

Glossary for the first verse of Jabberwocky

In the full version of *Through the Looking-Glass*, when Alice is talking to Humpty Dumpty, he tells her the meaning of some of the words in *Jabberwocky*.

Brillig: four o'clock in the afternoon – the time when you begin broiling (or grilling) things for dinner.

Slithy: lithe and slimy. ('Lithe' is the same as 'active'.)

Toves: creatures that are a cross between badgers, lizards and corkscrews. They make their nests under sundials and live on cheese.

To gyre: to go round and round like a gyroscope.

To gimble: to make holes like a gimblet.

Wabe: the grass around a sundial, so-called because it goes a long way before it and a long way behind it. (And a long way beyond it on each side.)

Mimsy: flimsy and miserable.

Borogove: a thin, shabby bird with its feathers sticking out all around it – rather like a live mop.

Mome rath: a *rath* is a sort of green pig and Humpty Dumpty thinks *mome* is short for 'from home' – in other words, they'd lost their way.

To outgrabe: this is to make a sound between a bellow and a whistle, with a kind of sneeze in the middle.

