

Insect Riddles

Objectives: To reinforce basic concepts learned about insects so far and to experiment with creative writing concepts by writing riddles.

Time: 1 hour.

Materials: Pens or pencils, paper.

Have the gardeners compose riddles about insects or other garden creatures that are not insects, using the information they have learned about insect characteristics. Read the riddles below as examples. When each JMG'er has composed one or two riddles, have them all present their riddles to the others or another group. Have the other children try to guess the identity of the mystery creatures. Examples are included of both rhyming and nonrhyming riddles—use whichever is appropriate for the children's skill level.



You may want to revisit this activity later in this unit. As the gardeners learn more about insects and other garden creatures, they will be able to add more detail to their riddles. Creating riddles or simple rhymes will help you assess how well they understand the concepts you are teaching.



Nonrhyming riddles

(Dragonfly)

I am an insect.

I have four long, narrow wings that make a whirring sound
when I swoop over ponds and lakes searching for mosquito larvae.

I scoop them up with my basket-shaped front legs for a snack on the run.

I have two large compound eyes

so I can see what's sneaking up behind me,

and a long, narrow body that may be brightly colored, blue or green.

I like to rest on reeds or cattails by the water and bask in the sun

while I am looking for my next meal.

What am I?

(Spider)

I am not an insect.

I have two body parts instead of three, as insects have,
and I have eight legs instead of six.

I am a very helpful friend to have in the garden,

because I eat many pest insects that would eat your plants.

I catch my prey using silk threads.

What am I?

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Rhyming riddle

(Caterpillar)

I cannot fly, spin a web, chew through wood, or even hop!
But when it comes to eating plants, I'm pretty much nonstop.

My chewing mouthparts munch on leaves morning, evening and at noon
In preparation for the BIG DAY when I change in my cocoon!

In the Classroom

1. Discuss the terms onomatopoeia (the name given to its corresponding sound, such as buzz, hiss, drip-drop) and/or alliteration (a sentence or phrase in which many words begin with the same letter, such as "blue buzzing bees") with the gardeners. Ask them to include examples of onomatopoeia in their riddles, and/or alliteration where appropriate. This is also a good activity for practicing the use of descriptive words such as adjectives or adverbs.

Example (Dragonfly)

Whirring wildly, I whip above the water, winging on the wind as I watch for wigglers (mosquito larvae) in the water. Who am I?

2. Use descriptive terms about insects to reinforce the students' knowledge of the parts of a sentence, using the follow-up activity below

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Ask the students to call out names of insects. List these words on the chalkboard. Explain that the name of a person, place or thing, such as an insect, is a noun. Next ask the students for words that describe how insects look, and list these on the board as well. Explain that words describing a person, place or thing are called adjectives.

Next, ask the children to call out words that tell what insects do. Make another list of these, and explain that these words—which show action—are called verbs. Finally, ask them for words that describe how insects do each of the action words listed. (For example, for the action word "fly," how do insects do it? Swiftly? Silently?) Explain that words describing verbs or adjectives are called adverbs.

Tell the students that they will create special poetry riddles about an insect of their choice. Show them the Poetry Riddle template. Ask them to think of an insect and fill in the blanks of their Poetry Riddle with words describing this insect. Once they have finished, have them share their Poetry Riddles with the rest of the class to see if other JMG'ers can guess the insects.

Poetry Riddle Template:

_____ (adjective),
 _____ (adjective),
 _____ (adjective),
 _____ (adverb) _____ (verb)
 _____ (adjective) _____ (noun)
 _____ (verb sound)

Example Poetry Riddle:

small
 brown
 quiet
 quickly hop
 old logs
 chirp