

Famous and Classic Riddles

From brainpuzzles.games

1.

What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening?

3.

Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet. What is it?

5.

Thirty white horses on a red hill. First they champ, then they stamp, then they stand still. What are they?

7.

I speak without a mouth and hear without ears. I have no body, but I come alive with wind. What am I?

9.

A thief crept through a monastery library and ate a scholar's finest words, yet swallowed no wisdom at all. Monks wrote about me a thousand years ago. What is the thief?

11.

I am a little box with no hinges, no lock, and no lid, yet golden treasure hides inside me. What am I?

13.

I live but never breathe. I am cold as the grave. I drink all day yet am never thirsty, and I wear shining mail that makes no sound. What am I?

2.

There are two sisters: one gives birth to the other and she, in turn, gives birth to the first. Who are the two sisters?

4.

As I was going to St. Ives, I met a man with seven wives. Each wife had seven sacks, each sack had seven cats, each cat had seven kits. Kits, cats, sacks, and wives, how many were going to St. Ives?

6.

My roots run deep where nobody goes. I stand taller than any tree, yet I have never grown an inch. What am I?

8.

In Greek myth, what happened to the Sphinx after Oedipus answered her riddle correctly?

10.

What has keys but can't open locks, space but no room, and you can enter but can't go inside?

12.

What is greater than God, more evil than the devil, the poor have it, the rich need it, and if you eat it you'll die?

14.

What can run but never walks, has a mouth but never talks, has a head but never weeps, has a bed but never sleeps?

15.

The riddle of the Sphinx appears in the ancient Greek play 'Oedipus Rex' word for word.

17.

I am always hungry and must always be fed. The finger I touch will soon turn red. What am I?

19.

The famous 'Einstein riddle' asks who owns a certain pet, given clues about five houses. Which pet is it?

21.

What comes once in a minute, twice in a moment, but never in a thousand years?

23.

Riddle contests appear in Norse mythology, including one where Odin competes in disguise.

25.

I spend my whole life drying others, and the better I do my job, the wetter I become. What am I?

27.

I have cities, but no houses. I have mountains, but no trees. I have water, but no fish. What am I?

29.

An eye in a blue face saw an eye in a green face. 'That eye is like to this eye,' said the first, 'but in low place, not in high place.' What is it?

16.

I devour everything: birds and beasts, trees and flowers. I wear down iron, crumble castles, and turn mountains into sand. Even kings cannot escape me. What am I?

18.

What English word is always spelled incorrectly?

20.

A man looks at a portrait and says: 'Brothers and sisters I have none, but that man's father is my father's son.' Who is in the portrait?

22.

I saw maidens marching over the sea. Each wore a white hood, yet not one of them had a head. Who were they?

24.

Four hang, four sprang, two point the way, two ward off dogs, one dangles after, always rather dirty. What is it?

26.

The oldest known riddles were written on clay tablets. Which civilization left them to us?

28.

What is so fragile that saying its name breaks it?

30.

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31.

In 'Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire,' a sphinx blocks the maze with a riddle. Its answer is a creature Ron would hate. Which one?

33.

'Why is a raven like a writing desk?' is a famously unanswered riddle. Who asks it?

35.

In a famous opera, a princess demands to know: what is born anew every night and dies every dawn, rising in the heart of every person? What answer saves the prince?

37.

Old Mother Twitchett has but one eye and a long tail she can let fly, and every time she passes through a gap she leaves a little of her tail behind. What is she?

39.

How many legs does a dog have if you call its tail a leg?

41.

A suitor must choose among three chests of gold, silver, and lead to win a bride. The lead one warns, 'Who chooses me must give and risk all he has.' Which chest holds her portrait?

43.

Whoever makes it has no use for it. Whoever buys it does not keep it. Whoever needs it never knows. What is it?

32.

The phrase 'riddle of the Sphinx' refers to a puzzle from ancient Egypt.

34.

A wondrous creature comes sailing, deadly and beautiful, carrying cold water in its belly. The more of its sisters it gathers, the more ships it can drown. What is it?

36.

Little Nancy Etticoat, in a white petticoat and a red nose, stands and stands, and the longer she stands the shorter she grows. What is she?

38.

I am born in winter and die in summer, and I grow toward the ground with my roots pointing up. What am I?

40.

A rooster sits at the very peak of a slanted barn roof and lays an egg. Which side of the roof does the egg roll down?

42.

