***Through the Looking Glass***

***Chapter 10***

***“It’s My Own Invention”***

***Summary:***

Back at home in England, Alice rubs her eyes, apparently waking from a dream.

 Alice tries to talk to Kitty, the black kitten, about her adventure, but it simply purrs.

 Alice finds the Red Queen among the chess pieces and shows it to Kitty, trying to make the kitten admit that it's the Red Queen. It won't, but Alice is convinced that it knows.

 Looking over at Snowdrop, the White Kitten, Alice finds that she is still being washed by Dinah, the old cat. She realizes that Snowdrop turned into the White Queen.

 Looking at Dinah, Alice thinks she must have turned into Humpty Dumpty.

 Turning back to Kitty, Alice tells it that she heard a lot of poetry on this adventure, all about fishes. She promises to recite "The Walrus and the Carpenter" for the kitten the next day.

 Alice asks Kitty whether she herself (Alice) dreamed the adventure, or whether they are simply all characters in the Red King's dream.

 The narrator ends by asking us the same question: which of them dreamed it?

***Critical Study(Ch9-12):***

After realizing that she has become a Queen, Alice finds herself in the company of the Red Queen and the White Queen. The two queens begin questioning her relentlessly, telling her that she cannot be a queen until she passes the proper examination. They ask her strange questions about manners, mathematics, the alphabet, how to make bread, languages, and the cause of lightning. The Red Queen frustrates Alice by correcting every incorrect answer. Alice mistakenly remarks that thunder causes lightning, but when she attempts to reverse her statement, the Red Queen snaps that once she says something, she must live with the consequences. The White Queen changes the subject to a thunderstorm that occurred on the last set of Tuesdays. Confused, Alice listens to a sneering explanation that in Looking-Glass World, days are taken two or three at a time. The White Queen continues her foolish story, while the Red Queen apologizes to Alice for the White Queen’s behavior, explaining to Alice that the White Queen wasn’t brought up well.

The Red Queen asks Alice to sing a lullaby to the White Queen, but Alice claims that she doesn’t know any. The Red Queen begins singing instead, causing the White Queen to fall asleep on Alice’s shoulder. Soon, the Red Queen falls asleep, too, and both queens slump their heads into Alice’s lap. The snoring sounds like a song to Alice. She becomes distracted by the music and doesn’t notice when the two queens vanish inexplicably. When Alice looks up, she finds herself standing in front of a door emblazoned with the words “QUEEN ALICE.” Alice wants to enter but only finds a visitor’s bell and a servant’s bell, and no bell for guests. She knocks on the door and it flies open. The words “NO ADMITTANCE UNTIL THE WEEK AFTER NEXT!” boom out of the open door. Alice continues to knock to no avail, until eventually an old frog approaches from behind her and asks her what she wants. Alice explains that no one will answer the door. The confused Frog asks what the door has been asking and whether it would need an answer. The door flies open again and Alice hears a song about Queen Alice’s grand party.

Alice finds a large table set before her with fifty guests seated around it. She sits down at the head of the table between the White Queen and the Red Queen. A servant brings out food and the Red Queen formally introduces Alice to the food. After the introduction, the Red Queen sends the food back to the kitchen, commenting that it is impolite to eat something after one has made acquaintance with it. Alice becomes frustrated and asks to get the pudding back, which she slices and serves to the guests. As the pudding is passed around, Alice asks the guests why there are so many poems in Looking-Glass World on the subject of fish. The White Queen responds by telling a riddle that asks whether answering the door or uncovering a dish of fish is more difficult. The queens toast Alice, who rises to give thanks to her guests. As she stands up, the room spontaneously erupts into chaos. Candles rise to the ceiling, guests become stuck to their plates, the White Queen tumbles into a soup tureen, and a soup ladle storms around the table. Alice grabs the tablecloth and tugs it off of the table, sending all of the guests flying to the ground.

Alice turns to the Red Queen, whom she considers responsible for the chaos, and grabs her. The Red Queen shrinks down to the size of a doll and Alice begins shaking her. Before Alice’s eyes, the Red Queen seems to transform into her kitten Kitty. Alice realizes that she has woken up. She scolds Kitty for waking her up and then grabs the small Red Queen off of the nearby chess table, trying to get Kitty to admit that she had transformed into the Red Queen. Alice addresses Snowdrop, stating her suspicion that the white kitten is the White Queen. Lastly, Alice tries to guess who Dinah might be before deciding that she’s probably Humpty Dumpty. She turns back to Kitty and tells her all about the fish-themed poetry she heard in her dream.

