***Through the Looking Glass***

***Chapter 2***

***The Garden of Live Flowers***

***Summary:***

* Having left the house, Alice tries to walk to the top of a little hill to get a view of the garden. But no matter which way she walks, she always finds herself entering the house again.
* Alice refuses to go back into the house; she's sure that will be the end of her adventures. This time, she comes across a bed of flowers. Talking to herself, she wishes that the Tiger-lily could talk.
* The Tiger-lily surprises Alice by replying to her. The Rose criticizes Alice's appearance, interpreting her skirt as drooping petals.
* Alice asks the flowers if they're afraid, being planted alone in the garden and vulnerable to anyone that comes by. They tell her that the tree would protect them by barking – saying "bough-wough."
* At this, the Daisies begin chattering, and Alice makes them shut up by threatening to pick them.
* Alice is amazed that there are talking flowers, and the Tiger-lily and Rose explain to her that all flowers can talk, only in most gardens the beds are too soft so they fall asleep.
* Alice asks the flowers if there are other people in the garden. They tell her there is one "flower" like her, but it has spikes around its head. Alice is puzzled until the Red Queen, wearing a spiky crown, comes walking around the corner. This time, the Queen is Alice's own size and can see her.
* Alice tries to walk over to meet the Red Queen, but every time she tries, she finds herself walking back in the front door of the house. After she tries and fails several times, the flowers advise her to walk the opposite direction from where she wants to go.
* Walking in the opposite direction works, and Alice finds herself talking to the Red Queen.
* The Red Queen asks Alice where she's going, but as Alice tries to explain, the Queen keeps interrupting her with advice and arguments. Eventually, she falls silent and they walk together to the top of the hill.
* Alice looks out across the country and realizes that this world is an enormous chessboard. Tiny brooks and narrow hedges divide the land into squares, and there are men moving about according to the rules of the game.
* Alice wishes aloud that she could join the chess game, and the Red Queen says that Alice can be a White Pawn, since Lily, the White Queen's youngest daughter, is too young to play.
* Suddenly Alice and the Red Queen are running like crazy. Alice is out of breath and the Queen keeps telling her to go faster, but nothing around them seems to move.
* Finally they stop, and the Red Queen lets Alice rest. The Queen explains that, in Looking-Glass World, you have to run just to stand still.
* The Queen offers Alice a biscuit (a cookie) and seems to expect this to quench her thirst. Unfortunately, even though this is a world of opposites, it doesn't.
* The Queen sets out a series of pegs using a tape measure. As she and Alice walk between the pegs, the Queen explains the rules of the game and tells Alice what to do. Because Alice is a pawn, she starts in the second square. She will go through the third square by railway, then enter the fourth square where Tweedledum and Tweedledee live. Next is the fifth square, which is water. The sixth square is Humpty Dumpty's. The seventh square is a forest, which the White Knight will guide Alice through. When she reaches the eighth square, of course, she will be a Queen.
* Having given these directions, the Red Queen disappears, and Alice is left alone to make her move in the game.

***Synopsis:***

Once outside, Alice climbs a nearby hill to get a better look at the garden near the house. However, every time she begins to follow the path to the hill, she finds herself back at the door to the house. Dismayed, she mentions her frustration to Tiger-lily, who surprises her by responding in perfect English. The Tiger-lily explains that all flowers can talk. The Rose chimes in and mentions that Alice does not look very clever. Alice asks them if they feel at all vulnerable. They explain to her that they are protected by a nearby tree that will bark at any approaching threats. The Daisies begin caterwauling and Alice silences them by threatening to pick them.

The Rose and the Violet continue to insult Alice, but the Tiger-lily reprimands them for their rudeness. Alice learns from the flowers that there is another person like her in the garden. They describe the Red Queen, who now looks human and stands a head taller than Alice. The Rose advises Alice to walk the other way, but Alice sets off toward the Red Queen, ending up back at the door of Looking-Glass House. Once she sets off in the opposite direction, she eventually reaches the Red Queen.

