CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Lewis Carroll · *1865 · original English text*

A curious girl follows a talking rabbit underground and finds a world that will not keep its size, its rules, or its manners. Carroll's tale is play and trial at once: Alice must keep her head, tell the truth, and refuse a court that is only a pack of cards.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

When nothing underground will stay the same size or keep a rule, how is a child to know who she is, and what is worth obeying?

"Who in the world am I? Ah, that's the great puzzle!"

Alice · Chapter I, after she has begun to change size

Alice keeps asking the question the creatures will not answer well. She tries their games, learns their verses, and grows bold enough to refuse a queen's sentence and a court's evidence. Wonderland tests her sense; it does not give her a new self. She wakes on the bank, still Alice, having named the court for what it was.

KEY CHARACTERS

Alice
A clear-headed child who keeps asking who she is and will not pretend a bad court is just.

The White Rabbit
Anxious, late, and well-dressed; Alice's first guide and later a timid court official.

The Cheshire Cat
A grinning reasoner who says everyone here is mad, and can vanish all but the grin.

The Duchess
Harsh in the kitchen, oddly moralizing later; her baby becomes a pig.

The Mad Hatter and March Hare
Hosts of a tea-party stuck at six o'clock, full of riddles that have no answers.

The Queen of Hearts
A ruler whose first sentence is beheading; her fury is the law of the garden.

The King of Hearts
Weaker than his queen; he tries to run a trial by the book and cannot.

The Mock Turtle and the Gryphon
One weeps over a lost education; the other hurries Alice from lesson to dance.

KEEP YOUR HEAD

> *"Begin at the beginning," the King said gravely, "and go on till you come to the end: then stop."*
>
> **the King of Hearts** · Chapter XII

> *"You're nothing but a pack of cards!"*
>
> **Alice** · Chapter XII, at the trial

Grades 3–5

Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

Down the Rabbit-Hole

CHAPTERS I–II

Alice follows the White Rabbit, falls a long way, drinks and eats until she cannot keep a steady size, and weeps a pool of tears.

- The Rabbit mutters about being late and vanishes down a hole under the hedge.
- In a hall of locked doors she finds a little key and a bottle labeled "DRINK ME."
- She grows and shrinks until she swims in her own tears with a mouse and other creatures.

> *"Curiouser and curiouser!"*
>
> **Alice** · Chapter II, The Pool of Tears

02

Lessons, a Bill, and Advice

CHAPTERS III–V

A caucus-race leads nowhere; the White Rabbit takes her for his maid; a caterpillar tells her to keep her temper and recites 'You are old, Father William.'

- The Dodo proposes a caucus-race in which everyone wins and must have prizes.
- Alice is nearly burned out of the Rabbit's house when she grows too large.
- The Caterpillar's hookah advice is short: she must explain herself, though she cannot.

03

Pig, Pepper, and Tea

CHAPTERS VI–VII

A baby turns into a pig; the Cheshire Cat appears and vanishes; Alice sits down to a mad tea-party that never ends and never offers real tea.

- The Duchess's cook throws pepper and fire-irons; the baby in Alice's arms becomes a pig.
- The Cat tells her that everyone in Wonderland is mad, herself included.
- The Hatter, March Hare, and Dormouse live at six o'clock, riddling without answers.

> *"we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."*
>
> **the Cheshire Cat** · Chapter VI, Pig and Pepper

04

The Queen's Ground

CHAPTERS VIII–X

Alice is invited to play croquet with a queen who sentences everyone, then hears the Mock Turtle's sorrowful school-story and the Lobster Quadrille.

- The gardeners paint white roses red rather than face the Queen of Hearts.
- Croquet is played with flamingos and hedgehogs; the Cat's head appears and cannot be beheaded properly.
- The Gryphon takes Alice to the Mock Turtle, who weeps over a childhood of 'whiting' and 'reeling.'

> *"Off with her head!"*
>
> **the Queen of Hearts** · Chapter VIII, The Queen's Croquet-Ground

05

Who Stole the Tarts?

CHAPTERS XI–XII

The Knave of Hearts is tried on verses that prove nothing. Alice grows to her full size, refuses the court, and wakes on the bank beside her sister.

- The White Rabbit reads verses that name no crime clearly and convict no one justly.
- The King bids the witnesses begin at the beginning and go on to the end.
- Alice calls the court a pack of cards; the cards rise into the air, and she wakes.

> *"Begin at the beginning," the King said gravely, "and go on till you come to the end: then stop."*
>
> **the King of Hearts** · Chapter XII, Alice's Evidence

Identity | Rules and Justice | Curiosity | Courage to Refuse | Nonsense and Sense

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 3–5

1. The hosted text is the original English of Project Gutenberg #11, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865).
2. Alice's cry "Curiouser and curiouser!" is her own surprised grammar, not a correction the book mocks for long.
3. The Cheshire Cat's line is "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."—not the later shortened proverb alone.
4. The trial's evidence is verse that does not prove the theft. Alice's last courage is to name the court a pack of cards.
5. This is comedy and dream-logic, not a tract; the moral weight is in Alice's refusal to honor a lawless court.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #11, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/alices-adventures-in-wonderland/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.