

JOURNEY INTO DANGER

Based on the Lewis
Carroll poem,
Jabberwocky



GUIDE FOR PARENTS

This is a story about a boy who slays a monster... but it is also a story about animals and habitats, grammar and spelling, war and peace... and much more.

The pack includes a fair amount of curriculum content. That said, it's designed to be playful, thought-provoking and to be taken at your own (and your child's) pace. See activities as suggestions rather than instructions. You may have your own ideas and your child may have theirs – by all means take this in the direction you want to.

Most of all, have fun with it. There may be monsters ahead!

JABBERWOCKY

‘Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

“Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!”

He took his vorpal sword in hand;
Long time the manxome foe he sought –
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

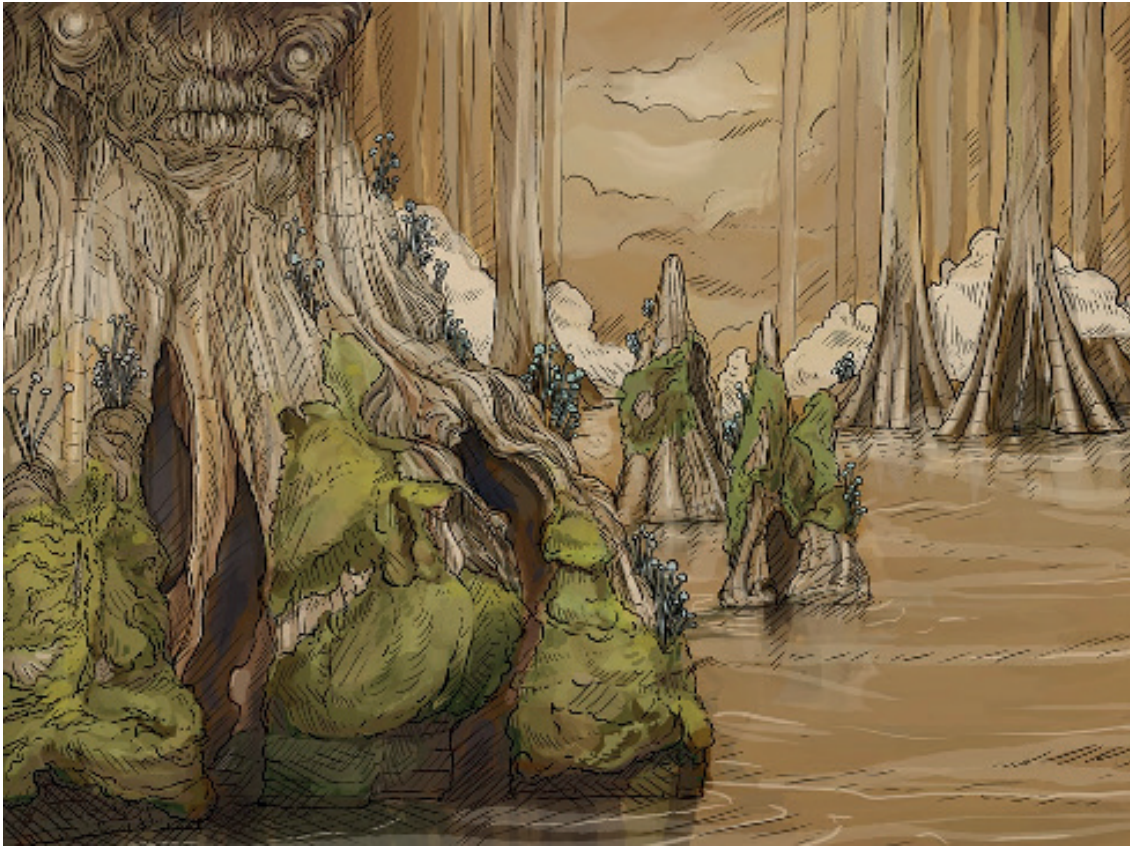
And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

“And, has thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!”
He chortled in his joy.

‘Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

1. A STRANGE SETTING



The Wabe by Gabriel Kidd

RESOURCES

- Paper and pens.



ACTIVITIES

1. Read the first verse of the poem with your child. Make it clear from the start that it has invented words in it, so they don't feel stressed by not understanding the vocabulary. Don't show them the image above yet – let them develop their own picture in their mind. We'll share it later. Just ask them to read the first verse and encourage them to speak the verse aloud in three ways – with different 'attitudes':

- As if it is a warning
- As if it is very exciting
- As if it is irritating

**'Twas brillig and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe.
All mimsy were the borogoves
And the mome raths outgrabe.**

Which one do they prefer? Whichever they choose is the 'mood' of the opening.

