

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

CHAPTER 5:

A CATERPILLAR TELLS ALICE WHAT TO DO

Adapted for The Ten Minute Tutor by: Debra Treloar

The Cat-er-pil-lar looked at Al-ice, and she stared at it, but did not speak. At last, it took the pipe from its mouth and said, "Who are you?"



Al-ice said, "I'm not sure, sir, who I am just now... I know who I was when I left home, but I think I have changed two or three times since then."

"What do you mean by that?" asked the Cat-er-pil-lar.

"I fear I can't tell you, be-cause I don't know, my-self; but to change so man-y times all in one day, makes my head hurt."

"It doesn't," said the Cat-er-pil-lar.

"Well, may-be your head hasn't hurt yet," said Al-ice, "but when you have to change... and you will some day, you know... I think you'll feel strange then, don't you?"

"Not a bit," said the Cat-er-pil-lar.

"Well, you may not feel as I do," said Al-ice. "All I know is, it feels strange to me to change so much."

"You!" said the Cat-er-pil-lar with its nose in the air. "Who are you?"

Which brought them back to where they start-ed.

Al-ice was not pleased at this, so she said, in as stern a voice as she could, "I think you ought to tell me who you are first."

"Why?" asked the Cat-er-pil-lar.

As Al-ice could not think what to say and as the cat-er-pil-lar did not seem to want to talk, she turned a-way.

"Come back!" said the Cat-er-pil-lar. "I have some-thing to say to you!"

Al-ice turned and came back.

"Mind your tem-per," said the Cat-er-pil-lar.

"Is that all?" said Al-ice, as she hid her an-ger as well as she could.

"No," said the Cat-er-pil-lar.

Alice wait-ed a long time, while it sat and smoked, but did not speak. At last, it took the pipe from its mouth, and said, "So you think you have changed, do you?"

"I fear I have, sir," said Alice, "I don't know things I used to... and I only stay the same size for a short time."

"What things don't you don't know?"

"Well, I tried to say things I knew at school, but the words came out all wrong."

"Let me hear you say the poem, 'YOU ARE OLD, FATHER,'" said the Cat-er-pil-lar.

Alice folded her arms, and be-gan:

"You are old, Fath-er , ' the young man said,
'And your hair has be-come ver-y white,
And yet you stand all the time on your head...
Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

'In my youth,' the Fath-er said to his son,
'I feared it might in-jure the brain;
But now that I know full well I have none,
Why, I do it a-gain and a-gain.'

'You are old,' said the son, 'shall I tell you once more?

And you now weigh as much as a tonne;
Yet you turned a back som-er-sault in at the door...
Please, tell me now, how was that done?'

'In my youth,' said the father, as he shook his grey locks.
'I kept all my limbs ver-y sup-ple
By the use of this oint-ment... one shil-ling for the box...
Al-low me to sell you a coup-le.'

'You are old,' said the son, 'and your jaws are too weak
For an-y thing tough-er than soap;
Yet you ate up the goose, with the bones and the beak:
Please, how did you man-age to cope?'

'In my youth,' said his fath-er, 'I took to the law
And ar-gued each case with my wife;
And the ver-y great strength, which it gave to my jaw,
Has last-ed the rest of my life.'

'You are old,' said the son; 'one would hard-ly sup-pose
That your eyes were as stead-y as ev-er;
Yet you bal-ance an eel on the end of your nose...
What makes you al-ways so clev-er?'

'I have re-plied to three ques-tions, and that is e-nough,'
said the fath-er; 'don't give your-self airs!
Do you think I can lis-ten all day to such stuff?
Be off, or I'll kick you down the stairs!''

"That was not said right," said the Cat-er-pil-lar.

"Not quite right, I fear," said Al-ice, "some of the words are wrong."

"It is wrong from start to fin-ish," said the Cat-er-pil-lar.

After a while it said, "What size do you want to be?"

"Oh, I don't care what size, but I do not like to change so much, you know."

"I don't know!" it said.

Al-ice was much too cross to speak, for she had nev-er, in all her life, been talked to in that kind of rude way.

"Do you like what size you are now?" asked the Cat-er-pil-lar.

"Well, I'm not quite as large as I would like to be," said Al-ice; "three inch-es is such a small height to be."

"It is a good height, in-deed!" said the Cat-er-pil-lar, and sat it-self up tall as it spoke.

(It was just three inch-es high...)

