***Through the Looking Glass***

***Chapter 4***

***Tweedledum and Tweedledee***

***Summary:***

* Alice stares at Tweedledum and Tweedledee for a long time. She can tell them apart because the ends of their names are written on their collars.
* One of the brothers tells Alice that, if she thinks they're wax figurines, she should pay for looking. The other brother tells her that, if she thinks they're alive, she should speak to them.
* Alice apologizes and remembers a nursery rhyme. Verse Alert! – it's the rhyme about the brothers Tweedledum and Tweedledee, who have a battle over a broken rattle until they're disturbed by a giant crow.
* Alice asks the brothers to tell her the best way out of the wood. They refuse.
* The brothers tell Alice that she started wrong and that they should all shake hands. They clasp hands and suddenly they're dancing around in a ring together singing "Here we go round the mulberry bush."
* When they stop dancing, there is an awkward pause. Tweedledee asks if Alice likes poetry, and she says yes in a doubtful way. The brothers confer, and Tweedledee decides to recite "The Walrus and the Carpenter," because it's long. Alice tries to persuade him to show her the way out of the wood before it gets dark, but he insists.
* Verse Alert: Tweeledee recites "The Walrus and the Carpenter." The poem tells the story of a Walrus and a Carpenter who make friends with a bunch of oysters. They take the oysters for a walk, but it turns out to be a trick – they eat every single oyster.
* At the end of the poem, Alice says that she likes the Walrus, because he was sorry for the oysters. Tweedledee tells her that he ate more of the oysters. Then Alice says she likes the Carpenter best because he ate fewer, but Tweedledum reminds her that he ate as many as he could. Alice is puzzled and doesn't know what to think.
* Then Alice hears a strange noise. The brothers tell her that it's the Red King snoring. They take Alice to see him and they scare her by telling her that she is only an imaginary character in his dream. According to Tweedledum and Tweedledee, if he woke up, she would vanish. Alice insists that she's real and begins crying.
* Finally Alice says that she has to leave the wood because it's dark and might rain. Tweedledum spreads an umbrella over himself and his brother.
* Alice is about to leave when Tweedledum shows her a broken rattle. He's angry because it was nice and new until his brother broke it.
* Tweedledee tries to shut himself up in his umbrella, but it doesn't really work.
* The brothers agree to have a battle. Alice helps them put on their armor, which consists of all kinds of housewares – pots and pans, mattresses, rugs, and so on – which she ties around them.
* The brothers, who now look like bundles of rags, agree to fight for an hour and a half and then have dinner. They tell Alice to stand well back, because they tend to hit everything they can reach when they fight.
* Before the brothers can start their battle, a monstrous crow appears. In fact, the darkness overhead is not a rain cloud – it's been the crow all along!
* The brothers run away. Alice runs into the wood to hide from the crow. While she's there, she finds a shawl blowing away in the wind and catches it.

***Synopsis:***

Alice approaches the portly twins Tweedledee and Tweedledum, who stand side by side with their arms around each other’s shoulders. Upon seeing them, Alice begins reciting a poem that she knows about them. The poem describes Tweedledee and Tweedledum fighting over a broken rattle until a crow frightens them, causing them to forget their argument. They deny that this has ever happened, and though they ignore Alice’s questions about how to get out of the wood, they do extend their hands to her in greeting. Alice does not want to choose one over the other, so she grabs each man’s hand and the three begin dancing in a ring. After a short dance, they stop, and though Alice continues to ask how to get out of the wood, Tweedledee and Tweedledum ignore her.

Tweedledee begins reciting “The Walrus and the Carpenter,” a poem that describes the story of a Walrus and a Carpenter who trick a group of young oysters into leaving their home underwater and coming to shore with them. Once the oysters get to shore, the Walrus and the Carpenter eat them. When Tweedledee finishes, Alice states that she prefers the Walrus because he feels sympathy for the oysters. Tweedledee points out that the Walrus ate more oysters than the Carpenter, and Alice changes her mind, stating her new preference for the Carpenter. Tweedledum observes that the Carpenter ate as many oysters as he could, which causes Alice to doubt her feelings.

