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THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

CHAPTER 11 SUMMARY

Dischord and Dynne

- Milo gets up at the perfect time to wake Chroma.
- But he's so tempted by Chroma's job – it looks so cool – that he decides to have a go at it.
- Things start off well, but conducting the sunrise is much harder than it looks. Things get out of control very quickly, and a whole week rushes by, full of all the wrong colors. Oops!
- The chaos stops only when Milo stops conducting out of total exhaustion.
- Chroma wakes up and starts a new day like nothing happened. And actually, nobody really knows except for Milo and the orchestra. Phew: crisis averted.
- With that, Milo, Tock, and the Humbug have to be on their way. When they're saying goodbye, Alec gives Milo a special telescope, which will help him to see things better.
- The three friends then drive quickly away. The road they find is much steeper and more difficult than previous ones. Uh oh.
- Soon they come to a "carnival wagon" (11.29) that is decorated to advertise the business of Kakofonous A. Dischord, Doctor of Dissonance. (That's quite a mouthful!)
- Milo wants to ask the doctor some questions about the route, but the person who greets them has his own agenda.
- He asks a bunch of questions about strange noises they might have heard. But neither Milo, Tock, nor the Humbug has ever heard them.
- The three travelers go into the wagon as the doctor keeps asking questions. They're all kind of freaked out but don't want to let their feelings show.
- Dr. Dischord examines the three of them and says they need more noise in their lives. He begins concocting a mysterious potion that will "cure" their sickness. As he mixes it, he tells the three travelers about his business. He works on making noise and harsh sounds, rather than soft or nice ones. Interesting profession, that's for sure.





- When Dr. Dischord explains what his cure will do – make sure the three hear bad things, not good ones – the travelers all refuse it. Good call, guys.
- So, Dr. Dischord says he'll give it to the DYNNE, genie-like thing that appears from a bottle and is composed entirely of smoke.
- Dr. Dischord tells the DYNNE's sad backstory: turns out, the DYNNE is responsible for most of the noise in the world.
- A joke the Humbug makes upsets the DYNNE, who cries. Then he weeps some more at the fact that none of the three travelers seem to respect noise in the way that he and the doctor do.
- Dr. Dischord cheers up the DYNNE by reminding him of all the important ways noise works in the world. Then, he tells the travelers they should get going: the DYNNE has his own path to travel for the day.
- When the doctor and DYNNE find out where Milo, Tock, and the Humbug are going, they freak out: it's dangerous and frightening, they say. In order to get to Digitopolis, these three will have to "pass through the Valley of Sound" (11.99). For whatever reason, Dr. Dischord and DYNNE are totally scared of this place.

HE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH CHAPTER 12 SUMMARY

The Silent Valley

- Milo, Tock, and the Humbug have gathered their courage and driven away from Dr. Dischord.
- They know that they're about to get to the Valley of Sound, which should scare them, but so far things don't seem that bad. Deep breath.
- After a few minutes, though, they figure out the problem. They've entered an area where there *aren't* any sounds.
- They try to talk, but nothing happens. Their car doesn't make any noise, nor does the outside world. This is like a bad dream!
- But they keep going and end up finding some people who have figured out how to communicate without sound. They use signs to show the three visitors what the problem is.
- Here's the story: their leader, the Soundkeeper, took sound away from them.





