

The Walrus and the Carpenter

Narrative Poem by Lewis Carroll

Have you ever been **FOOLED?**

COMMON CORE

RL 5 Analyze how a particular stanza fits into the structure of a text and contributes to the development of the setting or plot.

It can be fun to trick people—to watch their faces as you convince them to believe that something wacky is actually true. It can even be fun to be tricked. Has anyone ever told you that you were going somewhere boring when in fact you were headed to a surprise party? But not all tricks are fun or funny. In “The Walrus and the Carpenter,” we see how easy it is to be fooled into doing something unwise.

CHART IT With a group of classmates, discuss what types of tricks are harmless and fun and what types of tricks can be harmful and cruel. Use a chart like the one shown to note your ideas.

<i>Harmless</i>	<i>Harmful</i>



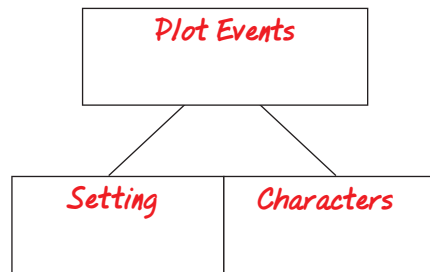
● TEXT ANALYSIS: NARRATIVE POETRY

“The Walrus and the Carpenter” is a **narrative poem**, a poem that tells a story. Narrative poems contain all the elements of poetry—such as rhythm, rhyme, and sound effects—but they also include the same narrative elements that any work of fiction does, such as

- plot
- setting
- characters

Identifying these elements will help you understand the ideas in a narrative poem.

As you read “The Walrus and the Carpenter,” note details about the plot events, setting, and characters in a story map like the one shown.



● READING STRATEGY: VISUALIZE

You’re about to read a poem with a vivid setting and some very unusual, fantastical characters. You’ll probably enjoy the poem more and understand it better if you can **visualize**, or picture in your mind, the setting and characters. To visualize, follow these steps:

- Pay attention to the descriptions on the page.
- Take time to form sensory images based on the words in the descriptions.
- Use your imagination to fill in the blanks.

As you read Lewis Carroll’s poem, pay attention to details that will help you visualize the story the poem is telling.

Lewis Carroll

1832–1898

A New Name

In 1865 a British man named Charles Lutwidge Dodgson published his first book for children, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. Instead of using his name, however, Dodgson chose a “pen name,” a made-up name. The book was a huge success, and the pen name, Lewis Carroll, became very famous.

Children’s Entertainer

Dodgson enjoyed entertaining children throughout his life. As the eldest son in a family of 11, he made up games for his brothers and sisters. As an adult, he told stories and drew pictures for the children he befriended—including a real-life Alice. By training, Dodgson was a mathematician, and even in this field he often focused on young people. He used his math skills to make up puzzles and brainteasers.

BACKGROUND TO THE POEM

Poetic Lessons

In the 1800s in Great Britain, children were often required to memorize long, boring poems that taught lessons about how young people should behave. In “The Walrus and the Carpenter,” Carroll makes fun of this approach to education. But he might have slipped in a good lesson for children at the same time.

Author
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Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

The Walrus and the Carpenter

Lewis Carroll

The sun was shining on the sea,
Shining with all his might:
He did his very best to make
The billows¹ smooth and bright—
5 And this was odd, because it was
The middle of the night. **A**

The moon was shining sulkily,²
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. **B**

Analyze Visuals ▶

How would you describe the **setting** in this illustration?

A VISUALIZE

Reread the first stanza. What words help you to visualize the setting?

B NARRATIVE POETRY

What have you learned so far about the time, place, and weather conditions of the setting? Record details in your graphic organizer.

1. **billows**: large waves.

2. **sulkily**: in a gloomy, pouting way.



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!” ©

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 tear.

“O Oysters, come and walk with us!”
 The Walrus did beseech.³
“A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk,
 Along the briny⁴ 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.