As she tries to sort out her feelings, Alice becomes distracted by the Red King sleeping under a tree and snoring like a train engine. Tweedledee tells Alice that the Red King is dreaming about her, and if he stops, she will vanish. Alice starts to cry at the thought that she is real, and Tweedledee and Tweedledum try to comfort her by telling her that her tears are not real.

Alice decides that Tweedledum and Tweedledee are talking nonsense and that she is indeed real. Alice changes the subject and starts to leave when Tweedledee grabs her wrists and points to a broken rattle on the ground. Tweedledum recognizes it as his new rattle, and explodes in anger while Tweedledee cowers in fear. Tweedledee calms down and the two agree to a battle to determine ownership of the rattle. Alice helps them put on their battle gear, but before they can begin fighting, a great crow comes and scares them off, and Alice slips away into the wood alone.

***Brief Analysis:***

Tweedledum and Tweedledee are mirror images of one another, reintroducing the theme of inversion. With the exception of their names, the two little fat men are identical in looks, manner, and stance. They exhibit perfect symmetry, standing together with their arms around each other, so that when they extend their free hands they each reflect the other’s body position. Their conversation also displays a symmetrical position designated by Tweedledee’s favorite expression, “contrariwise.” “Contrariwise” functions as a transitional word that flips the premise of the conversation. Tweedledee usually addresses the other side of whatever Tweedledum just said. The twins’ reversal of language becomes apparent in the following exchange with Alice:

TWEEDLEDUM: I know what you’re thinking about . . . but it isn’t so, nohow.

TWEEDLEDEE: Contrariwise . . . if it was so, it might be . . . That’s logic.

The inversion motif appears on a larger scale in the fight between Tweedledee and Tweedledum, since it appears at the beginning of the chapter in Alice’s recitation and ends the chapter as an actual event. Their scripted quarrel reveals the power of language to affect outcomes. Language has an almost magical effect on Tweedledee and Tweedledum in creating a rattle that did not exist before the two met Alice. Language also seems to cause their battle. Tweedledum and Tweedledee must play out the events of Alice’s rhyme, and their lives are destined to imitate the events in the poem.

The episode with the sleeping Red King causes Alice to question whether or not she actually exists. The possibility that she may be a figment of the Red King’s dream complicates her already slippery hold on reality. Tweedledee’s suggestion questions the stability of reality itself. Alice has already experienced the loss of her name, a fundamental aspect of her sense of self. Here, she loses the security of her material existence in the world. If the Red King is in fact dreaming Alice into existence, then he is the only thing in Looking-Glass World that truly exists. The only way to test this hypothesis would be to wake the Red King up, but if he has imagined Alice, Tweedledum, and Tweedledee, none of them would be able to ask him about it, since they exist only in his dreams and thus cannot affect his waking life. Even Alice’s emotions are artificial, since her tears are only real to her. Though the tears serve as evidence of real emotion, that real emotion exists as a figment of the King’s dream.

The episode of the Red King’s dream opens up greater implications for Alice and the readers about reality and the nature of God. The presence of the Red King suggests the notion that no person actually exists, but lives solely as a fragment of a divine imagination. The chessboard motif makes sense as a tool for organizing the story since it functions as an allegory for human life in general. The characters in the story live a deterministic existence in which they have no free will and move about according to the will of their creator. Free will is an illusion in this world, since the residents of Looking-Glass World must follow the rules of the chess game in all of their actions. The idea of free will as an illusion challenges our understanding of Alice’s adventures, since we have understood that they exist as part of Alice’s own imagination. By introducing the possibility that Alice acts under the manipulation of a larger divine force, Carroll presents the idea that human life exists as an abstraction of the imagination of a larger divine force.

***Critical Study:***

[Alice](https://www.gradesaver.com/through-the-looking-glass/study-guide/character-list#alice) comes upon [Tweedledum and Tweedledee](https://www.gradesaver.com/through-the-looking-glass/study-guide/character-list#tweedledum-and-tweedledee), and she immediately knows which is which because they have their names on their collars. They chastise her for not beginning a conversation with them, but she is distracted by the poem about the two engaging in a battle. She tries to elicit directions from them, but they continue to advise her on how properly to begin a conversation. When she tries to shake both of their hands at once, they grab her and begin to dance.

