***Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland***

***Chapter 6***

***Summary:***

The little house is watched over by a frog-faced doorman (or footman), who sits outside the door. As she watches, his fish-faced colleague comes with a croquet invitation from the queen. Alice asks how she can get inside but he offers her little help, since he is outside rather than inside it himself. The door opens and a plate comes flying out. The doorman vows to sit at his post for days. Alice loses patience and walks right in. Inside, she finds a couple of women making soup in the kitchen. The first woman, a Duchess, nurses a very ugly baby while the second, a cook, stirs a kettle full of highly peppered soup. The air is full of so much pepper than everyone is sneezing except the cook and a large cat that sits nearby, smiling at them all. Curious, Alice asks why the cat is grinning so broadly and she is told the cat is a "Cheshire cat."

The Cook and Duchess behave very rudely to each other and to Alice. The Duchess calls the baby a pig and insults Alice's intelligence, while the Cook constantly throws heavy dishes and pans at her employer. Alice tries to calm them both down, but is told that the world would go around faster if everyone minded their own business. Alice retorts, trying to show off her knowledge, talking about the turning of the earth on its axis, but when the Duchess hears the word 'axis' she thinks instead of an ax that can be used to chop off Alice's head. Alice goes on calculating the rotation of the earth while the Duchess sings a cruel lullaby to her child, one which tells of beating babies who sneeze. Then she tosses the child to Alice while she goes off to play croquet.

The uncooperative baby sobs, grunts, and squirms in Alice arms; as it fights to get loose it turns gradually into a small piglet. Relieved that the ugly baby has become a rather handsome pig, Alice lets it loose in the woods.

The Cheshire Cat appears above her on a limb, and she asks him where she should go from here. "That depends on where you want to go" replies the cat. Alice says she doesn't really care; she just wants to get somewhere. The cat answers very logically that it doesn't matter, in that case, which way she follows, since she'll always get somewhere if she walks far enough. Then he tells her that all people in the vicinity are mad, including her, or she wouldn't be here among them. He reminds her of the croquet game, where he will also be, and vanishes into thin air. Immediately he reappears to ask about the baby, finds it turned into a pig, seems unsurprised, and vanishes. Oddly, the cat has the strange ability to vanish so slowly, starting with the tail, that the only thing left visible is its large grin. Continuing on her bizarre journey, Alice comes upon the March Hare's house. She adapts her size and enters.

***Analysis:***

This chapter largely serves to introduce several new characters who play important roles in the second half of the story. The themes of transformation and identity continue to be developed, as the ugly baby boy turns out to make a far better pig. As Alice begins to accept such fluid transformations, (for example, letting the baby go in the woods instead of worrying about its change of state), she seems to grow wiser, more self-assured and able to handle odd new situations.

The characters exemplify two sorts of people. The duchess and cook are caught up in banal duties of daily life, such as domestic tasks and social obligations. They are too busy arguing to speak with Alice or give her much information. The Cheshire Cat, on the other hand, has a calm, detached perspective on the whole situation. He shows curiosity, but no surprise, at the baby's turning into a pig, and he rightly tells Alice that she will always arrive somewhere if she walks long enough. Implied in his advice to her is the idea that she must be more specific and deliberate about choosing her goals and destinations, if she wants to arrive somewhere worth going.

***Detailed Summary***

Alice sits drowsily by a riverbank, bored by the book her older sister reads to her. Out of nowhere, a White Rabbit runs past her, fretting that he will be late. The Rabbit pulls a watch out of his waistcoat pocket and runs across the field and down a hole. Alice impulsively follows the Rabbit and tumbles down the deep hole that resembles a well, falling slowly for a long time. As she floats down, she notices that the sides of the well are covered with cupboards and shelves. She plucks a marmalade jar from one of the shelves. The jar is empty, so Alice sets it down on another shelf. With nothing else to do, she speaks aloud to herself, wondering how far she has fallen and if she might fall right through to the other side of the earth. She continues to speak aloud, daydreaming about her cat Dinah. In the midst of imagining a conversation the two of them might have, she abruptly lands. Unhurt, Alice gets up and catches sight of the White Rabbit as he vanishes around a corner.

