

## **Through the Looking Glass: An Approach to the Perfection of Emotional Invocation**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The 64-grid square design of a chess board maintains a pivotal role throughout the fantasy fiction of Lewis Carroll. Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There discusses the dream of Alice who had to take the title role of a pawn as a challenge to become a queen towards the end of the journey. This research paper examines the resemblance of Alice's character to a pawn which might have led the author to select her to be a pawn rather than other pieces in a game of chess. The idea behind the journey of Alice from a pawn to a queen denotes several meanings in relation to the reality and eight basic emotions of life. The position, track of movement and actions assigned to a pawn can be associated with the characteristics expressed by the character of Alice.*

**Keywords:** *Alice, chess, emotions, fantasy, looking glass, queen, Maslow, needs theory, wonderland.*

### **Introduction**

‘It’s a great huge game of chess that’s being played—all over the world—if this is the world at all, you know. Oh, what fun it is! How I wish I was one of them! I wouldn’t mind being a Pawn, if only I might join—though of course I should like to be a Queen, best.’ (Carroll 144)

Chess is regarded as a game synonymous with great intelligence and brain power. Traditionally, it is played by two opponents using tactical and strategic thinking to ‘checkmate’ the opponent’s King. Plan of action has to be altered with each unexpected moves in the chess board. Anything can happen any time leading to a great threat to the King. It is the duty of the other pieces in the chess board to safeguard the life of the soul piece of the game. The game is played on a checkered board with 64 squares organized in 8x8 grids.

The game of chess is considered to be derived from the ancient *Chaturanga* (Indian), *xiangqi*(Chinese), *janggi* (Korean), and *shogi* (Japanese). It was taken to Europe in the period of conquest of Hispania. In the book *A History of Chess* published in 1913, the writer H.J.R Murray writes in detail about the ancient forms Indian chess, Malay Chess, Chinese, Korean and Japanese chess, Persian and Muslim Chess, Chess in Northern and Central Asia, and European Chess.

Historically chess must be classes as a game of war. Two players direct a conflict between two armies of equal strength upon a field of battle, circumscribed in extent, and offering no advantage of ground to either side. The players have no assistance other than that afforded by their own reasoning faculties, and the victory usually falls to the one whose strategically imagination is the greater, whose direction of his forces is the more skillful, whose ability to foresee positions is the more developed. (Ch. 1)

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-1898), known in his pen name Lewis Carroll, is famous for his children's fiction, particularly for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and its sequel *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871).

His writings were noted for the word play, inclusion of creative imagination, games and puzzles which were highly regarded for writing for children. While referring to his fictional works, the reader can follow a hidden morale within it, especially connecting the protagonist and circumstances. Alice, the major character in his two children's fictions was inspired from the third daughter of Henry Liddell, a Christ Church dean who arrived in Oxford in 1856. Alice's *Adventures in Wonderland* was an extension of a tale of a little girl who fell down in a rabbit hole which Dodgson wrote when Alice was ten years old.

### **Through the Looking Glass: A Game Exploring the Eight Primary Emotions**

The plot structure of *Through the Looking Glass* is progressed through a chess game challenge from Red Queen which is accepted by Alice. In the preface, Carroll introduces the chess problem by giving a hint that "White Pawn (Alice) to play, and win in eleven moves" (114).

She gives an idea of the eleven movements of Alice in eleven points. Why Carroll did refer to a chess game to describe the journey of Alice in the looking glass world which she explores

by passing through the drawing room mirror? Do the inversions and reflections experienced through the looking glass have to say something in relation with the reality of the world? Yes.

A writer like Carroll, even though he writes for children, has given prior importance for whatever she has created as imaginations for the fiction. Textual analysis of the fiction gives certain indications on the selection of pawn for Alice for her challenging journey to become a queen like the Red and the White. The utilization of the game of chess gives a representative attribute to the entire fiction.

The character of Alice is a seven and a half year old girl who is a miniature representation of a Victorian middle class lady regarded as a perfect persona. She uses her quaint capacity for rationalization that brings her to clashes with the creatures of the looking glass world. The pure innocent mindset in the seven and a half year old Alice is clearly represented through the white pawn.

Considering the movement of the pawn compared to other pieces in the chess board, it is the piece with smallest size and value. It has the restricted ability to move one square forward in a straight line column, if unobstructed by any other piece. It gets an opportunity to change its column diagonally if it makes a capture of its opponent which is a least possible chance to be achieved if the circumstances are truly supportive.

The first move of a pawn has an option to take two squares ahead and the rest has to be one each. Being the lowest ranked among the board pieces, it is often sacrifices its life for sustaining the life of the other pieces that has various other possible movements. Total of eight in count on one side, it collectively becomes a barricade protection for the other pieces.

The innocence of Alice cannot be represented well than through the characteristics of a pawn in a chess game. Being in a strange world, Alice has shrunken into the qualities of a pawn on the advice of the Red Queen. “You can be the White Queen’s Pawn, if youlike, as Lily’s too young to play; and you’re in the SecondSquare to begin with: when you get to the Eighth Square you’ll be a Queen” (144).

In the position of a pawn, Alice had to encounter different creatures and escapades which she was not acquainted with. As it was entirely new to her experience, it resulted in the eight primary emotions of life such as joy, trust, fear, surprise, sadness, anticipation, anger, and

disgust. Robert Plutchik, a psychologist from United States developed the wheel of emotions in his book *Emotions and Life: Perspectives from Psychology, Biology, and Evolution* published in 2003. Emotions of a lifetime were expressed in concise form during her progressive journey from a pawn to a queen. Similar to the journey of Alice as a pawn to a queen, the journey of real life is also a salad mixture of emotions where one comes after the other in an irregular and unordered manner.

