

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Lesson Six

Level: Grades 3-12



John Tenniel, "White Rabbit." Preliminary drawing for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. 1864 or 65. 1954.0182

This pencil drawing by John Tenniel of the White Rabbit was the basis for the first text illustration that appears in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. As the story opens, Alice was sitting near her sister on a river bank when a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran by. She heard the rabbit say to itself "Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!" as it took a watch out of its pocket. "Burning with curiosity," Alice ran after the Rabbit and followed it down its rabbit hole, where her adventures began.

What do you notice about this rabbit? What details do you see?

What might the rabbit be thinking? How can you tell?

Where could the rabbit be? What do you see that makes you say that?



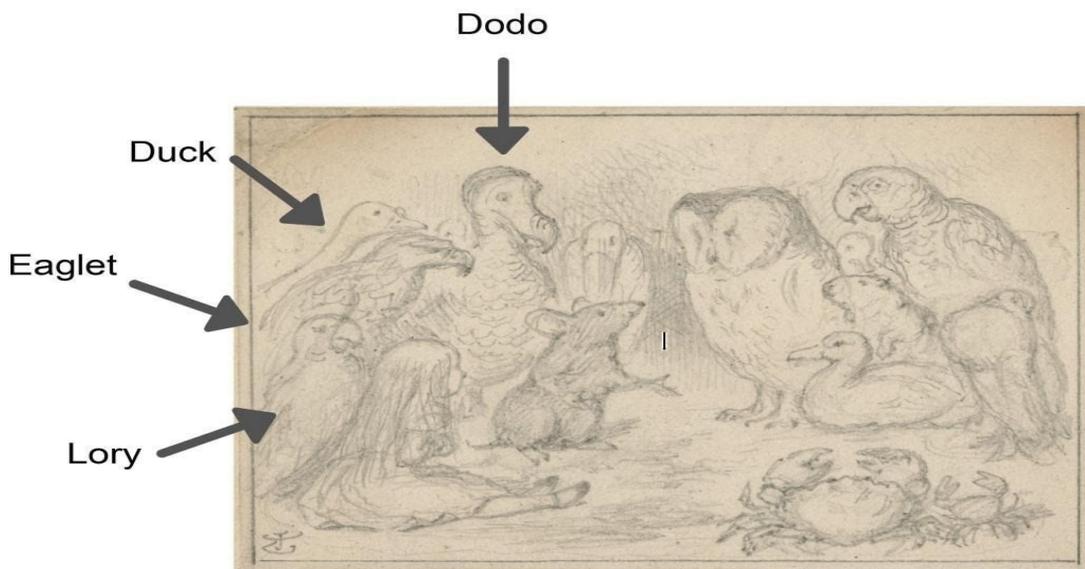
John Tenniel, "A Little Door." Preliminary drawing for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. 1864 or 65. 1954.0180

After Alice followed the White Rabbit down the hole, she landed in a long hallway with a little door about fifteen inches high opening to "the loveliest garden you ever saw." This pencil drawing by Tenniel shows her pulling back a curtain to reveal the door, which was locked. In the same hall was a small glass table with a tiny golden key that opened the lock, but Alice couldn't fit through the door. She found a bottle marked "DRINK ME" on the table. When she drank its contents she shrank to only ten inches high!

Describe the action in this scene. What is Alice doing?

What might Alice be thinking or feeling? What do you see that tells you so?

If you were Alice, would you want to go through the little door? Why or why not?



John Tenniel, "Sit Down All of You." Preliminary drawing for Alice's Adventures in Wonderland [1864 or 1865]. 1954.0183

Alice changed size repeatedly underground, growing to over nine feet tall and shrinking to less than one foot. At her tallest, she realized she wouldn't be able to fit through the little door leading into the garden and began to cry, "shedding gallons of tears, until there was a large pool all round her, about four inches deep." When she shrank again, she fell into the pool and "was up to her chin in salt water." In the pool she met a mouse, animals, and birds that had fallen into it, including "a Duck and a Dodo, a Lory and an Eaglet." After swimming to shore they had to dry off so the Mouse recited a passage from an English history book, which was "the driest thing I know." This pencil drawing shows Alice, the birds and others surrounding the Mouse. The Dodo is Carroll's reference to himself. He stammered and is said to have pronounced his name "Dodo-Dodgson." The Duck is his friend Robinson Duckworth, who accompanied them on the boat trip when the story was first told. The Lory, an Australian parrot, is Lorina, who was the eldest of the three Liddell sisters. The Eaglet is their youngest sister Edith. A photograph of Alice and her two sisters is included in the Photography section of this Guide.

What birds and animals do you see?

Compare the birds to each other. What is unique about each one? What do they have in common?

What are they all doing? How can you tell?

John Tenniel's illustrations for *Alice* are almost as well known as the text and helped shape how we see Alice and other characters. The book has also sparked the imagination of many other artists since then, including filmmakers (such as the well-known animated Disney version of the story).

Click here to read more about Tenniel and his work on *Alice*:

<http://www.theseashellpress.com/Alice/Tenniel.html>

Click here to see some early movies based on *Alice*: <http://www.themorgan.org/exhibitions/online/alice/58>

Click here to listen to music inspired by *Alice*:

<http://www.themorgan.org/exhibitions/online/alice/57>