Alice approaches a long corridor lined by doors. The doors are all locked, so Alice tests them with a key that she finds on a glass table. After searching around, Alice discovers a small door behind a curtain. She tests the key again and finds that it opens up to a passage and a garden. Since the door is much too small for Alice to squeeze through, she ventures back to the table with the hope that she might find something there that would help her. A bottle marked “DRINK ME” sits on the table. Alice drinks the contents of the bottle after inspecting it to be sure it does not contain poison. Alice immediately shrinks, and though she can now fit through the door, she realizes she has left the key on the tabletop high above her. She alternately cries and scolds herself for crying before catching sight of a small cake with the words “EAT ME” underneath the table. Alice eats the cake with the hope that it will change her size, but becomes disappointed when nothing happens.

***Detailed Analysis:***

Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland begins with Alice dozing off as her sister reads to her, anticipating the strange and nonsensical events that occur throughout the book. As her sister reads, Alice nods off into a dream-like state in which she seems to catch sight of a fully dressed white rabbit capable of speaking English. Even before she enters Wonderland, she experiences phenomena that depart from the conventional rules of the real world. The plunge into the rabbit hole represents a plunge into deep sleep. Her dreams create a fully formed world that constantly shifts and transforms with its own unique logic. The slow fall imitates the shift from dozing off to deep sleep, beginning with Alice’s idle daydreaming and ending with her firmly placed in her dream world. Alice slowly acclimates to the dream world but does not let go of the established logic of the waking world. She marvels that after this fall, she would think nothing of falling off of the top of her house, much less down the stairs, even though the narrator reminds us that both falls would still likely kill her. Alice runs away from the Victorian world of her sister because she feels unfulfilled, but she quickly discovers that Wonderland will not fulfill any of her desires. Wonderland thwarts her expectations at every turn. The Rabbit represents this motif of frustrated desire. His antics inspire Alice to follow him down the hole and into Wonderland, but he constantly stays one step ahead of her. Led on by curiosity, Alice follows the elusive rabbit even though she does not know what she will do once she catches him. She pursues him out of pure curiosity but believes that catching him will give her some new knowledge or satisfaction. Even when the outcome is unknown, the act of chasing implies that a desired goal exists.

Alice cannot enter the garden even though she wants to, and her desire to enter the garden represents the feelings of nostalgia that accompany growing up. Carroll dramatizes the frustrations that occur with growing older as Alice finds herself either too small or too large to fit through the passageway into the garden. After drinking the potion, Alice shrinks and cannot reach the key on the table. The helplessness that comes with her exaggeratedly small size represents the feelings of insignificance of childhood. The growth spurt caused by the cake in Chapter 2 represents the awkward bodily transformations that come with puberty. Alice’s growth allows her the means to fulfill her destiny but literally reminds her that she is growing away from the pleasures of childhood. The idealized garden is now off limits to Alice, who can no more fit through the passageway than an infant could travel back to the safety and security of the womb.

[Lewis Carroll](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Alice-in-Wonderland/author/)'s father was rector of a church that featured a carving of a cat's head on one wall. Looked at from a child's perspective, the carving showed the cat to be smiling broadly. This carving may have inspired Carroll's creation of the [Cheshire Cat](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Alice-in-Wonderland/character-analysis/#Cheshire_Cat). Additionally, the expression "grinning like a Cheshire cat" was a familiar one in Carroll's day.

The Cheshire Cat makes the book's first mention of madness, a popular theme in Victorian literature. This is also the first time that [Alice](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Alice-in-Wonderland/character-analysis/#Alice) is warned that the characters she'll meet next are insane, though most of the characters she has already encountered have also seemed mad.

The baby's transformation into a pig is a good example of the dream motif that runs through the novel. In dreams, things can change in unexpected and illogical ways. The transformation of the baby boy is also in keeping with Carroll's opinion of little boys. "My best love to yourself," he once signed off in a letter to a little girl. He added, "To your small, fat, impertinent, ignorant brother, my hatred."

***Critical study:***

The Caterpillar's nasty mood, even if he does seem nonchalant, is a subtle symbol of all the verbal chaos in Wonderland. Yet, here, in Chapter VI, that linguistic nonsense is replaced by random, violent, physical disorder in the action of the story.

Alice has come upon a house, just as a Fish-Footman delivers a letter to the Frog-Footman of the house. The letter is an invitation, which the Fish-Footman reads: "For the Duchess. An invitation from the Queen to play croquet." In a marvelous example of Wonderland's semantic, verbal fun, the Frog-Footman reverses the invitation: "From the Queen. An invitation for the Duchess to play croquet." In reality, it should end with "From the Queen."

