

The Queen's Croquet-Ground

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

In Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice meets many curious characters in the strange land she accidentally discovered. The Queen of Hearts is one of those strange characters. In this passage, the Queen has commanded Alice to join a very odd game of croquet.

'Get to your places!' shouted the Queen in a voice of thunder, and people began running about in all directions, tumbling up against each other; however, they got settled down in a minute or two, and the game began. Alice thought she had never seen such a curious croquet-ground in her life; it was all ridges and furrows; the balls were live hedgehogs, the mallets live flamingoes, and the soldiers had to double themselves up and to stand on their hands and feet, to make the arches.

The chief difficulty Alice found at first was in managing her flamingo: she succeeded in getting its body tucked away, comfortably enough, under her arm, with its legs hanging down, but generally, just as she had got its neck nicely straightened out, and was going to give the hedgehog a blow with its head, it would twist itself round and look up in her face, with such a puzzled expression that she could not help bursting out laughing: and when she had got its head down, and was going to begin again, it was very provoking to find that the hedgehog had unrolled itself, and was in the act of crawling away: besides all this, there was generally a ridge or furrow in the way wherever she wanted to send the hedgehog to, and, as the doubled-up soldiers were always getting up and walking off to other parts of the ground, Alice soon came to the conclusion that it was a very difficult game indeed.

The players all played at once without waiting for turns, quarrelling all the while, and fighting for the hedgehogs; and in a very short time the Queen was in a furious passion, and went stamping about, and shouting 'Off with his head!' or 'Off with her head!' about once in a minute.

Alice began to feel very uneasy: to be sure, she had not as yet had any dispute with the Queen, but she knew that it might happen any minute, 'and then,' thought she, 'what would become of me? They're dreadfully fond of beheading people here; the great wonder is, that there's any one left alive!'

Questions

1. What animals were used as croquet mallets in the game?
2. What animals were the croquet balls?
3. Who made the arches, or wickets?
4. What was Alice afraid the Queen might do to her?

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. curious
2. chief
3. puzzled
4. generally
5. conclusion
6. quarrelling
7. uneasy

Context Clues

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

1) "Alice thought she had never seen such a **curious** croquet-ground in her life..."

- a. fun b. imaginative c. confusing d. odd

2) "The **chief** difficulty Alice found at first was in managing her flamingo..."

- a. leader b. first c. worst d. main

3) "...it would twist itself round and look up in her face, with such a **puzzled** expression that she could not help bursting out laughing..."

- a. confused b. ashamed c. guilty d. worried

4) "...besides all this, there was **generally** a ridge or furrow in the way wherever she wanted to send the hedgehog to..."

- a. never b. typically c. seasonally d. hardly

5) "Alice soon came to the **conclusion** that it was a very difficult game indeed."

- a. beginning b. question c. puzzle d. decision

6) "The players all played at once without waiting for turns, **quarrelling** all the while, and fighting for the hedgehogs..."

- a. arguing b. dancing c. pushing d. whining

7) "Alice began to feel very **uneasy**: to be sure, she had not as yet had any dispute with the Queen, but she knew that it might happen any minute..."

- a. sure of herself b. proud c. uncomfortable d. angry