her desire and impulse to separate herself from those around her. Although during the course of the novel she eventually “acquire[s] the skills to look and see beneath the surface of character and circumstances—an essential prerequisite in the development of empathy” (Clement 58), her romanticized escapes allow her character to eventually gain the ability to understand the perspectives of others.

Anne sees the world around her romantically, perhaps because nature is always pure and beautiful, and the people she has been in care with for the duration of her life have been sinners. She makes sure to observe every aspect of the nature around her—even the smallest details of the landscape. On her initial ride to Green Gables, the narrator observes:

The sun had set some time since, but the landscape was still clear in the mellow afterlight. To the west a dark church spire rose up against a marigold sky. Below was a little valley beyond a long, gently rising slope with snug farmsteads

scattered along it. From one to another the child's eyes darted, eager and wistful. At last they lingered on one away to the left. Far back from the road, dimly white with blossoming trees in the twilight of the surrounding woods. Over it, in the stainless southwest sky, a great crystal-white star was shining like a lamp of guidance and promise. (Montgomery 30)

Anne's initial reaction to the landscape around her new home is important because it shows the reader that even though she is on her way to a happier life, the memories of her traumatic past are lasting. Anne will still be able to rely on the ability to comfort herself by using her imagination to create what she deems ugly into a romanticized version to distract her from potential trauma and fear. Although her imagination is extremely vivid for an eleven-year-old, it is important to realize that her reason for imaginative escape is egocentric; it benefits only her, and she does not understand why nobody else around her chooses to think like her.

Anne seems to ask inferential questions of the reader rather than of the characters she is conversing with because she cannot seem to get through to them. Perhaps L.M. Montgomery uses this device to spark a direct relationship between child readers and the child protagonist. Examples of these seemingly reader-directed questions include "but how are you going to find out about things if you don't ask questions?" (Montgomery 21), and "Isn't it splendid to think of all the things there are to find out about? It just makes me feel glad to be alive—it's such an interesting world. It wouldn't be half so interesting if we knew all about everything, would it?" (21). The questions Anne is asking are easy enough for young children to ponder in their thoughts, as Anne does throughout the novel, making it easier for the reader to relate to Anne. These inferential questions could also inspire the readers, both child and adult, to think critically about the world around them.

Marilla's distant attitude toward Anne shapes both characters' behaviors. The more Marilla is cold to Anne, the more Anne seeks to escape her immediate reality. Paige Gray observes the ongoing tension between Marilla and Anne:

Montgomery introduces us to Marilla Cuthbert in notes of rigidity marking her as a woman 'with angles and without curves', whose 'hair was always twisted up in a hard little knot' (5). Her sharp, severe physicality mirrors the moral standards of her [Scots Presbyterian] cultural upbringing, while the novel's first description of Anne highlights a kind of plasticity with her eyes 'that looked green in some lights and moods of gray in others.' (Gray 171)

These descriptions of each character show the reader how drastically different their characters are not only in appearance, but in beliefs as well. Essentially, Marilla allows her generational gap with Anne to be a barrier for any sense of relationship between them, which makes Anne have the potential of feeling abandoned once again. On a number of occasions throughout the novel, Marilla expresses her disapproval of Anne's personality. For Marilla, the most irritating behavior that Marilla observes in Anne is when she daydreams. Perhaps Marilla was unable to daydream as a child and envies Anne's ability to do so:

As [the meal] progressed Anne became more and more abstracted, eating mechanically, with her big eyes fixed unswervingly and unseeingly on the sky outside the window. This made Marilla more nervous than ever; she had an uncomfortable feeling that while this odd child's body might be there at the table her spirit was far away in some remote airy cloudland, borne aloft on the wings of imagination. Who would want such a child about the place? (Montgomery 47-48)

To the child reader, Marilla is seen as a nasty, overly-strict mother figure to Anne. To the adult reader, Marilla is seen as a mother figure that is not only upset by the orphanage mix-up, but also a person who does not have time for nonsense. Essentially, Marilla believes that Anne chooses to be inside her imagination so much because it prevents her from growing up and participating in reality, which consists of both beauty and ugliness. However, Marilla does not understand that “[a]lthough Anne understands in theory the ethics of empathy, her juvenile egocentricity is a barrier to her truly attaining it” (Clement 62). This observation is important because this is the central reason for the rift in Anne and Marilla’s relationship.

