

Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking Glass

Q. Comment on Humpty Dumpty's narcissism and how Alice handles it?

⇒ "Humpty Dumpty" chapter serves as the structural centre of Alice's 12 chapter adventures behind the mirror. For in Humpty Dumpty Alice meets the reduction ad absurdum of circular narcissism. The spherical Humpty Dumpty, for one thing, believes himself master because he masters words. **

⇒ Completely egotistically unconscious of his imprisonment in a simple nursery-rhyme figure so infantile that he is literally an egg, a prenatal sphere that turns upon itself in a sort of permanent self-absorption, a throwback to the womb circularity of the rabbit hole and the amniotic pool of tears.

⇒ Humpty Dumpty represents the solipsism Alice repeatedly encounters and leaves behind in her accelerating rush toward self-consciousness.

⇒ Furthermore, Humpty and Dumpty's childish ignorance of the way human exchanges recognition of others and of meanings beyond willful: ... self-assertion makes him in both linguistic and developmental terms, a lonely and helpless figure, imprisoned by a ludicrously circular theoretical approach to the pragmatic question of human communication.

⇒ Humpty Dumpty's philosophy of naming demonstrates both the arbitrariness of language and the capacity of literature to convey meaning.

⇒ Humpty Dumpty's ideas about language will fall apart if multiple people adjust the meanings of words to suit their individual fancy. In this context, Humpty Dumpty's ideas are more appropriate. This extreme linguistic narcissism, this childish and unfounded sense of control over the world's signs and its meanings is so shocking to Alice that she wisely refrains from debating the question any longer.

⇒ Humpty Dumpty is so permanently sealed into his static self-absorption that to dispute his views would be like discussing with an infant the logic of its elemental desires.

Unsatisfactory Role Model

⇒ Alice's last remarks about her encounter with Humpty Dumpty sum up her reactions to the stage of development he represents and by extension her general reactions to the many other mirror figures of her looking-glass adventures: of all the unsatisfactory I ever met.

⇒ Conclusion Indeed, in terms of Alice's own development toward psychic integrity, Humpty Dumpty is an

an extremely unsatisfactory role model, trapped as he is in a self mirroring stage that can offer Alice no useful behavioural model to guide her in her drive toward the freedom and power of autonomous queenhood. The best, the most "satisfactory" example he offers is a negative one — an image of permanent imprisonment. In this context, Alice says: I do not want to be anybody's prisoner. I want to be a queen