2. Let's explore one invented word at a time. Dictate the words and ask your child to write them down: see if your child's spellings correspond with the ones in the text. They may have remembered some and not others. There are different options for some of the words – for example 'toaves' or 'toves' would be logical, but not 'brilig' – why? (The short vowel sound in the 'i' suggests there are two consonants in the middle – think about filing and filling!) You can chat with your child about why they think a word is spelled a certain way. Now ask them to put the invented words into alphabetical order and leave a space between each – enough for a sentence or two. We're going to make a little dictionary to help us set the scene for this great adventure. Here are the words:

- Brillig
- Slithy
- Toves
- Gyre
- Gimble
- Wabe
- Mimsy
- Borogoves
- Mome
- Rath
- Outgrabe

3. Once they've done this and got them listed, ask them to identify if they think the word is a noun, a verb, an adjective or an adverb. Talk to them about where the clues are in the text. They'll have covered a lot of this in school already (and answers are listed below in case you want to check), but see if they can identify parts of speech when there is no 'context' for meaning. Try to make this playful and like a puzzle and discuss it together.

| Word | Explanation |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Brillig (adjective) | Brillig describes the 'it' in 'it was' which has been contracted to 'twas'. An adjective usually directly describes or modifies a noun. In this instance, 'it' is the noun. The 'it' could suggest weather, a mood or time of day/year. Your child can decide! |
| Slithy (adjective) | Describes the 'toves' – adjectives usually come directly before the noun like this, but not always – see 'brillig'. |
| Toves (noun, plural) | When there are words like the/a/an in front of a word, it suggests it's a noun. These words before nouns are called articles. The suffix 's' suggests there are more than one of them – i.e. a plural noun. |
| Gyre (verb) | The auxiliary verb 'did' suggests action. |
| Gimble (verb) | Another action because it's directly connected to the first action. |
| Wabe (noun) | Again we can tell it's a noun because of the presence of the article 'the'. In this context, because something is doing something IN the wabe, it suggests a place or environment or setting. (The word 'in' is a preposition – it helps you to understand where things are.) |
| Mimsy (adjective) | Here the adjective is before the verb (were) and not the noun, and because the verb is a form of 'to be' it suggests a description of the state of mind, mood or behaviour of the borogoves (the noun). |
| Borogoves (noun) | Again, there is an article and the 's' suggests there is more than one borogove in the story. |
| Mome (adjective) | Directly before the noun 'raths', it is clearly an adjective. |
| Raths (noun) | Another plural noun. |
| Outgrabe (verb) | Verbs usually come after the noun in a simple sentence or phrase, so it's reasonable to assume this is a verb. |

4. To recap: we know that there's a special atmosphere/mood/time in the word 'brillig', and that there are creatures called 'toves' doing two things or types of movement in something called a 'wabe'. Nearby there are creatures called 'borogoves' who are being 'mimsy', and also other creatures called 'raths' who are 'outgrabing'. As far as story settings go, there are lots of mysterious and perhaps dangerous creatures in this 'wabe' environment! Let's get our imaginations going.

5. Taking each word in turn, discuss with your child what they imagine each means. For example, one child said that they thought 'brillig' was "the kind of cold that creeps under your skin and makes you think something really bad is going to happen". What does your child think? Can they add to their list of words a definition that they think we might find in a 'fantasy' dictionary?

You might need to challenge them a little. Children will often default to cognates – other words that sound the same as the new word, so it's common to see children write 'slimy' for 'slithy'. You could say that if the poet had meant slimy, they would have written slimy, so what's particular about the word 'slithy'? Once they have their 'dictionary', they might want to rewrite the opening to the poem as if it is an opening to a story – i.e. in prose – with their own definitions. Or you could talk about this together. Either way, we now have our fantasy setting and can start to picture where we are.



6. If your child likes to draw/paint, they might enjoy creating an image of this place or one of the creatures in it. Once they've done theirs, show them the image at the start of this chapter. This is what an artist imagined the 'wabe' to be like when they read the first verse. The illustration below is another artist's idea of the creatures in the 'wabe'. Which of these creatures is which, do they think?

