

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Walrus and the Carpenter

By Lewis Carroll  
1872

*Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-1898) is better known by his pen name, Lewis Carroll. He was an English writer, mathematician, and photographer. Carroll is most well-known for his book Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. "The Walrus and the Carpenter" is a poem recited by two characters in Through the Looking Glass, Carroll's sequel to Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. In the poem, a walrus and a carpenter convince a group of young oysters to follow them. As you read, take notes on how the different Oysters react to the Walrus and the Carpenter.*

[1] The sun was shining on the sea,  
Shining with all his might:  
He did his very best to make  
The billows<sup>1</sup> smooth and bright —  
[5] And this was odd, because it was  
The middle of the night.

The moon was shining sulkily,<sup>2</sup>  
Because she thought the sun  
Had got no business to be there  
[10] After the day was done —  
"It's very rude of him," she said,  
"To come and spoil the fun!"

The sea was wet as wet could be,  
The sands were dry as dry.  
[15] You could not see a cloud, because  
No cloud was in the sky:  
No birds were flying overhead —  
There were no birds to fly.

The Walrus and the Carpenter  
[20] Were walking close at hand;  
They wept like anything to see  
Such quantities of sand:  
"If this were only cleared away,"  
They said, "it would be grand!"



*"Briny Beach" by Sir John Tenniel is in the public domain.*

1. a large mass of something, typically a cloud  
2. **Sulk (verb):** to be silent and bad-tempered

[25] "If seven maids with seven mops  
Swept it for half a year.  
Do you suppose," the Walrus said,  
"That they could get it clear?"  
"I doubt it," said the Carpenter,  
[30] And shed a bitter<sup>3</sup> tear.

"O Oysters, come and walk with us!"  
The Walrus did beseech.<sup>4</sup>  
"A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk,  
Along the briny<sup>5</sup> beach:  
[35] We cannot do with more than four,  
To give a hand to each."

The eldest Oyster looked at him,  
But never a word he said:  
The eldest Oyster winked his eye,  
[40] And shook his heavy head —  
Meaning to say he did not choose  
To leave the oyster-bed.

But four young Oysters hurried up,  
All eager for the treat:  
[45] Their coats were brushed, their faces washed,  
Their shoes were clean and neat —  
And this was odd, because, you know,  
They hadn't any feet.

Four other Oysters followed them,  
[50] And yet another four;  
And thick and fast they came at last,  
And more, and more, and more —  
All hopping through the frothy<sup>6</sup> waves,  
And scrambling to the shore.

[55] The Walrus and the Carpenter  
Walked on a mile or so,  
And then they rested on a rock  
Conveniently low:  
And all the little Oysters stood  
[60] And waited in a row.

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3. **Bitter** (*adjective*): angry or hurt  
4. **Beseech** (*verb*): to beg eagerly  
5. salty  
6. full of or covered with small bubbles

"The time has come," the Walrus said,  
"To talk of many things:  
Of shoes — and ships — and sealing-wax —  
Of cabbages — and kings —

[65] And why the sea is boiling hot —  
And whether pigs have wings."

"But wait a bit," the Oysters cried,  
"Before we have our chat;  
For some of us are out of breath,

[70] And all of us are fat!"  
"No hurry!" said the Carpenter.  
They thanked him much for that.

"A loaf of bread," the Walrus said,  
"Is what we chiefly<sup>7</sup> need:

[75] Pepper and vinegar besides  
Are very good indeed —  
Now if you're ready, Oysters dear,  
We can begin to feed."

"But not on us!" the Oysters cried,

[80] Turning a little blue.  
"After such kindness, that would be  
A dismal<sup>8</sup> thing to do!"  
"The night is fine," the Walrus said.  
"Do you admire the view?"

[85] "It was so kind of you to come!  
And you are very nice!"  
The Carpenter said nothing but  
"Cut us another slice:  
I wish you were not quite so deaf —

[90] I've had to ask you twice!"

"It seems a shame," the Walrus said,  
"To play them such a trick,  
After we've brought them out so far,  
And made them trot so quick!"

[95] The Carpenter said nothing but  
"The butter's spread too thick!"

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7. above all

8. **Dismal** (*adjective*): showing or causing sadness; very bad or poor

"I weep for you," the Walrus said:  
"I deeply sympathize."<sup>9</sup>

With sobs and tears he sorted out

[100] Those of the largest size,  
Holding his pocket-handkerchief  
Before his streaming eyes.

"O Oysters," said the Carpenter,  
"You've had a pleasant run!

[105] Shall we be trotting home again?  
But answer came there none —  
And this was scarcely<sup>10</sup> odd, because  
They'd eaten every one.

*"The Walrus and the Carpenter" (1872) by Lewis Carroll is in the public domain.*

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9. **Sympathize** (*verb*): to feel sorry for someone

10. hardly

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement best expresses a theme of the poem?
  - A. Trusting someone you don't know can have dangerous consequences.
  - B. Young people are often overwhelmed by what the world has to offer.
  - C. Children should always listen to the advice of their parents.
  - D. Sometimes bad people are not held responsible for their actions.
  
2. PART B: Which quote from the poem best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "The eldest Oyster winked his eye, / And shook his heavy head / Meaning to say he did not choose / To leave the oyster-bed" (Lines 39-42)
  - B. "'The time has come,' the Walrus said, / 'To talk of many things: / Of shoes — and ships — and sealing-wax'" (Lines 61-63)
  - C. "'Now if you're ready, Oysters dear, / We can begin to feed.' / 'But not on us!' the Oysters cried," (Lines 77-79)
  - D. "'O Oysters,' said the Carpenter, / 'You've had a pleasant run! / Shall we be trotting home again?'" (Lines 103-105)
  
3. PART A: How is the Walrus' view about eating the Oysters different from the Carpenter's?
  - A. The Walrus is excited about eating the Oysters, while the Carpenter feels guilty.
  - B. The Walrus feels bad about eating the Oysters, while the Carpenter doesn't care.
  - C. The Walrus changes his mind about eating the Oysters but the Carpenter does not.
  - D. The Walrus knows they need to eat the Oysters to survive but the Carpenter wishes they did not have to eat them.
  
4. PART B: Which TWO details from the poem best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "'Now if you're ready, Oysters dear, / We can begin to feed'" (Lines 77-78)
  - B. "'It was so kind of you to come! / And you are very nice!'" (Lines 85-86)
  - C. "'I wish you were not quite so deaf — / I've had to ask you twice!'" (Lines 89-90)
  - D. "'The Carpenter said nothing but / The butter's spread too thick!'" (Lines 95-96)
  - E. "'I weep for you,' the Walrus said: / 'I deeply sympathize.'" (Lines 97-98)
  - F. "'O Oysters,' said the Carpenter, / 'You've had a pleasant run!'" (103-104)

5. How does the characterization of the Oysters contribute to the poem's theme?

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