

Discovering a new world

The new home was OK, once the lights were connected, but Alice had to go to a new school too. She was not happy about it.

Mrs. Patterson announced to her class, "We have a new girl and a new boy in school! And they're cousins!"

The students applauded. Charlie grinned. Alice looked down at her desk.

"Alice and Charlie," said Mrs. Patterson. "All the students have jobs. Since the jobs are already assigned, you can share with someone else." She winked. "It's a great way to make friends."

"Don't want to make friends," thought Alice.



Charlie looked down the list of jobs. Cleaning the whiteboards sounded good! A boy named Ron was already cleaning them.

"Hi," Charlie said to Ron. "Can I help you clean the boards?"

"Sure," said Ron.

Alice ignored the jobs list. Why should she work for this stupid school!

Outside, Charlie played with Ron. Alice was by herself. Charlie came up to her. "What's wrong?" he asked.

Alice was crying. "Oh, dry up!" Charlie said, embarrassed.

"Meanie!" said Alice, and she punched him in the arm.

Mrs. Patterson was angry. "We have rules about hitting, Alice!" she said. "Inside! Now!"

Alice went in, sobbing. Mrs. Patterson softened. She said kindly, "I remember when I was in Year 5, my kitten died. I didn't want a new one before we had given it a funeral and I cried for a long time. When we lose part of our life, it's natural to cry. We wouldn't be being very loyal if we just forgot our friends."

Alice gulped.

"Why don't you write a goodbye letter to your old classmates? Then maybe you'd be ready for new ones. Also, I think you'll be happier if you took part in the jobs. Why don't you shake out the art overalls?"

"OK," snuffled Alice.

"Now, do you know why we have a rule against hitting?"

"So no one gets hurt?" said Alice.

"Right. To get along together, we need rules. Because you're new, I'll overlook it this time. But next time, I'll treat you like the others. Now run along. There are a few minutes left of break."

Alice went and found Charlie in the playground.

"Sorry," she said.

"I'm sorry too," said Charlie. "But, Alice, why don't you join in, and have some fun, like me? There are some nice people here!"

When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

This piece of advice is at least 2000 years old. It's a good way to adjust to new surroundings: to fit in and do like the others.



After class, Alice and a girl named Susan took the overalls outside and shook each one. It was fun trying to make a breeze.

Charlie said, "Mrs Patterson's nicer than our old teacher."

"No, she's not!" said Alice loyally. "But she is nice, though." Maybe the people in this new school weren't so bad after all!