***Through the Looking Glass***

***Chapter 8***

***“It’s My Own Invention”***

***Summary:***

* The noise dies away and Alice looks up. She wonders again whether she is in her own dream or the Red King's.
* A Red Knight gallops up and takes Alice prisoner. Then a White Knight gallops up and challenges him to a battle over her.
* Alice hides behind a tree while the Knights fight. Their battle is silly and haphazard; they hold their clubs with their arms instead of their hands and they fall off their horses a lot. Eventually the Red Knight gallops away and the White Knight seems to be victorious.
* The White Knight offers to take Alice to the Eighth Square and she accepts.
* Alice helps the White Knight take off his helmet. He's dressed in ill-fitting armor and there are all kinds of strange things strung around his horse.
* The Knight tells Alice about one of his inventions – a box for storing things that's hung upside down so the rain doesn't get in. Unfortunately, all the things have fallen out. The Knight hangs it on a tree instead so that it can be used as a beehive.
* Alice notices a beehive and a mousetrap hanging from the Knight's saddle. They talk about these items and the Knight explains that he wants to be prepared for anything.
* The Knight notices the dish Alice is still carrying. He tucks it away into his bag in case they find any more plum-cake.
* As they start their journey, the Knight asks Alice if her hair is fastened adequately. He tells her about a silly invention for keeping hair from falling off by making it grow up sticks.
* Alice notices that the Knight is a very bad rider; he falls off every time the horse stops and starts. She says the Knight must not have had very much practice riding, which offends him.
* Alice suggests that the Knight use a wooden horse on wheels instead, since it would go more smoothly.
* There is a pause and then the Knight tells Alice about a new plan he's invented for getting over a gate by doing a headstand.
* Alice comments on the Knight's strange helmet. He tells her about another helmet he made for himself that was so large he once fell into it. The other White Knight came to put it on, and he had to kick the Knight in the head.
* Alice asks the Knight how he can keep talking when he falls over, and the Knight says his brain keeps working no matter where his body is.
* The Knight tells Alice about a strange pudding (the British term for "dessert") that he invented, made with blotting-paper, gunpowder, and sealing wax.
* They arrive at the end of the Seventh Square. The Knight offers to sing Alice a song before she leaves him. He spends a long time telling her the title of the song – it seems to have a whole series of titles, including titles of the titles.
* The Knight sings for Alice. He is a picturesque figure, and years later she remembers the scene vividly.
* Verse Alert: the Knight sings a song all about his daydreams and strange plans and inventions.
* When the Knight finishes singing, he gives Alice directions and rides away. He asks Alice to wave to him as he turns the corner, and she does.
* Alice turns and leaps across the last of the brooks and finds herself in the Eighth Square. A huge golden crown appears on her head.

***Synopsis:***

As the pounding of the drums dies away, Alice starts to wonder if she still exists as part of the Red King’s dream. At this moment, the Red Knight barrels toward her, screaming “Check!” The White Knight comes to Alice’s rescue, and the two chess pieces fight furiously until the Red Knight gallops off. The White Knight happily tells Alice that he will bring her safely to the next brook, explaining that once she crosses the brook she will become a queen. As they walk, the White Knight describes all of the items that he carries with him. He carries a box to keep clothes and food, a beehive for keeping bees, a mousetrap to protect his horse from mice, and horse-anklets to guard against shark-bites. As he speaks to Alice, he repeatedly falls off of his horse. She questions his riding ability, which offends him. The White Knight explains that he has practiced riding frequently, which is the key to good horsemanship. Alice finds his claims to be ridiculous.

As the White Knight and Alice continue traveling toward the brook, he explains several of his inventions to Alice. He has developed a new kind of helmet, several ways to jump a fence, and a new kind of pudding, which he considers to be his greatest invention. All of the White Knight’s inventions seem to have something wrong with them. Alice becomes increasingly puzzled by his explanations as they approach the forest’s border. The White Knight mistakes Alice’s confusion for sadness, and proposes that he sing a song that has several different names. Upon finishing the song, the White Knight points to the brook that she must jump over to become a queen. He asks her to wait to jump until he reaches a turn far off down the road. Alice waits for him to pass out of sight, waving her handkerchief after him, and jumps over the brook. On the other side, she finds herself sitting on a lawn wearing a crown.