When Alice attempts to enter the house, she finds herself further into the world of nonsense. The Frog-Footman is sitting before the door and is totally uncooperative as she knocks at the door. He replies to her every question in "absurd" reasoning — as if Alice had suddenly found herself in a Samuel Beckett play. With elegant precision, the Frog-Footman explains that her knocking on the door is useless because he can only answer the door from inside. Again, we see an illustration where the reply to a question is never addressed to the question, but to something else. Alice's knocking on the door is "useless," she is told, because the Frog-Footman, who opens the door from inside the house, is now outside; thus, he can't answer her; and, in any event, the noise from inside the house would prevent the Frog-Footman from hearing her knock even if he were inside. Truly, this is the World of the Absurd.

Yet, this kind of confusion is quite normal in Wonderland; all of reality here is viewed, so to speak, on a scale of values which are completely alien to the "normal" Victorian world of Alice.

A large plate suddenly comes flying out of the house and barely misses hitting the Frog-Footman's head. The Frog-Footman is totally oblivious to this. And his indifference to chaos is characteristic of Wonderland's creatures and indicates to Alice that there surely must be an underlying order here. Or perhaps it involves only a fatalistic indifference. For the Caterpillar and the Frog-Footman, things have no purpose. "I shall sit here," the Frog-Footman muses, "on and off for days and days."

"But what am I to do?" asks Alice.

"Anything you like," says the Frog-Footman.

The Frog-Footman's reply to Alice's question is idiotic nonsense, and with a child's simplicity, Alice finds the Frog-Footman's values totally illogical. Alice has been brought up to believe that things should be done and that they should be done with a purpose. In her world, there is order and there are schedules and tasks to be accomplished at certain times. Carroll's method in creating the tension between these two worlds is to increase the difference in the values "above-ground" and those of Wonderland. One is, therefore, not entirely correct in relating Wonderland's anarchy and nonsense to the creatures' irrational behavior. Alice, in fact, is making the assumption that there is — and should be — an order here; she is trying to make logic from illogic. Wonderland is a world of illogic, and Alice, as a proper little Victorian girl, keeps trying throughout the novel to relate, logically, to these creatures — who seem like adults and who, therefore, should be logical.

The creatures' acceptance of disorder may seem to be a parody of reality to the reader. Yet Wonderland's chaos is not altogether unreal. Our own reality, as a historical one, is impermanent and never without some degree of ambiguity. When we consider what has been accepted as "reality" throughout the ages regarding our world and its place in the Order of Things, we see how flimsy a word "logic" can be. Indeed, Albert Einstein, the father of relativity, was deeply worried that God was "playing dice with the universe." If Alice fails to discover a correlation between her reality above-ground and her dream, it must be because she is "inside" her dream. To put it another way, one might even say that she is trapped in an unadjustable frame of meaning. For her, there is no scale of values except the one which she brings to Wonderland. She has a strong sense of being lost and abandoned; but the creatures know where they belong, and none of them identifies with her plight. Nor are the creatures able to befriend her. Note that Alice meets no other children like herself in Wonderland. And the creatures all speak to her on the inscrutable and mysterious level of adults. Unless they direct her to do something, their utterances are quite beyond her comprehension. In that sense, in Alice's dream, they are echoing memories of the many puzzling things that adults living above-ground have said, things that Alice did not understand.

Inside the house, Alice meets the Duchess, who nurses a crying baby. A cook, meanwhile, stirs a cauldron of soup and, indiscriminately, she shakes a pepper mill. The baby is crying, and it is sneezing, it seems, because of all the flying pepper. Next to the cook sits the Cheshire-Cat with his famous smile. The kitchen is in an absolute turmoil. But the Duchess ignores the sneezing, the crying, and the cook throwing pans. Alice watches silently as the Duchess brutally shakes and pounds the baby. The Duchess' rudeness and cruelty is the most extreme thus far in the story; even the cook is provoked to the point of directing her pans at the Duchess. Calmly, the Duchess ignores the others' reactions.

"If everybody minded their business," the Duchess says, "the world would go around a deal faster than it does."

"Which would not be an advantage," observes Alice.

