

# The Phantom Tollbooth

Norton Juster

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## CONTEXT

Norton Juster was an architect by training and worked as a professor of design at Hampshire College in his native England. When he published *The Phantom Tollbooth* in 1961 it was an instant classic. Critics in the *New York Times* and *Life Magazine* likened the book to Lewis Carroll's famous *Alice in Wonderland*, which previously stood alone as the best-known fantasy novel in the English language.

*The Phantom Tollbooth* is, in a sense, a modern take on Carroll's famous work, which was published in 1865, and an adaptation of some of its key themes. England of the 1960s was in a period of furious progress as a country known for its history pressed toward an uncertain future in the twentieth century. In this time, books of the Victorian era of literature such as *Alice in Wonderland* began to lose their appeal to younger readers who were alienated by their older language and dated references. *The Phantom Tollbooth* gave these readers an opportunity to enjoy a novel of fantasy to which they could more easily relate.

The fantasy novel remains an important genre of fiction as it is uniquely well suited to audiences of all ages. It is often used to teach lessons about life through symbolic interactions. The best-known examples of this are stories such as *Grimm's Fairy Tales* or *Aesop's Fables*. The fantasy novel is a longer, more refined, and more adult take on these sorts of stories. The elements of magic help fantasy novels appeal to younger readers while the more mature plot construction and language draw in older readers.

In writing a modern version of the fantasy novel, Juster attempted to update the themes to make them more pertinent to the twentieth century. *The Phantom Tollbooth* tackles issues that simply did not exist in Carroll's time. Characters in Juster's book grapple with issues relating to life in cities (such as noise), the boredom bred by instant entertainment, and the laziness of students in modern schools. At the same time, the book also incorporates some of Carroll's ideas about creativity and imagination.

Juster never wrote another book, but *The Phantom Tollbooth* has never gone out of print and remains a favorite among readers of all ages.

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## PLOT OVERVIEW

Milo, a very bored little boy, receives an unusual package one day: a make-believe tollbooth. When he drives through it in his electric toy car, he is suddenly transported to the Lands Beyond, a fantastic world of imagination. On his way to Dictionopolis, one of the country's two capitals, he meets Tock, the watchdog who joins him on his journey. In Dictionopolis, Milo meets King Azaz who presides over the world of letters and words. Azaz sends Milo on a mission to rescue two princesses, Rhyme and Reason, who are imprisoned in the Castle in the Air, which floats hundreds of feet off the ground. Milo and Tock leave Dictionopolis with a new companion, the Humbug, whom Azaz has sent along as a guide. The three head toward Digitopolis where they hope to persuade the Mathemagician to release the princesses.

On their way to Digitopolis, Milo, Tock and the Humbug encounter all sorts of unusual people and places. Just outside Dictionopolis they stop at Point of View, where they meet Alec Bings, a little boy who floats above the ground because he has not grown down to it yet. In his family, everyone's head stays at exactly the same height their entire lives and their legs grow down until they touch the earth. The travelers then proceed past the twin cities of Reality and Illusions and come upon Chroma and his symphony of color. Milo watches in wonder as Chroma conducts the orchestra through the colors of the sunset and, once Chroma has gone off to bed, decides to try to conduct the sunrise himself. This proves to be more difficult than Milo thought, and soon he has made a complete mess of the colors, which he manages to fix just moments before anyone notices.

The exhausted Milo then leads his friends towards the Valley of Sound, where they meet Dischord, a fake doctor who deals in noises, and his sidekick Dynne, a monster made of smoke. Once the travelers escape the doctor and his horrible racket, they find themselves in the Valley of Sound, which turns out to be completely silent. They meet the Soundkeeper who has withheld all the sounds of the Valley because people have stopped appreciating them and instead gave business to Dischord and Dynne. Milo steals a sound from the Soundkeeper's palace, which the people of the valley use to break open the sound vault.

After helping save the Valley of Sound, Milo and his friends continue on their way to Digitopolis, taking a short detour to the Island of Conclusions, to which they magically jump after making assumptions about their trip. They swim back to shore through the Sea of Knowledge and find themselves on the outskirts of Digitopolis. There they meet the Dodecahedron, a man with twelve faces, each of which expresses a different emotion. The Dodecahedron takes the travelers to see the Mathemagician, after giving them a tour through the Numbers Mine, where digits are pulled from the earth like jewels. Milo manages to trick the Mathemagician into agreeing to release the princesses and finds out that he must climb through the Mountains of Ignorance to reach the Castle in the Air.

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Although they are afraid of the demons they might encounter, Milo, Tock, and the Humbug head into the Mountains of Ignorance. They meet the Everpresent Wordsnatcher, a dirty little bird who twists their sentences into his own meanings, the Terrible Trivium, a man with no features on his face who stalls the travelers with meaningless busywork, and the Demon of Insincerity, who tries to trick them into leaving the path to the castle. Fortunately, Milo has learned a great deal from his travels in the Lands Beyond and manages to escape each of these demons and make his way to the unbelievably tall staircase to the Castle in the Air. After climbing to the top, the three travelers encounter a final demon, the Senses Taker, who demands all sorts of trivial information and bogs them down in meaningless questions. Milo's sense of humor, the one thing the Senses Taker cannot take away, helps him laugh his way past the demon and up to Rhyme and Reason.

The two princesses are thrilled to hear that Azaz and the Mathemagician have agreed to release them. Riding on Tock's back, since time flies, they soar over the Mountains of Ignorance and land in the midst of a hoard of demons. When it seems that all hope is lost, the Armies of Wisdom, led by Azaz and the Mathemagician, suddenly arrive and drive back the demons. The two leaders welcome the princesses and begin a celebration to mark their return.

Milo himself must also return home and says his goodbyes to all the friends he made in the Lands Beyond. He returns to his bedroom to find that only a few minutes have passed. The next day, he hurries home from school with dreams of further adventures only to find the tollbooth gone. All that remains is a note that tells him that he has learned so much that he should be able to find his way to all sorts of fantastic lands without the help of the tollbooth. Milo realizes that there are all sorts of fantastic adventures to be had anywhere, even in his own bedroom.

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## CHARACTER LIST

**Milo**—The main character, Milo is a little boy who goes through all of his days in a state of horrible boredom. This routine changes when Milo takes a trip through the mysterious make-believe tollbooth that appears in his bedroom one day.

**Tock**—Milo's friend Tock is a literally a "watchdog." A giant clock makes up part of his body, and he constantly makes ticking noises. He patrols the Doldrums and stops people from wasting time.

**The Humbug**—The Humbug is an insect who lives only to flatter people—especially himself. The Humbug is ignorant about everything from math to geography and proves himself the fool by his constant attempts to say intelligent things. After trying to brown-nose his way to favor with King Azaz, he accompanies Milo and Tock on their journey.

**King Azaz**—King Azaz is ruler of the realm of letters and words. Azaz and his brother argue over which is more important—numbers or letters, and they banish the princesses Rhyme and Reason. Once he realizes the foolishness of his squabble, King Azaz sends Milo to rescue the princesses.

**The Mathemagician**—Azaz's brother, the Mathemagician, lives in a world of numbers. Unlike Azaz, the Mathemagician has doubts about releasing Rhyme and Reason.

**Rhyme and Reason**—The two princesses were adopted by the King of Wisdom and raised alongside Azaz and the Mathemagician. When Azaz and the Mathemagician asked them to determine whether numbers or letters are more important, Rhyme and Reason say each is equally valuable. The brothers then imprisoned the two princesses in the Castle in the Air.

**Faintly Macabre**—The Which, Faintly Macabre, has been imprisoned since Rhyme and Reason disappeared. It was once her duty to select the words to use for every occasion, but she became corrupted by her power and began to hoard the words for herself. Faintly tells Milo the story of the imprisoned princesses and inspires him to broach the subject with King Azaz.

**Alec Bings**—Milo first meets Alec Bings in the Forest of Sight, where Milo sees a boy floating several feet off the ground. Alec explains that in his family, everyone's head remains at the same height from the day they are born until the day they die and that their legs grow toward the ground. Alec has the special ability to "see through things" and can see anything except that which is right before his eyes.

**Chroma**—Conductor of the great color orchestra in the Forest of Sight, Chroma makes sure all the colors of the day are properly handled. When he decides to take a rest, Milo makes a mess of the colors of the day.

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**Dischord and Dynne**—Dr. Dischord, a quack doctor, prescribes medicines of terrible noises to all of his patients and has an assistant, a smoke monster named Dynne. Dischord and Dynne invent new sounds, peddle noise pulls, racket lotions, clamor salves and hubbub tonics in the Valley of Sound.

**The Soundkeeper**—Once ruler of the Valley of Sound, the Soundkeeper becomes dismayed with the lack of appreciation of beautiful sounds and the rise of Dr. Dischord's terrible practice. In protest, she cuts off sound and retreats to the fortress where she keeps all sounds made since the beginning of time.

**The Dodecahedron**—The Dodecahedron has twelve different faces wearing twelve different emotions. He leads Milo and his companions through the numbers mine, where workers chisel out gemlike digits, to the city of Digitopolis.

**The Everpresent Wordsnatcher**—More nuisance than demon, the Everpresent Wordsnatcher is a bird who flutters around the Mountains of Ignorance turning the words of others around to illustrate his own cleverness.

**The Terrible Trivium**—The Terrible Trivium is a demon with no facial features. He lives in the Mountains of Ignorance and preys upon travellers, convincing them to undertake tasks that can never be completed.

**The Demon of Insincerity**—The Demon of Insincerity looks like a cross between a beaver and a kangaroo. He tries to scare Milo and his companions off their path through the Mountains of Ignorance by throwing half-truths at them, which are only dispelled when they see this demon for what he really is.