The more of them you take, the more you leave behind you. What are they?

44.

What can travel all the way around the world while staying stuck in one corner?

45.

It only ever goes up and never comes back down, no matter what anyone does. What is it?

47.

You can catch me quite easily, but no matter how hard you try, you can never throw me. What am I?

49.

When is a door not a door?

51.

There is one English word in which the first two letters make a male, the first three a female, the first four a great man, and the whole word a great woman. What is the word?

53.

Which everyday English word contains three sets of double letters, one right after another?

55.

What five-letter English word keeps the exact same sound even after you remove four of its five letters?

57.

I am dug from a mine and shut inside a wooden case I will never leave, yet nearly everyone puts me to work. What am I?

46.

I hold thirteen hearts, yet I have no other organ anywhere in my body. What am I?

48.

What kind of room has no doors, no windows, and no walls to speak of?

50.

What can fill an entire room yet take up no space at all?

52.

I am an odd number, but take away a single letter and I suddenly become even. What number am I?

54.

A certain word has six letters, but remove just one letter and twelve of something remain. What is the word?

56.

Stand me on my side and I am everything there is, but cut me in half and I am nothing at all. What am I?

58.

A man rides the elevator down from the tenth floor every morning, but coming home he rides only to the seventh floor and walks the rest, unless it is raining, when he rides all the way up. Why?

59.

A man pushes his car up to a hotel, hands over some money, and declares himself bankrupt, yet he is not upset at all. Why not?

61.

A traveler rides into a town on Friday, stays for three nights, and rides back out on Friday. How is that possible?

63.

There is a common word that changes how it is pronounced the moment you give its first letter a capital. What word is it?

65.

Two fathers and two sons go fishing, each one catches a fish, yet only three fish are caught in all. How does that add up?

67.

A woman points something at her husband and presses a button, then holds him underwater for half a minute, and later they sit down to dinner together, perfectly happy. How?

69.

There is a word from which you can remove one letter at a time, again and again, and still have a real word at every step, all the way down to a single letter. What is it?

71.

You face two doors and two guards, one who always lies and one who always tells the truth, but you do not know which is which. With a single question to one guard, how do you find the safe door?

60.

Police raid a house to arrest a killer named John and find a plumber, a lawyer, a mechanic, and a firefighter playing cards, then arrest the firefighter at once. How did they know?

62.

Before Mount Everest was ever discovered by climbers, which mountain was the tallest on Earth?

64.

What can you drop into a full bucket of water to make the bucket lighter rather than heavier?

66.

What five-letter word actually becomes shorter when you add two more letters to it?

68.

Read one way I am a heavy weight, but spell me backward and I mean the opposite of yes. What word am I?

70.

In a famous ancient paradox, a swift hero can never overtake a slow tortoise that started ahead of him, because every time he reaches where it was, it has crept a little farther. What is this puzzle called?

72.

There is a part of your body you can easily hold in your left hand, yet you can never hold it in your right hand. What is it?

73.

What has a neck but no head, and can wear a cap without a single hair?

75.

What has one thumb and four fingers yet is not alive?

77.

What is packed with words on every page but never says a thing out loud?

74.

What has plenty of teeth in a row but has never once taken a bite?

76.

What is full of holes all over yet still manages to hold water?

