



Helping Children Write Riddles

by Caroline Brewer Books ©2022

by Caroline Brewer, Author and Literacy Activist

🌐 carolinebrewerbooks.com ✉ caroline@carolinebrewerbooks.com 📘 [facebook.com/brewercaroline](https://www.facebook.com/brewercaroline)

What Is A Riddle?

A riddle is a word puzzle, or a story that you can tell in the form of a puzzle. It's a way of defining and describing something in the form of a puzzle. It's full of statements that lead to or end with a question, and each statement provides clues.

Benefits of riddles

<https://www.everythingmom.com/parenting/riddles-and-brain-teasers-for-kids>

1. **Introduction to Intellectual humor.** Laughter is just good for the soul and when you are learning something new, laughter helps motivate you a little bit more. It helps relieve stress and also helps fight boredom. So when kids learn riddles it breaks up standard learning, but yet allows the brain to continue to work in a whole new way.
2. **Teaches Problem-solving skills.** Problem-solving is one of the most important things we can teach our kids and riddles help improve kid's problem skills.
3. **Critical Thinking Skills.** Critical thinking is a key component kids use while solving riddles. As kids solve riddles they learn how to critically think more in-depth which improves comprehension and creativity.
4. **Expands Vocabulary.** As kids read and solve riddles, they are constantly expanding their vocabulary. They are learning new words and multiple meanings and ways to use words. Riddles for kids help kids understand words by using words in a variety of different contexts to help expand your child's vocabulary.
5. **Share their Knowledge.** As kids learn riddles, they have the opportunity to learn new skills and words and then share them with others. They can share these riddles with siblings, friends, teachers, and even parents. As your child shares this knowledge it not only reinforces the skills they are learning through riddles but learns socialization skills as well.
6. **Creates Bonds.** By sharing the love of riddles with your kids you are helping them create bonds with you as well as their peers. If your child is shy sometimes it just takes one riddle to get them interacting and laughing with peers. This interaction creates lifelong bonds with their peers.
7. **Establish a love for learning.** When kids first begin telling and trying to solve riddles it is fun! They love it because it makes them laugh and they enjoy figuring out the riddle. They don't realize they are "learning" while they are doing it. Riddles help establish a lifelong love of reading.

How to start writing riddles

The best way to start a riddle is to define/describe the person, place, or thing that will be the answer to your riddle. Feel free to use dictionaries, encyclopedias, newspapers, magazines, or biographies, including Wikipedia to gain ideas for how to define your person, place, or thing. After you have made a list, think of ways you could make it harder to guess your riddle, by adding a phrase that provides a clue but doesn't give away the answer. In fact, the additional clue is often ironic. That means that it's the opposite of what most people might think. For instance in the first example below, you'll see a riddle that contains "a river but no water," as a clue. Doesn't make sense on the face of it, right? But it keeps you thinking, and that's what makes riddles fun – the challenge of using the clues to figure out the puzzle. The first riddle in *Darius Daniels: Game On!* contains these ironic clues:

*You can't touch it but you can see it
You can't hear it, though you stand right near it.
You can't taste it but you know it's sweet
You can't smell it, though your nose it might greet*

Find three complete riddle examples below from <https://www.poetry4kids.com/news/writing-riddles/> and discuss how you feel about the contents of the riddle.

*1 - I have streets but no pavement,
I have cities but no buildings,
I have forests but no trees,
I have rivers yet no water.
What am I?*

*2 - He who builds me doesn't want me,
he who buys me doesn't use me,
he that uses me doesn't know he's got me.
What am I?*

*3 - You may enter, but you may not come in,
I have space, but no room,
I have keys, but open no lock.
What am I?*

Answers: A map, a coffin, a keyboard

Did all the clues work for you? Did they make solving the riddle easy or hard? What did you find confusing, or disagree with? What helped you get the answer? What other clues would you add?



by Caroline Brewer, Author and Literacy Activist

How about this excerpt of a riddle from the novel, *The Hobbit*?

*“It cannot be seen, cannot be felt,
Cannot be heard, cannot be smelt.
It lies behind stars and under hills,
And empty holes it fills.*

The answer: Darkness

Did all the clues work for you? Did they make solving the riddle easy or hard? What did you find confusing, or disagree with? What helped you get the answer? What other clues would you add?

Your Turn

In *Darius Daniels: Game On!*, all of the riddles rhyme, and that’s harder to do, but if you’re open to trying a rhyming riddle, start by turning one of the three riddles above into a rhyming riddle.

Here’s my attempt at the first one.

*I have streets but no pavement
I have cities but no buildings or cement
I have forests but no trees
I have rivers yet no water, birds, or bees
What am I?*

Try Your Own Version of the Sample Riddles or Create Something Entirely New

Try writing your own 4-6-line riddle about darkness or a type a light,
or try writing a 4-6 line riddle with different clues based on riddles you find in *Darius Daniels: Game On!*
Or think of something you know very well. It could be something everyone knows well or something only you know well Write a riddle about that.
Only one rule: Have fun!

