

The Alice Sound



READING ALOUD

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PERFORMING CONVERSATIONS

Lewis Carroll loved the theatre. He gives us so much information about the way characters speak that reading the *Alice* books can be like reading a play script. Alice speaks 'politely' and 'timidly' whereas the Caterpillar speaks 'contemptuously' (find out what that means!) We can tell their tone of voice but also the volume of what they say. Sometimes they whisper but sometimes they ROAR! The Queen of Hearts is particularly shouty and loud.

Read the following passages and pick one to read aloud with a partner. First, find all the instructions that Carroll gives about how to say the lines (TIP: look at the words after the speech marks) and then try to do that as you read.

Decide who will be who.

It might help to first re-write the passage as a play script, as follows:

Alice (shyly): I—I hardly know, sir, just at present—at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then

Caterpillar (sternly): What do you mean by that?

ALICE & THE CATERPILLAR

The Caterpillar and Alice looked at each other for some time in silence: at last the Caterpillar took the hookah out of its mouth, and addressed her in a languid, sleepy voice.

“Who are you?” said the Caterpillar.

This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, “I—I hardly know, sir, just at present—at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.”

“What do you mean by that?” said the Caterpillar sternly. “Explain yourself!”

“I can’t explain myself, I’m afraid, sir,” said Alice, “because I’m not myself, you see.”

“I don’t see,” said the Caterpillar.

“I’m afraid I can’t put it more clearly,” Alice replied very politely, “for I can’t understand it myself to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.”

“It isn’t,” said the Caterpillar.

“Well, perhaps you haven’t found it so yet,” said Alice; “but when you have to turn into a chrysalis—you will some day, you know - and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you’ll feel it a little queer, won’t you?”

“Not a bit,” said the Caterpillar.

“Well, perhaps your feelings may be different,” said Alice; “all I know is, it would feel very queer to me.”

“You!” said the Caterpillar contemptuously. “Who are you?”

Which brought them back again to the beginning of the conversation. (*Wonderland*, chapter 5)



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LIVE FLOWERS

“How is it you can all talk so nicely?” Alice said, hoping to get it into a better temper by a compliment. “I’ve been in many gardens before, but none of the flowers could talk.”

“Put your hand down, and feel the ground,” said the Tiger-lily. “Then you’ll know why.”

Alice did so. “It’s very hard,” she said, “but I don’t see what that has to do with it.”

“In most gardens,” the Tiger-lily said, “they make the beds too soft—so that the flowers are always asleep.”

This sounded a very good reason, and Alice was quite pleased to know it. “I never thought of that before!” she said.

“It’s my opinion that you never think at all,” the Rose said in a rather severe tone.

“I never saw anybody that looked stupider,” a Violet said, so suddenly, that Alice quite jumped; for it hadn’t spoken before.

“Hold your tongue!” cried the Tiger-lily. “As if you ever saw anybody! You keep your head under the leaves, and snore away there, till you know no more what’s going on in the world, than if you were a bud!”

“Are there any more people in the garden besides me?” Alice said, not choosing to notice the Rose’s last remark.

“There’s one other flower in the garden that can move about like you,” said the Rose. “I wonder how you do it—” (“You’re always wondering,” said the Tiger-lily), “but she’s more bushy than you are.”

“Is she like me?” Alice asked eagerly, for the thought crossed her mind, “There’s another little girl in the garden, somewhere!”

“Well, she has the same awkward shape as you,” the Rose said, “but she’s redder—and her petals are shorter, I think.”

“Her petals are done up close, almost like a dahlia,” the Tiger-lily interrupted: “not tumbled about anyhow, like yours.”

“But that’s not your fault,” the Rose added kindly: “you’re beginning to fade, you know—and then one can’t help one’s petals getting a little untidy.”

Alice didn’t like this idea at all: so, to change the subject, she asked “Does she ever come out here?”