When Alice begins her journey as a pawn in the chess board, she has not experienced with the eight basic emotions. She had only been with the Red Queen, White Queen and the King where she could experience some of the exciting wonders like the poem 'Jabberwocky'. Her gradual development through the square columns brings her to experience new emotions.

She meets the Gant, fawn, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, the Red King, different animals and insects, Humpty Dumpty, Hatta, Lion and the Unicorn and a long-beaked creature where she could get different experiences from them. When the forests evoked fear, the egg that turned into Humpty Dumpty excited her. The gradual growth in one's life by undergoing various circumstances is depicted through Alice's journey as a pawn in the chess board in the looking glass world.

At the time of Red King's snoring, Alice was in fear thinking it would be the roar of a wild beast.

This was a puzzler. After a pause, Alice began, 'Well! They were both very unpleasant characters——' Here she checked herself in some alarm, at hearing something that sounded to her like the puffing of a large steam-engine in the wood near them, though she feared it was more likely to be a wild beast. (Carroll 167)

In the meeting with the Red Queen and the White Queen, the anxious and uncomfortable emotions are visible.

There were three chairs at the head of the table: the Red and White Queens had already taken two of them, but the middle one was empty. Alice sat down in it, rather uncomfortable at the silence, and longing for someone to speak.

At last the Red Queen began. 'You've missed the soup and fish,' she said. 'Put on the joint!' And the waiters set a leg of mutton before Alice, who looked at it rather anxiously, as she had never had to carve a joint before. (Carroll 234)

Her anxious interest to become a queen is seen throughout her journey being a pawn. She might be interested in being a powerful, respected and higher ranked queen who is able to access all the columns in every direction, unlike the pawn. It can be seen as an individual's urge to experience the eight basic emotions in life. The four directions of squares such as the front, back, left and the right as well as the diagonal square columns represents the collection of eight primary emotions.

The journey in the chess board for Alice was an exploration of these emotions which developed her into an experienced and powerful person from a pawn to a queen. Similarly, in the game of life, an individual strives to explore the eight squares, which are the fulfillment of experiencing the primary emotions in a life. If one would just be a pawn in the first column of the game, he would not be able to experience life in its fullest means.

The eager to achieve one step ahead rests in the primary nature of human beings. According to Abraham Maslow's the hierarchy of needs theory, people get motivated by unfulfilled needs. The dissatisfaction gives rise to a need to attain or conquer the unachieved. Needs may be psychological or physiological with varying circumstances and aspects that collectively design one's need. ( Abraham Maslow 430-437)

The physiological needs such as air, food, water, shelter, clothing and sleep come at the lower end of criteria that are regarded as the basic need of a human being. The next level is of safety that includes personal safety and financial stability. Social needs extend to achieving love and belonging. Esteem needs which come after safety point to the need of self-esteem, admiration and respect. The higher level is self-actualization is described as a person's need to attain full potential. Similar to the urge to acquire needs, the urge to experience more in life would lead to experiencing different emotions in life while facing new people and situations.

With experiencing the eight emotions, she was promoted to be a queen which changed her to be a real player in the game. Vladimir Putin commented during the World Championship Knockout in Moscow that "Chess makes man wiser and far-sighted". It might have made her wiser, stronger and courageous than before when she was an innocent pawn. That could have made her to recognize her fault in identifying the real antagonist in the game.

'And as for you,' she went on, turning fiercely upon the Red Queen, whom she considered as the cause of all their mischief—but the Queen was no longer at her side—

she had suddenly dwindled down to the size of a little doll...At any other time, Alice would have felt surprised at this, but she was far too much excited to be surprised at anything now. 'As for you,' she repeated, catching hold of the little creature in the very act of jumping over a bottle which had just lighted upon the table, 'I'll shake you into a kitten, that I will!' (Carroll 239)

## **Conclusion**

Lewis Carroll ends the fantasy with a thoughtful question which could be a common question regarding the actuality of living. He titles the twelfth chapter with a question: WHO DREAMED IT? It is a relevant question considering the dilemma of identifying whether the life led by a person is his own dream or someone else's. It is a fact that the life of a person is not actually controlled by one single factor or one single person. It is an overall amalgamation of influence put on by a variety of factors around a person. Someone other than the person himself designs the track of movement like in a chess board game.

'Now, Kitty, let's consider who it was that dreamed it all. This is a serious question, my dear, and you should not go on licking your paw like that—as if Dinah hadn't washed you this morning! You see, Kitty, it must have been either me or the Red King. He was part of my dream, of course—but then I was part of his dream, too! Was it the Red King, Kitty?' (Carroll 244)

She directs the confusing question on to the readers. "Which do *you* think it was?"

Edmar Mednis, an American Chess player once said: "After a bad opening, there is hope for the middle game. After a bad middle game, there is hope for the endgame." Yes. The game of chess can have three phases of game, same in the case of life. If the beginning did not go well, there are chances for rectifying our mistakes.

Through the critical analysis of the *Through the Looking Glass*, it can be interpreted that the track of life is similar to the war in a chess board game. The struggles in life can be equated to the fight within the 8x8 grids where the opponent can be anything that comes as an

obstacle to our interest to become the queen like Alice or to win the game by trapping the opponent's soul piece in a 'checkmate'.

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