"But I'm not used to it!" begged poor Al-ice.

And she thought, "I wish things here were not so strange!"

"You'll get used to it in time," said the Cat-er-pil-lar and put the pipe to its mouth. Al-ice wait-ed in case it chose to speak.

At last it took the pipe from its mouth, yawned once or twice, then got down from its mush-room and crawled off in the grass. As it went it said,

"One side will make you tall, and one side will make you small.

"One side of what?" thought Al-ice to her-self.

"Of the mush-room," said the Cat-er-pil-lar, as if it had heard her speak... soon it was out of sight.

Al-ice stood and looked at the mush-room a long time and tried to make out which were the two sides of it.

It was round, so this is a hard thing to do.

At last she stretched her arms round it as far as they would go, and broke off a bit of the edge with each hand.

"Now which is which?" she said to her-self, and ate a small piece of the right-hand bit, to see what it would do.

The next thing she felt, was her chin hit her foot with a hard blow.

She got a big fright at this quick change, but she felt that there was no time to be lost as she was shrink-ing so fast... so she took a bit at once from her left hand.

"Great, my head's free at last!" said Alice, with great joy, which quickly changed to fear when she found that her waist and hands were nowhere to be seen. All she could see when she looked down was a long neck, which seemed to rise like a plant stem out of a sea of green leaves from far below her.

"What can all that green stuff be?" said Alice. "And where has my waist gone? And oh! My poor hands, why can't I see them?"

She moved her hands as she spoke. The green leaves shook as if to let her know her hands were there, but she could not see them. As there seemed to be no chance to get her hands up to her head, she tried to get her head down to her hands and was happy to find that her neck would bend like a snake.

Just as she bent it down to dive in to the sea of green, (which she found out was the tops of the trees which she had just been walking under) a loud "hiss" made her draw back in haste!

A large bird had flown into her face, and struck her with its wings.

"Snake! snake!" screamed the bird.



"I'm not a snake," said Alice. "Leave me alone!"

"Snake, I say, Snake!" cried the bird, then added with a kind of sob, "I have tried lots of ways, but I do not like them."

"I don't know what you mean," said Alice.

The bird seemed not to hear her, but went on talking, "I've tried the roots of trees and I've tried a hedge, but those snakes! There is no way to please them. It is hard work to hatch the eggs, but now I have to watch for snakes night and day too! Why, I have not had a wink of sleep for the past three weeks!"

"It's sad for you to be so up-set," said Alice, who began to see what it meant.

"And just when I had built my nest in this high tree," the bird went on, raising its voice even higher, "just as I thought I should be free of them at last, they fall down from the sky! Ugh! Snake!"

"But I'm not a snake, I tell you!" said Alice. "I'm a... I'm a..."

"Well! What are you?" said the bird. "I can see you will not tell me the truth!"

"I... I am a lit-tle girl," said Al-ice. But she was not sure what she was, when she thought of all the chang-es she had gone through that day.

"I've seen girls in my time, but none with a neck like that!" said the bird. "No! no! You're a snake so don't say you're not. I guess next you'll say you don't eat eggs!"

"Of course I eat eggs," said Al-ice, "girls eat eggs just as much as snakes do, you know."

"I don't know," said the bird, "but if they do, then they are kinds of snake! That's all I can say."

This was such a new thing to Al-ice that at first, she did not speak. This gave the bird a chance to add, "You want eggs now, I know that much."

"But I don't want eggs and even if I did, I would-n't want yours. I don't like them raw."

"Well, be off, then!" said the bird as it sat down in its nest.

Al-ice crouched down through the trees as well as she could, for her neck would twist a-round the branch-es and now and then she had to stop to get them off.

At last, she thought of the mush-room in her hands.

Alice set to work with great care, to take a small bite first from the right hand, then from the left, till at last she came down to the right size. It was so long since she had been this height, that she felt quite strange, at first. But she soon got used to it.

"Good, there's half my plan done now!" she said. "How strange all these things are! I'm nev-er sure, what I shall be next! I'm glad... I'm back to my right size. The next thing is, to get in-to that gar-den... How that will be done, I would like to know?"

As she said this, she saw in front of her, a small house, not more than four feet high.

"Who lives there?" thought Alice, "it will not do at all, to walk up on them at this size. I would scare them out of their wits!"

So she ate some of the right hand bit, a-gain and did not dare go near the house until she had brought her-self down to nine inch-es high.