**The Gelatinous Giant**—The Gelatinous Giant is so huge that Milo first mistakes him for a mountain. He is the epitome of spinelessness. He hides in the Mountains of Ignorance and tries to look exactly like everything around him because he thinks it is "unsafe" to be different.

**The Senses Taker**—The Senses Taker spends his days in the Castle in the Air trying to rob people of their senses by bombarding them with detailed questions. His appearance as an ink-stained old man perched over an enormous book deceives Milo into thinking his purpose is anything other than wasting time.

**Officer Shrift**—Officer Shrift is twice as wide as he is tall. In Dictionopolis, he works as a police officer, judge, and jailer all at the same time. Officer Shrift has a habit of sentencing people to millions of years in prison then immediately forgetting about them.

**The Whether Man**—A peculiar fellow who says everything three times, the Whether Man is the caretaker of Expectations. He is so busy thinking about what could be and why that he never seems to go anywhere or get anything done.

**The Lethargians**—The Lethargians, minute creatures, live in perpetual boredom in the Doldrums. They change colors to match their surroundings and sometimes enforce laws against thinking and laughing.

**The Spelling Bee**—Though he is a giant bee, the Spelling Bee is a self-taught master of spelling and enjoys randomly spelling the words he hears or speaks.

**The Half Boy**—The result of a statistic, the Half Boy is really the leftover .58 from the 2.58 children the average family has. He believes in the reality of averages and likes to spend his time on the staircase to Infinity.



## ANALYSIS OF MAJOR CHARACTERS

## Milo

The primary character in *The Phantom Tollbooth*, Milo, is meant to represent the typical bored child. Milo has everything a child should want in terms of toys and entertainment, yet he is horribly, unchangeably bored. He finds everything in his life to be completely uninteresting and has a special disdain for his schoolwork, since he thinks all of it is useless. Milo does not believe that anything he learns—numbers, words, or anything else—is applicable to everyday life.

When an anonymous friend sends Milo a huge tollbooth, he begins a journey that will change his life forever. What begins as a make-believe game (and not a very interesting one, from Milo's perspective) eventually becomes a very real journey into a wonderful fantasy world called the Lands Beyond. Structurally, Milo's journey constitutes a series of lessons from the inhabitants of this unusual land. Oddly enough, Milo is never frightened by his sudden movement between words, perhaps just another indication of how truly bored he was before the tollbooth arrived.

Through his encounters with characters in the Lands Beyond, Milo learns about imagination, using his time wisely, perspective, words, sounds, numbers and a host of other things. His ultimate goal is to find wisdom—both figuratively, through his education, and literally, by locating the missing princesses Rhyme and Reason. These themes often overlap and repeat themselves as Milo finds himself in similarly sticky situations.

Milo finds himself under the wing of many characters who impart their different lessons—sometimes intentionally and sometimes unwittingly. Milo is open and attentive to these lessons, largely because he must learn them in order to escape a situation. Throughout the book, Milo learns not only values but also how to put those values to work for himself.

When he finally returns to the real world, Milo is forever changed. He realizes that he does not need the tollbooth to travel to exotic and magical places; he only needs to look around him. The once perpetually bored Milo is suddenly inspired and enthralled by practically everything. Although he is now aware of how to travel to the Lands Beyond, he decides instead to examine the things in the more immediate world around him. Where the *old* Milo needed the fantasyland on the other side of the tollbooth in order to be inspired or engaged, the *new* Milo needs only the tools he has found through the course of the book: imagination, insight, education, and wisdom.

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## Tock

Milo's closest friend in the Lands Beyond, Tock, is a watchdog—a canine with a clock for a body. He spends most of his time patrolling the Doldrums, since so much time is wasted there, and decides to accompany Milo on his quest to rescue Rhyme and Reason. Tock is initially very gruff and gives Milo something of a scare when they first meet. Later, he warms up and explains that people expect watchdogs to be mean, and so Tock tries to live up to that expectation.

Being born into a long line of watchdogs, Tock believes in the value of time above all else. His purpose in life is to make sure that time is used wisely since there is, contradictorily enough, so much and yet so little of it. Tock is extremely dutiful, and it seems as if he never rests from his job and devotes all of his energies to his work as a watchdog.

When Milo first meets Tock, he is in sore need of Tock's help. The little boy has a habit of wasting time on the most useless of tasks and certainly has no appreciation of it whatsoever. Thanks to his friendship with the watchdog, however, Milo learns how important it is to use time wisely. It is important to note that Milo learns his first real lesson in the Lands Beyond when Tock saves him from the Doldrums. Without Tock's help and his newfound understanding of the value of time, it is doubtful that Milo would have completed his quest. Tock also teaches Milo about the speed of time and the ways in which it can move. Milo sees how time can fly when Tock soars out of the Castle in the Air with a number of passengers on his back.

## The Humbug

The Humbug completes the trio of travelers, having been sent along as a guide by King Azaz. Resembling an enormous beetle, the Humbug has just about that much personality. He is first and foremost a braggart; the Humbug wants to be thought of as smart and important by everyone. Unfortunately, the Humbug is neither smart nor important, and it seems that the harder he tries to be perceived as such, the more foolish he appears.

It is, in fact, his shameless desire to impress that leads to his involvement in Milo's quest in the first place. When Milo and Azaz discuss the possibility of rescuing the princesses, the Humbug vainly tries to take both sides of the argument. So he unexpectedly finds himself volunteering to go along on the mission, though he would certainly prefer to stay within the safe walls of Dictionopolis.

In many ways, the Humbug acts as a contradiction to Tock. Where the watchdog is loyal, brave, and efficient, the Humbug is selfish, cowardly, and wastes a great deal of time with his blathering. Milo learns different sorts of lessons from the Humbug, but the lessons come in the form of what *not* to do. These lessons mostly have to do with humility, since the Humbug is the most arrogant character in all of the Lands Beyond. Milo witnesses the pitfalls of the Humbug's egotism and the benefit of avoiding such folly himself.

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## THEMES, MOTIFS, AND SYMBOLS

### Themes

#### The Value of Education

Though Milo never actually finds himself in the classroom, *The Phantom Tollbooth* is primarily a book written in praise of education. The plot arc of a bored little boy who is inspired by travels in the City of Words, the Forest of Sight, the Valley of Sound, and the City of Numbers seems to spell this out clearly. The most consistently pressed concept in the book is, without a doubt, the importance of the various lessons Milo learns through his journey. It is only by using the knowledge he has gained that Milo is able to fight his way past the demons who inhabit the Mountains of Ignorance. The princesses Rhyme and Reason, who represent wisdom, another major theme, acknowledge the importance not only of what Milo has learned, but also of how he has learned to use it.

#### Appreciating the Things of Everyday Life

Milo's boredom is largely the result of his inability to appreciate the world around him. His bedroom is the perfect example of this: it is practically overflowing with toys, all of which Milo finds totally unengaging. Through his travels in the Lands Beyond, he meets a number of people who also have taken the things in their life for granted. The inhabitants of the city of Reality, for one, begin hurrying about without stopping to appreciate the beauty of their city. As a result, the city slowly crumbled away into nothing. Similarly, the residents of the Valley of Sound become so unappreciative of beautiful sounds that the Soundkeeper was compelled to impose utter silence on the whole of the valley. Through his travels, Milo learns the folly of taking things for granted so much so that he decides to postpone any further travels in the Lands Beyond in favor of enjoying the things in his bedroom.

#### Learning to Use Common Sense

One of the defining characteristics of the Lands Beyond is the presence of quite a lot of nonsense. Inhabitants of this fantasyland engage in all sorts of ridiculous behavior, most of which shocks even Milo. Juster uses the nonsense of certain situations, such as the Royal Banquet, for great comic effect while simultaneously underscoring the lack of a natural order. Rhyme and Reason, we eventually learn, are imprisoned in a faraway castle and much of the nonsense Milo observes has only sprung up since their departure. Milo

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himself, of course, is in need of some common sense. His quest to find Rhyme and Reason therefore is both literal and figurative. On the one hand, he must learn all sorts of lessons in order to truly appreciate common sense. On the other hand, he must physically journey to the Castle in the Air to release the princesses.

## Escaping Boredom

At first Milo, simply, is bored. His tendency to be consistently bored seems to change when he first enters the Lands Beyond, but once Milo finds himself in the Doldrums he is right back where he began. Thankfully, Tock enters the scene and helps teach Milo about the value of time and how to make the most of every minute. Then Milo finds himself in the clutches of boredom at later points in the story, such as when he is in the Dictionopolis prison or when he is waylaid by the Terrible Trivium. With the help of his friend Tock and the lessons he has learned through his journeys, however, Milo manages to overcome boredom and eventually becomes so good at inspiring himself that he no longer needs the flash and excitement of the Lands Beyond to hold his attention.

## Motifs

### Puns

Juster frequently plays upon the dual meanings of words and expressions to create humorous situations. When Milo orders a "light meal" at Azaz's banquet, he is literally served light. When Milo catches a word on the tip of his tongue in the Soundkeeper's fortress, a word physically appears in his mouth. When the Humbug jumps to the conclusion that nothing more can go wrong with the group's journey, he leaps out of the car and lands on the island of Conclusions. Juster uses puns both to amuse and educate, as these unusual situations often result in Milo learning an important lesson.

### Gift Giving

Once he has learned what a given character has to teach him, Milo often receives some sort of gift from them. Considering the importance Juster places on education throughout the book, these interactions are likely meant to suggest that knowledge itself is a gift. It is also significant that the gifts that Milo receives embody the lesson itself and are handy when Milo needs to put his knowledge to work.

## Symbols

### Rhyme and Reason

As their names, which play off a well-known idiom, imply, the two imprisoned princesses represent wisdom and common sense. The fact that they were found orphaned in the King of Wisdom's garden suggests that they literally were the fruit of wisdom itself. The princesses, famous for their ability to settle disputes fairly, provide an important counterpart to the knowledge and intelligence of Azaz and the Mathemagician. Milo's quest to return them is, therefore, both a quest to gain wisdom himself (through the lessons he learns during his journey) and to return wisdom to the land (by returning the princesses).