The Red Queen is friendly but overbearing when she strikes up a conversation with Alice. Alice explains her plight to the Red Queen and mentions the garden, which prompts the Red Queen to remark that she has seen gardens that would make this one seem like a wilderness. When Alice mentions the hill, the Red Queen states that she has seen hills to make this hill look like a valley. Frustrated, Alice tells the Red Queen that she speaks nonsense, but the Queen responds that she has heard nonsense that would make her claims seem as sensible as a dictionary. The Red Queen takes Alice to the hill, where she notices that the surrounding countryside resembles a giant chessboard. Alice spots a game of chess happening on the chessboard and expresses her desire to join the game. The Red Queen tells Alice that she may stand in for the Tiger-lily as a White Pawn. The two begin a brisk run but remain in the same place. Once finished with their run, the Red Queen explains the chess game to Alice. Alice starts at the second square and must travel through the other squares. A different character owns each square, and once Alice reaches the eighth square she will become a queen herself. With a few final words of advice, the Red Queen bids Alice goodbye and disappears.***Brief Analysis:***

Just like in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, Alice acts as an explorer in Looking-Glass World, recalling other explorers discovering new territories in the late Victorian era. Like the English Imperialist explorers of Carroll’s time, Alice intrudes on foreign lands with preconceived notions about language, manners, and the way the world works. When she meets the living flowers, she discovers not only that others do not share her assumptions, but that the native population perceives her as foolish. Alice’s lack of knowledge about Looking-Glass World creates a culture clash in which her confusion over the flowers’ explanation of why trees have “bark” and “boughs” inspires scorn in the flowers.

Alice fails to understand that in Looking-Glass World she must do everything backward. She gets confused when the Rose advises her to “walk the other way” to reach the Red Queen. Alice relates to the Red Queen how she is “lost” because she does not realize that in the mirror one has to move away from an object to get closer to it. The path seems to actively punish her for failing to understand the properties of Looking-Glass World, deliberately rearranging itself to get her off track. The principles of inversion do not solely affect space and distance, but also movement. The faster Alice moves, the less distance she covers, so that when she runs she never seems to leave her initial position.

Alice becomes a pawn in the game of chess and discovers that Looking-Glass World closely follows the strict rules of chess. Alice can only move forward one “square” at a time, despite the fact that she seems to wield a degree of imaginative control over Looking-Glass World. While the Queen seems to “vanish” because she can travel quickly across the board, just as a Queen has greater mobility in a game of chess. As a pawn, Alice has much more restricted mobility and line of vision. Alice is not only a pawn in the game of chess, but also in the text of the book. The author has absolute control over Alice’s actions and can move her around at will in the context of the story as if she were a pawn.

***Critical Study:***

[Alice](https://www.gradesaver.com/through-the-looking-glass/study-guide/character-list#alice) follows the path she believes will bring her to the garden, but no matter the direction in which she goes, she ends up back at the house. Eventually she runs into a patch of flowers with a tree in the middle. She discovers that the flowers can talk, but they are quite rude, criticizing her lack of intelligence and her strange looks. The flowers think that she must be a flower as well, even if she looks wrong.

The flowers reveal that there is another person in the garden, which Alice surmises from their desciption of a flower that looks quite like Alice. Alice looks around and sees the [Red Queen](https://www.gradesaver.com/red-queen), who has grown to a little taller than herself. Alice expresses interest in meeting the Queen, even though the flowers advise against it.

But when Alice tries walking toward the Queen, she finds herself in front of the house again. This time, she tries walking in the opposite direction in which she wants to go, and she finds herself walking almost straight into the Queen.

The Queen demands that Alice curtsey and call her "your Majesty" when they speak to each other. Alice tells the Queen that she wants to get to the hill in the distance, and when the Queen calls it a valley, Alice accuses her of speaking nonsense, but the Queen only then claims that she is making sense.

When the pair reaches the hill, Alice notices that the countryside is divided into regular squares. She realizes that the whole world is a chess game, and she very much wants to join the game. All of the sudden, she realizes she and the Queen are running, and when they slow down, the Queen explains that in this world, one has to run to remain in place.