Once they stop, they decide to recite poetry for Alice. They recite "The Walrus and the Carpenter," which is basically a tale of a walrus and a carpenter who take a walk on a beach one day and invite some oysters to come along. Many of the young oysters agree and end up getting devoured by the walrus and the carpenter.

After the recitation, Alice admits that she prefers the Walrus because he at least showed remorse for eating the oysters. Tweedledee and Tweedledum argue that even so, he ate significantly more than the carpenter. When Alice changes her mind, they argue that the carpenter ate as many as he could. Alice is left confused about which character she prefers.

Alice hears a rumbling noise and fears that it is coming from some great beast in the woods. The two little men assure Alice that it is just the Red King snoring, and they go to look upon him. Alice is disappointed to see that he is just a rumpled mess. The men then try to convince her that she is just a character in the King's dream and that she is therefore not real. This makes Alice exceedingly upset.

They notice a white rattle on the ground, and this incites the battle between the two men that Alice was originally anticipating. She helps them get dressed in ridiculous outfits for their battle, and when they both complain about injuries, she uses the opportunity to encourage them to save their fighting for another time. At this, they agree to have a shorter fight, but then a monstrous crow flies overhead, and they all run for cover.

Tweedledum and Tweedledee are enantiomorphs, which, according to mathematicians, are forms that are mirror images of one another. This is emphasized by the frequent use of the word "contrariwise." It is possible that the original nursery rhyme is an allusion to the rivalry between two composers, Handel and Bononcini.

The poem about the walrus and the carpenter is an important one, especially considering the discussion that follows it. The brothers want to know which Alice thinks is more contemptible, and it appears that she is unable to decide. The question poses a difficult moral dilemma, that involving whether it is right to judge a man by his actions or instead, by his intentions.

This chapter also poses metaphysical problems, for Tweedledum and Tweedledee claim that Alice is only a figment of the Red King's dream. This is more deeply interpreted as the philosophy that things are not real in an of themselves; Bishop Berkeley wrote that things exist only as "sorts of things" in the mind of God. Alice takes the more practical point of view.

Also, this idea of who is dreaming of whom shares an interesting parallel with the idea of mirrors. It is postulated that Alice is dreaming of the King, who is also dreaming of Alice, who still is dreaming of the King, which ends up being an infinite regress. The image is strikingly similar to two mirrors facing one another, reflecting infinitely themselves inside the other mirror. This idea also relates back to Tweedledee and Tweedledum themselves, who have been established as mirror images of one another.

***Critical Analysis:***

When [Alice](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Alice) meets Tweedledum and Tweedledee, she is reminded of a rhyme about Tweedledum and Tweedledee quarreling over a rattle. Not surprisingly, this nursery rhyme is reflected in the event that ends this chapter.

Alice shakes both Tweedledee and Tweedledum's hands at once. They start dancing, and afterward, they recite a poem, "The Walrus and the Carpenter." The poem is the story of a Walrus and a Carpenter who deceive and then devour a group of oysters.

After the poem, Alice hears a peculiar noise, and she wonders if there are lions or tigers nearby. The brothers lead her to the sleeping Red King, who is wearing a tall red night-cap. As they stand over the sleeping king, Alice worries he may get cold sleeping on the ground as he is. The brothers are more interested in the fact that the king is dreaming. They ask her what she thinks he's dreaming. Alice says, "Nobody can guess that."

Again, Alice is faced with unpleasantness. The brothers argue not only is the Red King dreaming of her, but she would vanish if he awoke: "You'd be nowhere. Why, you're only a sort of thing in his dream!" Alice's rebuttal is dismissed because, according to them, "You know very well you're not real."

Obviously, Alice rejects this idea. She cries and, in doing so, points out if she weren't real, she wouldn't be able to cry. Again, Alice defaults to logic. She is a reasonable person, and she realizes they are not: "I know they're talking nonsense." This logic makes her stop crying and decide to continue on her journey.

However, Tweedledum notices his rattle, and the brothers insist Alice help them dress for a battle. The sky grows dark as a great crow approaches. The brothers run off at the sight of it, and the flapping of the bird's wings sets someone's shawl to flight.