### Milo's gifts

Each gift represents the lesson Milo learned from the character who gave it. During his travails in the Mountains of Ignorance, Milo is able to use these gifts as a way of implementing the knowledge he has gained. Alec Bings, for example, teaches Milo about perspective and gives him a telescope. When Milo is frightened by what he cannot see, he uses the telescope to change perspective and conquer his fear.

### Tock

In addition to being a vital character who contributes to the storyline, Tock also plays an important symbolic role: he represents the wise use of time. Tock is the only teacher-character in the Lands Beyond who does not give Milo a gift after teaching him something, because Tock's company itself is the gift. He constantly reminds Milo to make the most of his time, helping him to defeat the boredom that defined his life before coming to the Lands Beyond.

**SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS****Chapters 1–2****Summary****Chapter 1**

Milo is a boy who does not know what to do with himself. He is bored senseless by practically everything in his life and is constantly trying to find something exciting or interesting. Milo especially dislikes his schoolwork because he cannot understand the use behind learning geography or math and thinks that learning is "the greatest waste of time of all."

One day, Milo goes into his bedroom to find a strange package waiting for him. The box is not quite square but not quite round and is addressed to "MILO, WHO HAS PLENTY OF TIME." There is no return address on the package, and Milo has no idea who might have sent it to him—it is not his birthday or Christmas. Deciding that there is no way he can return the box, he opens it. Inside he finds an unassembled turnpike tollbooth, a map, a book of traffic rules, and an instruction manual. He puts the tollbooth together and gets into a small electric car, one of the many toys he is usually too bored to play with. As he approaches the tollbooth he is told to have his destination in mind, so he randomly picks the city of Dictionopolis from the map and passes through the turnstile.

**Chapter 2**

Once through the tollbooth, Milo finds himself speeding along a country highway. He is shocked to discover that the tollbooth was no toy at all. Since it is a beautiful day on the road, he continues on his trip. Before long, he arrives at Expectations where an excitable little man rushes up to his car. The Whether Man, has a habit of saying everything three times. In response to Milo's questions about how to reach Dictionopolis, the Whether Man talks nonstop about navigation and the weather.

Milo presses on, leaving Expectations. The road gets increasingly curvy and repetitive. Bored by the seemingly endless circles, Milo's mind begins to wander and he becomes very drowsy. The car also seems to tire and grinds to a halt. As he sits, almost asleep, a distant voice informs Milo that he is in the Doldrums.

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After looking around, Milo realizes there is a tiny man sitting on his shoulder who changes color to match it. He then notices a number of little people around him hiding like chameleons. They introduce themselves as the Lethargians and describe their idle lives in the Doldrums, explaining that thinking and laughing are both outlawed.

Suddenly a large dog with a clock for a body comes running up, frightening the Lethargians away. The watchdog whose job it is to make sure nobody wastes time, suspiciously asks Milo what he is doing in the Doldrums. When Milo replies that he is "just killing time," the watchdog becomes furious and tells Milo that the only thing worse than wasting time is killing it. He tells Milo that if he wants to leave the Doldrums he only needs to do the opposite of what got him there. Since Milo drifted into the Doldrums by not thinking, he concentrates on thinking and his car begins moving. Soon he is back on his way to Dictionopolis with the watchdog.

## Analysis

In Chapters 1 and 2, Juster sets out the major theme of the book in two forms, one general and the other more specific. Milo's character represents all bored children; note that Juster gives us no specifics about Milo's classes, friends, or parents. Milo is generic, and thus can be seen as representing a whole category of character, or an archetype. In this case, the traits Milo symbolizes are boredom and laziness.

Juster sets up the premise so that there is a drastic contrast to Milo's moping around the house—something has to happen to shake up Milo's world. That something is the anonymous package. The gift-giver does not have a name, which makes him or her as nonspecific as Milo. Here Juster sets out the theme of the book on the first, broader level: *The Phantom Tollbooth* is largely about discovering and appreciating what is interesting in everyday life. Milo finds something—in the most common place, his bedroom—that at first seems nondescript but then, once opened, reveals a gateway to a magical land.

It is also important to notice that Milo's feelings of boredom disappear as soon as he leaves his old world behind. Instead of being frightened by the sudden transportation from his bedroom to a country highway in an unknown land, Milo is so busy noticing what a beautiful day it is that he forgets to be scared. His brief stop in Expectations highlights the excitement he feels and Milo becomes eager to see more. To linger in Expectations, Milo realizes, is pointless since all one can do is wonder (asking "whether" questions) about where he can go next and what he can do.

When the distance between Expectations, where he comes up with ideas about the land he is about to tour, and the city of Dictionopolis proves to be very long and winding, Milo loses interest and begins to daydream. Here we see Juster's more specific theme: Milo allows his mind to wander, and so he physically wanders into the Doldrums, the land of ultimate boredom and laziness. The physical and the mental become one. Not only do

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Milo's physical surroundings jump-start his mental process, but here his mental processes change his physical surroundings. Juster suggests that a person can affect one with the other, exciting a boring place by thinking exciting thoughts or getting excited by finding an exciting place. The introduction of the watchdog—who eventually becomes Milo's closest friend in the Lands Beyond—and his suggestion that Milo can escape the Doldrums simply by putting his mind to work, underscores Juster's larger theme of finding interesting things everywhere, including seemingly boring places. All Milo has to do is use his imagination to get him back on track and speeding towards a more exciting and interesting place.

## Chapters 3–5

### Summary

#### Chapter 3

As the two travelers make their way toward Dictionopolis, the watchdog apologizes for his gruff behavior and explains that people expect watchdogs to be ferocious. He introduces himself as Tock and launches into a speech about the value of time and the importance of the watchdog's role in preserving it as he and Milo approach the gates of Dictionopolis.

Once inside, Milo and Tock discover that it is market day in the city, and the square is filled with merchants selling all sorts of words and letters. They meet the five royal advisors, who have the curious habit of repeating each other in synonyms and randomly defining some of the words each other use. The advisors explain the function of the word market in a dizzyingly complicated fashion, leaving poor Milo as lost as when he first entered the city. "I never knew words could be so confusing," he tells Tock. "Only when you use a lot to say a little," the watchdog replies.

#### Chapter 4

Milo and Tock explore the word market, looking over shelves full of everyday words and fancy-sounding words (which are so expensive Milo cannot afford even one) and jars filled only with letters. Milo samples an A and finds that it tastes "sweet and delicious—just the way you'd expect an A to taste."

As Milo and the shopkeeper talk about the construction of words, the buzzing of a giant bee surprises them. The Spelling Bee tells them not to be alarmed and then spells the word "alarmed" for them. The insect claims that he can spell almost any word and proves it by taking challenges. When Milo expresses his amazement at this skill, another insect, this one looking more like a beetle, trots over and pronounces it "BALDERDASH!"

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Dodging swings of the grumpy beetle's cane, the Spelling Bee introduces him as the Humbug, "a very dislikeable fellow." The two giant insects begin an argument and things go from bad to worse when the Spelling Bee knocks the Humbug's hat off his head and the Humbug begins swinging wildly with his cane, knocking one stall into another and causing the whole marketplace to collapse like dominoes.

## Chapter 5

When the dust from the Humbug's disastrous clumsiness settles, the merchants begin hollering in mixed-up nonsense because all of their words have become jumbled. Eventually, they right the stalls and sweep up the spilled words, finishing up just as Officer Shrift arrives on the scene. Milo is surprised by how short the policeman is, noticing that he is twice as wide as he is tall.

Officer Shrift begins his investigation by declaring everyone present to be guilty and then begins asking very confusing questions that seem to have nothing to do with the collapse of the marketplace. Officer Shrift finds Milo guilty of various ridiculous crimes and, pronounces a sentence of six million years in prison then escorts Milo and Tock to a dank and musty dungeon. He warns them about "the witch" in the prison then shuts the three into a cell.

Inside Milo meets the "Which," Faintly Macabre. She explains that she is King Azaz's great aunt and was once in charge of choosing which words would be used for which occasions. As time went on, she noticed how frightfully wasteful people were with their words, often using too many for the simplest statements. So she began to give people fewer and fewer words to use, eventually becoming so miserly that nobody could speak or write at all. King Azaz became infuriated and locked the Which in the prison.

Faintly Macabre tells Milo that only the return of Rhyme and Reason will free her. When Milo seems confused, she settles down to tell him the story of Rhyme and Reason.

## Analysis

In this section, Juster begins to orient us in the Lands Beyond and sets up some plot motifs and themes that will frequently reappear throughout the book. Dictionopolis gives the reader the first taste of the "civilized" parts of the Land Beyond; later, Milo travels to lands outside of the city that are quite wild. In Dictionopolis, as in the rest of the Lands Beyond, Milo finds that what he usually cannot touch or taste (like words or reasons) are physical objects. He slowly begins to understand this idea after his interlude with the gatekeeper and wanderings in the word market. This plot motif, in which Milo discovers some unusual aspect of the Lands Beyond and figures it out with the help of the people he meets along the way, is a common occurrence in *The Phantom Tollbooth*.

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This motif relates to the theme of education, a major part of Juster's book. As he wanders the word market, Milo becomes increasingly aware of how many words there are and how few he knows. He is also very impressed by the Spelling Bee, who is able to spell practically every word there is. Milo's lack of education in this subject eventually gets him into quite a bit of trouble when Officer Shrift begins asking him questions that he cannot understand. Once in prison, Milo realizes how valuable an education in reading and writing can be and vows to learn more about words.