"Talking of axes," says the Duchess, "Chop off her head!" The Duchess is abominable, and the baby bears the worst of her cruelty. While violently throwing the baby around, the Duchess sings a crude and savage lullaby:

Speak roughly to your little boy,  
And beat him when he sneezes:  
He only does it to annoy,  
Because he knows it teases.

The cook and the baby then recite a chorus to each stanza:

Wow! wow! wow!

This verse, like the others before it, is another parody of a well-known poem in Carroll's time. Alice is rightly appalled at the lullaby's sentiments and the Duchess' cruelty. Every now and then, the Duchess calls the baby "Pig!" This is proof enough that the Duchess has a barbarous nature.

As the Duchess prepares to go play croquet with the Queen, she tosses the baby to Alice. Suddenly, Alice feels maternal and thinks that she must save the baby from the violent Duchess and from the crazy cook. But in the next moment, Alice finds that her sympathy is falsely placed. The baby struggles to get out of her embrace, and before Alice's very eyes, the baby is transformed into a grunting pig.

Confident that she was doing the right thing — despite the metamorphosis that is happening before her very eyes — Alice still finds her good intentions subverted by Wonderland's absurdities. Finally, she has no choice but to let the pig trot off, but she cannot let it go without a twinge of guilt. She considers it a handsome pig — but an ugly baby. Implicit in this observation is the assumption that "all things have a silver lining," a very Victorian type of thought. Alice remembers children who "might do well as pigs . . . if one only knew the right way to change them."

Alice has a new sense of self-satisfaction and superiority that has been reinforced by the contemptible behavior of the Duchess. She "saved" the pig/baby. Indeed, in the face of the rudeness she has experienced, Alice is finding that she doesn't have to struggle so hard to remain a "lady." All she has to do is not react to the crazy provocation that she meets. But even so, her moral superiority illustrates her painful isolation, and not even the smiling Cheshire-Cat enables her to relax for very long, for despite his wonderfully large smile, the cat has "long claws and a great many teeth."

Just after the pig trots away, Alice notices the Cheshire-Cat sitting on a bough in a tree. Whereas the Duchess is unpleasant and threatening, the friendly Cheshire-Cat treats Alice with a measure of respect — though he is no less maddening in his response to her questions. The Cat is neither didactic nor hostile; still, he is no less inconsistent. If he doesn't snap at her, he still confuses her. Seemingly, he is an honest cat, but Alice cannot make sense of his "honesty." For example, when Alice asks him which way to go, he responds: "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to." As Alice responds that she doesn't care, he replies: "Then it doesn't matter which way you go." He assures her that she will get somewhere if she only walks long enough; she is sure to reach the same destination regardless of the direction that she takes. Unlike the other creatures, the Cheshire-Cat does seem fair. However, he too creates frustration within Alice in exactly the very same illogical ways that adults have so often verbally confused Alice. And, in addition, his constant disappearances and reappearances are terribly distracting.

"How do you know I'm mad?" asks Alice.

"You must be or you wouldn't have come here," the cat says.

Alice then contradicts the cat when he claims to growl. "Call it what you like," he says. Then, in a clairvoyant moment, he casually mentions that he'll see Alice at the Queen's croquet game. At this point, Alice hasn't even been invited to the game, nor has she indicated any intention of going. But like the Frog-Footman, the Cheshire-Cat transfigures reality and anticipates events. He's not surprised that the baby became a pig; he's only uncertain whether Alice said "pig" or "fig." Ultimately, his smile is his most enduring and least confusing aspect. Alice complains that his vanishing and reappearing "so suddenly" make her dizzy. She asks him not to disappear; his response is to "slow down" his disappearance so that he appears to dissolve; in the end, only his grin remains, and then it too disappears. The Cheshire-Cat's smile is the embodiment of Wonderland's riddle; it is as famous and as enigmatic as Mona Lisa's smile.

Curiously, it is the Cheshire-Cat who offers Alice a "meaning" to Wonderland's chaos. Alice's curiosity has led her into a mad world, and she has begun to wonder if she herself is mad. She realizes that there is just a possibility that she may be mad! And the fact that Alice is, finally, not surprised at the cat's vanishing does indicate a kind of madness on her part. And after being told that the Mad Hatter and the March Hare are also mad, Alice still insists on meeting them. In her conversation with the cat, Alice tries to come to terms with madness, but it seems that she has no choice in the matter. All roads, as it were, lead to mad people, and she seems to be one of them. The cat's grin undermines her security in anything she hears because the connection between subject (cat) and attribute (grin) has been severed. "Well," [Alice thought], "I've often seen a cat without a grin . . . but a grin without a cat! It's the most curious thing I ever saw in all my life."

