

College Guild

PO Box 696, Brunswick, Maine 04011

Logic, Puzzles, and Games

Unit 2 of 6

Riddle Me This

Welcome back to Logic, Puzzles, and Games.

Daily conversations are filled with small talk, current events, instructions, humor, and arguments. Once in a while someone will pass on a riddle that they have heard or created. This mental challenge offers a low stakes opportunity to impress others with our wit and thought. Just as there is an art to telling a joke and sharing a story, riddle-telling requires an awareness of your audience, and patience to make the most of the social engagement. When an appetite for riddles is established and appreciated, they can provide the basis of entertainment for days on end. In Riddle Me This you will learn about how best to engage in riddles and be put to the test yourself. Keep in mind that a good riddle shouldn't be easy to solve, and sometimes will feel impossible. The joy of the journey to arrive at an answer can be just as good as feeling when you reach the solution. We hope the fun outweighs the frustrations; you can do it!

Glossary of Terms: In order of appearance

Conundrum- A confusing riddle that is built on a crafty way to hide the solution in a playful way.

Personify- To give something non-human a human characteristic.

Enigma- A puzzle whose solution requires dissecting given information, which on the surface seems insufficient.

Rebus- A visual puzzle where letters, numbers, words, and pictures spell out a hidden word or quote.

The Art of Telling a Riddle

The way you deliver a riddle is just as important to its success as the riddle itself. The conversations that follow will highlight some of the key things to keep in mind when you want to present a riddle in the most effective way. This extends beyond just good riddle-telling, it's about being a skilful communicator.

Conversation A:

Lewis: "Hey I heard this great riddle the other day, do you want to hear it?"

Clark: "Nah, I'm busy."

Lewis: "Well I'll tell it to you anyway, it's a good one. A man runs off in a hurry away from home. They make three left hand turns and return home where there are two masked men waiting for him. Who are the men?"

Clark: "I don't know?"

Lewis: "Come on, guess."

Clark: "I said, I don't know!"

Lewis: "Give up? Well I'll tell you, it's the catcher and umpire."

Clark: "Oh."

1. Do you think Lewis made a mistake by sharing his riddle, or was it good to challenge Clark anyway? Explain.



The Riddler Says: If you want to riddle with success choose the proper level of difficulty for your audience. I have heard riddles with such ridiculous solutions that no one could possibly answer them. If you want people to enjoy your riddles and continue riddling, then be picky about the ones you share.

Conversation B:

Mack: "Hey I heard this great riddle the other day, do you want to hear it?"

Andre: "Sure, I love riddles."

Mack: "I have one eye, but cannot see. You run inside when you see me. What am I?"

Andre: "I don't know?"

Mack: "It's a hurricane, get it?"

Andre: "Oh yeah, that's a good one."

2. If you were Mack, what could you have said instead of just telling the answer to Andre to make the riddle more enjoyable? Explain.



The Riddler Says: Be sure your riddle is appropriate for the generation you are asking it to. For example, phrases like "kick the bucket" might not be understood by younger people and the term "Gooci" might not be understood by older people.

Conversation C:

Jose: "Hey guys, I heard this great riddle the other day, do you want to hear it?"

Mike: "Sure, I love riddles"

Chris: "Me too."

Jose: "What gets wetter the more it dries?"

Mike: "I heard this one before, it's a towel."

Jose: "Yep, you got it."

3. What could have Jose said before he told the riddle to Mike and Chris that would have made the riddle more fun for Chris? Was Mike being impolite to quickly answer the riddle?



The Riddler Says: Just like telling a successful joke requires a good delivery, a riddle often must be worded correctly. Challenge yourself to memorize your riddle sufficiently. By doing this you also build up your skill as a public speaker. There is nothing wrong of course if you need to read your riddle off a piece of paper.

Conversation D: (transcribed from the television sit-com It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia)

Dennis: "Here's a riddle. The more you have of it, the less you see. What is it?"

Charlie: "Cantaloupes."