Another important theme that first appears in this section is one that will soon become the focal point of Milo's travels: Rhyme and Reason. One aspect of the Lands Beyond is that there is an element of nonsense to it. The Whether Man, in Chapter 1, acts very strangely, running around babbling and never answering any questions. Similarly, Officer Shrift conducts his investigation and trial of Milo and Tock in a ridiculous fashion and sentences them to an unbelievable six million years in prison. Faintly Macabre, the Which, also tells a story in which she behaved unreasonably, becoming a miser with words.

All of this foolish behavior, especially the Which's, can be linked to the disappearance of Rhyme and Reason from the land. Juster frequently returns to this theme as Milo encounters a number of nonsensical characters throughout the book. The author's message is that of simple common sense: each of these characters has lost his or her understanding of the obviously right thing to do.

It is also significant that Milo begins his friendship with Tock, the watchdog, in this chapter, as it represents an important turning point for Milo. Though Milo certainly has a lot to learn, his biggest problem was his boredom and laziness. Tock saved him from that in the Doldrums by getting him to use his imagination, and the fact that he continues to accompany Milo suggests that Milo has conquered this problem altogether. In the rest of the book, Milo will deal with a number of his shortcomings, but never again will he appear to be the dull little boy he was in Chapter 1. His immediate friendship with Tock suggests that he has the watchdog to thank for it.

## Chapters 6–8

### Summary

#### Chapter 6

Faintly Macabre begins the story of Rhyme and Reason by describing the horrible place the Lands Beyond were when they were first created. One day, a young prince from across the sea appeared and established a city that would become the Kingdom of Wisdom. Eventually

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he had two sons who went out in the wilderness to start their own cities, one founding Dictionopolis and the other establishing Digitopolis.

The king also found a basket with twin baby girls in his gardens one day. The king was delighted with the girls, whom he named Rhyme and Reason, and he raised them as his own children. When the king died, he left instructions that the Kingdom of Wisdom was to be divided equally between his two sons, who would also have the responsibility of caring for Rhyme and Reason.

Over the years, Azaz and the Mathemagician came to rely upon the princesses' wise judgment as the brothers grew more and more competitive and distrustful. Things reached a boiling point when they began arguing about whether numbers or letters were more important. The two rulers brought their quarrel to the princesses who, after careful consideration, declared that numbers and words were equally important.

At last, Azaz and the Mathemagician were able to agree upon something: they were infuriated by princesses' answer. In an act of rage, they banished Rhyme and Reason from the Kingdom and imprisoned them in the Castle in the Air. When the story is done, the Which explains that Officer Shrift "loves putting people in prison, but does not care about keeping them there" and shows Milo and Tock the way out. On the outside, the king's five advisors find them and immediately lead them off to the Royal Banquet.

## Chapter 7

Inside the banquet hall, Milo and Tock find a sizeable party waiting for them. The Humbug explains that they have been waiting for the guests of honor to select the meal. Milo proposes that they have a "light meal," and immediately a set of waiters hurries into the room carrying serving platters. When they remove the lids, rays of light shoot all over the banquet hall. The Humbug suggests that Milo select a dish that the guests might find "a little more filling." Milo, who has not picked up on the menu game yet, orders a square meal, prompting the waiters to bring plates filled with a variety of squares. For dessert, the waiters bring out platters of half-baked ideas, which the Humbug explains are very sweet but can cause indigestion. Milo munches on his "THE EARTH IS FLAT" while the king devours "NIGHT AIR IS BAD AIR."

## Chapter 8

As soon as King Azaz's nonsensical Royal Banquet is over, the guests rush from the hall, leaving only Azaz, Milo, Tock and the Humbug, who explains that they have all gone to dinner. The king declares that he will command that his guests eat their dinners before the banquet. That would be just as bad, Milo argues.

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Milo gently suggests that the return of Rhyme and Reason might help sort things out. The king agrees but thinks that it is impossible, since someone would have to go all the way to Digitopolis to convince the Mathemagician then get past the wicked demons in the Mountains of Ignorance and scale the two thousand step staircase up to the Castle in the Air.

The king charges Milo with this seemingly impossible mission, ominously telling him that there is "one more serious problem" with the quest that Milo will only learn once it is over. Azaz hands the young boy a small box that contains all the words he knows and tells him that he may find it handy on his journey. Recognizing that Milo will need a guide, the king orders the Humbug to go along on as well. The Humbug, who has been trying with all his might to agree with everybody all at once, suddenly finds himself in a very disagreeable position but is calmed by the king's flattery. As a crowd gathers to cheer them on their way, Milo and his two companions embark on their great adventure.

## Analysis

In this section, Juster fully develops the Rhyme and Reason theme. The story of the rise of the Kingdom of Wisdom and the division between Azaz and the Mathemagician not only explains the literal disappearance of the princesses but also relates to the secondary theme of education. Rhyme and Reason are a part of neither the world of words or numbers. Instead they are common sense—something that is essential to wisdom but is not taught in schools. While Azaz and the Mathemagician had nothing to do with discovering or raising Rhyme and Reason, they do have the power to repress them. Their argument about numbers and letters (Juster may be referring here to the common disagreements among scholars and students) is pure nonsense, a fact that only the princesses, in their wisdom, can see.

Thanks to Faintly Macabre's story, Milo also understands the need for Rhyme and Reason, and, as a result, Azaz realizes that Milo is the perfect person to help secure their return. Since Milo conquered his boredom and laziness in the first section of the book, it seems his next quest will be to discover true wisdom, which is symbolized by the two princesses. His trip to Digitopolis and trek through the Mountains of Ignorance represent not only a physical journey but an educational one as well. In order to find wisdom, Juster seems to be suggesting that Milo will need to learn some lessons in the world of the Lands Beyond.

It is also important to notice the two companions who are assigned to help Milo. Tock and the Humbug are, in many ways, opposites. Tock is dutiful and selfless; his only concern is making sure that people use their time wisely, particularly Milo. The Humbug, on the other hand, cares mostly about himself. He constantly wastes time by blathering on about himself or trying to suck up to important people like King Azaz. These efforts at flattery are not only pointless but also counterproductive for the Humbug. His brown-nosing is directly

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responsible for his unwanted appointment as Milo's guide. If the Humbug had simply kept his big mouth shut, he would not have ended up escorting Milo on what he considers to be a fool's errand.

In this section, Juster also forwards a number of recurring motifs. As we have already seen, the Lands Beyond are filled with nonsensical people and deeds. Juster continues this motif in the Royal Banquet scene, adding to it a the new motif of punning. A pun is a play on words, a way of using the double-meanings of words to make jokes. Milo's disastrous efforts at ordering a meal demonstrate this motif: first he orders a "light" meal, by which he means small and healthy. The waiters, however, take the term "light" to refer to the beams that come from the sun or light bulbs. The same happens when Milo orders a "square" meal and discovers, after making his speech, that he must "eat his words." By playing upon the different meanings of these words and phrases, Juster creates a series of amusing puns.

## Chapters 9–11

### Summary

#### Chapter 9

Motoring along in the electric car, Milo, Tock and the Humbug take in the scenery and stop to enjoy a panoramic view. When Milo comments that the view is beautiful, a strange voice counters that "[i]t's all in the way you look at things." Milo whirls around and sees a boy about his age floating several feet above the ground. "For instance," the floating boy continues, "If you happened to like deserts, you might not think this was beautiful at all."

Milo asks the boy how the boy is able to float in the air at the same time as the boy was about to ask Milo how Milo is able to touch the ground with his feet. In his family, the boy explains, everyone is born with their heads at the height they will be once they grow up; instead of growing steadily toward the sky, their legs grown down toward the ground. Milo explains that, where he comes from, the opposite is true.

The boy introduces himself as Alec Bings and claims that he has the power to see through things. In fact, the only thing he cannot see, Alec explains, "is whatever happens to be right in front of [his] nose." Milo is dazzled by this and wants to be able to see things as well. Alec tells him to simply start thinking like an adult and once Milo does, sure enough he begins to rise off the ground. Then he suddenly drops back to the earth and declares that he'd prefer to keep seeing things as a child since it is "not so far to fall."



## Chapter 10

Alec, Milo, Tock, and the Humbug continue their walk in the forest, coming upon a large clearing in which lies a magnificent metropolis. The city, Alec says, is called Illusions and is really just a mirage. Its twin city, Reality, turns out to be all around the travelers. Alec explains that Reality was once as beautiful as Illusions, but people in Reality decided that things would be much more efficient if they went everywhere as fast as possible and didn't bother to stop and appreciate things along the way. As a result, the city withered away.

Alec next leads the group to an enormous open-air orchestra concert of over a thousand musicians, all conducted by Chroma the Great. Chroma waves his arms, and the musicians seem to be playing their instruments, although Milo doesn't hear anything. Alec explains that this orchestra is responsible for providing all the colors in the world. Milo meets Chroma, who talks about what a dull place the world would be without colors before Chroma hurries off to bed. Before he goes, Chroma asks Milo to keep an eye on the orchestra overnight and to wake him at 5:23 a.m. for the sunrise.

## Chapter 11

Milo wakes up at 5:22 a.m. and decides that he should let Chroma sleep in and simply conduct the orchestra himself. The colors at first begin normally but Milo quickly loses control, causing all the colors to become wild and mismatched. Finally, after the sun has risen and set a full seven times, he gives up and drops his arms. It is 5:27 a.m., and it looks like night again. Chroma comes running up completely unaware that seven days have passed.

Alec escorts Milo, Tock, and the Humbug to the end of the Forest of Sight, where he bids them farewell and gives Milo a telescope as a gift so that he can "see things as they really are."

The three travelers pile back into the electric car and soon drive up to a carnival-style wagon bearing the sign "KAKOFONOUS A. DISCHORD, DOCTOR OF DISSONANCE." Within they find Dischord himself, a man with ears that are bigger than his head. As a purveyor of noise pills, racket lotion, clamor salve and hubbub tonic, Dischord mixes up a foul sounding substance that Milo and his companions refuse. Rather than waste it, the doctor summons Dynne, his terrible smoke-monster sidekick who gulps down the concoction. Dischord and Dynne talk for a bit about how wonderful noises are and how important they are to life before heading out to make their rounds. They bid Milo to be careful in the Valley of Sound.

