



Lewis Carroll: A Biography

By Morton N. Cohen

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Under the pen name Lewis Carroll, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson became a legend for his children's books, which broke the constraints of Victorian moralism. Thirty years in the writing and drawn from a voluminous fund of letters and diaries, this exemplary biography conveys both the imaginative fancy and human complexity of the creator of Alice in Wonderland. Photos.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Biography of the multitalented author and mathematician.

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From Library Journal

In his time, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson was known to the world as an outstanding pioneer photographer of children, particularly of female children, as well as for being the author Lewis Carroll. One of Dodgson's "child-friends," Alice Lidell, served as the inspiration for his literary Alice. These child-friend associations subjected Dodgson to public scrutiny, gossip, and suspicion concerning his emotional and sexual proclivities, suppressed though they may have been. Dodgson chose to "let them talk." Biographer Cohen (Lewis Carroll: Interviews and Recollections, Univ. of Iowa Pr., 1988) uses previously unavailable family and personal documents, diaries, and letters to show that the shy bachelor Dodgson, Oxford mathematics don and lecturer, held himself to the strictest of moral codes. While Lewis Carroll has been probed and analyzed by countless writers (see, for instance, John Pudney's *Lewis Carroll and His World*, 1976), this book is about the intimate and complex life of the man behind all those who lived on the other side of the looking glass. Recommended for all literature collections. —Robert L. Kelly, Fort Wayne Community Schs., Ind.

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From [Booklist](#)

Cohen has studied the great Victorian children's author Lewis Carroll for more than 30 years and is the logical person to write a penetrating biography of him. Bedecked with period photographs, including many of Carroll's own, and with letters and drawings by him, too, that is what this big book is. Cohen does not, however, proceed strictly chronologically through the life of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, the Oxford mathematics instructor who adopted the pen name by which he became world famous when he published *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). He begins straightforwardly tracing Dodgson's early years up through his most productive decade, the 1860s, but then retraces his steps in order to examine Dodgson's achievements and personality. He offers separate chapters on Dodgson's attitude toward children, the Alice books, Dodgson's lifelong pursuit of friendships with little girls, and the deep spiritual crisis that coincided with his 1860s productivity; then, after another eventful chapter about Dodgson's professional triumphs, chapters on his social personality, the shadow his father (an influential Anglican minister) cast upon his life, and his religious faith. The last chapters return to chronological presentation but do not stint analysis of Dodgson's later writings; indeed, throughout Cohen strives to account for how this quietly troubled, deeply religious, profoundly creative man produced not just his masterpieces for children but his excellent collodion process photographs, his innovative mathematical texts, and even his massive and frequently ingenious correspondence. Every lover of Carroll and of Victoriana should consider this a must-read book. —Ray Olson

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