ACTIVITY 1: Lost and Found in Transcription

Time to dig!

When you write down what your teacher says in class, or when you take notes from your textbooks, you transcribe information. Transcribing can help you keep a record of what you’ve heard or read, and it can also help you put information in your own words so you can understand it and remember it better. People who transcribe are called transcriptionists.

Scientists transcribe what they see into data that they can use to learn about the natural world. For example, ant researchers sometimes watch ants battle and write down how each ant behaves in battle. Researchers will write down each time an ant opens its jaws wide, bites, stings, or raises its bottom high in the air to warn others. By transcribing behaviors, researchers can take the events of ant battles back to their desks to measure and explore why ants fight.

People who transcribe documents like the Oxyrhynchus Papyri work with translators to read the Greek or Coptic text and write it in a language we can understand. Sometimes translators need to use context clues, or hints from the surrounding text, to help them decipher the meaning of certain words.
1865 illustration of the Jabberwock by artist John Tenniel
Let’s do some transcription and translation work. First, **read** Lewis Carroll’s nonsense poem, *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 hast 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.

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Many words in *Jabberwocky* are nonsense words that Lewis Carroll made up. **Underline** all the nonsense words you can find in the poem.
Now, use context clues to help decipher the meaning of a few nonsense words. See if you can match the nonsense word to its possible meaning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nonsense Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>frumious</td>
<td>flimsy, yet menacing!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slithy</td>
<td>Hooray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callay</td>
<td>on the warpath</td>
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<tr>
<td>beamish</td>
<td>the sound a sword makes when it cuts something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mimsy</td>
<td>bright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>snicker-snack</td>
<td>quivering, nimble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frabjous</td>
<td>smooth and active</td>
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<tr>
<td>gimble</td>
<td>so fabulous it makes someone happy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

I’ve got my markcil ready to match these up! Nice word engineering!
Write down five events that happened in *Jabberwocky*:

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**FUN FACT!** Lewis Carroll wanted to write down ideas that came to him in the night, so he invented the *nyctograph* tool to write his thoughts in code in the dark. (Even his name was a code: His real name was Charles Dodgson!)
Make up three nonsense words of your own!
Write your new words and their definitions here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>my word</th>
<th>definition</th>
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Write a short story or a poem using your new words!

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Try reading it out loud for a parent or a friend!
Transcribe *Jabberwocky* by writing the poem’s events in your own words as if it were a story.

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How do brave ancient Egyptians write?

How?

With HERO-glyphics!
How did transcribing the poem change the events of the poem?

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Callooh! Callay!

Lewis Carroll was more than a children’s book author. He was a mathematician, inventor, philosopher, and photographer.
What remains the same?
MEET Jennifer E. Gates-Foster, Ph.D.
Archaeologist,
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

What's the coolest part of your job?
Two major perks are traveling to foreign countries and learning how people lived thousands of years ago! The people I work with—geologists, topographers, engineers, artists—each bring something amazing to our research team.

What's one of your favorite projects?
The excavation of a large fortification in Egypt called B’ir Samut. This enormous building was built in the third century BCE to provide shelter and water for travelers and elephant hunters in the Eastern Desert of Egypt between the Red Sea and the Nile River valley. It was extraordinarily well-preserved, and we found lots of evidence for the lives of people during that time, including their letters, cooking pots, shoes, and the remains of their dinner!

What's something you wish you'd known about archaeology when you were a kid?
I wish I had known that archaeology wasn’t all about chasing bad guys and stealing things from tombs. The truth is much cooler and more important. Archaeology shows us where we come from and helps us understand how people just like us lived long ago.