***Through the Looking Glass***

***Chapter 3***

***Looking-Glass Insects***

***Summary:***

* Alice decides to make a survey of the country. She looks around her, observing the geography. She is distracted by the sight of elephants pollinating enormous flowers.
* Alice decides to go in the other direction, because she's a little afraid of the elephants. She also wants to go into the Third Square. She leaps over a little brook and suddenly finds herself on a crowded train. The Guard comes through asking everyone for their tickets. Alice doesn't have one. A strange chorus of voices keeps making remarks about her situation.
* The Guard studies Alice with a telescope, a microscope, and an opera-glass (like binoculars). He decides Alice is traveling the wrong direction and leaves.
* The man facing Alice in the train compartment, who is dressed in white paper, says that a child of her age should know which way she's going, even if she doesn't know her own name. The other passengers in the train, including a Goat, a Horse, and a Beetle, make rude comments about Alice's ignorance. The Gnat, speaking in a tiny voice in Alice's ear, makes puns.
* There is a squeal from the engine of the train. The Horse says that the train is going to jump over a brook. This makes Alice nervous, but she realizes it will take her into the Fourth Square.
* The train carriage lifts into the air, and Alice finds herself sitting under a tree talking to the Gnat.
* The Gnat asks Alice what the insects are like in her country. Alice says she's frightened of insects, but she knows some of their names. The Gnat wonders what use it is to give insects names if they don't answer to them.
* The Gnat shows Alice some of the Looking-Glass insects. They include a Rocking-horse-fly, a Snap-dragon-fly, and a Bread-and-butter-fly.
* The Gnat asks Alice if she wants to lose her name. Alice says she doesn't, and the Gnat warns her that in the wood nearby, the animals have no names.
* The Gnat keeps making jokes and telling Alice that it wishes she had made them instead. It gets sadder and sadder until it sighs itself away.
* Alice walks on into the Fourth Square. She comes to a dark wood, and the Gnat is proved right, because she forgets her own name when she enters it. She wonders who has her name and what new name people might give her.
* Alice encounters a Fawn. The Fawn and Alice can't introduce themselves because they don't remember their own names. They walk along together, Alice putting her arms around the Fawn's neck.
* At the end of the wood, the Fawn remembers what it is – and that it should be afraid of Alice. It runs away. Alice is sorry to see it go, but she's glad to know her own name again.
* Alice wonders which way to go next. There are two sign-posts, pointing in the same direction, one to Tweedledee's house and one to Tweedledum's.
* Alice keeps walking, and there are signs at regular intervals, but they always point in the same direction. Alice decides that Tweedledum and Tweedledee must live together.
* Alice turns a corner and sees two fat little men standing together.

***Synopsis:***

Alice surveys her surroundings, spotting a group of elephants in the distance that seem to be pollinating flowers and making honey. She sets off in the direction of the elephants, but changes her mind and starts heading down the hill in the other direction. Before she knows it, she finds herself riding inside a carriage, and she explains to the Guard present that she doesn’t have a ticket. She hears various voices in the carriage badgering her, as the Guard examines her with a telescope, a microscope, and opera glasses. The other passengers in the carriage begin to discuss Alice. A man dressed entirely in white paper comments that she ought to know where her ticket is, while a goat interjects that she should know the location of the ticket office. A beetle comments that Alice will have to make the return journey as luggage. Alice hears a hoarse voice in her ear that suggests various jokes she can make using wordplay. As the train prepares to jump over a brook, Alice speaks back to the voice. The train jumps and Alice finds herself sitting quietly in the shade of a tree.

The strange voice turns out to be the voice of a gnat, who has grown to the size of a chicken since they landed in the forest. Alice and the Gnat discuss the difference between the insects in Alice’s world and Looking-Glass World. He explains that the horsefly becomes a rocking horsefly, the dragonfly becomes a snapdragon fly, and the butterfly becomes a Bread-and-butter-fly. Alice wonders what would happen to the Bread-and-butter-fly when it cannot find its chosen diet of weak tea and cream. The Gnat informs her that this is a regular occurrence, which means that Bread-and-butter-flies frequently die. The Gnat then warns Alice that she will lose her name if she travels into the wood. The Gnat discusses lost names and then vanishes as mysteriously as he appeared.

