***Through the Looking Glass***

***Chapter 9***

***“It’s My Own Invention”***

***Summary:***

* Alice tries to get used to the idea that she is now a Queen. She gets up and walks back and forth, feeling the weight of her crown on her head.
* Suddenly the Red and White Queens are sitting on either side of Alice. They tell her that she won't really be a Queen until she has passed an examination.
* Alice tries to talk to them, but they twist her words and don't let her finish her sentences. She gets frustrated, and they tell her that she's bad-tempered.
* There is a silence. The Red and White Queens invite each other to Alice's dinner party that afternoon. Alice didn't even know about the party, but they still think she's rude for not issuing the invitations.
* The Queens begin asking Alice about what she learned in her lessons. The White Queen asks an addition question, but Alice loses count. The Red Queen asks a subtraction question, but Alice says it's impossible.
* The White Queen gives Alice a division problem: divide a loaf by a knife. The Red Queen answers before Alice can: "bread and butter."
* The Red Queen asks Alice what happens when you subtract a bone from a dog. The answer is that the dog's temper remains, because the dog loses its temper and then runs away.
* Confused, Alice asks the White Queen if she can do these kinds of sums. The White Queen admits that she can do addition, but not subtraction – which she calls substraction.
* The White Queen and Alice talk about the alphabet. The White Queen brags that she can read words of one letter.
* The Red Queen tries to ask Alice a "useful question" about how to make bread, but she stops Alice every few words and makes her define her answer.
* The Queens decide that Alice must be feverish with so much thinking and fan her madly.
* Next, the Queens ask questions about languages and about the cause of lighting. This brings up the subject of weather, and the White Queen talks about the thunderstorms that happened on the last set of Tuesdays. As the Queens explain, days and nights come two or three at a time in Looking-Glass World.
* Alice gives up on trying to understand, but the Queens keep telling stories about their strange country. The White Queen says that during the thunderstorm Humpty Dumpty came to her door carrying a corkscrew and looking for a hippopotamus.
* The White Queen admits that she was frightened of the thunderstorm. The Red Queen asks Alice to excuse her for saying foolish things and tells Alice to pat the White Queen on the head.
* The Red Queen begins singing a lullaby for the White Queen, who goes to sleep in Alice's lap. Then the Red Queen also falls asleep. Alice doesn't know what to do.
* The Queens begin snoring, the sound of which turns into a tune. The Queens vanish, but Alice hardly notices. Looking up, she sees that she is standing in front of an arched doorway with the words "Queen Alice" over it.
* Alice wants to go through the doorway, but there are two bells – one for visitors and one for servants – and she doesn't fit either category. She doesn't know what to do.
* A footman sticks his head out the door and tells her that she can't get in until the week after next. Then he slams the door shut.
* Alice knocks and rings both bells for awhile, to no avail. An old frog sitting under a tree gets up and comes to see what she's up to.
* Alice says that she's trying to get someone to answer the door. The frog wants to know what the door has been asking.
* Alice and the frog argue for awhile, then the frog shuffles away.
* The door is flung open and Alice hears a song from inside. The song is about her, welcoming Queen Alice to her banquet. Each time they come to the refrain, the number of guests gets larger. Alice finally goes in when they get to "ninety times nine" guests, afraid the hall just won't hold them all.
* When Alice appears, the crowd falls silent. The hall is full of about fifty guests, including many of the creatures she met on her adventure in Looking-Glass World.
* Alice joins the Red and White Queens at the head of the table. The Red Queen tells Alice that she missed the first two courses of the meal.
* The third course, the Joint, arrives at the table. The Red Queen introduces Alice to the Joint, which is a Leg of Mutton. The Mutton gets up and bows to Alice. Alice offers to carve the Mutton and give slices to the other Queens, but they tell her it's rude to cut someone she's been introduced to. ("Cut" in Victorian slang meant "pretend not to know" – so to "cut" someone was to snub them in public. Yes, it's yet another pun.)
* The waiters take away the Joint and bring a Plum Pudding. Alice asks not to be introduced, because she wants to eat it. The Red Queen introduces her anyway and sends the pudding away.
* Alice orders the Plum Pudding brought back and cuts slices of it. The Pudding tells her that she is being impertinent.
* The Red Queen tells Alice to make conversation, so she tells the Pudding that she's heard a lot of poetry over the course of the day, mostly about fishes.
* This reminds the White Queen that she knows a poem that is a riddle about fishes. She recites it to Alice and the guests.
* While Alice thinks about the riddle, the guests drink a toast to her health.
* The Red Queen tells Alice to make a speech. While she does, the Queens try to support her – literally. They push from either side and Alice rises up in the air.
* Suddenly, all the candles grow tall, the bottles on the table make themselves wings out of plates, and everything becomes strange and chaotic.
* The guests and tableware start changing places. The White Queen ends up in the soup tureen and the Leg of Mutton in her chair.
* Alice pulls on the tablecloth and everything comes tumbling down in a big crash.
* The Red Queen, who has shrunk small again, is running around on the table chasing her shawl. Alice grabs her and decides to shake her until she turns into a kitten.

***Synopsis:***

[Alice](https://www.gradesaver.com/through-the-looking-glass/study-guide/character-list#alice) wonders about the crown on her head until she sees that she is sitting on a throne in between the White and Red Queens. They begin to interrogate her, criticizing her manners, and claiming that she needs to take and examination before she can be a queen. They proceed to ask her trivia questions that Alice continues to get wrong because the answers are nonsensical.

The Queens discuss being tired, and soon they are asleep on Alice's lap. She tries to wake them unsuccesfully. She notices a door labeled with her name right in front of her, with a bell for visitors and one for servants. She wonders which one to ring and decides on the servants bell.