Marilla becomes especially irritated with Anne when Anne refuses to run the errand of going to Mrs. Barry’s to pick up the pattern for an apron that Marilla is going to make for her. Anne claims the woods are haunted, and Marilla questions her as to why she believes such nonsense. Anne explains:

Diana and I just imagined the wood was haunted. All the places around here are so—so—*commonplace*. We got this up for our own amusement. We began it in April. A haunted wood is so very romantic, Marilla. We chose the spruce grove because it’s so gloomy. Oh, we have imagined the most harrowing things. There’s a white lady who walks along the brook just about this time of the night and wrings her hands and utters wailing cries. She appears when there is to be a death in the family. And the ghost of a little murdered child haunts the corner up by Idlewood; it creeps up behind you and lays its cold fingers on your hand—so. Oh Marilla, it gives me a shudder to think of it. And there’s a headless man stalks up and down the path and skeletons glower at you between the boughs. Oh, Marilla, I wouldn’t go through the Haunted Wood after dark now for anything. I’d be sure

that white things would reach out from behind the trees and grab me.

(Montgomery 233)

In this instance, Marilla is not only irritated by Anne's vivid imagination, but alarmed. To Marilla, Anne is not present because she is too busy daydreaming, causing her to limit herself in terms of socializing and building relationships with those around her. Ultimately, Anne's behavior angers Marilla because based on her account with Diana, Anne believes in the supernatural, which conflicts with Marilla's religious views: "Anne Shirley, do you mean to tell me you believe in all that wicked nonsense of your own imagination?" (Montgomery 233-34). Marilla disapproves of Anne's behavior and method of entertaining herself through imaginative play with a friend her own age.

Marilla's feelings toward Anne change as the novel goes on, especially when Anne is injured at a friend's house: "At that moment Marilla had a revelation. In the sudden stab of fear that pierced her very heart she realized what Anne had come to mean to her" (Montgomery 264). Here, the reader sees that Marilla does indeed feel empathy toward Anne even though she has been consistently abrasive toward her. Her change of heart could be due to the realization that she is responsible for Anne's well-being. She and Matthew wanted a boy orphan only to work on the farm, and the arrival of Anne changes the way Marilla looks at the world. Although she does not make it obvious, she knows that she has to protect her, care for her, and raise her as her own. In this instance, Marilla finds the beauty in Anne, as well as the beauty of herself. She realizes that no matter how much their personalities may differ, Anne is part of their family, and she needs to accept her for who she is even though she may be a burden to her sometimes.

Anne constantly seeks to escape an alternate reality because of her traumatic past of treatment by her caregivers. She imagines a romanticized world through metacognition and

aspects of her own egocentric ways to ensure a sense of safety because she is completely in charge of what she sees and does not see. Although to some her behavior may come off as annoying or distant, imagination is her coping mechanism: “By embracing the imagination—through ‘discovering,’ ‘exploring,’ and ‘dream[ing]’—Anne not only demonstrates liberation from the mundane present moment, but also...strategically builds a ‘reality’—a psychological and sociological conception of her environment—that best suits her and enables her to thrive” (Gray 170). Thus, the only person who is truly able to understand her imaginative world is Anne herself, because she is the creator, and she creates her world based on what makes sense to her. This can be irritating at times to the characters Anne interacts with because they are unable to relate with her on that metacognitive level.

‘Magic’ as a Coping Mechanism in *A Little Princess*

Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *A Little Princess* (1905) narrates the unexpected and traumatic turn of events in the life of seven-year-old Sara Crewe. Before arriving at ‘Miss Minchin’s Select Seminary for Young Ladies,’ a boarding school for girls in London, Sara has lived in India with her father, Captain Crewe. Because her mother is dead, Sara has been spoiled by her father in an attempt to make up for the absence of her late mother. She has lavish clothes, jewels, and toys—much more than any other girl her age. When her father loses all his money and unexpectedly dies of a fever in India, leaving her with no inheritance, everything she knows is taken away from her. In order to escape her grief and the anxieties brought on by her sudden impoverishment, she copes by creating an alternate reality for herself through metacognition. This discussion will explore Sara Crewe’s resilience, loss of egocentrism, and heightened metacognitive experiences of the young Sara Crewe. Although Sara’s egocentric ways of

thinking and metacognitive processes do not function together, each are impactful in her escape because they help her to cope with her emotions while experiencing trauma, which matures her.