Answer Key

Famous and Classic Riddles, from brainpuzzles.games

1. A human. We crawl as babies, walk upright as adults, and use a cane in old age. This is the riddle of the Sphinx, which Oedipus solved in Greek myth.
2. Day and night. This is the second, lesser-known riddle of the Sphinx from Greek tradition.
3. Honey from a lion's carcass. This is Samson's riddle from the Book of Judges, one of the oldest riddles ever written down.
4. Just one: you. Everyone else was coming FROM St. Ives. This English rhyme dates back to at least 1730.
5. Teeth. A traditional English folk riddle, later made famous by a certain riddle game in a dark cave.
6. A mountain. Riddles in this shape go back to old Anglo-Saxon and Norse tradition.
7. An echo. One of the most repeated classic riddles in the world.
8. She destroyed herself. In most tellings the Sphinx threw herself from her rock and died. Thebes was freed, and Oedipus was made king soon after.
9. A bookworm. This retells Riddle 47 from the Exeter Book, a manuscript of Old English riddles copied down around the year 975.
10. A keyboard. A modern classic built on the much older piano riddle.
11. An egg. An old folk riddle form found in collections long before it turned up in fantasy novels.
12. Nothing. Nothing is greater than God, nothing is more evil than the devil, and if you eat nothing you die. A famous trick riddle passed around for generations.
13. A fish
14. A river. One of the most anthologized riddles in English.
15. False. False. Sophocles never states the riddle in the play. The audience already knew it, so the text only refers to it. The full wording comes from other ancient sources.
16. Time. The 'time devours all' riddle is an ancient form, made newly famous by literature's most dangerous riddle game.
17. Fire. A classic riddle found in collections across many languages.
18. The word 'incorrectly.' A famous schoolyard trick question.
19. The fish. The classic zebra-puzzle variant credited to Einstein asks who keeps the fish. There is no proof Einstein wrote it, which is part of its legend.
20. His son. 'My father's son' is the speaker himself, so the portrait shows the speaker's son. A famous logic riddle from Victorian puzzle books.
21. The letter M. A print classic since the 1800s.
22. Waves, wearing hoods of white foam. This comes from the Old Norse saga of King Heidrek, where Odin in disguise plays a riddle contest with a king.
23. True. True. In the Vafthrudnismal, Odin has a life-or-death wisdom contest with the giant Vafthrudnir, and he wins with an unanswerable question.
24. A cow. Four teats hang, four legs spring, two horns point, two hind legs kick at dogs, and the

tail dangles. A riddle in the old Norse style.

25. A towel. This small paradox has been a favorite of printed riddle books since the 1800s.

26. Sumer in Mesopotamia. Sumerian school tablets from around 4,000 years ago carry the earliest riddles we can still read today.

27. A map. A modern classic repeated in nearly every riddle book of the last century.

28. Silence. One of the most shared riddles on the internet, with roots in much older word riddles.

29. The sun shining on daisies

30. Honey from the lion (lion + bee): a nod to Samson's famous riddle.

31. A spider. The sphinx's riddle builds the word 'spider' piece by piece. Harry solves it and keeps his wand ready, just in case.

32. False. False. The famous riddle belongs to the Greek Sphinx of Thebes. The Egyptian sphinx statues, like the one at Giza, ask no riddles at all.

33. The Mad Hatter. The Mad Hatter asks it in 'Alice in Wonderland' and admits he has no answer. Lewis Carroll invented one later: 'Because it can produce a few notes.'

34. An iceberg. This reworks a riddle about ice from the Exeter Book, the same Old English manuscript as the bookworm riddle.

35. Hope. It is the first of Princess Turandot's three riddles in Puccini's opera 'Turandot.'

36. A candle. A traditional nursery riddle printed in old Mother Goose collections.

37. A needle and thread. A classic riddle from old Mother Goose rhymes.

38. An icicle. A traditional folk riddle found in many old rhyme collections.

39. Four. Calling a tail a leg does not make it one. This point is famously attributed to Abraham Lincoln.

40. Neither side. Roosters do not lay eggs. A favorite schoolyard trick question.

41. The lead casket. In Shakespeare's 'The Merchant of Venice,' the humble lead chest holds the winning prize.

42. Footsteps. A classic riddle repeated in countless puzzle books.

43. A coffin. A grim old riddle passed around for generations.

44. A postage stamp. A classic printed riddle from the age of letters.

45. Your age. A well-worn riddle from countless puzzle books.

46. A deck of cards, counting the thirteen cards of the hearts suit.

47. A cold. A classic bit of riddle wordplay.

48. A mushroom. A famous joke riddle beloved by children.

49. When it is ajar. This pun on 'a jar' is one of the oldest joke riddles in English, in print since the 1700s.

50. Light. A classic riddle found in puzzle books everywhere.

51. Heroine

52. Seven

53. Bookkeeper

54. Dozens
55. Queue
56. The number 8
57. Graphite, the lead in a pencil
58. He is too short to reach the top button, but an umbrella lets him press it on rainy days
59. He is playing Monopoly
60. The firefighter was the only man, since the other three were women
61. His horse is named Friday
62. Mount Everest
63. Polish
64. A hole
65. There were only three people, a grandfather, his son, and his grandson
66. Short
67. She is a photographer developing his photo
68. Ton
69. Startling
70. Zeno's paradox of Achilles and the tortoise
71. Ask either guard which door the other guard would call safe, then take the opposite door
72. Your right elbow
73. A bottle
74. A comb
75. A glove
76. A sponge
77. A book