## Analysis

In this section, Juster forwards the theme of education as Milo learns his next set of lessons in the Lands Beyond. His teachers include Alec Bings, Chroma the Great, and even the

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wretched Dr. Dischord. From Alec Bings, Milo learns a great deal about perspective. Alec Bings has the unfortunate fate to have to look at things from the same perspective for his entire life. Rather than seeing things differently as he ages, like most people do, Alec will always have the same grown-up outlook. This relates to the motif of nonsense as Alec's unusual situation results in his ability to see everything but that which is right before his eyes. This seems contrary to common sense and creates quite a few problems for the floating boy as he smashes into trees and bushes whenever he tries to run through the forest. It is important to notice that despite the fact that he has only a single, ridiculous perspective, Alec Bings is aware of the multitude of perspectives that different people have. In fact, Milo first meets him because Alec comments that not everyone would think a forest vista is beautiful.

Milo's lesson on perspective continues in the twin cities of Reality and Illusions. Since the residents of Reality have decided to block out their perceptions by turning their heads down and hurrying from place to place, their city has become literally invisible. The city of Illusions is even worse; it does not even exist as anything but a mirage. Here Juster seems to be referring to the tendency of people to rush past the important things in everyday life. Remember that before coming to the Lands Beyond, one of Milo's biggest problems was his inability to appreciate the things around him. In the twin cities, we see what might have happened to poor Milo if he had not corrected his problem: the things around him would have become uninteresting, just as they did in the city of Reality.

Juster also presents the lesson of perspective through the characters Dischord and Dynne. This unlikable pair seems to think that noises are much more enjoyable to hear than beautiful sounds. Dischord seems to think that Milo's ability to appreciate sounds such as music is a "disease" that needs to be cured, much as we might think the same of Dischord. Here Milo is reminded of the well-known idiom that "one man's music is another man's noise" as he and Dischord differ over which sounds they prefer.

Milo learns another lesson in the Forest of Sight, this one from Chroma the Great—or rather Chroma's absence. Without the maestro of color around to set things in their proper order, Milo witnesses what sort of chaos would exist. Juster seems to be further the education theme here by illustrating how important Chroma's knowledge and experience are. Milo thinks that conducting the color orchestra will be easy because, to his untrained eye, it looks that way. When he takes to the podium, he learns just how difficult conducting really is and how unqualified he is to do it. Juster seems to be telling us that in order to color the world properly, one needs the education and experience of Chroma the Great.

## Chapters 12–13

### Summary

#### Chapter 12

Upon entering the Valley of Sound, Milo can immediately tell why Dischord and Dynne seemed to be so afraid of it: there is no sound whatsoever. As Tock frets over his lack of ticking, a crowd of people bearing protest signs about the silence comes down the road. One of them produces a blackboard and writes out the story of the Valley's loss. He explains that the Soundkeeper, once the benevolent ruler of the Valley, became upset with the lack of appreciation for beautiful sounds and the rise of Dr. Dischord's noises, and she, consequently, locked away all the sounds in her fortress. The blackboard man asks Milo to help by visiting the Soundkeeper and stealing a sound that they can use to destroy the fortress. Milo agrees and, with Tock and the Humbug sets out for the fortress.

The Soundkeeper turns out to be a perfectly pleasant woman who invites the travelers inside where they find sounds still exist. She tours them through the vault where she keeps every sound that was ever made, showing as an example the "exact tune that George Washington whistled when he crossed the Delaware on that icy night in 1777." The Soundkeeper demonstrates how she catalogues sound by having Milo speak then walking him over to a filing cabinet where, sure enough, his "hello" is neatly stored.

Next on the tour is the laboratory where sounds are invented—and also become visible. Milo claps his hands and sheets of paper begin shooting out. He tries to reason with the Soundkeeper about the silence in the valley, but she will not hear of it. At one point Milo tries to retort with "But!" and catches himself short, feeling the word form on his tongue and stay there. He quickly, and silently, makes for the door, smuggling his sound out with him.

#### Chapter 13

Milo hurries back to the angry mob where he is directed to deposit his stolen sound into a large cannon. When fired, the sound shatters the walls of the fortress and all the sounds in the vault come crashing out. After a few moments of noisy confusion, the dust settles, and Milo sees the Soundkeeper sitting on a pile of rubble. He goes over to apologize for helping destroy her fortress, and the Soundkeeper is very understanding. She recognizes that it was her own fault for taking away all the sounds and realizes that silence is not the solution. "The problem," she says, "is to use each sound at the proper time."

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Dynne comes running up with an enormous sack full of sounds that are not noisy enough for his tastes. It turns out that he has gathered up nearly all the sounds of the vault, which the Soundkeeper happily accepts. As Dynne hurries away, the Soundkeeper remarks that the unpleasant sounds he likes have value because they help us appreciate the pleasant ones more. If only Rhyme and Reason would return, she says, they might be able to bridge that gap. She gives Milo a package of sounds to remember her by and bids him good luck with his quest.

Milo, Tock, and the Humbug pile back in the car and soon find themselves driving along the Sea of Knowledge. When each of the three makes an unfounded assumption about the ease of their quest, they leap out of the car and find themselves standing on the island of Conclusions. Unfortunately, they discover that it's much easier to jump to conclusions than to jump away; they have to swim back to shore. On the other side of the shore, Milo and Tock are soaked through with the waters of Knowledge while the Humbug, who thinks he already knows everything, is bone dry. Milo comments that he has learned a lesson about jumping to conclusions, and the three travelers are soon on their way again.

## Analysis

In the Valley of Sound, Juster ties Milo's lesson on perspective from Dischord and Dynne to the larger theme of appreciating everyday life. Just as Milo fails to appreciate the beauty of noises, the doctor and his sidekick are unable to appreciate the nicer sounds. When he reaches the Valley of Sound, Milo learns what happens when too many people take Dr. Dischord's perspective. Just like Milo and Dischord, the residents of this valley have an unbalanced appreciation of sounds—they seem to prefer one kind to the extreme. As Milo learns, the residents of the valley became so unable to appreciate beautiful sounds that the Soundkeeper takes them away along with all the noises as well. Notice the plot similarity here with the city of Reality, whose city disappeared because they failed to appreciate it. It seems that what people take for granted in the Lands Beyond disappears.

At the Soundkeeper's fortress, Milo learns about sounds in much the same way he learned about words in Dictionopolis. Sounds become tangible just like words at the Royal Banquet or in the word market. When he is actually able to see sounds in their "true" forms and the elaborate catalogue system that the Soundkeeper uses to keep track of them all, Milo seems to gain a greater appreciation of both noises and nice sounds. When Milo catches the word "but" in his mouth, Juster returns to his motif of punning by playing off the popular expression "on the tip of his tongue." Once the sounds have been restored, the Soundkeeper realizes that her inability to appreciate all sounds makes her just as bad as Dischord and Dynne. Beauty, as we learned in the last section, is a matter of perspective. The Soundkeeper realizes the sense of this, referring to Rhyme and Reason, symbols of wisdom, and declares that she will try to use each sound at the right time.

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Milo learns a second lesson in this section during his detour to the island of Conclusions. Once they pass through the Valley of Sound, Milo and his companions each makes a statement that demonstrates an assumption. They make decisions without having enough information to do so and end up literally jumping to Conclusions. Since he got to Conclusions by deciding something before having enough information, it is fitting that Milo must swim through the Sea of Knowledge to get back to shore. When he finally makes it to the beach, Milo finds himself drenched in the waters of knowledge while the Humbug, who seems to be more interested in sounding knowledgeable than actually being knowledgeable, is bone dry. Juster seems to be telling us that one has to be open to knowledge in order to absorb it.

## Chapters 14–16

### Summary

#### Chapter 14

Shortly after their detour to Conclusions, Milo, Tock, and the Humbug come upon a fork in the road where they meet the Dodecahedron, a man with twelve faces, each of which displays a different emotion. When Milo introduces himself, the Dodecahedron wonders if everyone with one face is called "a Milo" and explains that in Digitopolis everything is named for what it is. He finds Milo's system of naming very difficult and wonders how anything gets done if the numbers all had their own names, and one had to do the sum of "Robert plus John."

Milo asks which fork he should take to get to Digitopolis, and the Dodecahedron responds with a series of increasingly ridiculous story problems. When Milo points out how silly they are, the Dodecahedron remarks, "as long as the answer is right, who cares if the question is wrong? Then he explains that none of the three roads is right and points out that it was foolish of Milo to assume that just because there were three choices one of them was right. The Dodecahedron offers to personally escort the travelers to Digitopolis and hops in the car with them.

On the outskirts of the city, they stop to see the numbers mine where digits are chiseled out of the stone much like precious gems. Inside they meet the Mathemagician, an impressive man who carries a giant pencil that he uses as a wand. The Mathemagician explains the functions of the mine to the companions and then invites them to lunch.

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## Chapter 15

Milo's lunch with the Mathemagician proves to be as baffling as his banquet with King Azaz. They dine on subtraction stew, which makes them hungrier rather than fuller and leaves the poor Humbug, who gorges himself on twenty-three bowls, practically starving. After the meal, the Mathemagician magically transports the group to his workshop, where he uses his magic staff to dazzle the group with mathematical tricks. Milo asks to see the biggest number, and the Mathemagician leads him to an enormous number 3. Milo corrects himself and asks to see the longest number, and the Mathemagician opens a closet to display a very flattened number 8.

Milo finally clarifies that he means the number of the greatest value, prompting the Mathemagician to give a lengthy speech about infinity. He leads Milo to a staircase that he claims will lead to infinity, and Milo happily starts climbing, telling Tock and the Humbug that he should be back in just a few minutes.