On her birthday, Sara finds out that her father has passed away. The initial shock prevents her from responding appropriately when speaking to Miss Minchin. Although she is eleven years old, Sara handles this conversation resiliently despite this sudden trauma.

‘You will have no time for dolls in future,’ [Miss Minchin] said, ‘You will have to work and improve yourself and make yourself useful.’ Sara kept her big, strange eyes fixed on her, and said not a word. ‘Everything will be very different now,’ Miss Minchin went on [...] ‘You are a beggar,’ said Miss Minchin, her temper rising at the recollection of what this all meant. ‘It appears that you have no relations and no home, and no one to take care of you.’ For a moment the thin, pale little face twitched, but Sara again said nothing. (Burnett 66-67)

Following this terrible speech by Miss Minchin, Sara is transformed from student to servant. She quickly becomes overworked, malnourished, and exhausted, but somehow manages to maintain her resilience by believing in ‘Magic.’ This belief in Magic enables her to keep a positive attitude even in the worst of times. Essentially, she chooses not to dwell on the misery of her daily life surrounding her day-to-day abuse, for “[h]er imagination enables her to perceive what Miss Minchin cannot. Burnett tells us that Miss Minchin has a ‘narrow, unimaginative mind’ (149)” (Keyser 234). Sara has the ability to imagine, which is something the other girls in the school, as well as Miss Minchin, cannot do because they are too serious. Through her imagination, Sara is able to satisfy herself mentally, which can help to distract her from being dissatisfied or upset. Her desire to escape the everyday struggles of neglect and loneliness

increases by the day through her obsession with 'Magic,' her way of keeping faith alive while suffering.

Forced to sleep in the attic, "[Sara] felt as if she were walking away and leaving far behind her the world in which that other child, who no longer seemed herself, had lived. This child, in her short, tight old frock, climbing the stairs to the attic, was quite a different creature. Yes, this was another world" (Burnett 69). From this moment, Sara increasingly imagines satisfaction both cognitively and emotionally to cope. She truly believes that if she is passionate enough about believing in 'Magic,' there will be some sort of positive change—big or small. In her exile, Sarah's living quarters are literally higher up than everyone else's. This placement symbolizes the secret and transcendent 'Magic' power that Sarah develops over her peers and Miss Minchin. Sara has more freedom to indulge in her metacognitive abilities because she needs to keep herself entertained in the attic. Keyser argues that "Sara's exile has its advantages: she can see more for being above the 'world,' and she can do so safely because she is removed from it" (Keyser 235). Sara changes from a Romantic Child, "somehow purer and more virtuous than adults, closer to nature and God, and beautified by [her] naiveté" (Hintz and Tribunella 17), to what Hintz and Tribunella describe as "the child as Radically Other": "the child at play might represent an experience or imaginative feat unique to the childhood and lost to adults, who are much too preoccupied with the empirical or the real" (Hintz and Tribunella 17, 24-25). At the beginning of the novel, Sara is associated with the image of the Romantic Child because she has the ability to create an alternate reality for herself with her vivid imagination, which connects her more to the divine in ways that adults are not. She transforms into a representation of the child who is Radically Other when she loses her father and social status, and must rely on her

imagination-fueled escape to keep her sanity while she suffers neglect and abuse from Miss Minchin. In *A Little Princess*,

magic becomes a metaphor for the ability to see with the imagination, for example, Sara's ability to see her attic room as a dungeon or banquet hall in a romantic story and to see herself as a princess in a fairy tale. Like magic, this ability to see with the imagination is also a power—it helps Sara to endure her physical hardships and to maintain her sense of self-worth in the presence of Miss Minchin's insults. (Koppes 195)

'Magic' not only serves Sara as a coping mechanism, but also as a way for her to see the world in a different way because she no longer knows where she belongs socially and emotionally because, "The change in her life did not come gradually, [and] was made all at once" (Burnett 71). It is through the 'Magic' that Sara is able to create ideal, aesthetically satisfying alternative images of her immediate reality in order to comfort herself. Her metacognition allows her to manipulate her dreadful surroundings into images of a comforting environment. Sara converses with Ermengarde about surviving in the attic despite its less than luxurious appearance: "If I pretend it's different, I can [survive]," she answered: 'or if I pretend it is a place in a story.' She spoke slowly. Her imagination was beginning to work for her. It had not worked for her at all since her troubles had come upon her. She felt as if she had been stunned" (Burnett 79). When Sara mentions that she is going to pretend that her miserable living conditions are just part of a story, it is egocentric because she does not accept reality, and chooses to participate in a fantasy. However, because her metacognitive processes are so strong, it enables her to distract herself from the emotional trauma of suddenly becoming impoverished and shunned.

