puzzle stories

Puzzle stories are "thinking games" that get students to think about what they are listening to or reading. In using puzzle stories for listening comprehension/speaking practice, teachers should direct their students to ask a series of yes/no questions as a means of discovering the solution.

TEACHING TECHNIQUES. Play the audio file so the students can hear the puzzle story that is being used for that day's class. Explain any vocabulary items that are new to the students. Play the story once more before getting them to ask their yes/no questions.

Mario Rinvolucri in the April 1991 issue of the *Forum* makes the following suggestions to enhance the potential for cooperative learning within the context of the puzzle story:

1. Allow each student to ask only one question. If a student wants to ask more questions, that student can write the question on a piece of paper and hand it to another student who has not asked a question yet to ask on his behalf.

2. Allow the questions to develop naturally. If the solution is not found and the students are running out of questions, give them a useful clue and ask them to individually write down additional questions. The students have 2-4 minutes to do this while the teacher monitors their work. At this point, students who have not asked any questions are called on to ask one of the questions which they have written.
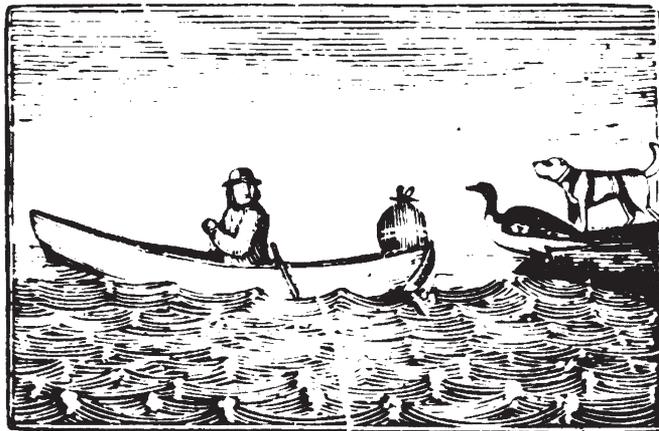
Puzzle stories

Mr. Jones

In the middle of the night, while Mr. Jones was asleep in his hotel room, the telephone beside his bed rang. Mr. Jones woke up, picked up the phone, and said "Hello." Then he put the phone down and went back to sleep. Can you guess who had telephoned him?

Man in the Bar

A man ran down the street, walked into a bar, and asked for a glass of water. The bartender gave him the water and pointed a gun at him. The man said "Thank you" and walked out of the bar. Why did he do that?

Liars and Truth-tellers

The people in a far-off land consist of two tribes: Liars and Truth-tellers. Both tribes speak the same language, but the Truth-tellers always tell the truth, and the Liars never tell the truth.

An explorer going through that country came to a rushing river and saw three natives of that land on the other side. He knew their language, so he shouted across the river to the first man: "Are you a Liar or a Truth-teller?" The man replied, but his answer was lost in the noise of the rushing water.

The second man had heard the question, and seeing that the explorer did not hear the first man's answer, he cried out: "This man said he is a Truth-teller. He is a Truth-teller. So am I a Truth-teller."

When the third man heard that, he pointed at the last speaker and said mockingly, "Do not believe him! He's a Liar; but I am a Truth-teller!"

Problem: Which of the men are Truth-tellers, and which are Liars?

The Dollar Bills

A man phoned his daughter to ask her to buy a few things he needed for a trip. He told her she would find enough dollar bills for the purchases in an envelope on his desk. She found the envelope with "98" written on it. In a shop she bought $90 worth of things, but when it was time to pay, she didn't have $8 left over, as she thought she would. In fact, she didn't have enough money to pay for all the purchases. By how much was she short, and why?

5 The Crossing

A farmer must transport his dog, a duck, and a bag of corn across a river. The boat he has to use is very small—so small that he can take only one of the three in the boat with him at a time. If he leaves the dog alone with the duck, the dog will kill and eat the duck. If he leaves the duck alone with the corn, the duck will eat up the corn.

What is the least number of trips the farmer must make to transport all three across the river safely?

6 The Cat in the Well

One day a cat fell down a well. The well was eighteen feet deep. When the cat tried to climb out, it found that the sides of the well were very damp and slippery. However, with patient determination it finally managed to climb out.

It took the cat one minute of climbing to gain three feet. However, after climbing for a minute, the cat had to rest for a minute before it could go on. During each minute of rest, the cat slid back two feet.

How long did it take for the cat to get out of the well?
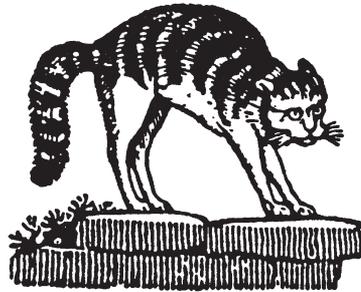
7 The Captured Traveler

A traveler had the misfortune of being caught by an enemy tribe and condemned to death. The only question that remained was how he was to be done away with.

According to tribal custom, the chief of the tribe was to make this decision on the following basis:

The victim was told to make an affirmative statement. If the chief considered the statement true, the victim would be shot with a poisoned arrow. If the statement was judged to be false, the victim would be tied to a stake and die by fire. In any case, his death was apparently inescapable—or so it seemed to everyone except the traveler.

He made a short statement which so perplexed the chief that it was found impossible to carry out the execution.

What were the words that the clever traveler must have uttered?

☸ Crossing the Bridge

Tom came to a bridge marked "Total weight 100 kilos." Now, Tom weighed 95 kilos, but he had three pineapples, each weighing 2 kilos. He couldn't throw them across the river, because the pineapples would be smashed to pieces. How did Tom cross the bridge?