Dennis: "What?"

Charlie: "Cantaloupes is your answer. Because if you are holding a pile of cantaloupes, you're not going to see very much, especially if it goes past your face."

Dennis: "No, that's not the answer!" (Growing angry)

Charlie: "Are you telling me you can see through a pile of cantaloupes?"

Dennis: "No,(Growing even more angry) that's not the answer to the riddle! The answer to the riddle is darkness. The more you have of it, the less you see!"



4. Replace Dennis's reaction to Charlie's answer with something that could have made for a much more interesting and polite interaction.



The Riddler Says: Some riddles, in fact some of the best ones, include guessing by the participants. You can engage back and forth with them releasing hints as necessary. Why rush? You could even tell a riddle and have someone think about it until the next time you see them.

5. Summarize what you have learned from these opening questions about telling a successful riddle. Please include any advice that you believe was not mentioned in this unit.

Types of Riddles

"It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma." -Winston Churchill, 1939

Now is the moment we hope you have been waiting for, an opportunity to sink your teeth into some juicy brainteasers. The three opening riddles will introduce you to three different categories of riddles. The solutions will be revealed later in the unit so no peeking!

6. I have hands that wave at you but I never say goodbye. It is cool for you to hang out with me, especially when I say "HI". What am I?

7. How can an ordinary bucket that is filled with water be turned upside down and never spill any water?

8. What common phrase is represented by this picture?



9. How did you feel when solving the three starter riddles? Did you have any positive or negative thoughts? Did your emotions help or hurt your ability to solve them?

Conundrums

Back in question 6, you were given our first variety of riddle called a **conundrum**. It is a playful riddle with clever wording that teases the solver and disguises the solution. Let's break down the riddle together. You might have been a little suspicious of several words in the riddle.

I have hands that wave at you but I never say goodbye. It is cool for you to hang out with me, especially when I say "HI". What am I?

The choice of using the words hands, say, and HI are all designed to throw the solver off the path to the answer. The wording may first make you think it is a person, but then there is a realization that the solution is a thing that has been **personified**, made to sound human. To solve a conundrum one must examine each word or phrase to uncover the mystery. You might have thought something like this while solving it: "Things can't say goodbye; things can't talk. What sorts of things have hands? Some clocks have hands, but why is it cool to be with a clock? What other things have hands, and why was the word HI written with capital letters and with quotes around it?" I sure hope you liked this riddle; I am a big FAN!

The following is an ancient conundrum from a story written in the 5th century BC. A Greek scholar named Sophocles wrote the tragedy called, "Oedipus Tyrannus," also known as, "Oedipus the King." In the tale, a prophecy predicts that Oedipus will kill his father and marry his mother. Despite all attempts to avoid such an awful fate, he ends up fulfilling a destiny that ultimately crushes him. One of the brighter moments of this play is when Oedipus is traveling to the city of Thebes, where a large beast called a sphinx stands guard. You may be familiar with the Sphinx at the Giza monument in Egypt, which sits amongst the great pyramids. The creature in this story is quite similar. She has the face of a woman and the body of a lion, and would eat anyone who wanted entrance to the city who could not answer one of her many riddles. Oedipus successfully answers the riddle of the Sphinx. Apparently the beast is so accustomed to winning that she kills herself over the loss. What a sore loser! Now see how you match wits with the sphinx's conundrum, which is commonly referred to as "The Riddle of the Sphinx":



10. "What is that which in the morning goeth upon four legs, upon two feet in the afternoon, and in the evening upon three?" To extend the question a bit more, how does the wording on this riddle classify the Sphinx riddle as a conundrum?

Riddles in the Dark is the fifth chapter in the novel *The Hobbit*. In the book, our hero, Bilbo Baggins, faces off in a battle of wits against his rival, an odd creature named Gollum. Perhaps the author J.R.R. Tolkien was inspired by Sophocles' work. The stakes in the book are very high, just as they were for Oedipus. If Bilbo wins the riddle battle he is promised safe passage out of the mountain. If Gollum bests him, he will get to eat Bilbo! Riddle solving can be best enjoyed with others to riddle beside. Unless of course, if the other one might have you for lunch. Gulp!