Sara uses her incredibly vivid imagination to entertain the other students at the boarding school: “Sara’s storytelling gradually leads her to envision herself as the heroine of a story, a princess in exile, and this fantasy enables her to endure her life of drudgery and deprivation” (Keyser 231). Because of the way Sara envisions herself, she essentially convinces herself that she truly is in a story, which isolates her from reality. Most of the other girls seem to idolize her because they cannot imagine like she can, but they are unaware that the reason her imagination is so powerful is due to its use as a coping mechanism for her trauma. To the other girls at Miss Minchin’s, Sara is seen as someone who brings the girls joy and comfort—like a mother would. After the death of her father, the others are ordered to abandon any and all interactions with Sara. As any child would do in a situation that closes them off from fun, they disobey the rules so that they can be entertained. In one of her forbidden ‘Magic’ related adventurous conversations with her friend, Lottie, who sneaks up to the attic to see Sara even though it is forbidden, Lottie is upset to see how dreary Sara’s new living conditions are. In an attempt to comfort her Sara explains to her:

‘You see,’ [Sara] said, ‘there could be a thick, soft blue Indian rug on the floor; and in that corner there could be a soft little sofa, with cushions to curl up on; and just over there could be a shelf full of books so that one could reach them easily; and there could be a fur rug before the fire, and hangings on the wall to cover up the whitewash, and pictures.’ ‘Oh, Sara!’ cried Lottie; ‘I should like to live here!’
(Burnett 84)

Lottie plays along with Sara, imagining all the wonderful things as well. Of course, Lottie cannot imagine fully what Sara is describing as because she does not possess metacognitive skills as strong as Sara does. The difference between simply imagining something and using

metacognition while imagining something is that metacognition is an extremely deliberate process, whereas imagination may not be. As mentioned before, metacognition enables the ability to rationalize and reason through a memory through critical thinking. Imagination is simply recalling abstract images without a critical analysis of it. In other words, not all imaginative fancies involve metacognition. Despite this, Sara does not realize that the acknowledgement of her traumatic reality is approaching rapidly. After Lottie leaves Sara and the room goes quiet, the narrator observes,

The bed was hard and covered with its dingy quilt. The whitewashed wall showed its broken patches, the floor was cold and bare, the grate was broken and rusty, and the battered footstool, tilted sideways on its injured leg, the only seat in the room. She sat down on it for a few minutes and let her head drop in her hands.

The mere fact that Lottie had come and gone away again made things seem a little worse—just as perhaps prisoners feel a little more desolate after visitors come and go, leaving them behind. (Burnett 84)

Everything that Sara has just imagined in order to comfort herself and to entertain Lottie has vanished because it was never real. In this moment, Sara comes to the harsh realization that no matter how much she hopes and desires to return to her previous life of luxury and comfort, she is unable to.

Sara's gradual realization of the harshness of her impoverished reality is observed once again when she encounters another girl her age who is suffering more than she is. After wishing for food because she is so hungry, Sara finds money on the street, and decides to buy herself some hot buns. When she walks out of the bakery, she notices a beggar girl in great crisis: "Sara opened the paper bag and took out one of the hot buns, which had already warmed her own

