

Zigzag & And
Longer Writing — Independent Practice
Down the Rabbit-Hole

Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

5.1 State a central idea

Directions: A central idea controls an entire response. It may explain what happens, interpret why it matters, or make a defensible argument. It should be specific enough to guide several paragraphs and grounded in the excerpt.

Worked example: Topic: *Alice during the fall*. Weak idea: *Alice falls*. Strong central idea: *The long fall gives Alice time to turn danger into observation and imaginative thought*. The strong version previews ideas a response can develop.

1. Write a central argument about why Alice follows the Rabbit. Include the Rabbit's unusual behaviour and Alice's response.

Solution: Alice follows the Rabbit because its watch and waistcoat-pocket make her curiosity stronger than her caution.

2. Write a central explanation of how Alice's thoughts change during the excerpt. Include her observations and her later questions.

Solution: Alice's thoughts move from noticing real objects in the well to imagining places and asking playful questions about Dinah.

3. Decide whether each central idea is focused enough for a longer response.
 - (a) *The White Rabbit's watch and waistcoat-pocket turn Alice's boredom into curiosity.* **focused**
 - (b) *Alice sees a jar.* **too narrow**
 - (c) *Alice's whole life is changed forever by the Rabbit.* **unsupported**

5.2 Write an engaging opening

Directions: An engaging opening creates interest without inventing facts. Begin with a thought that fits the response, narrow to the passage, and finish with the central idea. Write complete sentences.

Worked example:

Opening idea: *A quiet moment can change quickly when an ordinary rule is broken.*

Passage focus: *Alice is bored beside her sister when a White Rabbit speaks, carries a watch, and enters a rabbit-hole.*

Central idea: *The Rabbit changes Alice's boredom into curiosity and a dangerous descent.*

4. Write the opening for a response about Alice's attention during the fall.

Opening idea:

Solution: A person cannot control every unfamiliar event, but attention can still create a way to respond.

Passage focus:

Solution: While Alice falls through the well, she studies its sides, imagines destinations, and thinks about Dinah.

Central idea:

Solution: Alice keeps her mind active by combining close observation with imaginative questions.

5. Write a complete three-sentence opening for this central idea: *The Rabbit's unusual signs make Alice's choice understandable even though the fall is risky.*

Solution: A sudden interruption can draw a person into action before there is time for a plan. Alice is bored beside her sister when a White Rabbit speaks about being late, carries a watch, and disappears beneath the hedge. The Rabbit's unusual signs make Alice's choice understandable even though the fall is risky.

5.3 Write a satisfying ending

Directions: A strong ending returns to the central idea in fresh words, points to a concrete detail from the passage, and closes with an insight that follows from the evidence. Do not add a new plot event.

Worked example: Central idea: *The fall turns danger into observation and imagination.*
Ending: *Alice's descent is dangerous, but its length gives her time to study the well and imagine other countries. The empty jar shows that she remains careful even while falling, while the questions about Dinah show her mind wandering freely. An experience may be frightening and useful at the same time.*

6. Write an ending for this central idea: *Alice's curiosity changes an ordinary afternoon into an adventure.*

Solution: Alice's ordinary afternoon becomes an adventure because her curiosity responds to the Rabbit's extraordinary behaviour. Its watch and waistcoat-pocket prompt her to follow it down a rabbit-hole, which leads into a deep well. The excerpt suggests that a surprising detail can redirect a person's attention before the destination is known.

7. Write the three parts of an ending for this central idea: *Alice stays mentally active during a fall she cannot control.*

Return to the central idea:

Solution: Although Alice cannot control her descent, she keeps responding with alert observation and imagination.

Concrete detail:

Solution: She studies the cupboards and maps, guesses about the earth, and repeats questions about cats and bats.

Final insight:

Solution: When action is impossible, active thinking can still shape an experience.

5.4 Organise a longer response

Directions: Plan a response before drafting it. Give each paragraph one clear job. Use complete sentences for the opening and closing ideas; use concise notes for evidence and explanation. The plan should make the order of the final response easy to follow.

Worked example question: *How does the excerpt move Alice from boredom to wonder?*

Opening idea: *Alice's afternoon moves from boredom, through curiosity, into wonder.*

Paragraph 1 job: *show the starting boredom*

Evidence / explanation: *tired beside sister; book no pictures; hot day; nothing to do*

Paragraph 2 job: *show the trigger*

Evidence / explanation: *Rabbit says late; watch; burning curiosity; follows*

Paragraph 3 job: *show the wonder during the fall*

Evidence / explanation: *well objects; centre earth; countries; Dinah and bats*

Closing idea: *The unexpected Rabbit turns a dull moment into an active inner journey.*

8. Plan a longer response to *Why does the fall give Alice more than physical danger to think about?*

Opening idea:

Solution: The fall is physically dangerous, but its unusual length gives Alice time to observe, imagine, and care about what may happen next.

Paragraph 1 job:

Solution: danger and lack of control

Evidence / explanation:

Solution: tunnel dips suddenly; very deep well; no time to stop

Paragraph 2 job:

Solution: careful observation

Evidence / explanation:

Solution: too dark below; cupboards + shelves; maps + pictures; protects jar

Paragraph 3 job:

Solution: imaginative questions

Evidence / explanation:

Solution: centre earth; NZ/Australia; Latitude/Longitude; Dinah + bats

Closing idea:

Solution: Alice cannot steer her body, but her attention keeps giving shape to the descent.

9. Use your plan to draft three paragraphs, giving each paragraph its planned job.

Solution: The fall is dangerous, but its unusual length gives Alice more to think about than danger. The tunnel dips suddenly into a very deep well, leaving her no time to stop. She cannot control where she is going.

Yet the long descent gives Alice time to observe. She notices cupboards, bookshelves, maps, and pictures along the well. She also puts an empty jar into a cupboard because she fears dropping it on somebody below.

Alice's thoughts then move beyond the objects she sees. She wonders about the earth and other countries, remembers Dinah, and asks whether cats eat bats. Although she cannot steer her body, her observations and questions give shape to the descent.

5.5 Compare ideas fairly

Directions: A useful comparison names two ideas, gives a meaningful point of similarity or difference, and supports the comparison with evidence. Do not compare details that have nothing in common.

Worked example: *Alice's observations are tied to objects she can see, whereas her geography questions move beyond what she can verify. The cupboards, maps, and jar are evidence beside her; the centre of the earth and New Zealand or Australia are possibilities she imagines. The comparison shows two different ways she responds to uncertainty.*

10. Write a comparative central idea about Alice's observation of the well and her thoughts about geography.

Solution: Alice observes the well from direct evidence but uses imagination when she thinks about where the fall may lead.

11. Supply one piece of evidence for each side of the comparison.

Direct observation:

Solution: empty jar

Imaginative geography:

Solution: New Zealand or Australia

12. Write a paragraph comparing Alice's practical care with her playful questions.

Solution: Alice is practical when she handles the jar, but her thinking becomes playful when she asks about cats and bats. She refuses to drop the empty jar because she fears hurting somebody underneath, so she puts it into a cupboard. Later, as she becomes sleepy, she repeats the question of whether cats eat bats or bats eat cats. Her careful action responds to a possible real danger, while her repeated question gives her uncertainty a playful form. Together, the two moments show that Alice can be both responsible and imaginative during the same fall.