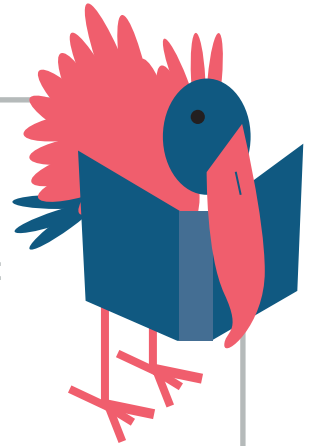
7. Now ask the question: “Does this seem like a safe kind of place to be?” Discuss with your child what they imagine might be the problems or dangers in such a place. Then tell them that someone is about to go in there and find out. Read out the following section and then leave your child to incubate this new information in their imaginations. We’ll find out more in the next verse.

Narration:

Some distance away, beyond the Forest of Fearsome Faces and protected by a ring of high, spiked, wooden fences, is a village. It is late at night. The only people awake are the watchers at their posts and an old man and a boy inside a small, modest home.

Look! We can see them in the lantern light through the window. The old man is speaking to the boy. He has his hands on his shoulders and is looking at him seriously. I wonder what he is saying?

I wonder why the village needs watchers.



2. A WARNING!

RESOURCES

- Pens and paper.
- Pencils – plain and coloured, or felt-tipped pens for drawing.



ACTIVITIES

1. Remind your child of where we left the story last time and then read the following verse together.

**"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"**

What is the relationship between the old man and the boy? Do the words 'my son' suggest a father talking to his son or an elder talking to a child? What is it to 'shun' something? Look the definition up together. It's clear that these creatures are dangerous. Discuss the following questions with your child.

- Why is the boy being warned in this way?
- Why would anyone leave the safety of their home and venture into danger?
- Ask your child to come up with a reason why a boy or young man might have to go and face these fearsome creatures. It's clear from the title of the poem that the most important of these is the Jabberwock. What reasons might explain why he has to tackle this creature in particular?
- Later in the poem we find out that the Jabberwock is described as a 'foe' or enemy. What might it have done in order to be viewed as an enemy of the village?

2. There is a theory that all the stories in the world fall into one of seven categories:

- a.** Overcoming the Monster (for example Jurassic Park)
- b.** Rags to Riches (for example Cinderella)
- c.** The Quest (for example Lord of the Rings or The Hobbit)
- d.** Voyage and Return (for example Alice in Wonderland)
- e.** Rebirth (for example Beauty and the Beast)
- f.** Comedy (for example The Simpsons)
- g.** Tragedy (for example Macbeth)

Which of these does your child think this story might be?

3. Your child can explore their ideas in any of the following ways:

- Write it as part of a story – perhaps adding this piece to the opening they created for the setting. This can grow and grow: they've done the setting (the where), now they can add the who and a little of the why. If they keep adding to their story, they'll have an epic by the end of this learning adventure!

2. A WARNING! continued

- Draw this moment (or perhaps illustrate their story). They could also start a comic-strip version of the tale and keep adding to it.
 - Write a diary entry for the boy as he prepares for his adventure.
 - Role play it with you – you being the old man and your child the boy. What would they say in return?
4. There are now three new dangerous creatures to explore – the Jabberwock with its jaws and claws, the Jubjub bird and the 'frumious' Bandersnatch. Each of them must have a habitat or lair. Now that we know we have a village, a forest and a 'wabe', as well as any other kind of place that such creatures might reside in, we can make a map of our story world.

Can your child create their own map of this story setting? On one piece of paper (A3 if you have it, but if not, A4 is fine) ask them to draw a map of the story in landscape. In the bottom left-hand corner they should put the village, which is probably near a fresh water source. (Why? – discuss). Then they can add the other environments and places we might find in this setting.

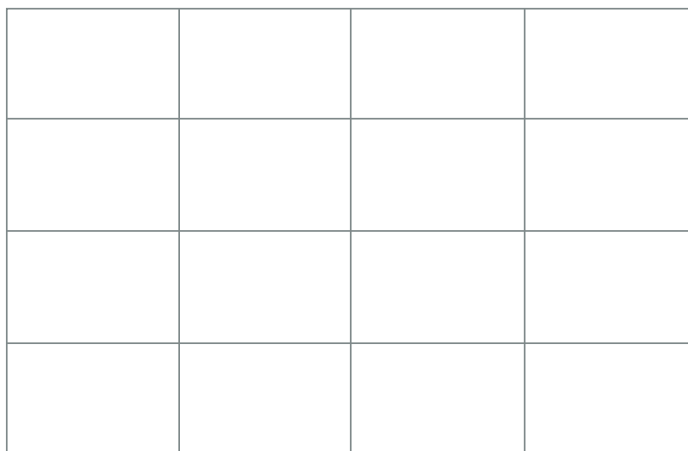


Remember we need:

- A village (left-hand bottom corner)
 - Water source
 - A forest
 - A 'wabe'
 - A Jubjub bird nest (in trees or mountains?)
 - The lair of a Bandersnatch (in swamps or caves?)
- The habitat of a Jabberwock (legend says they live far away in a forest of ancient Tumtum trees – this suggests there is more than one forest on our map)
 - Plus anything else they want to put in there

They might like to create a 'fantasy' map that looks exciting – like this one above from another book.

5. Once the map is drawn and labelled, fold it so you get a grid pattern like this. Alternatively, with a pencil and ruler you could lightly draw a grid pattern on the map. This will help us to be able to find our way.



Can your child label the map so that someone could find places using four figure grid references? (They will have learned about this at school, but in case they've forgotten, here's a **short guide** to both four and six figure grid references.)

Get them to write their Eastings (along) and Northings (up) on the map in numbers, imagining that the village in the bottom left-hand corner and in the first grid has the reference 3010. So what will the Eastings and Northings for the following grids be? (Let them work it out but they should end up with numbers across the bottom 30, 31, 32, 33 and upwards of 10, 11, 12 and 13). Now see if together you can find places, first of all by giving each other four figure grid references, and then seeing if you can narrow down the places to an exact location in the area with six figure grid references. (These can be estimated for now, rather than drawing lots of lines on the map). You can play with this some more by asking your child to put dots or crosses at reference points you give them (make them up but spread them out across the map). These could mark points of adventure in the boy's journey where something important happens. We'll come back to that later.

3. FEARSOME CREATURES

RESOURCES

- Pens and paper **or/and**
- A phone/device you can film on – depending on how tech-savvy your child is, they might want to make this into a little film project.

Sticking with the second verse for a while, we're going to find out some more about these fearsome creatures. This is a chance for your child to channel their inner David Attenborough.

**“Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!”**



ACTIVITIES

1. Watch **this clip from Blue Planet** and discuss with your child how Attenborough uses language to help us understand the scale of the blue whale. He uses similes and comparisons to help us, for example.
2. If it were possible to create a wildlife documentary film or script for the Jabberwock, the Jubjub bird or the Bandersnatch, what words might we use to describe them?

Ask your child to create a script for a wildlife presenter, describing the creature they've chosen. They might want to think about the following (and anything else they want to include):

- Its size and appearance
- How it moves, how it sounds
- Its habitat
- Its diet
- How it catches its prey
- How it reproduces
- Whether it is rare or endangered

3. FEARSOME CREATURES continued

Encourage them to use words like ‘predator’, ‘carnivore’, ‘habitat’ to sound professional, as well as more descriptive language to bring the creature to life.

3. They can either simply read out/enact the script (and you film them) or, if they love a bit of film making, they can go to town on it and create their own wildlife documentary clip of their chosen creature. They can edit in images they find online or their own drawings, act out the monster themselves and add their script as a voiceover. **This article** shares some good, free film-making and editing apps to get them started.

Don’t worry if this is all too much – a simple script read out in a suitably Attenborough-esque style is perfectly fine. It’s the quality of language that matters.

4. Now we have a better idea of what we’re dealing with, our hero can start to prepare for his journey. Discuss with your child what he might take with him. There are a couple of constraints – this is a ‘past’ fantasy time. There won’t be guns. What will he pack in his travelling bag or backpack? They can write a list or just talk this through with you. The hero will need his map of course!

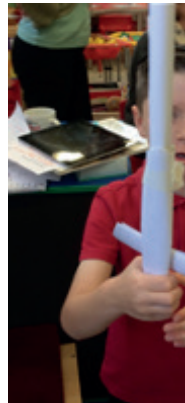
5. How does our hero feel as he sets off on this journey? Does he sneak off quietly without a fuss, or is the whole village there to say goodbye? Could your child write about the moment of departure and his first steps into the Forest of Fearsome Faces?



4. THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

RESOURCES

- Pen and paper.
- If your child wants to make their own 'vorpall' sword, they will need some materials – cardboard from used food packets perhaps, tinfoil etc. This little boy just made his from paper and tape.



Read the third verse with your child.