Here is a smile without a face, without any substance — just a smile. The smile has become a nightmare of perplexity. Yet what the cat told Alice is logical; she can get somewhere by walking long enough in any direction. But it is not the answer to the question which Alice asked. Thus, the cat's responses to her inquiries are scaled to very different values than the values above-ground in Alice's familiar Victorian world. And looked at objectively, the Cheshire-Cat does not really accept Alice as an equal. He patronizes her gullibility as any adult might play with a child. In the end, Alice doesn't learn anything from him.

Soon, Alice finds the house of the March Hare. Since it is May, she reasons (a wrong thing to do in Wonderland), the Hare should be "mad" only in March. She nibbles at her mushroom until she becomes taller; increasing her size gives her more self-confidence, but she still has not learned that getting smaller or larger by such means will not enable her to deal with Wonderland any better.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part***

***Summary Part 1:***

[Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/alice) stands outside, trying to decide what to do. She is interrupted by the appearance of two creatures, dressed like footmen, but with the faces of a fish and a frog. They are exchanging invitations. The Fish footman hands the Frog one from [the Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/the-queen-of-hearts) to [the Duchess](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/the-duchess) to play croquet and the Frog delivers the same invitation in reverse. Then the footmen bow and get their powdered curls tangled together. Alice laughs and dashes back into the forest so they can’t hear her. When she comes back, the Frog is sitting beside the door, looking mindlessly up at the sky.

***Analysis Part 1:***

The ridiculousness of a frog and a fish as footmen is just plain funny, first of all. But so is the idea of the two footmen delivering identical invitations to each other—it is as if both the Duchess and the Queen want to be able to take credit for the croquet event that both of them are going to, both want to be host. This again foregrounds and parodies the way that adults jockey for position, and try to make themselves look and be powerful, at each other’s expense (even as they give lessons to their children to not act that way at all).

***Summary part2***

When [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/alice) approaches, The Frog tells her that there is no use knocking, because he is outside, and there is such a racket inside that no one would hear. Alice hears crashing and screaming coming from inside the house. Alice asks how she will get in, if knocking will do no good. The Frog replies indirectly that if she were inside, she could perhaps knock and he could let her out. He plans to sit where he is for the next day.

***Analysis part 2:***

A number of times Alice has wished to go home when she was confronted by the strange rules or isolating failure to communicate when in Wonderland. Here is a Wonderland home—a domestic scene—but the comfort Alice expected to find in a “home” is missing. As if to hammer that home, the frog reverses the conventions of inside and outside, suggesting knocking to get out instead of in.

***Summary part 3***

Just then, the door opens and a plate comes flying out, skimming the Frog’s head. He still will not give [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/alice) a proper answer and she feels quite frustrated at everybody’s contrariness, so she lets herself in to the house, coming straight away into a kitchen, where a [cook](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters) is stirring a cauldron and [the Duchess](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/the-duchess) is sitting, nursing a baby. Everybody is sneezing because of the excessive amount of pepper the cook is putting in the soup; everybody except a [cat](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/the-cheshire-cat), which sits on the hearth, smiling. [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/alice) asks the group nervously why the cat is smiling, and [the Duchess](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/the-duchess) merely explains that it is a “Cheshire” cat and then shouts “Pig!” at her baby. Alice says she has never known a smiling cat, to which the Duchess insults her lack of knowledge, but before Alice can be much offended, the cook starts throwing things across the room, often hitting the Duchess and the child.

***Analysis part 3:***

The scene inside is very domestic...until you encounter the comically grotesque details of it, with the cook producing a soup so peppery people can barely breathe much less eat it, and the Duchess shouting insults at her baby. Meanwhile, the Duchess acts like an “adult” toward Alice, voicing judgments about her knowledge. The way the Duchess deals with the chaos around her suggests the image of a matronly woman, but she actually has no control, as the cook’s actions indicate.