***Brief Analysis:***

With the exception of the White Knight, the characters of Looking-Glass World have no understanding of the rules of the chess game that organize their lives. Alice has finally reached the seventh square and will become a queen with her next move. Since she moves as a pawn, she has no sense of the squares around her. She learns of her impending transformation into a queen from the White Knight, who comes to rescue her from the Red Knight. With the help of the chessboard diagram provided by Carroll, it becomes obvious that Alice faced no danger from the Red Knight, who had recently moved to the square adjacent to Alice. The Red Knight’s cry of “Check!” is not intended for Alice, whom, based on the rules of chess, he cannot capture, but for the White King, whom the Red Knight has put in check. The Red Knight has no understanding of the game, and upon seeing Alice, believes that he is meant to capture her. The White Knight arrives and enters the Red Knight’s square, defeating the Red Knight. The White Knight guides Alice to the eighth square, but before leaving she must see him off in his next move. Carroll follows the rules of chess closely, requiring Alice to watch the White Knight as the turns the bend in the road, following the one-across, two-over movement of the Knight in chess.

The White Knight appears as a fictional manifestation of Lewis Carroll. Critics have pointed out similarities between the two, noting the physical resemblance between them. Both the White Knight and Carroll have shaggy hair, mild blue eyes, and kindly smiles. Like Carroll, the Knight invents curious contraptions to help provide for any contingency. While the White Knight readies himself for a shark attack, Carroll created devices such as an object to allow him to take notes in the dark. More importantly, Alice finds in the White Knight and individual who truly esteems and cares for her. He soothes her loneliness, but this does not stop her from leaving him to become a queen. This decision imitates how Alice Liddell grew apart from Carroll as she matured. The song that the White Knight sings to Alice serves as Carroll’s heartfelt, if misdirected, tribute to the real life Alice. Carroll implies that Alice does not feel sadness, only confusion. Alice’s dismissal of the White King in her final remark about him affirms that she has grown up: “‘I hope it encouraged him,’ she said, as she turned to run down the hill.” Alice dismisses the White Knight’s offer of love and friendship as she goes off to become a queen, just as Alice abandoned Carroll when she became a young woman.

***Critical Study:***

[Alice](https://www.gradesaver.com/through-the-looking-glass/study-guide/character-list#alice) finds herself alone again, but then she is intercepted by the [White Knight](https://www.gradesaver.com/through-the-looking-glass/study-guide/character-list#white-knight), who claims that having come upon her, she is not his prisoner. However, he cannot seem to stay on his horse. Another knight approaches, the Red Knight, and they argue about whose prisoner Alice is. They then have a very clumsy battle to determine the captor.

The White Knight wins, though Alice could not really tell what decided the victory. But when he claims that she is his prisoner, she argues that she wants to be a Queen. He tells her that is not a problem, as he intends to see her safely to the next brook so that she can proceed to the next square and become a queen.

Alice mounts his horse, which the Knight cannot seem to ride properly. He consistently slides off in all directions and lands on his head. While they ride, he tells Alice about all of his inventions: the box turned upside-down so rain won't get in, the beehive attached to his saddle, the pole that keeps hair from falling off, etc. Each of these inventions has a number of problems that Alice contemplates.

The Knight offers to sing Alice a song, and even though she is not interested, she agrees to let him sing to her. He sings about an old man who gives another man advice about how to live. Alice finds that she knows the tune, but the song does not make her cry, even though the knight insisted it would.

They reach the end of their journey, and the Knight requests that Alice see him off. She does, hoping that it encourages him, and then she jumps the final brook into the eighth square. When she lands, she realizes there is a gold crown on her head.

At first it seems that the White Knight is a malevolent character in the story, because he tells Alice that he intends to take her prisoner. However, the reader discovers that he is a benevolent force in Alice's world, for he means to help her cross the last brook.