Alice journeys into the wood and finds that she cannot remember the name of anything. In her confusion, she thinks that her name begins with the letter “L.” She comes across a Fawn, who helps her through the wood. Once they exit the forest, the Fawn runs away now that it remembers that it is a fawn and Alice is a human. Alone again, Alice notices a series of signs pointing the way to Tweedledum and Tweedledee’s house. She heads off in that direction but bumps into them before she reaches her destination.***Brief Analysis:***

Alice fully understands the lack of control that she exerts over herself and where she wishes to go in Looking-Glass World. Despite her strong attraction to the elephants, she pulls back from going to meet them in favor of remaining on the chessboard and following the rules of the game. Back on the chessboard, her movements become measured and predictable. Alice’s train ride allows her to skip the third “square,” propelling her forward two spaces, mimicking the fact that pawns move two spaces forward on their first move. From this point on, Alice’s movement and geographical position are charted in the chess diagram provided at the beginning of the book.

Alice and the Gnat discuss in detail how one’s name should relate to one’s identity or physical characteristics. As they discuss the names of different insects in their respective worlds, the Gnat asks Alice about the purpose of names if the insects do not respond to the names when called by them. Alice explains that the names are not necessarily for animals and objects to identify themselves by and respond to, but rather, names help those with powers of language to label, classify, and organize what they experience. In Looking-Glass World, humans are not the only species with powers of language, which changes Alice’s perceptions about the act of naming and the properties of names. Alice’s interactions with the Fawn are initially friendly, but he bolts upon learning that it is a Fawn and she is a human child. Alice discovers that names do not simply label, but convey information about how something operates in the world in relation to other things. The Bread-and-butter-fly, as its name suggests, lives on weak tea with cream, and Fawns fear humans, their conditioned enemies.

The Fawn’s fear of Alice suggests Carroll’s preoccupation with Darwin’s theory of evolution. Carroll was a deeply religious man who felt threatened by Charles Darwin’s research on evolution, which was published at the same time that Carroll was writing. To Carroll, the theory of evolution challenged the Christian belief in a harmonious universe created by God in the manner described in the book of Genesis. As in Genesis, the forest resembles Eden, in which men and animals coexisted harmoniously. Alice and the Fawn exit the forest just as Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden after tasting from the Tree of Knowledge. Just like the story of the Fall of Eden, the Fawn becomes afraid once it remembers that Alice is a human and that she presents a threat to his safety. The reference to the Fall calls attention to Carroll’s anxiety about Darwin’s theories of evolution, which in his perception sought to undo the idea of a harmonious universe that might bring about a second Fall.

***Critical Study:***

[Alice](https://www.gradesaver.com/through-the-looking-glass/study-guide/character-list#alice) tries to survey the land before her, and she notices some elephants tending to enormous flowers like bees. She also notices that there are no rivers and that she is standing on what seems to be the only mountain in the place. Desiring to proceed to the third square, she leaps over the first brook in front of her.

She lands in a carriage and is immediately accosted by a guard asking for her ticket. She does not have a ticket and tries to explain herself, but all the passengers are chastising her for wasting time, breath and money. The passengers are all animals and insects. There is one passenger too small for her to see whispering in her ear.

When the train leaps over the next brook, she finds herself sitting beneath a tree and talking to a large gnat, which had previously been whispering in her ear. She explains to the gnat that she has never known any talking insects, and she proceeds to tell him the names of insects where she comes from. He then responds by telling her the equivalent insects in his world: the rocking horse fly, the snap-dragon fly and the bread-and-butter fly.