☻ The Two Students

Two girls appeared at the registrar's office of a college. The receptionist handed each of them a questionnaire to fill out. Each girl wrote the following facts on the questionnaire.

Each had the last name Smith. Each was born on February 29, 1960. Each was born at 376 East 53rd Street, New York City. Each had a father named John Smith and a mother named Gertrude Smith.

When the girls had completed the questionnaires they handed them to the registrar. The registrar read them and asked, "Are you two girls sisters?"

They replied, "Yes, we are." Looking up from his papers, the registrar saw the two girls and noticed that they looked exactly alike. He said, "You're twins, aren't you?"

They both promptly answered, "No."

Assuming that all the answers they gave were true, and that they had the same mother and father, how do you account for the fact that they were not twins?

� How Can It Be?

Albert Amblefoot walked outside in a heavy rainstorm for half an hour without getting a single hair of his head wet. He didn't wear a hat, carry an umbrella, or hold anything over his head. His clothes got soaking wet. How could this happen?

☸☸ A Boy and Girl

As you are traveling in the kingdom of Jerafa, you come upon a boy and a girl who are dressed exactly alike.

> "I'm a boy," says the one with red hair.
> "I'm a girl," says the one with black hair.

If at least one of them is not telling the truth, which is which?

✿✿ A Spring Walk

A man lived at the southern tip of a small forest which was exactly circular in shape. His house was at the very edge of the forest. One fine day in the spring he decided to take a walk around the forest. He set out from his house, heading in a westerly direction, that is going in a clockwise direction, all around the forest and returning to his house. He found that it took him eighty minutes to do this, walking at a steady rate and making no stops along the way.

Another day a few months later, he again took a walk around the forest, but this time he went in a counterclockwise direction. Walking at the same rate as before and making no stops, he found that the trip took him one hour and twenty minutes. Can you explain why?

✿✿ Marriage or Death

Ruling over the kingdom of Komosay was a very powerful king who had a beautiful daughter named Yamah. When Yamah fell in love with a poor peasant boy, the king was shocked and distressed. To show how fair he was, however, he promised to give the boy a 50-50 chance to marry his daughter by letting him choose one of two slips of paper. On one piece of paper would be written the word MARRIAGE; on the other, the word DEATH. Because of his great love for Yamah, the boy agreed to take this risk.

As he came near to the castle on the fateful day, he happened to overhear a conversation between the king and one of his attendants:

"Your Majesty," said the attendant, "how can you do this thing, and let that unworthy boy have a chance of marrying your daughter?"

The deceitful king laughed and said, "The way I will do it, he will have no chance. I will write the word DEATH on both pieces of paper. But of course, he will not know that; he will think he has chosen the wrong piece of paper."

When the boy heard that he was stunned and didn't know what to do. But then he thought of a clever solution to the problem. When the time came to choose, he put his plan into action. The next day he and the princess were married.

What was his solution?

✿✿ Bᴏᴛᴛʟᴇ ᴏꜰ Wᴀᴛᴇʀ

Two travelers in a desert land have been given an eight-liter bottle of water. Since they will be going in different directions, they want to divide the water equally, so they will each have four liters. However, all they have with them for the purpose of measuring are two containers, one of which holds five liters, and the other three liters.

At first it seems impossible to make an even division of four liters each by using the three containers on hand, but they finally manage to do it. How do they do this?
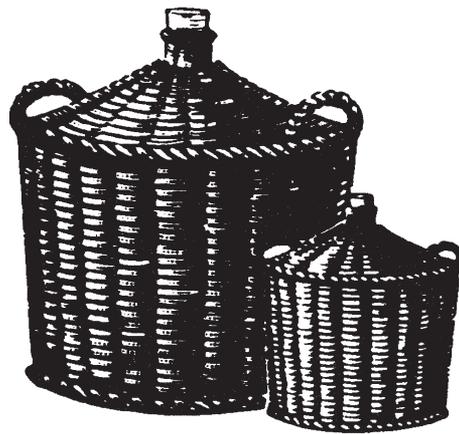
BICYCLE MATH

Bill rode his bicycle 300 kilometers. Three tires were used equally in accumulating this distance. How many kilometers of wear did each tire sustain?

A railway track runs parallel to a road until a bend brings the road to a level crossing. A cyclist rides along to work along the same road every day at a constant speed of 12 miles per hour.

    He normally meets a train that travels in the same direction at the crossing.

    One day he was late by 25 minutes and met the train 6 miles ahead of the level crossing. Can you figure out the speed of the train?

WHAT WAS YOUR ORDER?
A LOGIC PUZZLE

There are eleven related facts listed below for this logic puzzle. After reading them, help the waitress who is serving the table to figure out the answer to this question: *Who ordered the cola, cheeseburger with pickles, and French fries?*

1. Six friends went to a hamburger drive-in and decided to eat inside the restaurant.
2. The friends sat in a booth, three people on each side of the table.
3. They ordered six different meals.
4. Jack sat next to Jill.
5. Jill sat opposite the boy who sat next to Betty.
6. Archie ordered cola, a plain hamburger and french fries and sat across from Jane.
7. The boy who had the vanilla milk shake and two hot dogs sat across from Betty.
8. The girl who ordered the diet cola, fish sandwich, and onion rings sat between Archie and Reggie.
9. Reggie didn't order a diet cola, grilled chicken sandwich, and french fries or a cola and taco salad.
10. The girl who ordered the diet cola, grilled chicken sandwich, and french fries sat across from Archie.
11. The girl who sat next to Jack had a cola and taco salad.

Who had the cola, cheeseburger with pickles, and French fries?