Tweedledee and Tweedledum are mirror images of each other and reflections of the nursery rhyme [Alice](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Alice) initially recalls upon seeing them. Here again, the events are predicted. This predictability of narrative is in direct opposition to the nonsense aspects of *Through the Looking-Glass*. On one hand, Alice—and the reader—know the order of events from the meeting with the [Red Queen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Red_Queen) and the order of this chapter as a result of the nursery rhyme. On the other hand, the individual conversations, characters, and discussions often devolve into sheer nonsense. This is the apparent case when the brothers suggest that Alice isn't "real."

"The Walrus and the Carpenter," along with "Jabberwocky," is one of Lewis's most famous poems. Critics have read into it various political or religious allegories (the "carpenter" may be a representation of Christ), but there is no indication that [Carroll](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/author/) intended the poem to have an underlying meaning.

Within the world of *Through the Looking-Glass*, Alice is the only real character. She is the character who is driving the narrative, presumably by either dream or imagination. So Alice is dreaming a sleeping Red King who is potentially dreaming her. The layers of meaning in the simple question of whether Alice is real reveal a larger philosophical question Carroll is prompting. The question of whether reality might be a dream was explored in Carroll's time by Irish Bishop George Berkeley, who proposed the entire world was merely God's dream.

To prevent his children's adventure from becoming too serious, Carroll introduces the whimsical elements of the twins' battle dress: "He called it a helmet, though it certainly looked much more like a saucepan." The "monstrous crow" that frightens the twins out of doing battle may symbolize death, as crows are seen as carrion birds, or feeders on dead flesh. At any rate, it's fairly certain these unlikely warriors are looking for any excuse not to fight, although one boasts, "I generally hit everything I can see," and the other asserts, "I hit everything within reach whether I can see it or not."

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[Tweedledum](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/tweedledum) and [Tweedledee](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/tweedledee) are identical fat men and they stand with their arms around each other's shoulders. [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) can tell them apart because one has "Dum" embroidered on his collar and the other has "Dee" on his. She supposes that they must have "Tweedle" at the back of their collars but as she starts to move around them to look, Tweedledum says that she should pay if she's going to treat them like waxworks. Tweedledee says that she should speak. Alice apologizes and remembers an old song about Tweedledum and Tweedledee, in which the brothers fight over a rattle but forget their fight when a big crow flies too close. The brothers say that they know what Alice is thinking about but it's not true.

***Analysis Part 1:***

When Tweedledum and Tweedledee immediately chastise Alice for not being polite, it again suggests that Alice will have to try much harder to figure out how to operate in this world without offending anyone—there's little evidence that Tweedledee and Tweedledum looked like they were actually alive until they spoke, after all. This essentially sets Alice up to fail as she moves through Looking-glass World and tries to figure out how to properly conduct herself, especially when the brothers then tell her that the song is inexplicably wrong—everything she knows is, apparently, not correct.

***Summary Part 2:***

Politely, [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) asks the best way through the wood. [Tweedledum](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/tweedledum) and [Tweedledee](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/tweedledee) grin at each other. Alice thinks they look like schoolboys, so she points at Tweedledum and says, “First Boy” and then “Next Boy” to Tweedledee. They snap to attention, but Tweedledum reprimands Alice for not greeting them and shaking hands. Keeping one arm around the other, the brothers each hold out a hand for Alice to shake. Not wanting to offend either brother by choosing one over the other, Alice grabs both hands at the same time. They dance in a circle and Alice hears music.

***Analysis Part 2:***

When politeness doesn't work for Alice, she resorts to mischief—a reminder that even if she's getting older, she's still very much a child. When she deliberates over whose hand to shake first so that she doesn't offend anyone, it illustrates again how hard Alice is trying to do the right thing and make everyone feel comfortable—though often at her own expense.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Tweedledum](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/tweedledum) stops dancing and the music stops. He and [Tweedledee](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/tweedledee) drop [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice)’s hands and Alice awkwardly tries to think of how to begin a conversation. She asks if they're tired. The brothers thank her for her concern and then Tweedledee decides to recite “The Walrus and the Carpenter” for Alice, since it's the longest poem he knows. They ignore Alice's request for directions.