11. Choose at least one of the nine following riddles from Gollum's cave and write down your answer to them.

- a. What has roots that nobody sees, Is taller than trees, up, up it goes, and yet it never grows?
- b. Thirty white horses on a red hill, first they champ, then they stamp, then they stand still.

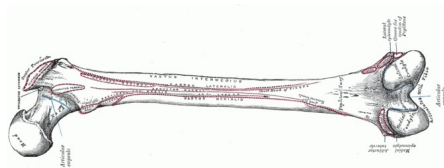
- c. Voiceless it cries, wingless flutters, toothless bites, mouthless mutters.
- d. An eye in a blue face, Saw an eye in a green face, "That eye is like to this eye," Said the first eye, "but in a low place, Not in a high place."
- e. It cannot be seen, cannot be felt, cannot be heard, cannot be smelt. It lies beneath stars and under hills, and empty holes it fills. It comes first and follows after, ends life, kills laughter.
- f. A box without hinges, key, or lid, yet golden treasure inside is hid.
- g. Alive without breath, as cold as death; never thirsty, ever drinking, all in mail never clinking.
- h. No legs, lay on one-leg, two-legs sat near on three-legs, four-legs got some.
- i. This thing all things devours: birds, beasts, trees, flowers; gnaws iron, bites steel: slays king, ruins town, and beats high mountains down.

Enigmas

The riddle about the bucket in question 7 had less to do with clever wording and more to do with unraveling a mystery. Was the bucket full of ice? Perhaps not since the riddle specifically says water. Does the bucket have a lid? Well buckets don't have lids. So I suppose that isn't the answer either. Is the bucket in an unexpected place, like in a swimming pool? Yes, that's it! These types of riddles are typically referred to as **enigmas**, puzzles that have everything we need to solve it laid before us, but they contain a deeper level of understanding to crack it. Word problems in math class are examples of enigmas. The student aims to arrive at the answer by filtering through all the given bits of information, organizing these facts, and applying a technique to solve it. Here are a few other examples of enigmas for you to chew on. So if you are ready to think, then into these mysteries you sink.

12. A crowd of people gathered on a beautiful day to see the launching of a new ship. As the ship pulled away from the dock it began to sink until it disappeared. No one in the crowd was worried about this, instead they were happy and cheered. Why?

13. A nurse is tutoring a student who is studying to become a doctor. The nurse holds up a model of a femur bone and hands it to the student and asks, "What is this bone, and how many of them do you have?" The student smiles and says, "This is a thigh bone and I have five of them?" The nurse quickly corrects the student. "Well you are right about the kind of bone, but you only have two of them; it is the largest bone in the body and you have one in each leg." The student explains to the nurse that they do in fact have five of these bones, and the nurse begins to cry. What made them cry?



