

Wonderland Is a Strange Place

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When Alice was a little girl, she popped down the rabbit hole—and visited Wonderland, where she had strange adventures and interesting conversations. Later, she went through the Looking Glass and visited the courts of the White Queen and the Red Queen.

Time passed. Alice grew up and became a school teacher. But she never outgrew her habit of visiting Wonderland and Looking Glass House. She went back—every 11 years because 11 is a very nice number and odder than either 10 or 12.

So 1969 came around and Alice found herself at a wonderful reunion, a Mad Tea Party attended by the March Hare, the Hatter, the Dormouse, and all of the other inhabitants of Wonderland.

"No room, no room!" they cried when they saw Alice.

"There's plenty of room," said Alice indignantly. "That's a very rude way to greet a person who hasn't been back since 1958, 11 years ago." She sat down anyway.

"Tell us a story!" said the March Hare.

"Tell us about that queer place you come from," ordered the Queen of Hearts.
"Else, off with your head."

Oh dear, thought Alice. What shall I tell them? "Well," she said slowly, since I was last here some of the Earth people called Americans have flown around the moon and have come back to earth safely."

Everybody began throwing things and shouting "Lies!" The March Hare and the Hatter restored order by stuffing several of the animals into the teapot.

"It's not a lie," said Alice angrily. "The Americans are now ahead of the Russians in the space race. We all saw it on television, which has become a black box with brightly colored people in it."

The Cheshire Cat grinned. "You know what she claimed the last time she was here in 1958? She claimed that the Americans believed that the Earth people called the Russians were way ahead of the Americans in the space race because the Russians sent Sputnik into orbit around the earth."

"So she did," said the Caterpillar in sleepy voice. "And she told us how the American people came to blame the educators and the schools because the Russians were first in the space race. She said you could hardly pick up a newspaper or a magazine or listen to a radio or TV program that didn't condemn the wicked, stupid educators and their awful schools."

"I was telling the truth," burst out Alice. "There were Life magazine editorials and Admiral Rickover, and scientists and scholars, and journalists and politicians. They all

blamed the educators and the schools. So then Americans spent zillions of dollars on the improvement of science and mathematics education in the schools."

The King said judiciously, "Now the Earth people called the Americans have flown around the moon and come back safely. But the Russians have not been able to do this as yet. So now in 1969 the American people are doing well in this space race."

"Absolutely right," said Alice triumphantly.

"Therefore," said the Dodo, "the newspapers and the magazines and the radio and the TV programs must now be complimenting the helpful and wise educators and their fine schools for their contribution to the American space achievements. The scientists and scholars and journalists and politicians must be singing the praises of the educators and the schools."

"Not at all," said Alice. "After the Apollo 8 moon flight I read the papers and the magazines and listened to the radio and TV programs. I read the comments of the great American opinion leaders. And no one has even mentioned the educators or the schools as contributing to the Apollo 8 flight."

Everybody began throwing things more wildly than before and shrieking "Liar, liar!" at Alice. Several seized Alice and began stuffing her into the teapot.

"Nobody can be that inconsistent," said Humpty Dumpty as he shoved Alice deeper into the teapot.

"Americans can," cried Alice.

"Off with her head," said the Queen of Hearts.

"I'm telling it like it is," cried Alice desperately, while sinking deeper. "Instead, the educators and schools are now being blamed for centuries of mistreatment of Negroes by American society. The educators and schools are now being condemned for the social problems and the decay of America's neglected cities."

This was too much for the inhabitants of Wonderland, who clamped the top on the teapot containing poor Alice.

The Hatter, who sat on top of the teapot, said to the March Hare, "And Alice thinks that we are the ones who live in Wonderland!"

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