The chess motif becomes highly pronounced in this chapter, and the various movements of the pieces signify the conclusion of the game. As Alice becomes Queen, the movements and positions of the individual pieces become clear. Flanked by both queens, Alice can see the entire chessboard. As she sits at the head of the table in her castle, all of the guests stretched out before her represent the other chess pieces. The table in this scene represents the table in Alice’s house on which the chessboard rests, adjacent to the “real” Alice asleep in her chair. The White Queen’s move to the soup tureen sets up the Red King’s “checkmate,” and when Alice slides over to seize the Red Queen, she puts the Red King in checkmate herself and ends the chess game. Now that the game has ended, Alice wakes up from her dream and finds herself holding Kitty.

Alice seems unsure of herself at the start of the game, but once she exerts her power as a queen, she exposes the façade and liberates herself from the confines of the chessboard. The Red and White Queens’ relentless questioning represents an attempt to flatten Alice into submission so that she becomes part of their two-dimensional lives in Looking-Glass World. Alice resists this flattening, which manifests itself literally when the guests at the table become stuck to their plates. Alice rises to give thanks and in doing so becomes three-dimensional, setting off the chaos that allows her to seize the Red Queen and end the chess match.

Some critics see the moment when Alice wins the chess game to be the moment of her sexual awakening. In this reading, Alice’s standing up represents a moment of orgasmic realization. The rising candle flames imply erection imagery, while the repetition of the word “moment” in the scene underscores the fleeting sensory intensity that causes Alice to tear away the tablecloth and attack the Red Queen. This orgasmic moment leads to the checkmate of the Red King, so that Alice experiences a sexual awakening. At this point, Alice has nowhere else to go in her dream, and abruptly wakes up. The fact that Dinah continues to wash Snowdrop when Alice regains consciousness supports the fact that the dream has happened in a single “moment.” This realization also prompts Alice to wonder whether it was she or the Red King who had had the dream. By leaving off at this moment, Carroll comments that life is nothing but a dream, a blinking moment in God’s mind.

Critical Analysis(9-12)

[Alice](https://www.gradesaver.com/through-the-looking-glass/study-guide/character-list#alice) shakes the queen, who appears to become smaller and fatter and whose eyes grow larger and greener. It turns out that the queen is actually Kitty. Alice tells Kitty that she was with her throughout the entire dream. She speculates about cats' tendency to purr, and she discusses her frustration with trying to figure out what is being said when the same noise is repeated over and over.

She picks up the [Red Queen](https://www.gradesaver.com/red-queen) from the table and tries to get Kitty to admit that she was the Red Queen, but Kitty does not seem to want to look at the chess piece. She looks over at Snowdrop, who is still having her cleaning from Dinah, and she concludes that the White Queen must have been so disheveled in her dream for this reason. She believes that Dinah must have been [Humpty Dumpty](https://www.gradesaver.com/through-the-looking-glass/study-guide/character-list" \l "humpty-dumpty).

Alice finally wonders who was dreaming all along. She believes that she might have been the one dreaming. It could also have been the Red King, since she was convinced that she had been a part of his dream. The narrator concludes by asking the reader who they think was dreaming all along, and follows the question with a poem about summers and dreaming and Wonderland.

*The Annotated Alice* reflects on the significance of the poem at the end of the work. "In this terminal poem, one of Carroll’s best, he recalls that July 4 boating expedition up the Thames on which he first told the story of Alice’s Adventures to the three Liddell girls. The poem echoes the themes of winter and death that run through the prefatory poem of Through the Looking glass. It is the song of the [White Knight](https://www.gradesaver.com/through-the-looking-glass/study-guide/character-list#white-knight), remembering Alice as she was before she turned away, with tearless and eager eyes, to run down the hill and leap the last brook into womanhood. The poem is an acrostic, the initial letters of the lines spelling Alice’s full name."

A nostalgic tone pervades the end of the book. Carroll reveals that all of Alice's experiences were part of a dream, and she spends the last chapter desperately trying to hold on to these experiences by speculating about the author of the dreams. But Carroll reveals that this is not the important question. Rather, the reader is meant to focus on the fleeting nature of childhood and its fantasies, reflected by the many things and events Alice encountered in the Looking-Glass world that were present one moment, but over and gone the next.