The crossing of this brook causes the White Knight great distress, for it signifies a significant move for Alice on the chess board of her life. She will move to the final square, where she is to become a Queen. While this causes the White Knight great sadness, Alice does not seem to be perturbed, even when he sings his song. The lack of tears from Alice indicates her blissful childhood ignorance.

The Red Knight who battles the White Knight represents a force of evil that means to hold Alice back from pursuing her destiny. Alice is amused as she watches the fight, unable to tell who is winning. This mirrors the ignorance she displays while listening to the White Knight sing; she obviously does not understand the importance of events leading to her destiny.

Some scholars believe that the White Knight is meant to be a caricature of the author. Carroll enjoyed inventing things and toying with odd objects. His physical appearance also mirrors that of the knight's: messy hair, blue eyes and a kind face. It also makes sense considering the role that he plays in Alice's journey. Of all the characters Alice meets, only the White Knight seems to offer her direct help.

***Critical Analysis:***

It is suddenly very quiet, and [Alice](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Alice) wonders if she'd been dreaming. However, she still has a platter from the meal. Two knights appear. The Red Knight declares Alice his prisoner, and the White Knight says he has "come and rescued her."

The knights quarrel, and the Red Knight leaves. Afterward, Alice and the White Knight travel together, but it is slow progress as the Knight has a nearly impossible time staying astride his horse. He shows her a series of his own inventions, but none of them work well. They discuss names, specifically in relation to a song he wants to share. He lets her know the song might bring tears to her eyes, but it doesn't.

After the Knight's ballad, Alice reaches the Eighth Square. The Knight, however, asks her to wait and wave to him when he reaches a turn in the road. She does, and then she crosses to the final square—whereupon a crown appears on her head.

The knight provides a rescue [Alice](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Alice) wasn't seeking. Readers may recall that the [White King](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#White_King) was sure the [White Queen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#White_Queen) did not need his aid. However, in keeping with the theme of kings and knights, a knight defending a lady, or a future king, is featured in many ballads. Interestingly, discussions of the White Knight sometimes suggest that [Carroll](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/author/) can be seen in this character, in part because he was an inventor.

If Carroll intended to base the White Knight on himself, the request that Alice pause and wave goodbye to him may be not just a knight's emphasis on courtly form: it may be a symbolic goodbye or an acknowledgment that the real-life Alice has left her childhood with him behind. *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* was published in December 1871. At that point, Carroll had no contact with the girl for whom he wrote the book, and Alice was no longer a child. She would have been 19 when the book was published.

*Through the Looking-Glass* reaches its climax at the close of this chapter as Alice crosses onto the Eighth Square and receives her crown.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

The racket gradually dies. [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) lifts her head and sees  that she's totally alone, but the dish from the plum cake is next to her. She decides that she wasn't dreaming, unless everything is part of the same dream. She hopes that she's not in the [Red King](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters)'s dream and considers waking him up, but she hears shouting and sees a [Red Knight](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters) riding toward her to take her prisoner. He tumbles off his horse. Alice is concerned, but he mounts again. A [White Knight](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-knight) rides in, falls off, and they argue about who has the right to take Alice. They agree to fight for her and observe the rules of battle.

***Analysis Part 1:***

That Alice is still considering whether or not she's in the Red King's dream suggests that these kinds of theoretical exercises are fun and worth considering—they're just not worth losing sleep over. When the knights agree to the rules of battle, it shows again that there is some logic that guides this world. Everyone is playing by the rules, even if those rules aren't immediately apparent to an outsider like Alice.

