

Talking about *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

by Lewis Carroll · the free ebook lives at youngreaderguide.org/books/alice-in-wonderland/

Warming up

Easy openers. Anyone at the table can answer these, including the youngest.

1. Which Wonderland creature would you most want at your tea party, and which one would you quietly not invite?
2. If you fell down the rabbit hole tomorrow, which of Wonderland's rules would you break first?

The real conversation

Pick two or three, not all of them. Parents answer too, honestly.

1. Alice spends the whole book too big or too small, and never quite the right size for the door in front of her. When have you felt too big and too small on the very same day?
2. Everyone in Wonderland is completely certain (the Duchess, the Hatter, the Queen), and none of them make any sense. Alice mostly stays polite anyway. Should she have? When does being polite stop making sense?
3. The Queen shouts 'Off with their head!' all day long, and nobody ever actually loses one. So why is everyone still afraid of her? What makes a threat work?
4. The tea party runs on rules nobody explains: no room when there's plenty of room, riddles with no answers. Grown-up life has rules like that too. Name one, and work out together whether it has a reason.
5. At the end, Alice says 'You're nothing but a pack of cards!' and the whole dream collapses. What changed in that moment: them, or her?

The big one

Save it for last.

The serious, improving children's books of 1865 are all forgotten, and the nonsense one is still here. Why do you think the silly story outlived the sensible ones? What piece of your family's silliness deserves to last 150 years?

Do it *together*

Hold an unbirthday tea. It works for 364 days a year, so pick one. Everyone wraps an unbirthday present for someone else. The rule is it must already exist somewhere in the house, and the stranger the better. Each person also brings one invented Wonderland rule the table must follow for the whole tea. Riddles with no answers are encouraged; getting cross about it is very much in the spirit.