- They used to have all kinds of sounds, but didn't treat these sounds with enough respect. People paid less attention to good sounds and more attention to bad ones.
- Eventually, Dr. Dischord and the DYNNE showed up, but they only made things worse instead of better.
- So, the Soundkeeper kicked Dischord and DYNNE out, and then took all the sounds away. That means that the people who live in the Valley live in constant silence.
- The people ask Milo for some help. If he can go into the Soundkeeper's fortress and bring out just one little noise, they will be able to win back the rest.
- Milo's up for the challenge, so he goes into the fortress to meet the Soundkeeper. Immediately, he feels better, because within the fortress there are sounds. He's happy to be back somewhere more normal.
- The Soundkeeper's a pretty weird lady. She values silence as much as the people outside her fortress are tired of it. At least, she says she does.
- She helps Milo explore the collection of sounds in the fortress, explaining where sounds come from and how they are recorded for all time. She says that the sounds are saved in the fortress for the good of the world. They are all automatically categorized and put in order.
- She explains what sounds look like. For example, each time you clap your hands you produce a piece of paper. Each of the sounds turns into a tiny object.
- Milo thinks of various ways to take a sound outside the vault – like asking for one straight up, or trying to hide one in his pockets. But the Soundkeeper is wise to his ways and she doesn't let it happen.
- At the end of their meeting, Milo asks why the Soundkeeper hides all the sounds. She says that she doesn't want to let them out because she can't control how they'll be used.
- Milo is about to argue with her some more, but he stops: he realizes that he's holding the sound of the next word he was going to speak ("but") in his mouth.
- He keeps his mouth shut and leaves.

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH CHAPTER 13 SUMMARY

Unfortunate Conclusions

- Milo doesn't have much time: as soon as he talks, he'll lose his stolen word.



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- So he races back to the others. He writes down what he's done, and the people of the Silent Valley get ready to use his word as their weapon. They set up a big cannon, and Milo says his word into it.
- Then, the Silent people fire their cannon at the Soundkeeper's fortress.
- The "but" looks small, but as soon as it hits the fortress it does the trick. The fortress sort of explodes, and all the forbidden sounds come out at once.
- For a while, as you might think, it's a complete cacophony (a mess of unmatching sounds). But the cacophony fades away remarkably quickly, and the citizens reabsorb their old sounds with what seems like no problem.
- Then they all go about their own business. Man, everything happens really quickly in this book, huh?
- Milo, Tock, the Humbug, and the Soundkeeper are left behind. The Soundkeeper is super sad, and the other three can't console her.
- What cheers her up is the appearance of the DYNNE, who has gathered up some of the leftover noises. He doesn't think they're useful, because they aren't unpleasant, but the Soundkeeper is so happy to have them back.
- She tries to give the DYNNE a present of nice sounds as a token of her thanks, but this freaks him out and he leaves (he only likes bad sounds, remember?).
- It turns out the Soundkeeper *also* wishes Rhyme and Reason would come back. Everyone's on board, huh? She wants to help Milo in the quest, too, and so she gives him a little box of different sounds.
- Then, she tells them which way to go to get to Digitopolis.
- But the characters aren't so lucky as to get to their destination right away. While they're going along in their car, each of them makes a claim that isn't based in fact. As soon as they do, they vanish and reappear on an island in the middle of the Sea of Knowledge. This should be interesting.
- On the island, they meet a man who says he doesn't know his own identity. The three want him to tell them where they all are, but he wants *them* to tell him who he is. He just keeps saying the things he "can be," so the other three decide his name is "Canby." Easy as pie.
- In turn, Canby says that this island is called Conclusions and they have all "jumped" (13.54) there. (Take a second to bask in the glory of this play on words.)
- Canby says that people get to the island all too easily: it's leaving the island that's hard. And, in fact, the island is terribly crowded.
- To leave, Canby says, they have to swim back to land.





- Milo and Tock force the Humbug to gear up for it, and the three of them sludge through the sea back to land. They've all learned a lesson from it (no more jumping to conclusions!). They get in the car and are off on their way again.

