

## CLASSIC POETRY: Inference

In Lewis Carroll's famous book *Through the Looking Glass*, the main character, Alice, finds a book containing a confusing poem. This is the poem that Alice read. Half the words are imaginary! As you read, try to guess their meanings!

# Jabberwocky

## by Lewis Carroll

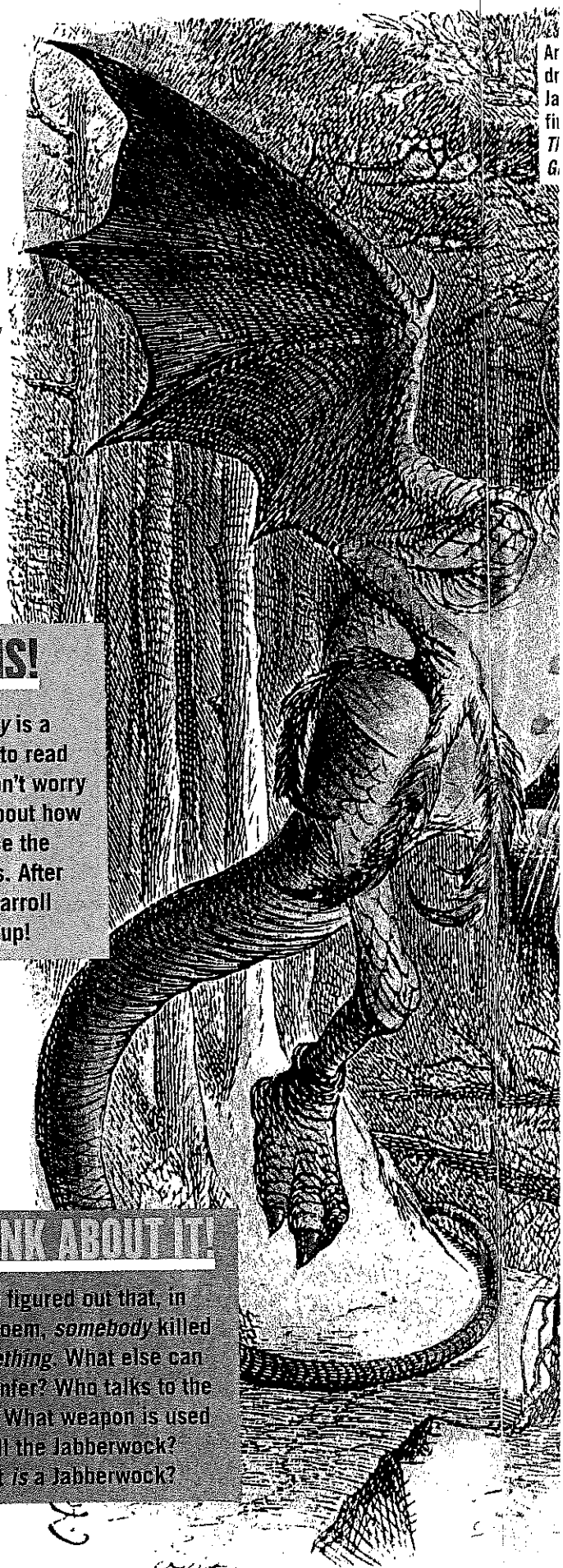
1. 'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
2. Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
3. All mimsy were the borogoves,
4. And the mome raths outgrabe.
  
5. "Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
6. The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
7. Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
8. The frumious Bandersnatch!"
  
9. He took his vorpal sword in hand:
10. Long time the manxome foe he sought—
11. So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
12. And stood awhile in thought.
  
13. And, as in uffish thought he stood,
14. The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
15. Came whiffing through the tulgey wood,
16. And burbled as it came!
  
17. One, two! One, two! And through and through
18. The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
19. He left it dead, and with its head
20. He went galumphing back.
  
21. "And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
22. Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
23. O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
24. He chortled in his joy.

### TRY THIS!

*Jabberwocky* is a great poem to read out loud. Don't worry too much about how to pronounce the weird words. After all, Lewis Carroll made them up!

### THINK ABOUT IT!

Alice figured out that, in the poem, *somebody* killed *something*. What else can you infer? Who talks to the boy? What weapon is used to kill the Jabberwock? What *is* a Jabberwock?



Artist John Tenniel drew this scary Jabberwock for the first edition of *Through the Looking Glass* in 1852.

## ACTIVITY: Identifying parts of speech

# Crack Lewis Carroll's Code!

Use your knowledge of grammar to solve the riddle of *Jabberwocky*.

Take another look at the nonsense words in the poem. Which are nouns? Which are verbs? Which are adjectives? Do some detective work to fill in the chart below. We've done a few for you.

FANTASY WORD	PART OF SPEECH	SIMILAR WORDS IN ENGLISH	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE, OR NEUTRAL?	MEANING—YOU DECIDE!
brillig <i>line 1</i>				
slithy <i>line 1</i>	adj.	slimy, sly, slithery		
toves <i>line 1</i>	noun	toes, moles, gloves		
gyre <i>line 2</i>	verb	gyrate		
gimble <i>line 2</i>				
borogoves <i>line 3</i>				
frumious <i>line 8</i>				
Bandersnatch <i>line 8</i>				
vorpal <i>lines 9, 18</i>				
whiffling <i>line 15</i>				

## WRITE NOW

Now that you've done some interpretations, reread the poem. Then, analyze the illustration at left. Is this how *you* would draw the Jabberwock? How would your drawing differ?