
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

Alice in Wonderland

Part 3: The Caucus-race



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Narrator

Hello. So far, Alice had been very small, then very tall, then very small again in this strange Wonderland she found when she chased a talking rabbit and fell down the rabbit hole. Now she was swimming in a pool of her own tears, wondering what was going to happen next.

Alice

Ooh, whatever's this? It's a mouse! Hello mouse! You're a very big mouse... but then, I'm a very, very little girl today. Whatever next? **If this mouse talks, I won't be at all surprised**... Oh Mouse, do you know the way out of this pool? I'm very tired of swimming about here, Mouse! Mouse? ... Hmm. Perhaps it doesn't understand English. Maybe it's a French mouse! Now, what was that French I learned in school? Où est ma chatte?

Mouse

Chatte? Cat! Did you say cat?!

Alice

Oh, I'm so sorry Mouse! I forgot mice don't like cats.

Mouse

Would you like cats if you were me?

Alice

Well... perhaps not. But my cat Dinah is different. She's such a sweet, quiet thing. If you meet her, I'm sure you'll like her.

Mouse

We won't talk about cats any more, thank you!

Alice

We won't! Er... do you - do you er... like dogs? They can be so sweet and they kill all the rats... and... Oh dear!

Alice

Oh please come back, dear Mouse. **We won't talk about cats or dogs, if you don't like them.** Swim with me to the shore.

Narrator

So Alice and the mouse swam to the edge of the pool of tears. And as they swam, they were joined by lots of other **creatures** that had fallen into the pool, just like Alice and the mouse. There was a duck and a **dodo** and many other strange animals that Alice had never seen before. All the creatures had the same question.

Animals

How can we get dry? What can we do? I'm so far away from my nest, that pool was very wet and salty, oh it's no good for my fur, oh my feathers are all heavy, etc...

Dodo

We must have a Caucus-race!

Animals

Hooray! Hoorah!

Alice

What's a Caucus-race, Mr Dodo?

Dodo

The best way to explain a Caucus-race is to have a Caucus-race!

Narrator

It was the strangest race Alice had ever seen. The Dodo marked a circle for the racecourse and everyone stood anywhere they wanted to. Nobody said "One, two, three, go!" but everyone started running. Alice ran too, although she didn't quite know where she should run to. Everyone ran left and right in any direction they pleased. But after half an hour of running, everybody was quite dry again.

Dodo

The race is over!

Multiple voices

But who has won? Did I win? Who is the winner?

Dodo

Ah ...yes... Who has won? Who has won? Everybody has won and everyone must have **prizes!** And **she** must give the prizes!

Alice

Me?

Animals

Yes! Prizes! Prizes!

Narrator

Alice didn't have any prizes for a Caucus-race with her, but she searched in her pockets and found some sweets. She had enough sweets to give exactly one sweet to every runner.

Alice

Here you are, one for you, and one for you...

Animals

Thank you very much... oh dear, this has no taste whatsoever... oh, I shall choke...it's rather good, yes very tasty...

Alice

And one for you – now, does everybody have one? Oh, I must say, my cat Dinah would love a Caucus-race... Oh dear. I said it again.

Animals

Let's go! Come away! Time for bed! Oh, is it that time already? Cats - ugh!

Alice

Come back! Please! I'm sorry! Poor Dinah. Nobody seems to like her down here and I'm sure she's the best cat in the world!

Narrator

Poor Alice felt very lonely and sad. She cried quietly to herself for a while. But in a little while, she heard footsteps in the distance. She looked up to see who it was. Next time, I'll tell you who the footsteps belonged to, and how Alice got so big she filled a whole house, and what happened when she kicked poor Bill the lizard up and out of the chimney. Goodbye.

Vocabulary

shore

the place where the water of a lake, sea or river meets the land

creatures (singular: creature)

animals

dodo

a large bird that lived in the past and could not fly.

prizes (singular: prize)

something you get as a reward for winning a race or competition

destroy

to break something completely so it can't be used at all