Rebuses

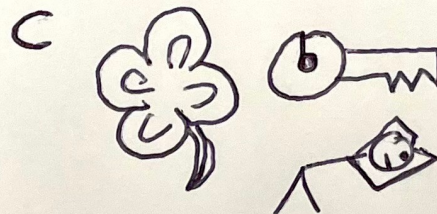
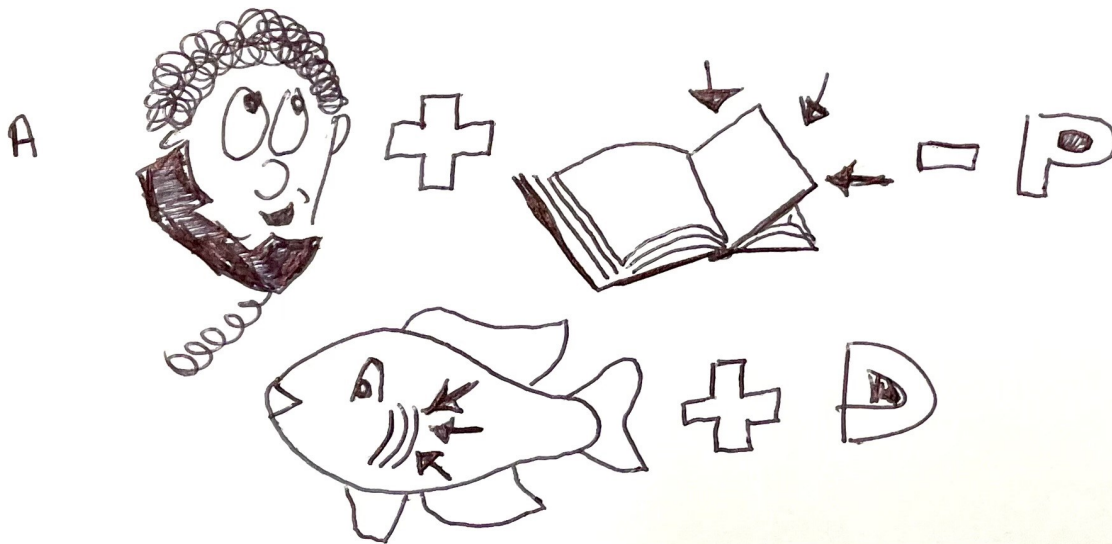
Going back to the riddle in question 8 with the clock and “most” of the alphabet is another kind, one with a visual element. In particular it is an example of a riddle called a **rebus**. A rebus contains pictures and or letters that contribute to assembling a solution, typically a word or common phrase, such as, “Long Time No C.”. From 1987-1991, a television game show called Classic Concentration featured rebuses that were slowly revealed and the contestants took turns guessing. Below are a few examples of the types of puzzles they’d solve on the show. Let’s play!

14. Solve each of these character only rebus riddles

- a. BLOOD WATER b. Mil1lion c. ROOD d. Ban Nana

- e. Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger
 Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger Ger

15. What phrase is being communicated with each of these rebus puzzles?



Share and Make

16. Share one or more riddles that you know that are either conundrums or enigmas. It is up to you whether or not you want to reveal the answers.

17. Make one or more rebus puzzles for us. Again, it is up to you if you want to share the answers. Sometimes people can be hesitant to share some artwork or drawing that they do. If you have those tendencies, challenge yourself to be daring.

For the final challenge in this unit, you will be asked to create a riddle of your own. To help you along here is an example of the thoughts that went into creating an original riddle.

Person thinking... I want my riddle to have an answer that is an object. I want to pick something that is not an obvious everyday object. I am reminded that words that have a simpler word in them like monkey, mushroom might disguise the answer somehow. Maybe it's going to be an object that has parts that have a double meaning like the riddle "Q:What has four wheels and flies? A: a garbage truck". What about a deck of cards? I could use the word hand in the riddle. Words that rhyme with hand, ... band, gland, land, stand. The cards represent royalty. The cards are on paper which comes from a tree. I could rhyme the phrase, "a tree" with the word "royalty." Black and red could be used in the riddle. Ok let me pick a short riddle to start, three lines...

Here is my first draft of my conundrum...

*Numbers and people from a tree
You might get rich with royalty
What am I?*

Now maybe I'll try to make it longer. I like the idea of using the word hand, and adding more in about the suits representing love, war, farming, and jewels. I could also add in the reasons people play cards to win money or just for fun. Here is my final idea...

*Wooden people break in four,
Some in love, others make war,
Some are rich, some farm the land,
They have no fingers but still a hand.
Your pockets could be made full or light,
Or it just might be for fun tonight.
What am I?*



18. Create your original riddle. It can be as long or short as you please.

Self-Reflection Exercise

19. What was the most interesting thing you learned about in Unit 2 Riddles?

20. Which do you prefer, to solve riddles or tell them? Explain.

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes

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