**He took his vorpal sword in hand;
Long time the manxome foe he sought –
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.**



ACTIVITIES

1. "He took his vorpal sword in hand"

Can your child design a vorpal sword? What do they think the word 'vorpal' means? It's another made-up word, so it can mean anything they like. What is special about this sword? If we think about myths and legends, heroes often get special weapons to help them. Your child could:

- Draw the sword.
- Write a 'scroll' that is kept with the sword, describing how it was made and who by.
- Create a language or set of symbols inscribed on the handle of the sword.
- Make the sword.
- Add to their story some details about the sword and how the boy acquired it, as he sets off on his journey.



2. “Long time the manxome foe he sought”

Manxome is another invented word. If it’s an adjective describing his enemy or foe, the Jabberwock, it’s not likely to be a flattering one. Can your child make up a meaning for this adjective? What does a Tumtum tree look like?

- 3.** How long do we think he has been gone? If this story has lasted a long time, he could have been gone for weeks, months or even years. What has happened to him in this time? Remember those marks we made on the map earlier? Here’s a chance for your child to go back to them and tell you some adventures, encounters or mishaps that our hero had in those places. You can talk about them, but ask your child to write one of them up in more detail. Depending on how much your child likes writing stories, they may spend a lot of time on this, creating chapters of the whole adventure. This is something they can do over time.

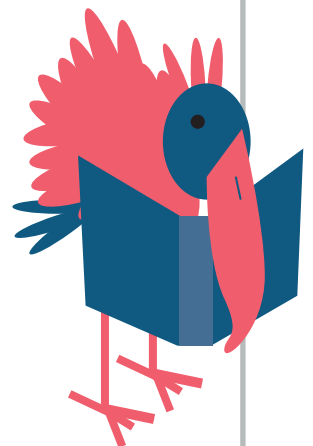
Narration:

As he leant against the tree, the boy looked at his hands. Where there had once been soft, child-like skin, there were now scars and patches roughened by weather, thorns, rocks and hardship. Where his belly had once been soft, it was now hard and muscular – firmed by climbing and walking, not to mention running for his life. Where his mind had once thought this would be a great adventure, it now worried that he might fail. Might return empty handed. While the Jubjub birds and Bandersnatches had been all too easy to find (or perhaps he had been the one easy to find), the Jabberwock had proven elusive. He was exhausted and felt despondent.

Was it time to admit defeat and return back to his people? It was an unbearable thought. Almost as unbearable as carrying on. Lost, deep in his uffish thoughts, he barely heard the wind change. Didn’t notice the small creatures hurrying to hide from what was about to come...

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.



4. Where is he now? Can we find the place on the map where he rested against a Tumtum tree and mark it, giving it a numbered grid reference? It's going to become a very important place – perhaps one that people talk about for centuries to come – the place where the boy slew the fearsome Jabberwock. What might it be called afterwards? Let your child name this place.
5. He can finally go home. But how will he carry the head? And what does the word 'galumphing' mean? Does it suggest he is riding an animal? If so, has he (like Perseus acquires Pegasus) found it, or tamed it on his journey? What kind of creature is it? Can your child draw this galumphing creature?
6. They might also like to add the battle and the journey home to their story.

5. A HOMECOMING

RESOURCES

- Pen and paper.
- Ingredients for a welcome feast. Obviously this will depend on what you have in and what your child wants to (or is able to) make.



ACTIVITIES

1.

**“And, has thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!”
He chortled in his joy.**

Read the verse above to your child and perhaps give them a hug, recreating the moment of reunion (if they'll let you!). Can they think of some words to describe how the old man is feeling, seeing the boy return?

2. How might the community respond to his success?

- Could they write a song to welcome him?
- A speech?
- Prepare special celebration food?

Let your child choose one or more of the tasks above and complete them. If they choose to cook, here are some Lord of the Rings biscuits from Pinterest to inspire them!



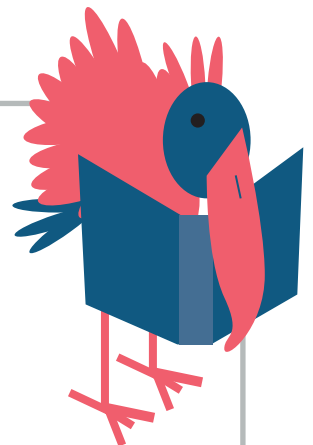
Narration:

The villagers threw the party of all parties for their hero. At the centre of it all, displayed for all to see, was the head of their old foe – the Jabberwock. People danced around the head and whooped. They spoke of putting it into a class cage, though some wanted to mount it on the wall for all to see.