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CHAPTER 14 SUMMARY

The Dodecahedron Leads the Way

- The three travelers – Milo, Tock, and the Humbug – pass a road sign to Digitopolis. They're headed in the right direction!
- The sign starts with the distance in miles and then goes down in increments all the way to half inches.
- There are all kinds of ways to measure the distance to Digitopolis, and the travelers can't agree on which measurement they should use.
- Someone shows up to help them: the Dodecahedron.
- He's called the Dodecahedron because he *is* one. He has "twelve faces" (14.14). (A dodecahedron is a three dimensional thing with twelve flat sides).
- The Dodecahedron explains some of Digitopolis' philosophies to the travelers, particularly Milo. Then he says he'll hop in their car with them and guide them, but only after forcing them to do a little math. (They're trying to figure out how long it will take for them to get from where they are to Digitopolis itself.)
- Their new guide also tells them where numbers come from. They're like jewels buried deep in the earth, and they have to be brought out through a mining process.
- To prove it, the Dodecahedron takes Milo, Tock, and the Humbug into a mine.
- Here, they soon meet the Mathemagician, who helps further explain the numbers-focused philosophy of the realm. Here, numbers are more important than words. (In case you hadn't noticed.)
- The miners think numbers are the most special things of all. Even though their mine produces what we humans would think of as very valuable objects, like precious stones, the people of Digitopolis don't see the value in them. They only see the value of the numbers.
- In fact, the Mathemagician dismisses a huge pile of precious stones like they're trash. Instead, he turns his attention to something far more important: lunch.





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CHAPTER 15 SUMMARY

This Way to Infinity

- The characters all have lunch inside the mine.
- Milo, Tock, and the Humbug are all super-hungry. So when they're done with their soup they have seconds – and then thirds, and so on.
- The more they eat, the more they want to eat.
- When the soup is taken away, they're even hungrier than they were to start with.
- The Mathemagician explains that in Digitopolis, people only eat when they're full. It's the opposite of what Milo and the other two are used to. Once again, we have to look at things a little differently.
- All the details about the way people in Digitopolis eat are really an excuse for a math lesson about negative numbers and zeros. We're onto you, Mathy.
- Then, the Mathemagician helps them magically travel to his office, which he does by erasing everything with his magic wand (which is an enormous pencil).
- Surprise surprise, The Mathemagician uses his wand to do more magic/math.
- Then Milo has a few questions. He tries to ask what the biggest number ever is, but has a hard time explaining what he means. Tock steps in.
- The Mathemagician answers that however large a number Milo can think of, there's always going to be one that's even bigger. The same is true for the tiniest number ever. There will always be one that's tinier – and on and on into infinity.
- In fact, Infinity is a place, and the Mathemagician tells Milo how to get there. He can follow a line or go up some stairs.
- Milo is too curious to resist, so he tries out the stairs, just to get a taste of Infinity.

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CHAPTER 16 SUMMARY

A Very Dirty Bird



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- Milo climbs and climbs. But the higher he goes the more it seems like there's more to go. (We all know that feeling!)
- Just as he's getting totally worn out, he runs into another little boy. The boy is only partly there, though. That is, he's only there on one side.
- The boy explains he's ".58" of a child. Then he tells Milo about the importance of fractions and percents – he's like the poster child of an "average" (16.14).
- Milo's confused by their conversation (so is Shmoop) and feels more ignorant than ever.
- The little boy tries to give Milo advice about learning, and Milo decides to return to his friends – and abandon the idea of trying to reach Infinity. Good call.
- When he gets back to the others, he complains to the Mathemagician about how thinking is tough and how finding the right answer can be so hard.
- This is the perfect opening for the Mathemagician to talk about how much Rhyme and Reason are missed.
- The Mathemagician blames his brother, King Azaz, for this. He tells Milo about how hard it is for the two brothers to communicate.
- The travelers try to get the Mathemagician's approval to rescue the princesses, but he says he can't give it because Azaz agreed to it already (and he sure can't agree with his brother).
- Milo uses logic to fool the Mathemagician into giving approval.
- The Mathemagician lets them go, but with two warnings. One is about the demons that will attack them once they get closer to the princesses. The other, he says, he can only reveal once they get back.
- The Dodecahedron shows up and hands Milo the important presents that he (Milo) has collected along the way. The Mathemagician also contributes a gift: a magic wand that looks just like his, only smaller.
- To keep going, Milo, Tock, and the Humbug have to proceed on foot. So they do. They say goodbye to the Mathemagician and the Dodecahedron and plunge right into the dangerous nearby mountains, leaving Wisdom and moving into Ignorance.
- The farther they go, the more depressing it is.
- When they've made it pretty far, and decide to rest for the night, they run into a mean and talkative bird. Every time they try to talk to it, the bird twists all of their words around. They can't even finish a sentence without it interrupting them and shifting their meaning.
- The bird says he's named the Everpresent Wordsnatcher, and that he's from Context.