The two then discuss whether or not it would be convenient to be able to leave behind one's name. The gnat makes a joke and in so doing makes itself extremely sad. When Alice looks up, she finds that it is gone, and wanting to make progress, she walks on. She finds herself in a darker wood with a wood beyond it and assumes this is the wood where things have no names.

Because she is in this wood, she cannot remember her name or the names of things around her. She comes across a Fawn who suffers from the same predicament, and they move on together into the next wood. Here, she remembers, and she proceeds along the path with two finger-posts, both pointing in the same direction, but one for Tweedledee's house, and the other for Tweedledum's.

Alice makes the typical two-square leap allowed a Pawn as its initial move. She starts in the second square, but as soon as she leaps a brook she is in a train in the third square. This train takes her over a brook and into the fourth square.

The issue of naming things appears in this chapter twice. The first occasion is in the middle of the conversation between the Gnat and Alice. Alice makes an incredibly astute observation about names, arguing that names are not actually important because they belong to things inherently but because they are useful tags for the person referring to them.

The second occasion involves Alice's short experience in the wood where things have no names. She forgets her name while she is here, although at one point, she believes it begins with an "L", undoubtedly because she has replaced the White Queen's daughter, Lily, in the game. She meets a fawn, with whom she rejoices once they exit the wood and remember their names.

The wood is supposed to represent the universe as well as Alice's observation. Things in the universe do not have signs or labels. Names are a product of the minds that need to organize and refer to them. Otherwise, they would not exist. This falls under the theme of imagination as well, or things merely existing as a part of a separate mind.

Alice's logical observation reveals her as a representation of Carroll, since he was so concerned with formal logic in his studies. Her rationality stands in sharp contrast to the nonsense of the Gnat, and will continue to do so with other characters. This and the consequences of her realization (the excursion in the no-name wood) is also a reminder that Alice is dwelling simultaneously in two worlds: that of the child and that of the adult. Her rationality places her in the world of adulthood, but it tends to get her into trouble in the Looking-Glass world, which might indicate a warning against her swift progress.

***Critical Analysis:***

As expected, [Alice](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Alice) boards a train. There she encounters a group of unusual passengers, including a goat, a beetle, and a gentleman dressed in paper. Alice encounters hostility on board. The Guard angrily asks for her ticket, and other passengers chime in aggressively. When Alice says she doesn't have a ticket, the Guard continues to be unpleasant: "'Don't make excuses,' said the Guard: 'you should have bought one from the engine-driver.'" He examines her with a telescope, a microscope, and opera glasses before abruptly leaving.

Soon afterward Alice meets another passenger—a Gnat the size of a chicken.

When the train ride ends, Alice finds herself under a tree. The Gnat is still with her, and they discuss Looking-glass insects and names. In the discussion, Alice notes that insects don't answer to their names where she comes from. The Gnat is perplexed and queries, "What's the use of their having names if they won't answer to them?" They continue on, discussing the Rocking-horse Fly that eats sap and sawdust, and the Dragon-fly that eats "frumenty and mince pie."

Eventually, the Gnat suggests it would be appealing to lose her name, especially as it would mean her governess couldn't call her to lessons. As they travel, Alice feels nervous. They cross a field and approach a wood that "looked much darker than the last wood, and Alice felt a little timid about going into it. However, on second thoughts, she made up her mind to go on: 'for I certainly won't go *back*.'"

Alice proceeds. She is having trouble remembering words—including her own name—and meets the Fawn, who is experiencing the same problem. Together, Alice and the Fawn exit the woods.

[Alice](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Alice) has now passed through the first two squares of her journey. The pattern of groups of unpleasant characters continues in this chapter. There is no threat from them, merely criticism. But much like real life for Victorian children, who tended to be raised with strict discipline and frequent correction, the Looking-glass world is not a loving or indulgent place.

Alice's resolve remains evident. Although she is intimidated, she is moving forward, and she is able to maintain her own perspective even when those around her influence her. She briefly forgets her identity after her encounter with the Gnat but quickly recovers it. Her claim that she will not go back reflects her strength of will. She knows the path she must take, and as she has told the [Red Queen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Red_Queen), she wants to be a queen.

