

Lewis Carroll's Illustrations



Lewis Carroll sent hundreds of letters to John Tenniel detailing every aspect of the *Alice in Wonderland* illustrations.

One letter went on for two pages about the White Rabbit, how his checkered waistcoat should have fortytwo checks showing, and how his cane should be a Briggs of London cane, since no one would believe in a rabbit carrying a cane made by R.F. Simmons. Carroll sent the exact cane to Tenniel with a note that said, DRAW ME.

Carroll also suggested the number 10/6 for the Mad Hatter's hat, and was so insistent on the number that he had an oversized top hat made and sent it to Tenniel with a note that said, WEAR ME.

When Tenniel asked the author if he had any preferences for the numbers of the playingcard gardeners, Carroll sent back an essay on prime numbers, along with dozens of card decks, all of them made up

entirely of twos, fives, and sevens. On the back of each card was written, *FIGURE ME*.

There were a couple months when Carroll only wrote letters describing what a smiling cat would look like. He included ripped-out pages from an anatomy book, and even a notarized letter from a veterinarian describing all the muscles that would be involved. Eventually Carroll just sent an entire cat. The note said, *TAKE CARE OF ME*.

And although Tenniel assured Carroll that he could draw Alice without a model, Carroll sent dozens of pictures of seven-year-old Mary Babcock, whom he thought would be the perfect Alice. When Tenniel still refused, Mary Babcock showed up on Tenniel's doorstep with a tag around her wrist that read, *PHOTOGRAPH ME*.

Eventually Carroll drew his own illustrations for *Alice in Wonderland* and sent them to Tenniel with a note that read, *SO AS NOT TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE*.

Tearing his hair out, Tenniel signed his initials to each of Carroll's drawings and sent them back to Oxford.

Carroll thought they were exquisite.