hands a little. ‘See,’ she said, putting the bun in the ragged lap, ‘this is nice and hot. Eat it, and you will not feel so hungry.’ The child started and stared up at her, as if such sudden, amazing good luck almost frightened her; then she snatched up the bun and began to cram it into her mouth with great wolfish bites” (Burnett 121). Here, Sara herself serves as ‘Magic’ for the beggar girl, who lingers by the bakery and is clearly longing for food. This is important because Sara has the ability to feel empathetic toward the beggar girl—an emotion that can only be felt by one who is not egocentric. In this moment, Sara loses her egocentrism because she is not imagining an alternate reality; she is choosing to see the immediate reality of her peer suffering, and takes action to help her. Although Sara’s metacognition and egocentrism do not function together consistently, in this scene, Sara is able to use her prior knowledge of suffering and experience the emotions that the other girl may be feeling. After leaving the beggar girl, “Sara found some comfort in her remaining bun. At all events, it was very hot, and it was better than nothing. As she walked along she broke off small pieces and ate them slowly to make them last longer. ‘Suppose it was a magic bun,’ she said, ‘and a bite was as much as a whole dinner. I should be overeating myself if I went on like this’” (Burnett 123). Sara is resilient in this scene because she is able to understand the perspectives of others, which ultimately allows her to “make choices and exercise a degree of control” (James 100). Sara’s control in this scene stems from her empathy for the beggar girl because Sara is still able to assuage her hunger despite having given the beggar girl almost all of her food. Her empathy, the ability to care for others, strengthens her resilience because it allows her to see that others are living under worse conditions than she is, which ultimately allows her to become less egocentric.

Despite her isolated living conditions, Sara is unaware that she is living next to another Indian servant, Ram Dass, who knows not only about her treatment at Miss Minchin’s, but also

had knowledge of Captain Crewe, because his master, Mr. Carrisford, was his friend. When they first encountered each other by chance, there was a sense of comfort and safety:

Sara looked toward him and he looked toward her. The first thing she thought was that the dark face looked sorrowful and homesick. She felt absolutely sure he had come up to look at the sun, because he had seen it so seldom in England that he longed for a sight of it. She looked at him interestedly for a second, and then smiled across the slates. She had learned to know how comforting a smile, even from a stranger, may be. (Burnett 103)

This initial interaction between the two of them during sunset emphasizes the empathy and sense of comfort they both feel in this moment—they understand each other. The sunset could also foreshadow that Sara's misery is coming to an end, and better days are ahead for her. It is clear through this passage that they share a love for Indian culture. Because Sara is living as a lowly servant in London, she does not meet many other people who share her cultural background. Ram Dass expresses his desire to protect Sara while conversing with Mr. Carrisford: “‘All her life each day I know,’ answered Ram Dass. ‘Her going out I know, and her coming in; her sadness and her poor joys; her coldness and her hunger. I know when her secret friends steal to her and she is happier—as children can be, even in the midst of poverty—because they come and she may laugh and talk with them in whispers. If she were ill I should know, and I would come and serve her if it might be done.’” (Burnett 127). With his protection, she could maintain this cultural identity and enjoy a greater sense of well-being. Ram Dass explains, “‘She is not as other children. I see her when she does not see me. I slip across the slates and look at her many nights to see that she is safe...By the mistress of the house—who is an evil woman—she is treated like a pariah; but she has the bearing of a child who is of the blood of kings!’” (Burnett

126). In regard to the role of Ram Dass in rescuing Sara, Mirchandani notes “[t]he novel emphasizes Sara’s cultural belonging by expressing in great detail her mannerisms, her language, and her courageous survival” (Mirchandani 14). At earlier points in the novel, Sara’s physical description is given, being described as having “green-gray eyes” (Burnett 10) and dark hair, which is different from her mainly European born classmates. However, the ability to identify culturally with Ram Dass provides Sara with another escape—out of her misery, where she would no longer need ‘Magic’ because she is able to have an identity again.

The investment Sara has in her own imagination is admirable because she truly believes it will change her life if she believes hard enough. Although this could be seen as naiveté or childishness, Sara’s metacognition is admirable because it highlights her strength in coping. Before going to sleep on one of her most brutal days of domestic labor, Sara wishes aloud for several comforts that would make her room more welcoming. The ‘Magic’ comes true when the attic is transformed into an oasis—a place that provides a feeling of safety and comfort for her. When she wakes up, she finds:

In the grate there was a glowing, blazing fire; on the hob was a little brass kettle hissing and boiling, spread upon the floor was a thick, warm crimson rug; before the fire a folding-chair, unfolded, and with cushions on it; by the chair a small folding-table, unfolded, covered with a white cloth, and upon it spread small covered dishes, a cup, a saucer, a tea-pot; on the bed were new warm coverings and a satin-covered down quilt; at the foot a curious wadded silk robe, a pair of quilted slippers, and some books. The room of her dream seemed to change into fairyland—and it was flooded with warm light, for a bright lamp stood on the table covered with a rosy shade. (Burnett 149)

This seemingly magical transformation is important to the characterization of Sara because although Ram Dass is responsible for this gesture, and Sara is distracted from her trauma, Sara will now truly believe that 'Magic' is real. This hinders her from fully understanding the difference between fantasy and reality, however. This is hinted at when it is made known to the reader that the lamp's bulb emits a rose-color. Sara's version of reality seems to be through rose-colored glasses because she is always creating an alternate reality for herself through the use of metacognition to escape her misery.