***Summary Part 2:***

The knights hit at each other and [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) escapes behind a tree. She watches to see if she can figure out what the rules are. They're odd rules: if a knight lands a blow, the victim falls off; if he misses, he falls off. The narrator says that Alice misses that a rule is that they must fall on their heads. The battle ends when both knights fall off in this way. They shake hands and the [Red Knight](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters) rides off. The [White Knight](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-knight) declares that it was a glorious victory. Alice isn't sure, but says that she doesn't want to be a prisoner—she wants to be a queen. The knight says that she will be once she crosses the next brook. He's going to escort her and then head back to finish his turn.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Alice's attempts to figure out what the rules are shows that she's still trying to make logical sense of what she sees in Looking-glass World, even as her experiences thus far have made it clear that this is often not a good use of her time. The Knight's explanation that he's going to accompany Alice to the edge of the square and then turn back again plays into the idea that he's a knight who moves in an L shape: he has to make a turn in order to finish his move.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) helps the [White Knight](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-knight) out of his helmet. Without his helmet, she sees that he has a very gentle face. He's dressed in ill-fitting tin armor and has a box strapped to his shoulders, but it hangs upside-down and open. The knight happily says that he invented the box to carry sandwiches and clothes, and he carries it upside-down so the rain doesn't get in. Alice notes that the things fell out and the lid's open. The knight looks upset and pulls off the box as though to toss it, but he hangs it on a tree. He explains that he did it so that bees could make a beehive in it. Alice points out that he already has a beehive hanging on his saddle. The knight doesn't refute this, but she says that it hasn't yet attracted bees.

***Analysis Part 3:***

The way that the White Knight talks about his inventions makes it clear that thinking about things can be fun and rewarding, even if those things are nonsense or ineffective—but pointing this out, as Alice does, is sometimes a pedantic and unwelcome habit that actually stifles creativity. In this situation, Alice again seems as though she's the adult and the White Knight, though older, is a child in need of adult guidance. This shows that adults don't have everything figured out, while kids may be better able to grasp the world around them.

***Summary Part 4:***

The [White Knight](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-knight) gestures to the mousetraps he has on his saddle to protect the beehive from mice. He explains that he plans for everything and points out that his horse wears spikes around its ankles to protect it from shark bites. The knight asks if he can take the dish from the plum cake and they struggle to shove it into his bag. The knight asks [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) if her hair is fastened. With a smile, Alice says that it's stuck on in the normal way. The knight nervously declares that that isn't enough with the wind so strong and says he has a plan for keeping it from falling off: train it like a vine to climb a stick so it's growing up and can't fall down. Alice thinks this sounds uncomfortable.

***Analysis part 4:***

The White Knight's contingency plans, especially the spikes to ward off sharks, look extremely childish: in this situation, Alice looks even more like an adult, as she's able to calmly and logically note that there are no sharks to be found (though, it's worth noting that, given what Alice has experienced thus far, it wouldn't be that far outside the realm of possibility to come across sharks—Alice is possibly acting too stodgy and old and stifling her imagination).

***Summary Part 5:***

[Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) stops often to help the [White Knight](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-knight) back on his horse. She asks if he hasn't ridden much, which offends him. He insists that he's had loads of practice and begins to expound on how to properly ride, falling off several times in the process. Annoyed, Alice says that this is ridiculous and the knight needs a wooden horse on wheels. The knight thoughtfully says that a wooden horse sounds wonderful.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Helping the White Knight back onto his horse is one of the most obvious ways that the novel suggests that Alice is more adult than the adults around her. However, the White Knight's speech on how to ride properly reads similarly to Humpty Dumpty's need to lord his knowledge over Alice, even if it was nonsense.

***Summary Part 6:***

The [White Knight](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-knight) tells [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) about his latest invention: a way to get over a gate. He says he'd do it by putting his head on the gate, standing on his head, and swinging his feet over. Alice points out that this might be difficult, but this makes the knight look sad. Changing the subject, Alice compliments the knight's helmet. He invented it and he tells Alice about another helmet he invented. It looked like a sugarloaf, so he didn't have far to fall. Another knight stole it. At this, the White Knight looks so sad that Alice tries extra hard to suppress laughter. The knight tells her how he got that helmet back and how it got stuck, saying that it was stuck on his head as fast as lightning. He brushes Alice off when she points out that he's referring to a different kind of fastness.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Especially since Alice spends most of this exchange trying not to laugh, it reminds the reader that language and creativity can be fun and humorous—even if, in practice, suggestions like the White Knight's are wildly out of touch with reality. However, being able to consider these possibilities, the novel suggests, makes life richer. People who try to suppress this kind of thinking (like Alice, in this case) are shutting themselves off from a world in which anything can happen—a world that Carroll suggests is most present for children.