***Analysis Part 3:***

It's worth noticing that Tweedledum and Tweedledee aren't being polite when they ignore Alice's request for directions. When Alice decides to stick around and listen to the poem anyway, it shows that the onus is on her to be polite—adults like Tweedledum and Tweedledee can get away with this kind of behavior, since Alice is comparatively powerless as a child.

***Summary Part 4:***

“The Walrus and the Carpenter” tells the story of a Walrus and a Carpenter walking along the shore. They invite oysters to walk with them. The old oysters refuse, but many young oysters happily follow. The group walks about a mile and then they sit on a low rock. The Walrus announces that it's time to talk, but he agrees to let the oysters catch their breath. The Walrus calls for bread, pepper, and vinegar so they can all eat. The oysters fearfully confirm that they're not going to be eaten. The Carpenter and the Walrus cut bread and lament that they tricked the oysters. The Walrus sobs as the Carpenter suggests that they all head home. The oysters don't answer—the Walrus and the Carpenter ate all of them.

***Analysis part 4:***

The behavior of the young oysters in the poem shows how vulnerable children can be in an adult world—the draw of being treated like an adult, as symbolized by the invitation to walk with the Walrus and the Carpenter, is enough to put the young oysters in a dangerous position. Symbolism aside, the poem is still silly and nonsensical—but regardless, it's still fun for the reader, even if it's not doing anything useful for Alice in terms of helping her navigate this world.

***Summary Part 5:***

After this recitation, [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) says she likes the Walrus because he was sorry for the oysters. [Tweedledee](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/tweedledee) points out that he ate more than the Carpenter. Alice switches and says that she then likes the Carpenter better, but [Tweedledum](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/tweedledum) says that the Carpenter still ate as many oysters as he could. Alice says they were both bad, but stops when she hears something that sounds like a train. Tweedledee says it's just the [Red King](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters) snoring and invites Alice to come look at him. They wonder what he's dreaming about and Tweedledee says that the king is dreaming about Alice—if he woke up, she'd disappear. Alice points out that Tweedledee and Tweedledum would disappear too, but they don't answer.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Alice's attempt to figure out which character was the better person pokes fun at philosophical arguments that have no one correct answer—it's possible to argue that either character is the better one. Alice's inability to come to a decision, combined with this conversation's inclusion in a children's book, suggests that people shouldn't put so much stock in these philosophical arguments. It doesn't matter, really, which answer one chooses, as there's no single correct answer.

***Summary Part 6:***

[Tweedledum](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/tweedledum) tells [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) that she's not real, which makes Alice cry. Alice thinks this is all ridiculous and suggests that if she weren't real, she wouldn't be able to cry. Tweedledum contemptuously says that Alice's tears are fake. Alice tells herself that the brothers are talking nonsense and calms down. She again asks for directions out of the wood and asks if it's going to rain. Tweedledum opens up an umbrella and announces that it won't rain under his umbrella, but it might rain outside.

***Analysis Part 6:***

This conversation about the Red King's dream draws on the idea that humans exist in God's dream. Now that Alice is the subject who's only alive in someone else's dream, it's very anxiety inducing for her. As with the philosophical argument, the novel again makes the case that it's not worth getting too worked up about—there's no proving it either way, and it just makes Alice sad.

***Summary Part 7:***

[Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) is ready to give up when [Tweedledum](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/tweedledum) grabs her, points to a white object, and chokingly asks if she sees it. She says that it's just an old, broken rattle. Tweedledum begins to rage as [Tweedledee](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/tweedledee) tries to close the umbrella around himself. Tweedledum calms down suddenly and asks his brother if he agrees to a battle. Tweedledee does, so the brothers skip away and return with a collection of blankets, rugs, and linens. They make Alice help them button and tie everything onto them. They agree to fight for two hours until dinner and then warn Alice to stand back so they don't hit her. She tries to shame them into giving up, but they ignore her. It starts to get dark quickly and the brothers realize it's a crow. They run away and Alice notices a shawl flying.

***Analysis part 7:***

When Tweedledee and Tweedledum's fight is cut short by the crow, as in the song Alice mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, it suggests that Alice is actually the one in charge here (and not the Red King). She can think about nursery rhymes like this and then see them come true before her very eyes. That it's nursery rhymes and songs that come to life suggests children have a degree of imaginative control over their worlds.