## Chapter 16

Milo gives up on his trip to Infinity and returns to the Mathemagician's workshop, where he finally broaches the subject of Rhyme and Reason. When Milo tells him that Azaz has agreed to release the princesses, the Mathemagician refuses to allow it since he and Azaz always disagree. The Mathemagician tells Milo that if he can prove that he and Azaz have ever agreed, he will consent to the release of the princesses. Milo points out that if the Mathemagician and Azaz always disagree then they have agreed to disagree. The Mathemagician gracefully accepts his defeat and even gives Milo a miniature version of his magic pencil as a gift.

Milo and his companions leave Digitopolis and head towards the Mountains of Ignorance. As they clamber up a dark, craggy path, a mysterious voice in the distance keeps making puns with their words. The Everpresent Wordsnatcher, a filth-encrusted bird, eventually presents himself and explains that his purpose is to take the words of others and twist them to make little jokes.

After more climbing, Milo, Tock, and the Humbug finally reach a flat part on the mountain, where they find a well-dressed gentleman whose face has no features on it—no eyes, no nose, no mouth. Despite his frightening appearance, the man seems very friendly and politely asks for help on a few tasks. He instructs Milo to move a pile of sand a grain at a time, Tock to drain a well using an eye-dropper, and the Humbug to dig a hole through the mountain with a needle. Since the gentleman seems so nice, the three travelers accept their tasks and begin working. Soon hours have gone by with no end in sight.

## Analysis

The introduction to Digitopolis, the city of numbers, resembles the introduction to Dictionopolis, the city of words. Milo first meets one of its unusual inhabitants, the Dodecahedron, who has the bizarre habit of cycling between his twelve different faces. His multitude of expressions resembles that of Azaz's five advisors, who also tend to overdo things and confuse Milo. The meal scene with the Mathemagician is also very much like the meal scene with Azaz in that the food seems quite nonsensical. Subtraction Stew, much like the "half-baked" ideas and "light" meal, does little to satisfy the guests' hunger—rather the opposite, in fact. The hapless Humbug only learns how stew works after wolfing down twenty-three bowls of it, illustrating an interesting role reversal with Milo. Remember that at Azaz's banquet, it was Milo who went hungry because of his misunderstanding of the food, while the Humbug stuffed himself silly.

Just as he learned about letters, perspective, colors, and sound in some of his other stops, Milo takes in a lesson about numbers in Digitopolis. The crux of the education in this section relates to infinity, though only after the requisite puns about the "largest" and "longest" numbers in the Mathemagician's possession. After Milo tricks the Mathemagician into agreeing to release the princesses, the ruler gives him a miniature magic staff as a gift. Notice that once he has learned a lesson from an inhabitant of the Lands Beyond, Milo nearly always gets some kind of gift from them.

The lessons Milo learns from the Mathemagician end this segment of his "education" in the Lands Beyond. As he heads into the Mountains of Ignorance, we will begin to see how Milo puts his learning to use. When he meets the Everpresent Wordsnatcher, we begin a series of demon confrontations, each of which Milo will solve by relying upon his newfound wisdom and the gifts he has been given during his journey.

The Everpresent Wordsnatcher presents the easiest of these challenges, since he is admittedly more of a nuisance than a demon. Notice that the Humbug seems to know the bird rather well, since the Humbug enjoys the sort of annoying word trickery. It is also important to observe that there the kind of games the Everpresent Wordsnatcher plays are very different than those that Juster himself plays with his pun motif. The primary difference is that the Everpresent Wordsnatcher makes puns with the intent of making himself seem intelligent, while Juster uses puns to help teach Milo lessons about the Lands Beyond.

The faceless gentleman does not seem to be a demon at first, but there definitely seems to be something wrong with him. The tasks he gives Milo, Tock, and the Humbug seem unimportant and time consuming. Juster seems to be setting us up for a revelation about the gentleman, a technique called foreshadowing. Though we aren't certain just what he is up to yet, Juster has given us a lot of clues that suggest the gentleman has something up his sleeves.

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## Chapters 17–18

### Summary

#### Chapter 17

Milo, Tock, and the Humbug are happily working away on the absurd projects they were assigned by the faceless gentleman when Milo points out that he feels like he could go on forever. He decides to use the magic wand the Mathemagician gave him to figure out just how long it will take him to complete his task and discovers that it will be 837 years. Milo confronts the gentleman and discovers that he is the Terrible Trivium, "demon of petty tasks and worthless jobs, ogre of wasted effort, monster of habit."

The travelers run away from the demon, running and scrambling up the increasingly steep and difficult path with the Trivium not far behind them. From nowhere a voice begins shouting what seems to be helpful advice, directing the three companions through a confusing part of the trail. But before they know it, they drop into a deep pit and realize they've been tricked. The owner of the voice introduces himself as the long-nosed, green-eyed, curly-haired, wide-mouthed, thick-necked, broad-shouldered, round-bodied, short-armed, bowlegged, big-footed Monster—or simply the Demon of Insincerity.

The demon warns Milo and his friends not to try to escape from the pit since he is "one of the most frightening fiends in this whole wild wilderness". Tock and the Humbug cower in fear, but Milo pulls out the telescope that Alec Bings told him would show things as they really were. He takes a good look at the Demon of Insincerity and discovers that he is a small, pathetic-looking animal. Crushed by Milo's realization of the truth, the demon wanders away while the travelers climb out of the pit.

They continue along the path for a time and, upon stopping for a rest, find themselves in the palm of the Gelatinous Giant. They do not notice the giant until he announces himself because this demon tries as hard as it can to look exactly like whatever is around it. Being different simply is not safe, the giant explains. Milo cannot believe that someone so big could be afraid of anything, yet the Gelatinous Giant says he is afraid of everything, especially ideas. Milo pulls out the box of words that King Azaz gave him and shoos the giant away with it.

And so the travelers are on their way once again. News of their journey seems to have spread across the demon network, though, and soon an entire throng of monsters is hot on their trail. Once they spot this horrible crowd, among its members all of the demons they had already met, Milo, Tock, and the Humbug press ahead at an even more urgent pace.

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## Chapter 18

Racing ahead, the three companions soon come upon the staircase to the Castle in the Air. As they reach the first step, they notice a little man at a desk with a huge book upon it. The Senses Taker asks all sorts of questions about the travelers that become increasingly trivial, and he writes down all of the answers in his ledger. They become engrossed in the question game and forget all about the castle and the horde of demons chasing them until Milo drops the bag of sounds that the Soundkeeper gave him. The package breaks open and explodes with laughter, pulling Milo from his trance since humor is the one sense the Senses Taker cannot seize.

The travelers bound up the stairs, climbing so high that they push through the clouds. They reach the castle and meet the princesses of Sweet Rhyme and Pure Reason, who have apparently been expecting them. Milo stammers an apology about his trip taking so long because of all the mistakes he made, and the princesses assure him that there is nothing wrong with mistakes so long as he learned from them. Learning is important, they explain, but learning how to use the lessons is important too.

The talk of learning is interrupted by the demons below, who tear apart the staircase and send the Castle floating off into space. Since time flies, Tock volunteers to get everyone back to the ground safely. The group piles on his back, and Tock leaps out the window.

## Analysis

In this section, the themes of education and everyday appreciation reach their climax as Milo does battle with the demons of ignorance and finally finds Rhyme and Reason. Throughout the preceding sections, Milo has been learning lessons that have contributed to his education and his wisdom. As symbols of his accepting of this knowledge, Milo has received a number of gifts that he will also use to defeat the various demons he encounters. Through a combination of his personal changes and the gifts he has received, Milo is able to find his way through a number of demon encounters.

First, we pick up with the faceless gentleman who predictably turns out to be a demon. After setting Milo, Tock, and the Humbug to work on pointless tasks that would take them nearly 1000 years, he thinks he has gotten the better of the trio. Milo, however, has learned about infinity and about boredom, and so he puts the magic staff he got from the Mathemagician to work to calculate how long his assigned task will take. Once he realizes that it is the worst sort of busywork, he unmasks the demon and beats a hasty retreat. The *old* would most probably have remained, busily moving the pile of sand forever.

Juster repeats this plot pattern with the Demon of Insincerity, who tricks Milo and his companions into cowering in a pit by convincing them that he is a horrible monster. Fortunately, Milo has learned how to see things because of his interactions in the Forest of



Sight, and he has the telescope Alec Bings gave him. Once he looks upon the so-called monster with unclouded vision, Milo sees that there is nothing to be afraid of at all, and the demon is defeated. Remember that Alec Bings saw things from an adult's perspective; Milo's ability to use that perspective to his advantage suggests that he has grown up a little during his travels.

Similarly, Milo defeats the Gelatinous Giant with the words Azaz gave him, because there is nothing a conformist hates more than ideas. Even the seemingly mighty giant is no match for Milo's education and wisdom. Finally, at the base of the steps to the Castle in the Air, Milo escapes the Senses Taker by relying on his sense of humor. The laughter that saves him comes from his perspective, symbolically represented by the box of sounds that the Soundkeeper gave him.

When Milo finally reaches the princesses, they explain the need for his trials in the Mountains of Ignorance. It was not enough that Milo learned the lessons of the Lands Beyond; he also needed to learn to put those lessons to good use. It is only when he does that he receives wisdom as represented by Rhyme and Reason. Milo, who once languished in boredom and felt minutes passing like days, has also discovered that "time flies." This proves to be a handy realization as the group uses Tock's ability to fly in order to escape from the Castle in the Air.