***Summary Part 7:***

As the [White Knight](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-knight) says this, he falls off headfirst into a ditch. He continues to talk about fastness as [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) drags him out of the ditch by his feet. Alice asks how he can keep talking in such a state, which surprises the knight—he declares that his mind works no matter where his body is, and he invents more when he's upside-down. He shares that the smartest thing he's ever done was inventing a new pudding during the meat course at dinner. Alice is impressed, thinking that the pudding was cooked by the time they were ready for dessert, but this isn't the case. He never cooked the pudding but it's still clever: it's made out of blotting paper, gunpowder, and sealing wax.

***Analysis part 7:***

This pudding in particular speaks to the vastness and the possibility of imagination: with enough imagination, it's possible to create all sorts of things that don't work in the real world, but are still glorious ideas in the abstract. This again suggests that children who think this way have the better end of the deal, as they're able to see the magic in thinking about impossible or silly things, while adults are too caught up in reality and deny themselves the fun of thinking imaginatively.

***Summary part 8:***

[Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) and the [White Knight](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-knight) reach the end of the wood and the knight says he needs to leave her. Alice is deep in thought about the unappetizing pudding, which makes the knight think she's sad. He offers to sing her a long but beautiful song. The name of it is "Haddock's Eyes." Alice tries to act interested and asks if that's the name of the song. This annoys the knight; the name is "The Aged Aged Man." Alice tries to recover from this blunder, but the knight says that the song is called "Ways And Means," but it really is "A-sitting On A Gate." Alice is thoroughly confused, but watching the knight sing moves her. Though the knight insists he made up the tune, Alice recognizes it as being the tune of a popular song.

***Analysis Part 8:***

In this exchange, the White Knight appears much more like Humpty Dumpty than he has thus far: he speaks very literally about the poem's title but in this case, this makes it impossible to actually figure out what the poem is called. This indicates that while this kind of nonsense can be funny, it can also make it much harder to understand what's going on in a way that can make things difficult.

***Summary Part 9:***

The [White Knight](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-knight) sings of coming upon an old man sitting on a gate. He asked the man how he makes his living. The man talked about selling mutton pies made out of butterflies, but the knight thinks about how to secretly dye his beard green. He hits the man and asks again how he makes a living. The man makes oil and again, the knight thinks of something entirely unrelated, so he shakes the man and asks his question again. This time, the man says that he turns haddocks' eyes into buttons and digs for buttered rolls, and says he'll drink to the knight's health. The knight hears this and thanks him. Addressing the reader, the knight sings that now, whenever he makes a mistake like putting a shoe on the wrong foot, he remembers the man on the gate.

***Analysis Part 10:***

Just as with the other poems that characters have recited for Alice, this poem makes little logical sense—there are no butterflies in mutton pies, and fish eyes aren't ever used as buttons. However, the poem still rolls off the tongue in a satisfying way and it's charmingly silly, making it fun to recite (or in Alice's case, listen to). This shows once again that a poem or a book need not make logical sense in order to be worth reading. It just needs to be fun.

***Summary Part 11:***

The [White Knight](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-knight) turns his horse away, points [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) in the right direction, and asks her to wave him off. Alice does as she's told and thanks the knight for his song. When he's gone, Alice leaps over the brook into the Eighth Square and flops down on a soft lawn. She realizes there's something on her head. She lifts it off and sees that it's a golden [crown](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/symbols/alice-s-crown).

***Analysis Part 11:***

Getting the crown symbolizes Alice's shift to a version of adulthood. Being surprised by it suggests that adulthood is something that catches people by surprise, and the people who find themselves wearing the proverbial crown are often, as Alice is, still just children.