The significance of names and the word-play of characters' names is one of the threads running through the novel. "What's the use of their having names" can apply to more than the insects, as is evident when the Gnat asks about Alice losing her own name. The Gnat's theory is that Alice could avoid her school lessons by having no name. However, this is illogical. Alice points out: "the governess would never think of excusing me lessons for that. If she couldn't remember my name, she'd call me 'Miss!' as the servants do."

The loss of a name is also considered in another example. When Alice forgets her name and the Fawn loses its name, they seem to forget more than that, such as the typical relationship between humans and wild animals. They share a camaraderie that is lost with the return of names. [Carroll](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/author/) may allude here to the real-life girl—Alice Liddell—who served as inspiration for his main character. When Alice forgets her name she does remember it begins with an "L."

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) stands on tiptoe so she can see as much of this world as she can. She reasons it's like learning geography and looks for principal rivers, towns, or mountains. There aren't any. Alice notices creatures making honey and thinks that they're bees, but realizes that they're elephants. As she thinks of how huge the flowers must be she decides to go look, but feels suddenly shy. Reasoning that she wants to get into the Third Square more than she wants to see the elephants, she runs down the hill and jumps over the first brook.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Standing up to look around and likening this to learning geography shows that Alice is very interested in thinking logically about the world around her. When she's able to head for the next square and jump over the brook, it shows that the system that the Red Queen introduced her to earlier won't hold true for the rest of the novel—per the queen's logic, Alice should've headed in the other direction.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) finds herself in a train car. The [Guard](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters) pokes his head in the window and demands tickets from everyone. Everyone but Alice pulls out tickets that are as big as they are, and both the Guard and the passengers chide Alice for not promptly presenting her ticket. Scared, Alice says that there wasn't a ticket office where she came from. The Guard and the passengers chastise her. Alice thinks that there's no use in speaking and, to her surprise, everyone in the carriage chastises her in their thoughts. The Guard studies Alice with a telescope, a microscope, and then opera glasses. He declares that she's going the wrong way and leaves.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Since pawns in chess move two squares in their first move, Alice finds herself on a train moving quickly through the next square. The Guard's heckling introduces Alice to the fact that as she continues along, she's going to come across all sorts of rules and systems that she has no knowledge of but is going to be asked to follow anyway. This more broadly mirrors how adulthood might feel for Alice, as adults can be just as lost in the world as children can be.

***Summary Part 3:***

The passengers around [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) are actually animals. They lament that she should know where she's going and should know how to get a ticket, even if she doesn't know her name or the alphabet. A hoarse voice begins to say that Alice needs to change engines, but it chokes and stops. Alice thinks that it was a horse speaking. A small voice in her ear quietly says that she could make a joke about “horse” and “hoarse.” As passengers try to give Alice advice, the tiny voice in her ear continues to suggest jokes. Finally, Alice tells the voice to make the jokes itself. It sighs unhappily, confirms that Alice is a friend, and admits that it's an insect. Alice wants to know if it stings, but feels that this is a rude question.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Alice's belief that it'd be rude to ask about information she needs shows that there are limits to how useful etiquette is for someone like Alice—if she's going to be polite, she can't ask an impertinent question like this, even if she'd really like to have the information for her own use. The Gnat's joke suggestions mirror the expectations put on adults to properly perform at all times, while Alice's rejection of these suggestions reminds the reader that she's still a nonconforming child.

***Summary Part 4:***

The engine screams, a Horse explains that they're going to jump over a brook, and as the carriage rises straight up, [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) finds herself sitting under a tree with the [Gnat](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-gnat). She realizes that this is who she's been talking to. The Gnat is as big as a chicken, but Alice finds that she's not scared. She admits that she's afraid of the insects in her world and offers to share some of their names. The Gnat asks if the insects respond to their names and suggests that there's no use in having a name if a being doesn't respond to it. Alice proposes that the names are useful to other people.

