

The Alice Sound



HUMPTY

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READING ALOUD

PERFORMING CONVERSATIONS

Lewis Carroll loved the theatre. He gives us so much information about the way characters speak that reading the Alice books can be like reading a play script. Alice speaks 'politely' and 'timidly' whereas the Caterpillar speaks 'contemptuously' (find out what that means!) We can tell their tone of voice but also the volume of what they say. Sometimes they whisper but sometimes they ROAR! The Queen of Hearts is particularly shouty and loud.

Read the following passage and then read it aloud with a partner. First, find all the instructions that Carroll gives about how to say the lines (TIP: look at the words after the speech marks) and then try to do that as you read.

Decide who will be who.

It might help to first re-write the passage as a play script, as follows:

Humpty (interrupting impatiently): It's a stupid enough name!

Alice (doubtfully): *Must* a name mean something?

HUMPTY

"Don't stand there chattering to yourself like that," Humpty Dumpty said, looking at her for the first time, "but tell me your name and your business."

"My name is Alice, but—"

"It's a stupid enough name!" Humpty Dumpty interrupted impatiently. "What does it mean?"

"Must a name mean something?" Alice asked doubtfully.

"Of course it must," Humpty Dumpty said with a short laugh: "my name means the shape I am—and a good handsome shape it is, too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost."

"Why do you sit out here all alone?" said Alice, not wishing to begin an argument.

"Why, because there's nobody with me!" cried Humpty Dumpty. "Did you think I didn't know the answer to that? Ask another."

"Don't you think you'd be safer down on the ground?" Alice went on, not with any idea of making another riddle, but simply in her good-natured anxiety for the queer creature. "That wall is so very narrow!"

"What tremendously easy riddles you ask!" Humpty Dumpty growled out. "Of course I don't think so! Why, if ever I did fall off—which there's no chance of—but if I did—" Here he pursed his lips and looked so solemn and grand that Alice could hardly help laughing. "If I did fall," he went on,

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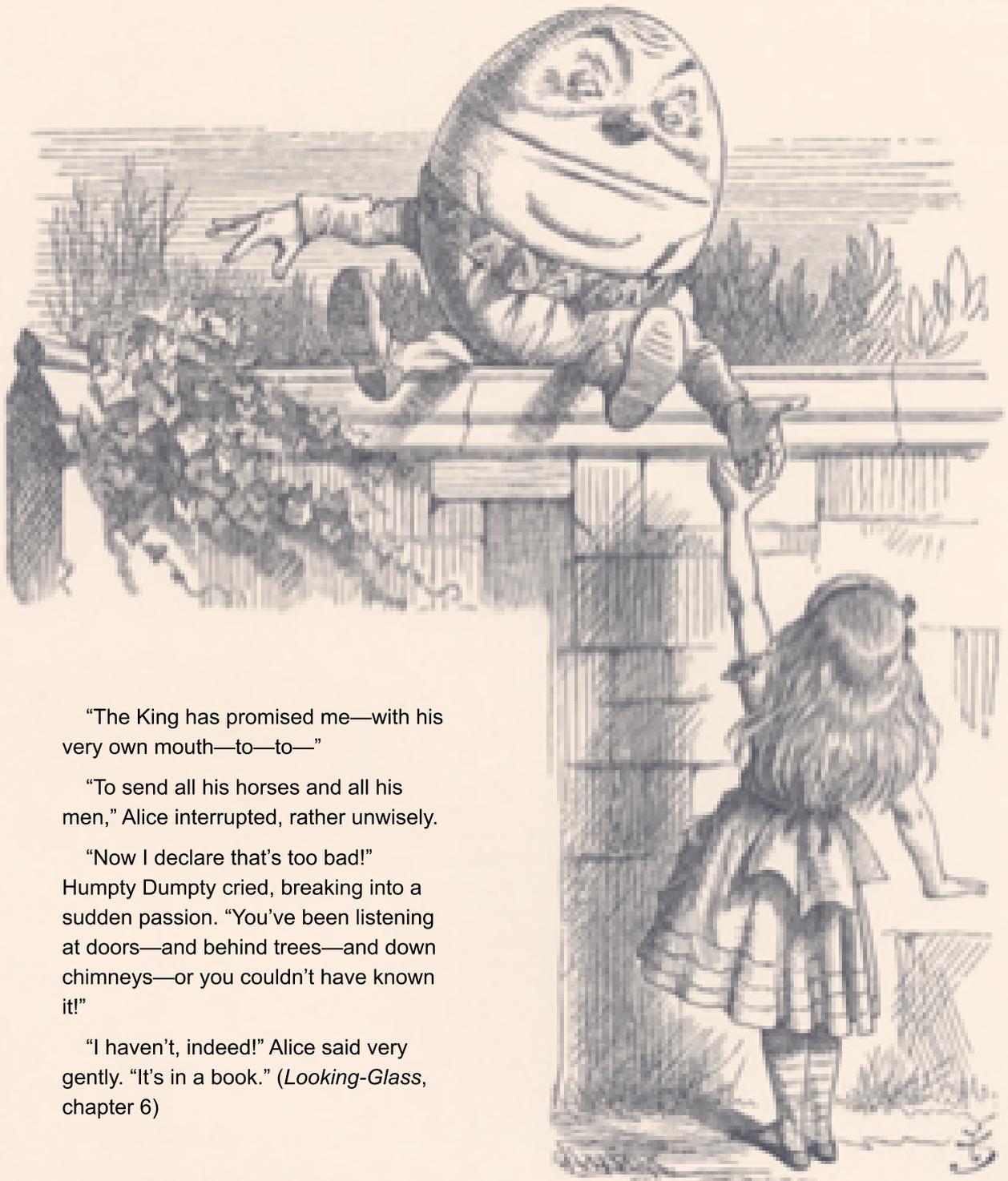
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“The King has promised me—with his very own mouth—to—to—”

“To send all his horses and all his men,” Alice interrupted, rather unwisely.

“Now I declare that’s too bad!” Humpty Dumpty cried, breaking into a sudden passion. “You’ve been listening at doors—and behind trees—and down chimneys—or you couldn’t have known it!”

“I haven’t, indeed!” Alice said very gently. “It’s in a book.” (*Looking-Glass*, chapter 6)