

A Caucus-Race and a Long Tale

by Lewis Carroll *from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Lewis Carroll wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in 1865. The main character, Alice, has stumbled on to strange world after she follows a mysterious white rabbit. In this passage, Alice shrunk to a very small size and almost drowned. She has met some other creatures who also had a hard time in the water, including a lory, or parrot, a crab, a mouse, and a canary. The mouse had begun to tell a story, but Alice makes the mouse angry and it leaves.

'Please come back and finish your story!' Alice called after it; and the others all joined in chorus, 'Yes, please do!' but the Mouse only shook its head impatiently, and walked a little quicker.

'What a pity it wouldn't stay!' sighed the Lory, as soon as it was quite out of sight; and an old Crab took the opportunity of saying to her daughter 'Ah, my dear! Let this be a lesson to you never to lose your temper!' 'Hold your tongue, Ma!' said the young Crab, a little snappishly. 'You're enough to try the patience of an oyster!'

'I wish I had our Dinah here, I know I do!' said Alice aloud, addressing nobody in particular. 'She'd soon fetch it back!'

'And who is Dinah, if I might venture to ask the question?' said the Lory.

Alice replied eagerly, for she was always ready to talk about her pet: 'Dinah's our cat. And she's such a capital one for catching mice you can't think! And oh, I wish you could see her after the birds! Why, she'll eat a little bird as soon as look at it!'

This speech caused a remarkable sensation among the party. Some of the birds hurried off at once: one old Magpie began wrapping itself up very carefully, remarking, 'I really must be getting home; the night-air doesn't suit my throat!' and a Canary called out in a trembling voice to its children, 'Come away, my dears! It's high time you were all in bed!' On various pretexts they all moved off, and Alice was soon left alone.

'I wish I hadn't mentioned Dinah!' she said to herself in a melancholy tone. 'Nobody seems to like her, down here, and I'm sure she's the best cat in the world! Oh, my dear Dinah! I wonder if I shall ever see you any more!' And here poor Alice began to cry again, for she felt very lonely and low-spirited. In a little while, however, she again heard a little pattering of footsteps in the distance, and she looked up eagerly, half hoping that the Mouse had changed his mind, and was coming back to finish his story.

Questions

Write what you think the underlined word means in the sentence.

1. 'Hold your tongue, Ma!' said the young Crab, a little snappishly.
2. 'And who is Dinah, if I might venture to ask the question?' said the Lory.
3. This speech caused a remarkable sensation among the party.
4. 'I wish I hadn't mentioned Dinah!' she said to herself in a melancholy tone.