***Analysis part 4:***

Alice's lack of fear points to the fact that she is an adaptable person who is able to go with the flow, something that will serve her well throughout her life. When she and the Gnat discuss names, Alice suggests that names matter because they allow people to make sense of the world around them. While she's more interested in putting together how her world works, the Gnat is more interested in piecing together individuals' identities.

***Summary Part 5:***

[Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) begins listing insects. She lists the horsefly, so the [Gnat](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-gnat) points to a rocking-horse-fly in a bush. It lives on sap and sawdust. Alice lists the dragonfly and again, the Gnat points out a snap-dragon-fly, which eats mince pie. When Alice lists the butterfly, the Gnat draws her attention to a bread-and-butter-fly at her feet. It eats weak tea with cream, and the Gnat says that they often die when they can't find tea.

***Analysis Part 5:***

The insects that the Gnat points out are all made up, but they're bright and fun to think about—until he notes that the bread-and-butter-fly often dies when it can't find food. This shows that nonsense can be fun, but it can also allow a person to think about uncomfortable truths, such as the ubiquity of death and how nonsensical those deaths can be.

***Summary Part 6:***

After a moment of silence, the [Gnat](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-gnat) confirms that [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) doesn't want to lose her name. Carelessly, the Gnat suggests that it'd be convenient if she lost it, as Alice's governess wouldn't be able to call her for lessons. Alice says that the governess would just call her "Miss," but the Gnat says that if the governess said that, she could miss her lessons. He wishes that Alice had made the joke. Alice asks why and points out that the joke was bad. The Gnat begins to cry and sighs itself into nothing.

***Analysis Part 6:***

The Gnat's jokes primarily work with homophones, or words that sound the same but mean different things. This shows how flexible language can be when one fixates on the sounds that words make more than their meaning. This encourages readers to think more playfully about language, what it can do, and what kind of wordplay and nonsense is possible when one thinks about it like this.

***Summary Part 7:***

Alice gets up and walks to a field with a dark wood on the other side. She reminds herself that she has to get to the Eighth Square and realizes that this must be the wood where things have no names. Alice chatters to herself about what it would be like to lose her name and be renamed until she reaches the edge of the wood. Under the trees, she can't remember her name, what trees are called, or where she is. A [Fawn](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-fawn) walks by and seems fearless. Alice calls out to the Fawn, but it backs away and stares at her. The Fawn asks what Alice calls herself, and Alice answers that she's not sure. The Fawn says that it'll tell Alice its name further on; it can't remember here.

***Analysis part 7:***

This wood represents the potential for children to grow up to be anything. In the wood, with no knowledge of their names or where they are, Alice and the Fawn have the ability to become anything on the other side—Alice could, as she suggests, come out with a new name. This again elevates childhood over adulthood, as it indicates that children are more flexible and more adaptable than adults are with fixed identities.

***Summary Part 8:***

[Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) puts her arms around the [Fawn](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-fawn)'s neck and together, they walk through the wood. In the open field beyond, the Fawn joyously remembers its name and then, in a panic, realizes that Alice is human and races away. Alice feels horrible, but she comforts herself with the fact that she now remembers her name. She comes to a road through the next wood and follows it. At the second signpost, she sees two signs pointing the same direction that read “To [Tweedledum](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/tweedledum)'s House” and “To the House of [Tweedledee](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/tweedledee).” Alice wonders if they live in the same house and decides to stop and ask them how to get out of the wood. As she comes around a corner, she comes face to face with Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

***Analysis Part 8:***

For Alice and the Fawn, learning their names isn't as positive as it might be for someone else: though Alice does now remember her name and, therefore, knows better who she is, she also lost the only friend she has in this world. For the Fawn, learning that Alice is human means that it's now terrified and just as alone as Alice is, something that's potentially less comfortable than it was to be nameless but in the company of someone else while in the wood.