***Summary part 4:***

[Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/alice) shouts at the [cook](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters) to stop and the Duchess says angrily that the world would go round faster if people stopped interfering. The Duchess doesn’t want to talk about figures – she starts singing a lullaby to the baby and shaking it violently. Soon, the cook joins in the singing and the whole room is howling.

***Analysis part 4:***

The Duchess tells Alice off but uses nonsensical proverbs that alert us to the fact that she has shoddy knowledge herself. She is also a terrifying mother. She does all the typical maternal things, singing and scolding, but in a ridiculous and careless way.

***Summary Part 5:***

Then the [Duchess](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/the-duchess) throws the baby to Alice to nurse while she gets ready for the croquet match. With great difficulty, Alice figures out how to hold the baby and carries it outside, thinking it would be murder to leave it in the hands of the Duchess. Then she notices how pig-like the child really is, with a turned up snout. It starts grunting, and Alice reminds it that grunting is not a proper way to express itself. The child keeps grunting. Alice sees that it is definitely becoming more pig than baby, and sets it on the ground. She knows some other children who would be better as pigs, she thinks.

***Analysis Part 5:***

The Duchess’s relationship with the pig/baby is a mockery of all the kinds of mothering that Alice has learned is appropriate for mother/child relationship. It also seems likely that the pig/baby may not actually be related to the Duchess. Wildness and domesticity have become confused here, and Alice, always eager for things to belong to the right categories (as she’s been taught that they should), does the right thing in her eyes by replacing the pig to its natural environment. At the same time, Alice recognizes that she knows many children who themselves have piglike attributes—in thinking this she is confusing categories of pig/child in much the same way as the pigeon confused the categories of girl/serpent.

***Summary Part 6:***

[The Cheshire Cat](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/the-cheshire-cat) appears, grinning as before. [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/alice) asks it which way to go. The Cat replies that the answer depends where she is trying to get to, but since Alice doesn’t mind, only that she gets somewhere, the Cat says that all directions lead to somewhere. Alice asks what kind of people she will find in each direction. The Cat points in one direction to a [Hatter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters), and the other to a [March Hare](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters), both mad; everybody is mad here, he says, even Alice. He says he knows he is mad, because he does everything in an opposite way to a dog, who they agree is a very sane animal.

***Analysis Part 6:***

When Alice asks the Cheshire Cat which way she should go she is making an assumption that the Cat will understand that she is looking to go to the best or right place. The Cat, though, refuses to grant such an assumption or to privilege one place over another. In so doing, it makes clear the assumption Alice was originally making. The Cat proclaims that Alice must be mad because everyone in Wonderland is mad, and she is in Wonderland, has the formulation of a logical statement and yet it comes to an illogical end.

***Summary Part 7:***

[The Cat](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/the-cheshire-cat) asks [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/alice) if she is going to play croquet with the [Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/the-queen-of-hearts) today but Alice hasn’t been invited. Nevertheless, the Cat says he will see her there and proceeds to vanish. Moments later it appears again to ask what became of the baby. When Alice replies that the baby turned into a pig, he vanishes again, unsurprised.

***Analysis Part 7:***

The social etiquette of Wonderland is reminiscent of that in the real world—with get-togethers and invitations—and yet completely counter at the same time, in that the invitations don’t actually seem to matter.

***Summary Part 8:***

[Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/alice) decides to go towards the [March Hare](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters), thinking a Hare is much more interesting than a [Hatter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters), and shouldn’t be too mad, because it’s past March. As she sets off, the [Cat](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/characters/the-cheshire-cat) appears again to check if Alice had said “pig” or “fig”, and then finally disappears from the tail up, leaving the smile without the cat for a moment. Alice goes off in the direction of the March Hare and soon spots the Hare’s house, which has a roof thatched with fur. She eats a little of the mushroom to [grow](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/alice-s-adventures-in-wonderland/symbols/eating-and-drinking-growing-and-shrinking) bigger and nervously approaches the house.

***Analysis Part 8:***

Proverbs, sayings and idioms have an interesting place in Alice in Wonderland. Alice takes them very literally, as a lot of children do when they are learning how to use their expanding vocabularies, and these literal meanings control and shape to a large extent how things appear in Wonderland. The March Hare is a good example. The phrase “mad as a March hare” comes from the behavior of hares at mating season, in March, but in Wonderland, this creature is permanently mad.