Sara's use of 'Magic' highlights her resilience because it serves her as a coping mechanism through the loss of her father and inheritance and the neglect at the hands of Miss Minchin. She demonstrates that she can manage herself socially and emotionally while living through traumatic circumstances. Her desire to escape her immediate reality in order to survive her day-to-day experiences shows that her metacognitive process of altering her environment to distract her from the maltreatment she is experiencing is the key to her vivid imagination not only for herself, but for her peers as well. Unconsciously, she is able to strengthen her metacognitive processes by relying on the 'Magic' to alter her immediate reality and entertain others. When Ram Dass 'saves' her, Sara's vision of 'Magic' is brought to life. This novel teaches child readers to persevere during times of difficulty and the importance of mental strength during emotionally trying situations.

Conclusion

In each of the above texts, the child protagonist experiences a strong desire to escape from their realities. Although each has their own reasons for wanting this, it is clear that

egocentrism and metacognition play central roles in each process. In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice is able to rationalize her way through an unfamiliar world through logical reasoning—an act done purely by being aware of one's own thought process. In this text, she uses metacognitive processes mainly by talking to herself to navigate through her wildly vivid dream in the fantasy land of Wonderland. In *A Little Princess*, Sara's escape takes place both mentally and physically. Because she is awake during her daydreams and fantasies, she constantly imagines alternate versions of her physical surroundings in order to comfort herself. She is egocentric until she encounters a beggar girl suffering more than she is and is able to experience the feeling of empathy. Similarly, in *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne uses the physical world around her to escape into a better world, romanticizing nature and the personalities of those around her. However, Anne tends to escape reality in a different way than Sara does. Sara's trauma of losing her father and being exiled to the attic and shunned are so extreme that it almost demands that she picture an alternate reality to ensure her own sense of normalcy, and Anne's escapes consist of her imagining people and places she thinks are not aesthetically pleasing to be more romanticized.

In addition to a child protagonist's escape providing comfort or ensuring a sense of safety, child protagonists often want to escape their immediate realities because they are seeking stimulation through play. Creative and imaginative play are crucial for the child to experience because it teaches them how to regulate themselves in society. In the texts I examined, children play many roles as social actors by using knowledge of their own through processes to rationalize their experiences and understandings of how their role as a child is important to their world. Through their play experiences, children learn the concept of resilience, how to gradually become less egocentric, and how metacognition plays a role in almost everything they do. When

a child has mastered all of these skills, they become more mature and are able to rationalize their way through problems.

To the child reader, these child protagonists are simply sharing how they live with them. Depending on reading levels, some child readers will pick up on the underlying dark themes of trauma, neglect and poverty in *A Little Princess* and neglect in *Anne of Green Gables*. Because most authors of children's literature write with both the adult and child in mind, there are bound to be aspects of the text that are catered exclusively to each audience in each of these texts. In theory, adults enjoy reading texts like these to their children because it allows for both audiences to escape from their realities. Ultimately, "Literary works ask and answer questions, the substance of which reveals how the readers of that day viewed and understood the work" (Lundin 32). Adult readers can analyze the text and infer what message it was originally attempting to get across as they read to their children, which puts an unintentional spin on the enjoyment of adults reading children's literature, promoting the possibility of connecting both audiences through inferential literary discussion.

One reason why children's literature is an exciting genre is because it explores a wide range of possible childhood experiences. In each of these texts, the child protagonist amazes readers with their metacognitive skills. Perhaps the most exciting part of children's literature is the possibility that parents and caregivers will read to their children, and create a love for literacy. Through this, the young reader can engage with the text and gain a love for reading while learning how to use metacognition to think critically and meaningfully about events in their everyday lives.