The Queen assures Alice that she can play the game, and that she can even eventually be a Queen if she wants. She will start out as a pawn, however. The Queen gives Alice some instructions as to where she will have to go and whom she will meet, and then she vanishes.

There are a couple of examples of allusion in this chapter. The episode of the talking flowers is actually a reference to a the poem "Maud" by Tennyson. Additionally, the Rose and the Violet are meant to represent the two youngest Liddell sisters, Rhoda and Violet, who are otherwise not included in the *Alice* books.

The theme of inversion appears again when Alice tries to walk toward the Red Queen. Every time she walks in the direction she sees the Red Queen, she ends up closer to the house where she started. But when she suddenly walks in the opposite direction, she ends up right in front of the Red Queen. It also appears within the dialogue between Alice and the Red Queen. The Queen offers Alice a dry biscuit to quench her thirst, and she informs Alice that she must run in order to remain in the same place.

Carrollian scholar Roger Lancelyn Green speculates that the Red Queen is in fact a prototype for the governess of the Liddell children, Miss Prickett. He also argues that their mansion was the original Looking-Glass house, and that the land it looked out upon is the model for the land that Alice viewed as a chessboard when receiving instructions from the Red Queen.

The chessboard/game of chess as a metaphor for life is rather common in literature. Many authors/philosphers employ it, including George Eliot and William James. H. G. Wells opens his book *The Undying Fire* with a conversation between God and the devil, who are playing chess. God is the creator of the game and of the rules and can make as many moves as he likes, and the devil is responsible for introducing "a slight inexplicable innaccuracy into each move, which necessitates further moves in correction."

In [Through the Looking Glass](https://www.gradesaver.com/through-the-looking-glass), Alice apparently has the ability to make her own moves, although it is not clear that the choice is entirely hers. This question is explored throughout the book. Indeed, as soon as the Red Queen tells Alice she is to be the White Queen's Pawn, she begins to run, although she cannot remember starting to run.

***Critical Analysis:***

[Alice](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Alice) enters the garden of live flowers. She speaks wistfully to one of the blossoms and is stunned when it answers her back. She holds a brief conversation with several blooms: "'It isn't manners for us to begin, you know,' [says] the Rose, 'and I really was wondering when you'd speak!" Each flower has its own personality, and they are not particularly friendly. Rose complains about Alice's ill manners, and Tiger-lily is critical of Alice's appearance, saying, "If only her petals curled up a little more, she'd be all right."

When Alice asks questions and is surprised by the answer, the criticism continues. "'It's my opinion that you never think at all,' the Rose [remarks] in a rather severe tone." Another flower, Violet, is equally critical. "I never saw anybody that looked stupider," she observes.

Alice is curious about whether there are any other people in the garden. The flowers tell her there is another person—one of "the thorny kind" who wears thorns on her head. Alice looks around, sees the [Red Queen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Red_Queen) wearing her crown, and leaves to have "a talk with a real Queen." When she finds the queen, Alice realizes the chess piece she'd encountered has grown substantially and is "half a head taller than Alice herself!"

Another Looking-glass oddity occurs here. Walking toward the queen is futile; it is only in walking away from her that Alice meets her.

Alice notices the landscape is a giant chessboard and mentions that she would happily be "a Pawn, if only I might join—though, of course I should *like* to be a Queen, best!" She and the Red Queen run until Alice is quite out of breath, at which time Alice notices she's gone nowhere.

The Red Queen offers Alice a biscuit (cookie) to quench her thirst. Finally, the Red Queen explains the chess game, as well as the route Alice will travel. "A pawn goes two squares in its first move, you know. So you'll go very quickly through the Third Square—by railway, I should think—and you'll find yourself in the Fourth Square in no time." The Queen continues on, explaining where Alice will go and that, at the Eighth Square, Alice will become a queen.