A frog responds, asking what she wants, and when she asks about the servants, he only provides her with an answer that does not make sense. He tells her to stop harrassing the door, and then he departs. Alice suddenly hears a chorus of voices singing about her and about a feast in her honor.

She proceeds through the door and finds herself at a table with about 50 guests. The Red and White Queens are sitting at the head of the table, so she joins them. The servers bring out various dishes, but instead of eating them, the queens just introduce them to Alice and encourage her to introduce herself. When she tries to offer them portions, they argue that it is rude to cut something she has just met.

She discovers that her voice has a commanding effect, and that when she speaks, not only do servants respond immediately, but everything also becomes silent. She asks why so many of the characters she has met like to sing about fish, and the White Queen offers to sing her own fish-themed song. Alice encourages her, and after the queen is finished, both queens encourage Alice to make a speech.

They offer to help support her, and though she refuses, they proceed to squeeze her as she begins. She finds herself rising as she tells her audience that she rises to give thanks. Suddenly, one of the queens warns her that something is about to happen, and indeed, several things unfold at once. The dishes and utensils all begin to move about, and the queens actually shrink. Alice realizes that she is too excited to be shocked as she grabs one of the tiny queens and shakes her with all her might, claiming she will turn her into a kitten.

***Brief Analysis:***

This chapter begins with a test, by which it will be determined if Alice is worthy of the crown she wears. The queens are rather hostile towards Alice, claiming that every response she provides is wrong and intimating that she is not ready to be a queen. It is likely that they treat her in this manner because there is much at stake; Alice must leave her examination a grown woman.

The [Red Queen](https://www.gradesaver.com/red-queen) makes an allusion to the game of chess while she is asking Alice trivia questions. When Alice tries to take back one of her answers, the Red Queen does not allow her, remarking that "when you've once said a thing, that fixes it, and you must take the consequences." This is an allusion to the fact that you can't take back a move in chess once you've made it. You cannot even change your mind once you've touched a piece.

The feast is a strong metaphor for coming-of-age. During the feast, amidst all of the chaos, Alice literally finds her voice, and realizes that she can make things happen by asserting herself. She even makes the dream end by grabbing the queen and shaking her, a clear act of control and aggression. It is during this moment that she gains clarity, threatening to turn the queen into a kitten. Alice stepped into this dream out of reality, where she was surrounded by kittens.

Speech is also an important symbol. As soon as Alice finds her voice, the queens call on her to use her newfound power. But Alice is reluctant, which only emphasizes the transitional period in which Alice inevitably finds herself.***Critical Study:***

[Alice](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Alice) suddenly discovers the [Red Queen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Red_Queen) and the [White Queen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#White_Queen) sitting on either side of her. The three speak, and the queens quiz Alice with nonsensical questions, such as "Do you know Languages? What's the French for fiddle-de-dee?" and "Try another Subtraction sum. Take a bone from a dog: what remains?"

Soon the White Queen grows sleepy and the Red Queen sings her a lullaby. Shortly thereafter, both queens fall asleep leaning on Alice. She rolls them off her and walks to an arched doorway inscribed, "Queen Alice." There are two bells: a servants' bell and a visitors' bell. As she ponders what to do, the door is opened—and closed—by a "creature with a long beak," who announces "no admittance till the week after next!"

Alice knocks on the door, to no avail. A strangely dressed Frog approaches and talks to her briefly. Then the door is flung open to a chorus of "Welcome, Queen Alice." Walking into the crowd, Alice finds the Red and White Queens. There is some jockeying for power over ordering and then rejecting various foods. The Red Queen actively asserts control, even as Alice tries to wrest it from her. The White Queen remains silent.

Even though Alice is tired of poetry, the White Queen recites a poem about fish, and the queens push Alice as she attempts to make a speech to the guests. The party dissolves into chaos, and the White Queen vanishes into a soup tureen. As Alice looks toward the White Queen, she sees, "the Queen's broad good-natured face grinning at her for a moment over the edge of the tureen, before she [disappears] into the soup." As the party becomes increasing raucous, Alice loses her temper, shouting, "'I can't stand this any longer!' ... as she [jumps] up and [seizes] the tablecloth with both hands: one good pull, and plates, dishes, guests, and candles [come] crashing down together in a heap on the floor."

Alice turns to the Red Queen, "the cause of all the mischief." The queen, however, has "suddenly dwindled down to the size of a little doll" and is running on the table. At this moment, Alice seizes the Red Queen and says, "I'll shake you into a kitten, that I will!"

[Alice](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Alice)'s coronation party is reminiscent of "A Mad-Tea Party" ([Chapter 7](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/chapter-7-summary/)) in *Alice in Wonderland*. The coronation party is a nonsensical, chaotic affair. However, Alice is now a much more self-confident character than she was in *Wonderland*. She is assertive in her own defense and isn't cowed, even though she is facing both the [Red Queen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#Red_Queen) and the [White Queen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Through-the-Looking-Glass/character-analysis/#White_Queen).

Notably, the White Queen and the Red Queen fall asleep. For a moment, three of the four original royals are asleep (recall that the Red King, who does not appear in this chapter, has been asleep throughout). Alice is the only awake royal figure present in the final square at this point. However, at dinner, it is the Red Queen who tries to take control by ordering dishes to be served and removed from the table. Alice tries to reassert control, but the Red Queen does not back down. The White Queen does not participate—reaffirming that the Red Queen is Alice's opponent. Not only does the White Queen remain silent, but she also vanishes into a tureen of soup after reciting a poem. She is not a participant in the final plays of this chess match.

The chaos becomes more intense, and the Red Queen suddenly shrinks, becoming a less intimidating figure. The chess match ends as Alice captures the doll-like monarch. When Alice seizes the Red Queen, she places the absent, sleeping Red King in check.