

# A Mad Tea-Party

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

One of the most famous scenes from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is this tea party. Alice, who has stumbled into a very strange land, joins the Mad Hatter, the March Hare and the Dormouse for an odd tea party.

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There was a table set out under a tree in front of the house, and the March Hare and the Hatter were having tea at it: a Dormouse was sitting between them, fast asleep, and the other two were using it as a cushion, resting their elbows on it, and talking over its head. 'Very uncomfortable for the Dormouse,' thought Alice; 'only, as it's asleep, I suppose it doesn't mind.'

The table was a large one, but the three were all crowded together at one corner of it: 'No room! No room!' they cried out when they saw Alice coming. 'There's plenty of room!' said Alice indignantly, and she sat down in a large arm-chair at one end of the table.

'Have some wine,' the March Hare said in an encouraging tone.

Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea. 'I don't see any wine,' she remarked.

'There isn't any,' said the March Hare.

'Then it wasn't very civil of you to offer it,' said Alice angrily.

'It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited,' said the March Hare.

'I didn't know it was your table,' said Alice; 'it's laid for a great many more than three.'

'Your hair wants cutting,' said the Hatter. He had been looking at Alice for some time with great curiosity, and this was his first speech.

'You should learn not to make personal remarks,' Alice said with some severity; 'it's very rude.'

The Hatter opened his eyes very wide on hearing this; but all he said was, 'Why is a raven like a writing-desk?'

'Come, we shall have some fun now!' thought Alice. 'I'm glad they've begun asking riddles.--I believe I can guess that,' she added aloud.

'Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?' said the March Hare.

'Exactly so,' said Alice.

'Then you should say what you mean,' the March Hare went on.

'I do,' Alice hastily replied; 'at least--at least I mean what I say--that's the same thing, you know.'

'Not the same thing a bit!' said the Hatter. 'You might just as well say that "I see what I eat" is the same thing as "I eat what I see"!'.

'You might just as well say,' added the March Hare, 'that "I like what I get" is the same thing as "I get what I like"!'.

'You might just as well say,' added the Dormouse, who seemed to be talking in his sleep, 'that "I breathe when I sleep" is the same thing as "I sleep when I breathe"!'.

'It is the same thing with you,' said the Hatter, and here the conversation dropped, and the party sat silent for a minute, while Alice thought over all she could remember about ravens and writing-desks, which wasn't much.

**Questions**

1. Besides Alice, who does most of the talking?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. A dormouse, like a bear, hibernates, or sleeps for long periods of time. Write a sentence or two from the passage that shows this.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Explain the difference between "I see what I eat" and "I eat what I see."
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How does Alice react when she finds out there is no wine?

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**Vocabulary List**

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. plenty
2. civil
3. severity
4. hastily
5. dropped

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**Context Clues**

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1) 'There's **plenty** of room!' said Alice indignantly, and she sat down in a large arm-chair at one end of the table.

- a. a limited supply    b. a small supply    c. a full supply    d. an endless supply

2) 'Then it wasn't very **civil** of you to offer it,' said Alice angrily.

- a. polite    b. rude    c. safe    d. important

3) 'You should learn not to make personal remarks,' Alice said with some **severity**; 'it's very rude.'

- a. kindness    b. hesitation    c. confusion    d. harshness

4) 'I do,' Alice **hastily** replied; 'at least--at least I mean what I say--that's the same thing, you know.'

- a. slowly    b. quickly    c. carefully    d. thoughtfully

5) 'It is the same thing with you,' said the Hatter, and here the conversation **dropped**, and the party sat silent for a minute..."

- a. became heated    b. stopped    c. started    d. changed