

Motivating Your Students with A Riddle

Do you typically remember the punchline to a good joke? I love riddles or jokes, but do not ask me to tell you one! It is interesting that I would choose to author a book of riddles for children, (Do YOU see ME in the SEA?) since I can barely remember one to share with others. So just why did I choose this style of book to write?

When I was teaching, I found myself drawn to non-fiction books about animals and nature. I discovered What Am I? books in which the children listened for clues and would attempt to answer. I could truly see the children enjoying solving the mystery. The interaction among the students and myself was a bonus.

The definition for a riddle is a question or statement written in the form of a puzzle for one to solve. They are typically short in length. They are also easy to read and can be humorous. They can also have a rhyming text. Often a riddle is a play on words as the following,

What fruit can never cheer you up? A “blue” berry!

It is a mistake to think that riddles have little educational value. Think about the number of times you set puzzles out for your students or your own children. A riddle is a verbal puzzle that one is trying to solve within their mind. It is an exercise for the brain. The major difference between a floor puzzle and a riddle, is that a child needs to listen and concentrate on the words of the riddle.

Here are other important benefits for reading riddles to your children:

1. Reading riddles increases and enhances one’s vocabulary and exposes them to other forms of language
2. Riddles can aid in comprehension, although a child may be reading, they may not understand the text. To solve the riddle, they must be able to understand what it is asking for.
3. They can help to improve listening and concentration skills.
4. Creates critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills, both SAT and ACT are based heavily on these.
5. Riddles help create a bond between classmates and teacher as they interact in the process of solving the riddle. It can help a child who is shy to break out of their comfort zone.
6. Improves creativity by forcing the mind to think differently.
7. LAUGHTER, riddles are a type of intellectual humor. Children do not know they are learning and enjoy the process of solving. Children prefer this creative method of learning.
8. Builds confidence as a feeling of accomplishment results when they can solve the riddle.

As a teacher, try telling a riddle to your class at the start of each new lesson. It should spark interest and curiosity as they wonder what else they will learn. Parents too can enjoy sharing riddles with their children. Learning can and should be fun!

*Please continue to read on and find out activities to do with your class that involve riddles.

Suggested Uses for Riddles in the Classroom

- Transitioning - There are always those moments when you have a few minutes, and this is the perfect opportunity to pull out one of those brain teasers. I would suggest having a ring of index cards each with a riddle printed on it. Use this throughout the school year.
- Riddle of the Day - during your morning circle read a riddle aloud to the class, the children may be able to solve right away. If not let the children think about it during the day, reread it occasionally, answer before departing.
- Comedy Hour - this is more for older children but see if the children can recite a joke or riddle in front of the class. Have a toy mic or make one for them to hold.
- Bring a Joke/Riddle to school day - I did this on April Fool's Day, and this is the "Tell" part of show and tell. This may be memorized or the teacher will help with the words.
- Basket of Answers - Fill a basket with objects, beanie babies etc that are the answers to the riddles you read. These will be hints for children as they pick which object, they think correctly solves the riddle.
- Make Up Your Own Riddles -
 1. Need the solution first, you are working backwards
 2. Brainstorm anything associated with the answer, what it does, describe it using simple words
 3. Produce the question or sentence.
 4. Share the riddles, were others able to answer?
- Paper Bag Riddles - Using a lunch bag fold and display a partial picture of the answer to the riddle, give clues and reveal answer by opening bag (see picture)

