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| **Humpty Dumpty's Explanation**  "You seem very clever at explaining words, Sir", said Alice. "Would you kindly tell me the meaning of the [poem](http://www76.pair.com/keithlim/jabberwocky/poem/humptydumpty.html) 'Jabberwocky'?"  "Let's hear it", said Humpty Dumpty. "I can explain all the poems that ever were invented--and a good many that haven't been invented just yet."  This sounded very hopeful, so Alice repeated the first verse:  'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves Did gyre and gimble in the wabe: All mimsy were the borogoves, And the mome raths outgrabe.  "That's enough to begin with", Humpty Dumpty interrupted: "there are plenty of hard words there. '*Brillig*' means four o'clock in the afternoon--the time when you begin *broiling* things for dinner."  "That'll do very well", said Alice: "and '*slithy*'?"  "Well, '*slithy*' means 'lithe and slimy'. 'Lithe' is the same as 'active'. You see it's like a portmanteau--there are two meanings packed up into one word."  I see it now", Alice remarked thoughfully: "and what are '*toves*'?"  "Well, '*toves*' are something like badgers--they're something like lizards--and they're something like [corkscrews](http://www76.pair.com/keithlim/jabberwocky/poem/humptydumpty.html)."  "They must be very curious creatures."  "They are that", said Humpty Dumpty: "also they make their nests under sun-dials--also they live on cheese."  "And what's to '*gyre*' and to '*gimble*'?"  "To '*gyre*' is to go round and round like a gyroscope. To '*gimble*' is to make holes like a gimlet."  "And '*the wabe*' is the grass plot round a sun-dial, I suppose?" said Alice, surprised at her own ingenuity.  "Of course it is. It's called '*wabe*', you know, because it goes a long way before it, and a long way behind it--"  "And a long way beyond it on each side", Alice added.  "Exactly so. Well then, '*mimsy*' is 'flimsy and miserable' (there's another portmanteau for you). And a '*borogove*' is a thin shabby-looking bird with its feathers sticking out all round--something like a live mop."  "And then '*mome raths*'?" said Alice. "If I'm not giving you too much trouble."  "Well a '*rath*' is a sort of green pig, but '*mome*' I'm not certain about. I think it's sort for 'from home'--meaning that they'd lost their way, you know."  "And what does '*outgrabe*' mean?"  "Well, '*outgribing*' is something between bellowing an whistling, with a kind of sneeze in the middle: however, you'll hear it done, maybe--down in the wood yonder--and when you've once heard it, you'll be *quite* content. Who's been repeating all that hard stuff to you?"  "I read it in a book", said Alice.  --*Through The Looking* [*Glass*](http://www76.pair.com/keithlim/jabberwocky/poem/humptydumpty.html), Lewis Carroll |

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