Classic works of children's literature from the Golden Age continue to be published and enjoyed by contemporary readers. Television and film adaptations of these works have been

produced by companies such as Disney, Warner Brothers, and Fox: "...the media pays attention to the literature of childhood, the juvenile works that function as innocent reading for varied-age consumers and as fantastic landscapes in a more prosaic age" (Lundin 30-31). The ongoing presence of classic children's literature in popular culture is important because

[L]iterary meaning is determined over time, by a series of readings constituting its history of influence. The history of reception includes those literary and sociological factors that shape individual responses in a given time and place. The context of reception is defined in material and ideological terms, in aesthetic terms, or in terms of evaluative interpretive communities that mediate between the literary product and audience. (Lundin 32)

Children's literature has adapted to historical and cultural changes, catering to different generations of audiences, and being adapted for a variety of media, creating new meanings for those audiences, both young and old. Lundin also notes that "A literary text has a particular historical audience that responds to the work in a dialectical relationship of question and answer. A text has a particular meaning for its time by the way it answers the fundamental questions of its age" (Lundin 32). This means that over time, texts considered classics will take on new meanings as new generations of children grow into adults, and new generations of children are born.

Works Cited

- Boyd, Denise, and Helen Bee. *The Developing Child*. 13th ed., Boston, Pearson, 2012, pp. 479-481.
- Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1865, pp. 9-60.
- Clement, Lesley. "Mobilizing the Power of the Unseen: Imagining Self/Imagining Others in L. M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*." *Studies in Canadian Literature/Etudes en Littérature Canadienne*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2011, pp. 51-68.
- Combs, Martha. *Readers and Writers in Primary Grades: A Balanced and Integrated Approach K-4*. 3rd ed., Upper Saddle River, Pearson, 2006.
- Cross, David R. and Scott G. Paris. "Developmental and Instructional Analyses of Children's Metacognition and Reading Comprehension." *Journal of Educational Psychology*, vol. 80, no. 2, June 1988, pp. 131-142. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1037/0022-0663.80.2.131.
- Gray, Paige. "'Bloom in the Moonshine': Imagination as Liberation in *Anne of Green Gables*." *Children's Literature: Annual of the Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature and the Children's Literature Association*, vol. 42, 2014, pp. 169-196.
- Hintz, Carrie, and Eric L. Tribunella. *Reading Children's Literature: A Critical Introduction*. Boston, Bedford St. Martin's, 2013, pp. 23-68.
- Hodgson Burnett, Frances. *A Little Princess*. New York, Penguin Books, 1905, pp. 66-149.

- Hunt, Peter. "The Fundamentals of Children's Literature Criticism: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and through the Looking-Glass." *The Oxford Handbook of Children's Literature*, Julia L. Mickenberg (ed. and introd.) and Lynne Vallone (ed. and introd.) Oxford UP, 2011, p. 42.
- James, Allison, and Adrian James. *Key Concepts in Childhood Studies*. 2nd ed., Los Angeles, Sage, 2012.
- Keyser, Elizabeth Lennox. "'The Whole of the Story': Frances Hodgson Burnett's A Little Princess." *Triumphs of the Spirit in Children's Literature*, Francelia (ed. & pref.) Butler, et al., Lib. Professional Pub., 1986, pp. 230-243.
- Koppes, Phyllis Bixler. "Tradition and the Individual Talent of Frances Hodgson Burnett: A Generic Analysis of Little Lord Fauntleroy, a Little Princess, and the Secret Garden." *Children's Literature: An International Journal, Annual of the Modern Language Association Seminar on Children's Literature*, vol. 7, 1978, pp. 191-207.
- Lundin, Anne H. "Victorian Horizons: The Reception Of Children's Books In England And America, 1880-1900." *Library Quarterly* 64.1 (1994): 30-59. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 28 Nov. 2016.
- Mirchandani, Manisha. "Colonial Discourse and 'Post'-Colonial Negotiations: A Little Princess and Its Adaptations." *New Literatures Review*, vol. 33, 1997, pp. 11-24.
- Montgomery, Lucy M. *Anne of Green Gables*. New York, Aladdin, 1911, pp. 30-264.
- Schatz, Stephanie L. "Lewis Carroll's Dream-Child and Victorian Child Psychopathology." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 76, no. 1, Jan. 2015, pp. 93-114

Schwebel, Sara L. "The Limits Of Agency For Children's Literature Scholars." *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Culture* 8.1 (2016): 278-290. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 28 Nov. 2016.

Wells, Karen. *Childhood in a Global Perspective*. 2nd ed., Cambridge, Polity Press, 2015.