

Alice meets the Cheshire cat



Lewis Carroll (whose real name was Charles Dodgson) wrote the story *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* for the children of a friend. It was first published in 1865, and he later wrote other stories for children, including *Through the Looking-glass*.

The door led straight into a large kitchen, which was full of smoke from one end to the other. The Duchess was sitting on a three-legged stool in the middle, nursing a baby. The cook was leaning over the fire, stirring a large cauldron that seemed to be full of soup.

"There's certainly too much pepper in that soup!" Alice said to herself, between sneezes.

There was certainly too much of it in the air. Even the Duchess sneezed occasionally. As for the baby, it was sneezing and howling alternately without a moment's pause. The only things in the kitchen that did not sneeze were the cook and a large cat, which was sitting on the hearth and grinning from ear to ear.

"Please would you tell me why your cat grins like that?" asked Alice. She spoke a little timidly, for she was not quite sure whether it was good manners for her to speak first.

"It's a Cheshire cat," said the Duchess, "and that's why. Pig!"

The Duchess said the last word with such sudden violence that Alice quite jumped. Then she saw that the word was addressed to the baby and not to her. So she took courage, and went on again:

"I didn't know that Cheshire cats always grinned. In fact, I didn't know that cats could grin."

"They all can," said the Duchess, "and most of 'em do."

"I don't know of any that do," Alice said very politely. She felt quite pleased to have got into a conversation.

"You don't know much," said the Duchess, "and that's a fact."

Abridged from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*
Lewis Carroll (1832–1898)

- 1 What tells us that Alice has only just entered the kitchen?

- 2 How many people are sneezing?

- 3 They are sneezing because of (ring one):
the smoke an allergy to the Cheshire cat pepper in the air.
- 4 The baby is sneezing and howling alternately. What does 'alternately' mean?

- 5 What container holds the soup?

- 6 How is it heated?

- 7 Who does the duchess call 'pig'?

- 8 What does to 'get into a conversation' mean?

- 9 The word 'timidly' means _____.
- 10 The Cheshire cat is sitting 'on the hearth'. What is a hearth, and why do you think the cat was sitting there?

- 11 Which words explain that the Cheshire cat had a wide grin?

1 mark

1 mark

1 mark

1 mark

1 mark

1 mark

1 mark

1 mark

1 mark

2 marks

1 mark