## Chapters 19–20

### Summary

#### Chapter 19

Tock, carrying Milo, the Humbug and the princesses on his back, glides down from the Castle in the Air and lands with a sudden jolt. The group quickly begins running down the Mountains of Ignorance as the horde of demons spots them and follows. Milo casts a glance over his shoulder and sees a horrible host of monsters that appears to be gaining on them. Just as the demons have caught up and are poised to pounce, they inexplicably stop in their tracks. Milo looks up and sees the armies of Wisdom, led by King Azaz and the Mathemagician, galloping towards them. The demons turn tail and run back up into the dark places from which they came.

A huge celebration ensues and all of the people Milo met during his journey through the Lands Beyond show up to congratulate him for finding Rhyme and Reason. King Azaz finally tells Milo the "secret" he warned him about back in Dictionopolis: the mission to save

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Rhyme and Reason was actually impossible. The king explains that he kept this from Milo because "so many things are possible just as long as you don't know they're impossible."

After Milo and his friends enjoy an joyous celebration, the princesses tell Milo that it is time for him to return to his home. He exchanges goodbyes with all the people he has met in the Lands Beyond, including his friends Tock and the Humbug, and sets out on the highway in his electric car.

## Chapter 20

Milo comes upon a tollbooth like the one he assembled in his bedroom and passes through it to find himself right back where he began. He realizes that days or weeks have passed while he has been away and hopes that no one has been worried. As it turns out, however, only a few hours have passed. It is near nightfall and Milo, who is exhausted, decides to go to bed.

The next day begins like any other. Milo goes to school where he is distracted by thinking of making his next trip through the tollbooth. He rushes home from school planning to hop in his electric car and have another adventure. When he reaches his bedroom, however, he finds that the tollbooth is gone. In its place is a note addressed "FOR MILO, WHO KNOWS THE WAY." The note explains that there are many more boys and girls in need of the tollbooth and suggests that, thanks to the lessons he has learned, Milo can explore many more wonderful lands all by himself. The tollbooth was just the first step, it seems, and now Milo is free to do all the exploring and adventuring he desires. Milo contemplates this, looking around at his room in a whole new way and seeing all sorts of wonderful and interesting things. "Well *I would* like to make another trip," Milo thinks, "but I really don't know when I'll have the time. There's just so much to do right here."

## Analysis

In this final section, Juster brings his major themes full circle. Throughout *The Phantom Tollbooth*, Milo has been learning how to appreciate and find the beauty in the things all around him as well as the value of education. When Rhyme and Reason return to the Kingdom of Wisdom and Milo himself returns to his home, these lessons are completed, and we see Milo in a whole new light.

Milo nearly suffers a gruesome fate at the hands of the demon hordes. Without the aid of the armies of Wisdom, he and his companions would surely have been destroyed by the hordes of demons. The fact that Azaz and the Mathemagician have set aside their differences and come to Milo's (and the princesses') rescue illustrates the important link between Juster's two major themes. Rhyme and Reason, who represent commonsense wisdom, are powerless to fend off the demons of ignorance whereas Azaz and the Mathemagician, who represent

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the two main areas of education, have the necessary forces. Here Juster demonstrates that wisdom without education is powerless just as education without wisdom is senseless. It is only when the two come together that the demons of ignorance can be defeated.

At the great carnival, Milo learns that the mission he just completed was, in fact, impossible. At this point, Juster addresses the seemingly daunting nature of the dual quests for leaning and wisdom. Many might think that what Milo has done in bringing together the worlds of letters and numbers and freeing the imprisoned forces of true wisdom would be more than they themselves could undertake. Through Azaz's claim that much is possible if one only believes so, Juster addresses these concerns with his characteristic wit.

Similarly, Juster addresses the device of the tollbooth itself. Remember that Milo was stuck in a terrible rut of boredom before the tollbooth appeared in his bedroom. It seems that without the intercession of this magical device, poor Milo would never have been saved. Since there are quite a lot of boys and girls in the same boat as Milo was before his trip, the mysterious sender of the tollbooth has to keep circulating it. The note the sender leaves, however, advises Milo that he can take all sorts of wonderful trips all by himself if he only uses his imagination. Milo decides that this sounds like a heap of fun but, having learned the lessons of wisdom, wants to appreciate the things before his eyes before moving on to his next journey.

Our final image of Milo stands in stark contrast to our first. Rather than being bored and lazy, Milo is inspired and fascinated by his world—so much so that he would rather be there than in the Lands Beyond. He is suddenly eager to look around, to crack open the books gathering dust on his shelves, and to experience the things all around him. This demonstrates the degree to which he has taken to heart the lessons he learned in the Lands Beyond and completes the themes of both wisdom and education.

**IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS EXPLAINED**

1. *Everyone loved the princesses because of their great beauty, their gentle ways, and their ability to settle all controversies fairly and reasonably... It was said by everyone that Rhyme and Reason settle all problems.*

This quotation comes from Faintly Macabre's account of the history of the Lands Beyond in Chapter 6. Here she speaks of the twin princesses Rhyme and Reason, who have since been imprisoned in the Castle in the Air. Faintly's description of the important role the princesses played in the everyday affairs of the kingdom explains the odd, nonsensical business that Milo witnesses in the lands. Though he has only seen a fraction of the country, Milo already seems to think it is a place where the ridiculous rules, and Faintly's explanation of the missing princesses' helps Milo understand why. It is also important to notice that Faintly refers to the ongoing feud between Azaz and the Mathemagician that only Rhyme and Reason can resolve.

2. *If we didn't collect them, the air would be full of old sounds and noises bouncing around and bumping into things. It would be terribly confusing because you'd never know if you were listening to an old one or a new one.*

In Chapter 12 we learn that one of the Soundkeeper's many jobs is to collect and catalogue all the sounds in the word. In this quotation she explains why this function is so important in a way that indicates much about the world of the Lands Beyond, namely that sounds there do not function as they do in the real world. Just as words and number are physical objects in the lands, so are sounds, and they must be snatched out of the air lest they create a terrible mess. The Soundkeeper's description of the chaos that would occur if she stopped doing her job also relates to the concept of order that Milo learned about when he tried to take over Chroma's job of conducting the color orchestra. Juster suggests that without proper order, the world would be a horribly confusing place.

3. *But it's not just learning things that's important. It's learning what to do with what you learn and learning why you learn things at all that matters.*

The princess of Rhyme tells this to Milo when he finally reaches the Castle of the Air in Chapter 18. Milo explains that if he had not made so many mistakes, he would have gotten there sooner. The princesses, of course, are pleased by his eagerness and good nature, and they tell him that mistakes are perfectly all right, so long as Milo has learned from them. They then elaborate on learning, illustrating the importance Juster places on this theme. Milo's education in the Lands Beyond can be broken into two phases. In the first phase,

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Milo encounters teachers of sorts who dispense lessons that are commemorated with gifts. In the second phase—which Milo has just completed when he reaches the Castle in the Air—the lessons must be put to use. Milo uses what he has learned to defeat a host of demons and comes to appreciate even more the knowledge he has gained.

4. *We always see things from the same angle... It's much less trouble that way. Besides, it makes more sense to grow down and not up.*

When Milo first meets Alec Bings in Chapter 9, he is perplexed by the notion that a person would grow down rather than up. As demonstrated by this quotation, Alec is similarly dubious of the idea of growing in Milo's way. Here he lists what he thinks are the benefits of his family's way of growing: one's perspective remains the same all through life and one is safer. Of course, Milo is horrified by the prospect of looking at things the exact same way whether he's eight or eighty years old. Here Juster demonstrates the value of changing perspectives throughout life, as Milo considers what it would be like to live up off the ground like Alec Bings. Eventually, Milo decides to try and by thinking "like an adult" he is able to levitate himself for a few minutes. When he falls back to the earth, he remarks that looking at things like a child is better because you don't fall so far. Alec would obviously see it the other way around, since he avoids scrapes and scuffs because of his altitude. Juster seems to suggest that the mistakes children make are an important part of growing up and that it is better to make mistakes while young, since it's easier to learn from them.

5. *I'm afraid of everything. That's why I'm so ferocious. If the others found out, I'd just die. Now do be quiet while I eat my breakfast.*

The Gelatinous Giant, one of the many demons Milo meets throughout Chapter 17 in the Mountains of Ignorance, is a monster of conformity. He lives every day trying to blend in and simply agree with everyone around him. Milo stumbles upon the giant because he is mimicking the mountains around him. This quotation illustrates Juster's viewpoint of group thinking. People who try to fit in by copying with everyone else, he seems to think, are just afraid of being different. The giant is also petrified that someone will find out that he is afraid because that might make him stand out from the crowd. He is, as he said, afraid of everything. The Gelatinous Giant is especially afraid of different ideas, as we learn when Milo uses the words in Azaz's box to scare him away.

**KEY FACTS****FULL TITLE**

The Phantom Tollbooth

**AUTHOR**

Norton Juster

**TYPE OF WORK**

Novel

**GENRE**

Young adult, Fiction, Fantasy

**LANGUAGE**

English

**TIME AND PLACE WRITTEN**

1961; Hampshire, England.

**DATE OF FIRST PUBLICATION**

1961

**PUBLISHER**

Epstein & Carroll Associates

**NARRATOR**

Anonymous

**POINT OF VIEW**

The point of view is from a third person omniscient narrator who skips from character to character, revealing a number of characters' thoughts and actions.

**TONE**

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The tone in the book is playful and fantastic. Though there are moments of serious danger, such as Milo's encounters with the demons of ignorance, the book reads mostly like a whimsical fairy tale.

**TENSE**

Past tense

**SETTING (TIME)**

Unclear, but relatively modern

**SETTING (PLACE)**

The Lands Beyond, a strange fantasyland.

**PROTAGONIST**

Milo

**MAJOR CONFLICT**

To release the princesses Rhyme and Reason from imprisonment in the Castle in the Air.

**RISING ACTION**

After Faintly Macabre tells him the story of the princesses' disappearance, King Azaz charges him with the mission of finding and releasing them.

