

Lesson Plan

RIDDLES AND ARGUMENTS

In this lesson, T&W teaching artist [Ibi Zoboi](#) introduces herself and the topic of her residency in one fell swoop. Using name riddles, she encourages students to have fun with their names and introductions while practicing their reasoning skills. Students then build from their solved riddles, moving into a brief exercise of argumentative writing that sets the stage for more work on writing arguments.

Grade(s) Taught: 6th

Genre(s) Taught: Argumentative writing, riddles

Common Core State Standards:

(Refer to the [English Language Arts Standards > Writing > Grade 6](#))

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1
Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1.E
Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented.

Guiding Questions:

- Which riddle was easier to solve, the poem or the set of questions?
- What details in each clue helped you to solve the problem?
- What strategies did you use to create your own riddle? Did you try to make your clues easy to solve?
- What strategies did you use to solve your friend's riddle? Did you ever doubt whether you were right about solving the riddle?
- What details are you including in your essay to support your argument?



Image by John Flannery

LESSON

Introduction:

Introduce vocabulary words, explaining those that students do not already know: riddle, clue, problem, mystery, solve, argument.

Introduce name using a riddle:

Can wink or blink
Or turn a blind one
At the shining sun

Stinging and buzzing and busy
Casting a spell
And giving a swell

Me, myself, and my dotted pupil.

Or

What letter do you get when an “H” takes a nap? Which letter’s favorite food is honey?
Which letter of the alphabet is the most selfish?

Writing Activity:

Tell students: I want you to create your own riddles as either a poem or a set of questions. Think about the sound of your name or the letters in your name. Remember that you need to give the reader clues to solve the mystery of your name.

After students have had time to work on their own name riddles, say: Now I want you to write another riddle using the first name of a family member (someone your classmates would not know).

When students have finished both riddles, ask them to exchange their second riddle with a partner: Now you'll test your problem-solving skills by trying to guess your partner's family member's name from the clues in the riddle. Be sure not to tell your partner the answer! Once you think you have the answer, write a brief essay in which you:

- State your claim: the name of the person, and
- Make your argument: why you think you are correct and how you arrived at your answer. Give clear reasons for your argument, citing specific information from the riddle.

Closing:

Share your essay with your partner and have him or her confirm your answer—or tell you the correct answer if it's not what you thought it is.

Materials:

Your personal name poem to use as a model

Vocabulary:

Riddle, clue, problem, mystery, solve, argument

Multi-Modal Approaches to Learning:

This lesson plan appeals to **logical** learners (following clues to an answer and following an essay format); **interpersonal** learners (group solving the first riddle, pair work); and **intrapersonal** learners (independent writing).