[Alice](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Alice)'s personality is not meek, despite the unpleasantness of the flowers. When the daisies become unruly and loud, Alice tells them, "If you don't hold your tongues, I'll pick you!" Overall, despite the criticism of the flowers, Alice is undisturbed. In *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice was beside herself repeatedly. She cried and worried. Here, though, she is calm in an unfamiliar land.

She also seeks out the [Red Queen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Red_Queen). Alice's interest in continuing on her journey shows growing maturity. Her assertiveness is also clear as she tells the Red Queen: "I wouldn't mind being a Pawn, if only I might join—though of course I should *like* to be a Queen, best." However, this is not simply about Alice's desire to be in control. It is a note to [Carroll](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/author/)'s readers, drawing attention to the role of chess in the novel.

The structure of *Through the Looking-Glass* is dependent on this conversation between Alice and the Red Queen. It sets them up as eventually being opposing queens in a chess match. Not only are the characters Alice will meet noted, the plot outline is also set forth as to what will *happen* at each stage: Alice will travel on a train, meet Tweedledum and Tweedledee, cross a square that's "mostly water," and so forth until the last square—where she will be made queen. The Red Queen observes, "in the Eighth Square we shall be Queens together, and it's all feasting and fun."

The Red Queen has provided all the information Alice needs. The objective of this journey is to complete a chess match and reach the final square.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

In the garden, [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) decides to climb to the top of a nearby hill so she can see better. The path twists and turns and Alice finds that it consistently returns her to Looking-glass House. Frustrated, she declares that she's not going back yet and tries even harder to keep to a straight line. She fails and tries again. This time, she passes some beautiful flowers. She speaks to one of the flowers and says that she wishes the flowers could talk. [Tiger-lily](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters) says that flowers can talk when there's someone worth speaking to. Alice asks if all the flowers can talk and several others pipe up.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Alice's struggle to get to the hill is her first indication that Looking-glass World doesn't function in the same way that Alice's does—clearly she's doing something wrong, even if she doesn't know what yet. The talking flowers reinforce this, while also flattering Alice by suggesting that she's someone worth talking to. By deigning to speak to Alice, the flowers indicate that children are possibly better conversational companions than adults are.

***Summary Part 2:***

A [Rose](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters) and the [Tiger-lily](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters) discuss that while [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) might be the right color for a flower, her face isn't very nice and her petals don't curl enough. To change the subject, Alice asks the flowers who cares for them. The Rose says that the tree in the garden protects them. It can bark and say "Bough-wough," which, according to a daisy, is why its branches are called boughs. The daisies begin shouting. The Tiger-lily tries to silence them, but Alice steps in and threatens to pick the daisies if they don't stop. In an attempt to placate the rude flowers, Alice asks how they can speak, since she's never heard flowers speak. The Tiger-lily tells her to feel the ground. It's hard, and the lily explains that most garden beds are too soft, so the flowers sleep all the time. This makes sense to Alice.

***Analysis Part 2:***

The insults of the Rose and the Tiger-lily indicate that even if Alice may be the right kind of conversation partner in some regards, she's still not perfect. This can be read as a suggestion that Alice isn't yet a fully formed person; she's still a wild child and hasn't yet completed her transformation as she grows up into adulthood. When the Tiger-lily's explanation of hard and soft garden beds makes so much sense to Alice, it shows again that Alice desperately wants to make sense of this world and at this point, is willing to see most anything as sensible.

***Summary Part 3:***

Several flowers insult [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) again. Alice ignores this and asks if there are more people in the garden. The [Rose](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters) says that there’s one other person in the garden, but she's redder and has “nine spikes.” The [Tiger-lily](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters) says that the other person's petals are neater than Alice's, and the Rose kindly says that Alice is starting to fade but it's nothing to be ashamed of. The [Red Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-red-queen) appears in the distance. She's now a half-head taller than Alice. Alice decides to go meet the queen and ignores the Rose when she suggests that Alice walk the other way. Alice heads for the queen but soon loses sight of her and ends up back at the house.