***Important Quotations***

***Quotation 1:***

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"  
  
"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.  
  
"I don't much care where – " said Alice.  
  
"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.  
  
" – so long as I get somewhere," Alice added as an explanation.  
  
"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough." (Wonderland 6.45-50)

***Explanation:***

Alice has trouble accepting that everywhere could be somewhere. She thinks that she's open to exploring anything she comes across, but really she has expectations about what kind of place "somewhere" really is.

***Quotation 2:***

"There's no sort of use in knocking," said the Footman, "and that for two reasons. First, because I'm on the same side of the door as you are: secondly, because they're making such a noise inside, no one could possibly hear you." And certainly there was a most extraordinary noise going on within – a constant howling and sneezing, and every now and then a great crash, as if a dish or kettle had been broken to pieces.  
  
"Please, then," said Alice, "how am I to get in?"  
  
"There might be some sense in your knocking," the Footman went on, without attending to her, "if we had the door between us. For instance, if you were inside, you might knock, and I could let you out, you know." (Wonderland 6.6-8)

***Explanation:***

Being on one side of a door is a puzzling situation in Wonderland (and, later, in Looking-Glass World). Alice seems to think that she should try to get in, but the Footman suggests two other possibilities – that she might want to try to get out, or that she doesn't need to go through the door at all. Perhaps Alice's ideas about what freedom and confinement really are need some work.

***Quotation 3:***

Alice did not at all like the tone of this remark, and thought it would be as well to introduce some other subject of conversation. While she was trying to fix on one, the cook took the cauldron of soup off the fire, and at once set to work throwing everything within her reach at the Duchess and the baby – the fire-irons came first; then followed a shower of saucepans, plates, and dishes. The Duchess took no notice of them even when they hit her; and the baby was howling so much already, that it was quite impossible to say whether the blows hurt it or not. (Wonderland 6.29)

***Explanation:***

The treatment of the baby at the Duchess's house is probably the most disturbing element of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. The narrator seems to think that, as readers, we'll be amused by the baby's wailing and the abuse it receives. All we can say is that we're quite relieved when Alice rescues it and it turns into a pig, but we still can't forget this scene – the crying baby being shaken and hit really crosses the line.

***Quotation 4:***

Alice waited a little, half expecting to see it again, but it did not appear, and after a minute or two she walked on in the direction in which the March Hare was said to live. "I've seen hatters before," she said to herself: "the March Hare will be much the most interesting, and perhaps, as this is May, it won't be raving mad – at least not so mad as it was in March." (Wonderland 6.69)

***Explanation:***

Alice distinguishes several degrees of madness. Apparently madness is something that can wax and wane, that ranges across a broad spectrum.

***Quotation 5:***

Alice didn't think that proved it at all; however, she went on: "And how do you know that you're mad?"  
  
"To begin with," said the Cat, "a dog's not mad. You grant that?"  
  
"I suppose so," said Alice.  
  
"Well, then," the Cat went on, "you see, a dog growls when it's angry, and wags its tail when it's pleased. Now I growl when I'm pleased, and wag my tail when I'm angry. Therefore I'm mad."  
  
"I call it purring, not growling," said Alice.  
  
"Call it what you like," said the Cat. (Wonderland 6.57-62)

***Explanation:***

The Cheshire Cat reminds us that we often come up with complicated explanations for the crazy things we do to try and make them sound normal. But no matter how we try to excuse it, much of what we do is, well, mad.

***Quotation 6:***

"But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked.  
  
"Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat: "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."  
  
"How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice.  
  
"You must be," said the Cat, "or you wouldn't have come here." (Wonderland 6.53-56)

***Explanation:***

It's Alice's own streak of madness that makes it possible for her to get to Wonderland in the first place. Perhaps we as readers feel implicated, too – we wouldn't be able to follow her adventures if we didn't share her madness to some degree.

***Quotation 7:***

"In that direction," the Cat said, waving its right paw round, "lives a Hatter: and in that direction," waving the other paw, "lives a March Hare. Visit either you like: they're both mad." (Wonderland 6.52)

***Explanation:***

Madness is a fact of life in Wonderland. No matter where you go, everyone there is crazy. This ubiquitous madness seems to make everyone equivalent in some way – the Hatter is exchangeable with the Hare because they're both mad.