“I daresay you’ll see her soon,” said the Rose. “She’s one of the thorny kind.”

“Where does she wear the thorns?” Alice asked with some curiosity.

“Why all round her head, of course,” the Rose replied. “I was wondering you hadn’t got some too. I thought it was the regular rule.”

“She’s coming!” cried the Larkspur. “I hear her footstep, thump, thump, thump, along the gravel-walk!”

Alice looked round eagerly, and found that it was the Red Queen. (*Looking-Glass*, chapter 2)



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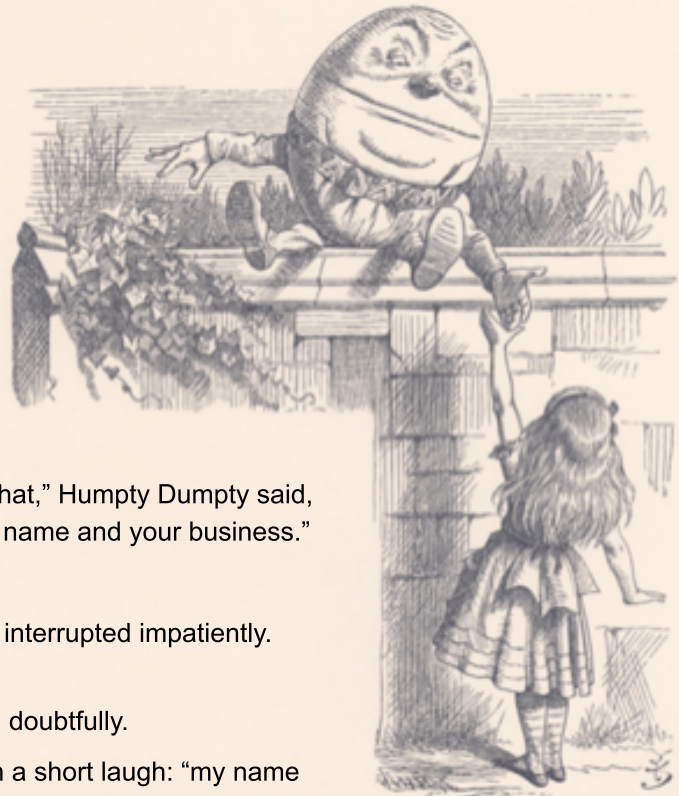
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HUMPTY

“Don’t stand there chattering to yourself like that,” Humpty Dumpty said, looking at her for the first time, “but tell me your name and your business.”

“My name is Alice, but—”

“It’s a stupid enough name!” Humpty Dumpty interrupted impatiently. “What does it mean?”

“Must a name mean something?” Alice asked doubtfully.

“Of course it must,” Humpty Dumpty said with a short laugh: “my name means the shape I am—and a good handsome shape it is, too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost.”

“Why do you sit out here all alone?” said Alice, not wishing to begin an argument.

“Why, because there’s nobody with me!” cried Humpty Dumpty. “Did you think I didn’t know the answer to that? Ask another.”

“Don’t you think you’d be safer down on the ground?” Alice went on, not with any idea of making another riddle, but simply in her good-natured anxiety for the queer creature. “That wall is so very narrow!”

“What tremendously easy riddles you ask!” Humpty Dumpty growled out. “Of course I don’t think so! Why, if ever I did fall off—which there’s no chance of—but if I did—” Here he pursed his lips and looked so solemn and grand that Alice could hardly help laughing. “If I did fall,” he went on, “The King has promised me—with his very own mouth—to—to—”

“To send all his horses and all his men,” Alice interrupted, rather unwisely.

“Now I declare that’s too bad!” Humpty Dumpty cried, breaking into a sudden passion. “You’ve been listening at doors—and behind trees—and down chimneys—or you couldn’t have known it!”

“I haven’t, indeed!” Alice said very gently. “It’s in a book.” (*Looking-Glass*, chapter 6)