**CLIMAX**

After much travel and difficulty, Milo find the princesses and manages to get them out of the Castle in the Air. Once on the ground, the group is surrounded by hordes of demons.

**FALLING ACTION**

The armies of Wisdom, led by Azaz and his brother the Mathemagician route the demons and welcome Rhyme and Reason back to the land.

**THEMES**

The value of education; appreciating the things of everyday life; learning to use common sense; escaping boredom

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MOTIFS

Puns; gift giving.

SYMBOLS

Rhyme and Reason, Milo's gifts, Tock

FORESHADOWING

When he gives Milo his mission, Azaz tells him that there is a serious problem with the quest. However, he will only tell Milo about it once he has completed his journey. The secret, it turns out, is that Milo's mission is impossible.



**STUDY QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTED ESSAY TOPICS****Study Questions****1. *Why is Milo so bored before he goes to the Lands Beyond?***

Though he does not even know it, Milo's boredom comes from a number of failings in his education about life. He only becomes aware of these gaps when he learns the solutions from people he meets in the Lands Beyond. When he meets Tock, for example, he learns that he has been frittering his time away instead of trying to make the most of it. This makes him feel bored. When he meets Alec Bings, Milo realizes that he has not been enjoying all of the different perspectives available to him. Again, this makes him bored with his seemingly one-dimensional life. All of particular things that make Milo so bored relate back to his education—or lack thereof.

**2. *What is the meaning of Faintly Macabre's story?***

On the surface, the Which's tale seems like a straightforward history of the Lands Beyond. However, there is much more to her account. In fact it is largely an allegory: a story that mimics a real one by changing some basics, such as character names and settings. Faintly's story is really about the problems with education present in Juster's *real* world, namely that the different disciplines, number and letters, have become so busy fighting over which is more important that they've forgotten about the big picture. The basic wisdom of common sense, represented by Rhyme and Reason, has been lost because of this foolish conflict, and nonsense has begun to run amok. It is up to young student like Milo, as Faintly suggests, to bridge this gap and restore wisdom to the land.

**3. *Why does the Humbug come along on Milo's journey?***

The most obvious reason is because King Azaz tells him to. The Humbug, who is a horrible suck-up, has been dancing around the argument over the princesses and trying to take both sides. So when Azaz decides to send Milo on the quest, he is under the erroneous impression that the Humbug has volunteered for the job. Still, this leaves the question of why Juster would chose to have such an obviously unlikable character tag along with his heroes, Milo and Tock. The most likely answer lies in the relationship between Tock and the Humbug; the two characters are basically opposites. In creating these opposing forces, Juster creates a more realistic educational environment for Milo. As much as he is learning from Tock (and the other teacher-characters in the Lands Beyond) the Humbug is always there trying

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to hold him back or to convince him that it is more important to seem like one is smart than to actually be smart.

*4. Why does Milo fail at conducting Chroma's orchestra?*

Milo assumes that the musicians in the orchestra will simply know what to do since, according to Chroma himself, they have been at their jobs since the dawn of time. It does seem strange that they do not know better than to make the sky turn red or plants turn orange. Chroma, the conductor, represents order and discipline without which nonsense would reign supreme. He provides an underlying structure and discipline that, though not immediately apparent, is crucial to the orchestra's functioning. Milo, being uneducated in the ways of conducting and lacking discipline himself, is unable to provide this for the orchestra, and, thus, everything falls apart when he tries to play conductor.

## Suggested Essay Topics

*5. What lessons could the Soundkeeper learn from Dischord and Dynne?*

*6. Why does Faintly Macabre remain in prison, despite knowing how to escape?*

*7. Who might the anonymous sender of the tollbooth be? What reasons would he or she have to send it to Milo?*

*8. What would the King of Wisdom— Azaz and the Mathemagician's father—think of the state of things in the Lands Beyond? Would he be pleased with the way his sons have been looking after the kingdom?*

*9. What would have happened to Milo if Tock had not shown up in the Doldrums? Would he have stayed there forever?*

**REVIEW AND RESOURCES****Quiz**

1. *Who is the first person Milo meets in the Lands Beyond?*
  - A. The Spelling Bee
  - B. King Azaz
  - C. The Whether Man
  - D. The Mathemagician
  
2. *How does Milo get out of the Doldrums?*
  - A. Uses his imagination
  - B. Tricks the Lethargians
  - C. Wishes on a falling star
  - D. Runs real fast
  
3. *Who sent Milo the tollbooth?*
  - A. King Azaz
  - B. The Mathemagician
  - C. Faintly Macabre
  - D. Nobody knows
  
4. *Why did Azaz and the Mathemagician banish Rhyme and Reason?*
  - A. Because they tried to take over the kingdom
  - B. Because they stole from the numbers mine
  - C. Because they said letters and numbers were equally important
  - D. Because they were demons in disguise
  
5. *Who keeps Dynne in a bottle?*
  - A. Chroma
  - B. Dr. Dischord
  - C. Alec Bings
  - D. The Humbug

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6. *What sort of music does Chroma's orchestra play?*
  - A. Mozart
  - B. Brahms
  - C. Bach
  - D. They don't play music at all.
7. *Why does the Soundkeeper lock all the sounds up in her vault?*
  - A. She thinks people don't appreciate them.
  - B. She is greedy.
  - C. She hates sounds.
  - D. She thinks that sounds should not be shared.
8. *What does the Mathemagician give Milo as a gift?*
  - A. The longest number there is
  - B. A small version of his own magic staff
  - C. The Dodecahedron
  - D. A math headache
9. *Why does Milo mistake the Gelatinous Giant for a mountain?*
  - A. Because he's made of stone
  - B. Because he has snow on his head
  - C. Because the giant tries to blend in with his surroundings
  - D. Because his middle name is "Everest"
10. *How many years is Milo's prison sentence from Officer Shrift?*
  - A. six
  - B. sixty
  - C. 600
  - D. 6,000,000
11. *How do Milo, Tock, and the Humbug get off the island of Conclusions?*
  - A. By swimming through the Sea of Knowledge
  - B. By walking across the Brainy Bridge
  - C. By wading on the Sand Bar of Smarts
  - D. By riding on the Waterskis of Wisdom

12. *Why does the Humbug accompany Milo and Tock on their quest to save Rhyme and Reason?*

- A. He tries to take credit for the idea.
- B. He shamelessly sucks up to King Azaz.
- C. He takes both sides in the argument about whether it could be done.
- D. All of the above

13. *How did Faintly Macabre end up in prison?*

- A. She made fun of Officer Shrift's weight problem.
- B. She stole from the word market.
- C. She began to horde all of the words in Dictionopolis.
- D. She kidnapped Rhyme and Reason.

14. *Why does Alec Bings float?*

- A. He ate too much subtraction stew.
- B. He thinks like and has the perspective of a grown-up.
- C. He got caught on one of the Whether Man's balloons.
- D. He lives in the Castle in the Air.

15. *Where does Milo meet Tock?*

- A. Expectations
- B. Dictionopolis
- C. The Doldrums
- D. Conclusions

16. *How does Milo get a sound out of the Soundkeeper's fortress?*

- A. In his pocket
- B. On the tip of his tongue
- C. In his ear
- D. Under his hat

17. *How do Milo, Tock, and the Humbug escape the Terrible Trivium?*

- A. Milo figures out how long the tasks will take.
- B. Tock sticks him with his eyedropper.
- C. The Humbug bores him to sleep with talk of history.
- D. Officer Shrift drops from the sky and crushes him.

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18. *What is the one thing the Senses Taker can't get from Milo?*
- A. Sense of direction
  - B. Sense of smell
  - C. Nonsense
  - D. Sense of humor
19. *How is it that Tock can fly?*
- A. He has wings.
  - B. Time flies.
  - C. He's related to Alec Bings.
  - D. Everyone can fly in the Lands Beyond.
20. *How much times passes in the real world while Milo is off in the Lands Beyond?*
- A. A day
  - B. A year
  - C. A lifetime
  - D. A few of hours
21. *Why didn't Azaz tell Milo his mission was impossible?*
- A. For a chuckle
  - B. Because Azaz is in the CIA
  - C. Because Milo only could have accomplished it if he didn't know it was impossible
  - D. Because Azaz enjoys watching little boys fail miserably in life
22. *When does Milo plan to make his second trip to the Lands Beyond?*
- A. The very next day
  - B. The very next week
  - C. The very next month
  - D. When he's done appreciating the things in the real world
23. *What is the biggest number the Mathemagician has?*
- A. 1
  - B. 2
  - C. 3
  - D. 4

24. *How does Milo overcome his fear of the Demon of Insincerity?*

- A. He uses his telescope to see the Demon for what he really is.
- B. He gets a pep-talk from the Humbug.
- C. He thinks of how important his mission is.
- D. He goes into therapy.

25. *What gift does the Soundkeeper give Milo?*

- A. The tune George Washington whistled while crossing the Delaware
- B. The sound of one hand clapping
- C. The sound of silence
- D. A parcel of beautiful sounds with lots of laughter mixed in

**Answer Key:**

<b>1: C</b>	<b>8: B</b>	<b>15: C</b>	<b>22: D</b>
<b>2: A</b>	<b>9: C</b>	<b>16: B</b>	<b>23: C</b>
<b>3: D</b>	<b>10: D</b>	<b>17: A</b>	<b>24: A</b>
<b>4: C</b>	<b>11: A</b>	<b>18: D</b>	<b>25: D</b>
<b>5: B</b>	<b>12: D</b>	<b>19: B</b>	
<b>6: D</b>	<b>13: C</b>	<b>20: D</b>	
<b>7: A</b>	<b>14: B</b>	<b>21: C</b>	



*Note:* This SparkNote uses the 1989 Random House hardcover illustrated edition of *The Phantom Tollbooth*, a reproduction of the original 1961 print. Page numbers may vary in other editions, especially those in paperback.

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