

where the first letter of every word provides the answer. This one could have been even harder if the letters required rearrangement. Below I explain in more depth how I made these and other riddles. First, here are a few other types of riddles worth mentioning.

PROPHECY

Similar to a What Am I? riddle, a prophecy describes a situation that lies sometime in the future. Usually, a prophecy cannot be understood until the appropriate time or place arrives, and it's up to the clever adventurer to realize the prophecy's fulfillment and then react accordingly. Say that the great hero Kaladan follows a prophecy spoken over him at his birth by a witch, telling him he will meet his destiny if he ever reaches a particular place. The prophecy states:

Your doom awaits you in a land

That treads upon the sea.

No matter where you turn and stand

One bearing will there be.

Here all colors fade to one;

Unclouded eyes can't see.

And sideways always runs the sun

Around your destiny.

One day, our hero journeys far into the northlands of the world, where he travels over a frozen ocean into the white, blinding land of the eternally setting sun. If he's clever, he realizes this is the place the prophecy described: the North Pole. (Or did the prophecy mean the South Pole?) If he's not clever... well, let's hope his doom doesn't surprise him too horribly.

While they can describe a variety of subjects, all prophecies should have one thing in common: excruciating vagueness! After all, that's what keeps the players on their toes, and it saves the DM from being too exacting in setting up adventures for the future. Note that the hero is not guaranteed to reach his destiny (he might be killed beforehand), and he is certainly not guaranteed to triumph in the end!

SECRET MESSAGES

A creative DM uses many other sorts of riddles and puzzles to baffle his players as well. Secret messages are a particularly fun method. Perhaps it's a parchment with a hidden message (perhaps a riddle in itself) written in lemon juice. The message is invisible, but when held over a fire (use care when doing this, of course!), the lemon juice darkens, thereby revealing the message. Or perhaps it's a map that, when folded in a special way, reveals an all-new terrain, showing the way to a dungeon entrance. Or maybe the players are forced to solve a mathematical problem, a rebus, or a musical code in which notes are letters. The possibilities are limited only by the DM's imagination and deviousness.

HIDDEN RIDDLES

Riddles don't have to be so straightforward, though. In fact, you can riddle players without them even knowing it if they don't pay attention. Names, both those of people and places, are a perfect medium for hidden riddles. One way is to rearrange or reverse the letters of a word or a name, thereby creating a new name (an anagram). For example, a group of characters might just have escaped their worst enemy, Doomfell, when they happen upon a merry merchant named Lom de Lof going their same direction. By the time they realize what "Lom de Lof" spells when the letters are transposed it might be too late!

Name riddles can also reveal something about the place or person they name. A haggard wanderer called Rex might really be a king, and a band of adventurers searching for the legendary Black Valley might or might not think of anything unusual when it comes to a town called Ebonvale. Riddles can be everywhere, limited only by the DM's discretion and imagination. The more riddles of this kind, the richer, more meaningful, and more mysterious the fantasy campaign world becomes.

DIFFICULTIES

Of course, riddles should be limited to the known abilities of the players. For example, don't use a musical code when no one in the group knows how to read music. And riddles of the What Have I Got In My Pocket? type, although remarkably successful for a certain hobbit, are impossible to solve and quite unfair. However, the DM shouldn't hesitate to make riddles varied and difficult. The best riddles are perfectly solvable, but only with a goodly amount of creative thinking.

USING RIDDLES

Although riddle types abound, ways in which to use riddles are even more plentiful. Riddles can replace almost any sort of physical barrier in an adventure—particularly monsters and traps—that might hinder characters on their way to the treasure or other goal. And riddles, too, should follow the same rules for placement as both monsters and traps. Easier riddles exist in the upper dungeon levels, but deeper down—where hoards of gold lie hidden—the riddles become more complex, more difficult, and more deadly if not solved.

To add to the suspense of riddle solving, players should have to discover the answer in real time, not game time. Of course, some riddles are long term. A prophecy, for example, might not be solvable for months or even years of game time, and a riddle-map that leads the way to a dragon's lair need not be solved until the players wish to go there. But other riddles can and should be more immediate, especially when the stakes are high, to add tension and excitement



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