- Milo accidentally hurts the bird's feelings when he asks if it's a demon (answer: no), and so it takes off.
- The three others keep going, and soon they meet a nice-looking man. He's wearing snappy clothes but has no features in his face. The man is super-nice to them and asks if they'll do him a favor.
- Milo, Tock, and the Humbug are happy to oblige. Maybe they were too kind: the man gives each of them a painstaking, time-consuming task.
- The three get started on their tasks and then just keep going... and going...

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CHAPTER 17 SUMMARY

Unwelcoming Committee

- Eventually, the three workers – Milo, Tock, and the Humbug – realize that they've been working for what seems like forever and, well, nothing's happened.
- Tock tells Milo to use the wand the Mathemagician gave him to determine how long their tasks will take.
- Milo does some quick thinking and realizes that it will take hundreds of years. That's no good.
- When he questions the man about it, the man tells them that they should do "unimportant things" (17.14) instead of important ones. It sounds like he's made that his life's work.
- Milo realizes the nice-seeming man is actually a horrible demon: the Terrible Trivium.
- The three travelers feel trapped.
- Things get worse and worse as the Trivium tells them more of his philosophy and it seems like they will never be able to escape.
- Then they hear a voice yelling for them to get out. Each of them thinks it's one of the others – oops – and they all obey.
- They run and run... and run. Trivium is chasing them, but they leave him behind when they start pushing through something that feels like quicksand.
- All three of them continue to follow the bodiless voice and then – ouch! – they all fall down into a huge hole.





- From there, they hear the voice threatening them. The voice describes itself as a terrible and scary demon, but Milo uses one of the presents he was given – the telescope – to take a good look at it.
- Milo figures out that the huge demon is just a tiny little thing: he's not scared of no tiny demon.
- The demon presents himself as "the demon of insincerity" (17.43), and he's so upset by being discovered for what he really is that he leaves crying.
- Milo, Tock, and the Humbug work together to climb out of the pit. It takes quite a while, but they manage it in the end.
- At that point, the Humbug takes the lead and, well, he walks them right into the hand of a giant.
- The giant is clearly about to eat them, so Milo tries to keep himself and his friends alive by starting a conversation with the guy. After all, as long as the giant's talking, he can't eat them. Smart move, Milo.
- The more they talk, the weirder the giant starts to feel. It turns out that he doesn't like thoughts.
- Milo shows him the box of words from King Azaz. Just the thought of them makes the giant sick, and he releases his prisoners.
- Unfortunately, as soon as he does this, he goes and tells all the other demons about Milo, Tock, and the Humbug. Different types of demons emerge from all over, and they all start coming toward the three travelers.
- Our three friends have no choice but to make a run for it.

THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH CHAPTER 18 SUMMARY

Castle in the Air

- Milo, Tock, and the Humbug go up the mountain as fast as they can. Meanwhile, the demons are following them.
- At last, they find the Castle in the Air, but a man sitting in front of the entrance makes them stop.
- The man, who introduces himself as the Senses Taker (like a census taker... how about that?), asks them a bunch of questions and says they have to answer them all



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before they can get through. As soon as they've finished, he asks a bunch more questions. Come on, dude!