Significance(Ch9-12):

In this two-sentence chapter, [Alice](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Alice) lifts the [Red Queen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Red_Queen) off the table and "[shakes] her backward and forward with all her might." As she does so, the Red Queen becomes shorter, fatter, softer, and rounder.

The entire chapter is the continuation of the final sentence in [Chapter 10](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/chapter-10-summary/): "—and it really was a kitten, after all."

The last chapter opens with Alice rubbing her eyes and chastising Kitty, the black kitten. Alice is convinced Kitty was with her in the Looking-glass world and decides Kitty was, in fact, the Red Queen. She further decides that Snowdrop, the white kitten, was the [White Queen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#White_Queen) and her cat, Dinah, was Humpty Dumpty. Then she comes to the crucial issue: "who it was that dreamed it all?" This was the question she'd pondered when she first encountered the sleeping king and had a discussion with Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Now she decides, "it must have been either me or the Red King. He was part of my dream, of course—but then I was part of his dream, too!"

[Alice](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Alice) wins the chess game at the close of the novel. At the onset of the match, Alice said, "I wouldn't mind being a Pawn, if only I might join—though of course I should *like* to be a Queen, best." In chess, though, it is not enough to simply become a queen. This entire novel was set up as a chess match, and thus, to end it, Alice must defeat the [Red Queen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Red_Queen). Chapters 9–12 highlight that this is a chess match and her true opponent has been the Red Queen. By seizing the Red Queen, she has "taken" that piece on the board, put the Red King into checkmate, and won the game.

The closing chapter is not only a return to reality, but it also reminds readers of the absent figure of the Red King. He has been present in the novel only as a sleeping figure in the wood. When Alice wakes, however, the question of whether she was a character in her own dream or in the Red King's dream appears to be answered. If it were the Red King's dream, she shouldn't—logically—have woken when she seized the Red Queen. On the other hand, if he were dreaming the chess match, Alice's winning could have meant that the ending of the match is *why* she woke. [Carroll](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/author/) leaves the possibilities open for Alice and readers to interpret.

The transition from the Looking-glass world to reality takes place over several chapters. The tension of the event is heightened by the extended process that is started in the closing line of [Chapter 9](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/chapter-9-summary/) into a two-sentence chapter that is the whole of [Chapter 10](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/chapter-10-summary/), and the sentence fragment that is the entire Chapter 11. Alice's greeting to the black kitten in Chapter 12: "Your Red Majesty shouldn't purr so loud," acknowledges that the narrative was a dream. Still neither she nor Carroll identifies the dreamer. "It must have been either me or the Red King," she muses.

This process that goes from the dream world to waking in Chapter 12 has thus stretched over several chapters: "Your majesty shouldn't purr so loud,' Alice said, rubbing her eyes, and addressing the kitten, respectfully, yet with some severity. 'You woke me out of oh! such a nice dream!'" She acknowledges that the entirety of the novel was a dream, but the identity of the dreamer she still refuses to define: "it must have been either me or the Red King." In doing so, Alice (or perhaps Dodgson) keeps the fantasy aspect alive for the reader. It invites one to believe yet another impossible thing.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part***

***Summary Part 1:***

The [Red Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-red-queen) turns into [Kitty](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters) and [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) wakes up. Alice scolds the kitten for waking her up and tells Kitty that she was in her dream. Kitty purrs at Alice as Alice digs through her chessmen for the Red Queen. She asks Kitty to confirm that she turned into the Red Queen, but Kitty refuses. Alice kisses Kitty anyway. She turns to [Snowdrop](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters), still in the middle of a bath, and asks when [Dinah](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters) will be done. She suggests that the White Queen was so unkempt in her dream because Snowdrop was getting a bath. Alice asks Dinah if she turned into [Humpty Dumpty](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/humpty-dumpty). She then tells Kitty that she heard lots of poetry about fish and asks for Kitty's opinion: whose dream was it, Alice's or the [Red King](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters)'s? Kitty ignores Alice and the narrator asks the reader for their opinion.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Now that Alice is awake and back in her world, she's able to try to make sense of her dream without getting criticized for it—but, as in her dream, it's impossible to make total sense of a dream like this, even if the cats are logical suspects for the Red and White Queens. This attempt—and the attempt to figure out if the dream was Alice's dream or the Red King's—reads again as something that, like many of the philosophical questions posed by the novel, is fun to think about but not something to take too seriously. Punting the question to the reader encourages them to take this lesson and apply it to their own life.