The boy smiled and nodded as people patted him on the back. He ate the food, drank the drink, answered the questions. But he was tired. And he didn't like to see the head of the creature there, with people prodding it and laughing. It felt somehow disrespectful.

He wanted to wait until a moment when it would be polite to leave and just go home to sleep. In a bed – a real bed with a mattress filled with straw and feathers. What luxury. He stifled a yawn. How much longer before he could slip away?

He looked to the door with longing, and so was the only person to see it open slowly. He was the first to notice the stranger enter the room. His heart stopped as he saw the stranger's sword. The markings were unmistakeable. The Timbultious Forest Tribe!



- What does your child think about the way the people in the village hall are behaving? Do they agree with the boy that it seems disrespectful, or do they think it's fair enough – the Jabberwock was a monster, after all?
- Who do they think this stranger might be and what might he want? Tell your child that you will speak as the stranger, that he brings a message from his chief and they should listen carefully. Let's imagine this message is written on a scroll and is ceremoniously unrolled and read out in a firm, angry voice!

*From:
The Chief, Alrun the Great of The Timbultious Forest Tribe*

*To:
The chief and villagers of the Timiditus Lowlands Tribe*

It has come to our attention that a member of your tribe has crossed the boundary of the territory that has, for centuries, marked the separation of our two tribes. As such he is in breach of the Ancient Peace Settlement of 1428. In addition to this, the trespasser has done grievous harm to a creature that our tribe has long worshipped and who is sacred to our way of life. Indeed, we have reason to believe that the villain has slain our sacred and beloved Jabberwock.

Such an insult will not go unpunished. We hereby demand that the villain is handed over to us within 24 hours to face Timbultious justice – for a crime this heinous, nothing short of the death penalty will do. The villain will be sacrificed to the Jubjub bird forthwith.

Refusal to comply with this request will be viewed as an act of war and our vengeance on your people will be great.

Yours,

Alrun The Great and Terrible

- 3.** Take a moment to discuss this twist with your child. We have two lots of people here. The Timbultious Forest Tribe and the Timiditus Lowland People. Who sounds the strongest and most powerful, and why?
- 4.** Ask your child to take on the role of adviser to the chief of the Timiditus Lowland People. Perhaps he is the old man who sent the boy off and welcomed him home. What would your child advise in terms of a reaction? Should we:
 - a.** Hand him over
 - b.** Go to war
 - c.** Try to negotiate

If they try to persuade you to choose a) argue that you will not betray this boy who followed your own request at great personal cost. Ask them to think of another solution. If they try to persuade you to choose b) explain that the Timbultious tribe are much better armed and stronger than us. They have a reputation as fearsome warriors, which is why we live as far away from them and have as little to do with them as possible. Going to war would mean the certain destruction of your whole village and tribe. That leaves your child with option c) – to negotiate.

Ask them to write a letter to Alrun the Great and Terrible – a reply. What would they say that would try to explain the situation? Might they have to offer something in compensation?

- 5.** How does this story end? Your child can
 - Write it
 - Tell it
 - Draw it (as a cartoon strip)

MORE IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION

The story explores three key concepts:

- Conflict** The conflict between man and predator and between rival groups of people. Can your child think of examples in real life of both of these conflicts and how they impact on the world?
- Sacrifice** Personal sacrifice of the boy being prepared to put himself in danger, in order to save or assist others. Can your child think of people who make sacrifices for others in the real world?
- Beliefs** To one group of people the Jabberwock is sacred, but to another it is a threat. Can your child think of things in this world that some people see as sacred, but other people think are either dangerous or just ordinary?

Perhaps in the future, when you're watching news items with your child, if these concepts come up as an example, you could talk about them and remind yourselves of the story of the Jabberwock and our boy.

READING LIST

If your child enjoyed this adventure, they might really like fantasy and adventure books. So why not set them off with some of these tales of wonder and adventure?

Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll (the poem Jabberwocky comes from the next Alice in Wonderland book – **Through the Looking Glass**)

The Hobbit by J.R.R Tolkien

Aru Shah and the End of Time by Roshani Chokshi

The Chronicles of Prydain by Lloyd Alexander

The Neverending Story by Michael Ende

Howl's Moving Castle by Diana Wynne Jones

The Chronicles of Ancient Darkness (**Wolf Brother** and another six books)
by Michelle Paver

Artemis Fowl by Eoin Colfer