© NARRATIVE POETRY

What **characters** have you met? Note them in your graphic organizer. Add new characters as they are introduced in the poem.

3. **beseech**: to beg anxiously.

4. **briny**: containing a fair amount of salt.



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 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. **D**

“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 need:
75 Pepper and vinegar besides
 Are very good indeed—
Now, if you’re ready, Oysters dear,
 We can begin to feed.” **E**

D VISUALIZE

Reread lines 55–60.
What do you see in your
mind? Why might it be
important that the rock
is “conveniently low”?

E NARRATIVE POETRY

What’s happening at
this point in the poem?
Note the **plot events** in
your graphic organizer.

“But not on us!” the Oysters cried,
80 Turning a little blue.
“After such kindness, that would be
 A dismal⁵ thing to do!”
“The night is fine,” the Walrus said.
 “Do you admire the view?” **F**

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!”

“I weep for you,” the Walrus said:
 “I deeply sympathize.”
With sobs and tears he sorted out
100 Those of the largest size,
Holding his pocket-handkerchief
 Before his streaming eyes. **G**

“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 odd, because
 They’d eaten every one.

F NARRATIVE POETRY

The **climax** of a plot is the turning point. What do the Oysters finally realize in this stanza?

G VISUALIZE

Picture in your mind the Walrus crying while sorting the Oysters. What details in the poem help you to do so?



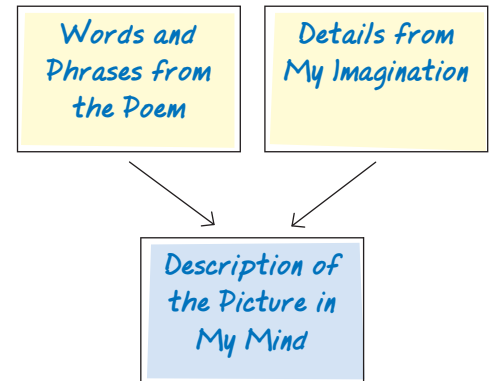
5. **dismal**: particularly bad; dreadful.

Comprehension

1. **Recall** What do the Walrus and the Carpenter invite the Oysters to do?
2. **Clarify** What trick do the Walrus and the Carpenter play on the Oysters?

Text Analysis

3. **Make Inferences** Reread lines 37–42. Why might the eldest Oyster have lived longer than any of the other oysters in the oyster bed?
4. **Visualize** A **stanza** is a group of lines within a poem. Choose a stanza on page 146 and describe the mental picture you form when you read it. Then use a diagram like the one shown to note what helped you visualize.
5. **Identify Rhyme** The repetition of a sound at the ends of different words—as in *knows* and *rose*—is called **rhyme**. The words at the ends of lines 2, 4, and 6 rhyme. Which words in lines 7–12 rhyme? Which words rhyme in lines 13–18? Look through the rest of the poem and describe any pattern you notice.
6. **Evaluate Narrative Poetry** Using the story map that you created as you read, summarize “The Walrus and the Carpenter.” Tell what happened, where it happened, and who took part. Do you find the events in the poem funny or disturbing? Explain your reaction.
7. **Draw Conclusions** On the basis of this poem, what do you think Carroll might advise young people to do to avoid being tricked? Use evidence from the poem to support your answer.



COMMON CORE

RL 5 Analyze how a particular stanza fits into the structure of a text and contributes to the development of the setting and plot. **SL 1c** Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail.

Extension and Challenge

8. **Readers' Circle** With a partner, look over the fiction and nonfiction you have read in this unit. Decide which selection might serve as a good basis for a narrative poem and why. Then discuss how the selection would change if told in poem form. Would it be funnier, or more serious?
9. **Creative Project: Drama** Poems often lend themselves to being read aloud. Put together a cast of classmates to read “The Walrus and the Carpenter.” Assign one person to be the narrator and others to perform the speaking parts. Then do a dramatic reading of the poem.

Have you ever been FOOLED?

Consider the oysters. Is it ever acceptable to fool someone? Explain why or why not.