***Analysis Part 3:***

The nine spikes that the Rose mentions refers to the Red Queen's crown. When the Rose then says that Alice is starting to fade, it suggests that Alice is growing up and getting too old—the joyful innocence of childhood is starting to disappear, but it's not something that Alice should worry about too much. This makes Alice uneasy and it shows that growing up is an uncomfortable experience for children, especially when the fact that they're growing and changing is pointed out.

***Summary Part 4:***

Annoyed, [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) decides to walk in the opposite direction. It works: she finds herself in front of the [Red Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-red-queen) in a minute. The queen briskly asks Alice her business and tells her how to properly stand and carry herself. Alice stumbles through her story and does her best to follow the queen's instructions as she says that she just wants to see the garden and the hill. The queen interrupts and says that this is a wilderness and the hill is actually a valley. Alice, surprised, says that that's nonsense. The Red Queen says that she's heard nonsense on par with the dictionary. Alice curtseys as requested and walks with the queen to the top of the hill.

***Analysis part 4:***

When Alice succeeds in meeting her target by aiming for something else, it indicates that the rules of Looking-glass World do make sense: in order to achieve a goal, a person must do the opposite. This is supported more by the queen's suggestion that they're in a wilderness (when it's actually a manicured garden) and that they're in a valley as they stand on a hill. Alice's attempts to comply with the queen's rules show that she wants to please and follow directions.

***Summary Part 5:***

From the top of the hill, [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) sees that the land is divided up into squares with small brooks and hedges. Alice says that it looks like a chessboard and, excitedly, says that a huge chess game is taking place all over the world. She says that she'd love to join and won't mind being a pawn, but she'd like to be a queen. The [Red Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-red-queen) says that Alice can play as the [White Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-queen)'s pawn, since [Lily](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters) is too little to play. She says that Alice will start in the Second Square and when she reaches the Eighth Square, she'll be a queen.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Alice's desire to be a queen is representative of children's desire to grow up and become adults. In this sense, Alice's coming journey across the chessboard is a symbolic journey towards adulthood, as signified by graduating from a pawn to a queen. Getting to experiment with growing up in this dream suggests that this is likely something that troubles Alice in her waking life.

***Summary Part 6:***

Without warning, [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) and the [Red Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-red-queen) begin to run. The Red Queen shouts for Alice to run faster but strangely, the landscape never changes as they race along. Alice is exhausted but finally, the queen stops. Alice sits to catch her breath. She looks around and says that they've been under the same tree the whole time. The Red Queen insists that this is normal here and when Alice explains that movement gets a person somewhere in her world, the Red Queen is derisive. Alice complains of thirst, so the queen offers her a biscuit. Alice doesn't want it but accepts it to be polite. It's extremely dry. The queen begins measuring the ground and asks Alice if the biscuit quenched her thirst. Confused, Alice doesn't answer.

***Analysis Part 6:***

The fact that the Red Queen and Alice don't get anywhere when they run provides more evidence that Looking-glass World does indeed function logically in the reverse of Alice's world, as does the queen offering Alice a cookie to quench her thirst. Alice's confusion and the sense that she's already lost in this world indicates that she's going to need to work harder if she wishes to adapt to the way that this world works and make it through without too much trouble. Her discomfort more broadly speaks to how uncomfortable it can be to be in the process of growing up and constantly changing.

***Summary Part 7:***

The [Red Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-red-queen) explains that she's going to give [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) directions. As she walks, the queen says that, since Alice is a pawn, she gets to move two squares in her first move. She'll end up in the Fourth Square quickly and she briefly explains what Alice will find in each square. In the Eighth Square, they'll both be queens. Alice curtseys. The queen gives Alice some final advice on etiquette and disappears.

***Analysis part 7:***

The way that the queen frames Alice's journey continues to suggest that Looking-glass World operates on an easy-to-understand system. While this is comforting for Alice at this point, she'll soon discover that this is wrong: Looking-glass World is far more nonsensical than the Queen implies and, in that way, it does mirror Alice's real world, which she doesn’t always understand.