- Even though the demons are getting closer, the man insists that these three travelers answer his questions.
- Finally they finish, but the guard tries to discourage them from going in the Castle. Instead, he provides each of them with the fantasy they'd like best.
- Milo, Tock, and the Humbug are each mesmerized by their own fantasy, and they forget all about the danger they're in. (Hmm, it seems like the Senses Taker has taken their senses!) Meanwhile, the demons get even closer.
- In the end, being distracted is what saves them. Milo is so into his fantasy that he can't even hold on to the gifts he was carrying. When he drops them, the box the Soundkeeper gave him falls apart and all the little sounds come out. They're enough of a new distraction that all the Senses Taker's fantasies fade away.
- The Senses Taker still seems pretty scary and says that the only way they will be able to defend themselves against him, ultimately, is by laughing. Laughing?
- Well, the other demons are about to overtake them, and the Humbug, Tock, and Milo run over the Senses Taker in their haste to climb the last stairs to the Castle in the Air.
- The stairs are scary, but they prevail, and make it to the Castle at last. Whew.
- Two beautiful women welcome the travelers. Milo recognizes them: Rhyme and Reason.
- The travelers explain their mission, and the princesses say they should take a few minutes to relax before they try to battle their way out of the castle.
- Milo has some private time with the princesses, who give him some wise ideas about how to approach education – and life, really. They say he shouldn't be afraid of not being right all the time.
- Their conversation is interrupted, though, when all the demons attack the castle from below and separate it from the stairs. The castle starts floating away.
- So the good guys smartly decide it's time to be on their way.
- Because "time flies" (18.72), Tock is able to fly through the air, and all the others grasp on to him.
- They abandon the castle and head for home.





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CHAPTER 19 SUMMARY

The Return of Rhyme and Reason

- Tock can't keep them all in the air for too long, but he manages to get them past the demons – at least, temporarily.
- He, the Humbug, Milo, Rhyme, and Reason hit the ground and keep moving. Rhyme and Reason get to ride on Tock (which tells you how big of a dog he is), while Milo and the Humbug have to fend for themselves.
- The demons are right behind them, and there are a bunch of creepy ones that our heroes are just now seeing for the first time: the Triple Demons of Compromise, the Horrible Hopping Hindsight, the Gorgons of Hate and Malice, the Overbearing Know-it-All, the Gross Exaggeration, and the Threadbare Excuse.
- The heroes get closer and closer to the border between Wisdom and Ignorance (when they get to Wisdom they'll be safe), but the demons are catching up to them. The Giant and the Trivium are following them, along with another one called the Dilemma.
- The demons are about to swallow the heroes alive, when saviors emerge. In the nick of time, a huge army from Wisdom appears. All the people and things Milo encountered along the way are represented, with King Azaz and the Mathemagician in the lead.
- After seeing the army, all the demons give up and retreat. Victory!
- King Azaz's cabinet comes forward and congratulates the returning heroes. Rhyme and Reason are welcomed home, and their rescuers are praised.
- To celebrate, they all begin three days of partying. It starts with a huge parade.
- During the parade, the travelers are horrified to learn that the one thing that neither King Azaz nor the Mathemagician wanted to say was that their quest was "completely impossible" (19.54). It's only because they didn't *know* it was impossible that they could attempt it. How about that?
- At a neutral point in Wisdom, the parade halts for the three days of partying. All the (nice) characters we met during the book show up to jam. There's eating and drinking and speeches.
- King Azaz and the Mathemagician seem like they've really made up.





- The princesses tell Milo he has to be on his way: it's sad but true. He has to say goodbye to everyone, even Tock and the Humbug.
- Milo gets his car back, and he takes off. As he's leaving, he hears the Mathemagician and King Azaz start to squabble once again over language and math. Oh my.

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CHAPTER 20 SUMMARY

Good-by and Hello

- Milo drives home. On his way, he realizes that that he's been gone for ages, which is probably not so cool with his parents.
- Yet, by the time he gets home, he discovers that it's only been a few hours back in human time. He hasn't even missed dinner.
- He's wiped out, so he eats and goes straight to bed.
- After school the next day, he's really excited to go home, go through the Tollbooth, and start another adventure.
- But the Tollbooth's gone. All that's left is a little note, which says he doesn't need the Tollbooth anymore. It says that he now has the power to make his own adventures.
- At first, Milo is really upset: he won't ever get see the friends he made in the Lands Beyond. But he's more excited to be in his own world than he ever was before.
- This guy is ready to make his *own* adventures.



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