

Alexander the Great (356 – 323 B.C.)

Riddle 2

(CD 1 track 2)

Vocabulary

wild
afraid
a battle

to ride
a shadow
to conquer

to notice
to tame

- 1) My father, * King Philip, * had a very wild horse.
- 2) No one * could ride him.
- 3) I noticed * that the horse * was afraid of * his shadow.
- 4) I turned him * toward the sun * and tamed him.
- 5) His name was * Bucephalus.
- 6) I rode him * in many battles.
- 7) We conquered * most of Asia.
- 8) People called me great. * In fact, * I am Alexander the Great.

Notes:

Bucephalus [Greek, meaning ox-head] is pronounced /byoo SEF uh luhs/.

Turned toward the sun, Bucephalus didn't notice his shadow and was calm and tractable.

You may need to explain that in the U.S., most people refer to animals, especially pets, as he/she/him/her.

Bucephalus died in battle in India after 18 years with Alexander. A city in India was renamed Bucephalus. In the same battle, Alexander received wounds that may have eventually caused his death. (An ax in the chest punctured his lung.)

He became king at age 20 when King Philip was assassinated. He is on virtually every list of the top five military leaders in history. Very few in history have convinced large armies to travel such distances, fight such battles, and endure such perils.

Alexander was tutored by Aristotle.

One famous legend about Alexander is that he released the Gordian Knot in Turkey that was tied by King Midas. The prophecy was that whoever was able to untie it would rule all of Asia. Alexander is said to have slashed through the knot with his sword. Does that count?

Winston Churchill (1874 – 1965)

Riddle 11

(CD 1 track 11)

Vocabulary

influential
an orator

a speech problem
a prime minister

to stutter

- 1) This famous man * was born in England * in 1874.
- 2) His family * was rich * and influential.
- 3) He had * a speech problem; * he stuttered.
- 4) He worked hard * on the problem.
- 5) He became * a great orator.
- 6) He was a politician, * a writer, * and a painter.
- 7) He was England's * prime minister * during World War II.
- 8) His name is Sir..... Winston Churchill.

Notes:

Some say he stuttered; others say he lisped or "cluttered." Either way, it is remarkable that he overcame the impediment and became one of the most influential orators the world has known.

His mother was an American. A popular story is that Churchill was born in a ladies' restroom during a dance, but history says he was born prematurely at Blenheim.

Churchill was the only non-royal to have had a state funeral since 1914.

It is no secret that he had a fondness for cigars and alcohol.

Churchill's witty quotes are famous:

- Bessie Braddock: "Winston, you're drunk!"
Churchill: "Bessie, you're ugly, and tomorrow I shall be sober."
- Lady Astor: "Winston, if you were my husband, I would flavor your coffee with poison."
Churchill: "Madam, if I were your husband, I would drink it."
- "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."
- "The price of greatness is responsibility."
- "Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing ever happened."
- "Truth is so precious she should always be protected by a bodyguard of lies."

Mount Kilimanjaro

Riddle 31

(CD 1 track 31)

Vocabulary

a mountain range
sea level
a peak

free-standing
to climb/a climber

a summit
to reach

- 1) I'm not part of * a mountain range.
- 2) I'm the world's tallest * free-standing mountain.
- 3) My summit is * 19,340 feet * above sea level.
- 4) Every year, * about 25,000 climbers * try to reach * my peak.
- 5) The meaning of my name * is a mystery.
- 6) Some people believe * it means "White Mountain."
- 7) I'm Africa's * tallest mountain.
- 8) My name is Mount Kilimanjaro.

Notes:

19,340 feet = 5,895 meters

Mt. Kilimanjaro is formed from three volcanic cones. Two are extinct; one is dormant and could erupt again, even though the last eruption was 360,000 years ago.

Approximately two-thirds of climbers successfully reach the summit.

Kilimanjaro is located in Tanzania. It is near the equator, but its summit is snow-covered.

The Mayans

Riddle 67

(CD 2 track 20)

Vocabulary

accurate	a system	faith
astrology	to control	a civilization
advanced	a mathematician	a concept
a human sacrifice	mysterious(ly)	to disappear
a descendant		

- 1) About 2,600 years ago * these people had * a very accurate system * of calendars.
- 2) They had great faith * in astrology, * and it controlled their lives.
- 3) Their civilization * was very advanced, * and they had a fully developed * written language.
- 4) Most of their books * were destroyed by the Spaniards.
- 5) Being advanced mathematicians, * they understood the concept * of zero.
- 6) They are probably most famous * for their pyramids * and human sacrifices.
- 7) This civilization * mysteriously disappeared * about 900 AD.
- 8) The descendants of these people * still live in Mexico * and Central America.
- 9) They were the Mayans.

Notes:

It is not true that their calendars predict that the world will end in 2012. That year will be the end of one creation cycle and the beginning of another. The end and beginning of a creation cycle can be compared to New Year's Day. It was a cause for great celebration.

The Mayans established their empire between 2000 B.C. and 250 A.D. It was at its peak between 250 and 900 A.D. The Aztecs came later: 1300s – 1600s.

The Incas also had an understanding of zero, but they and the Mayans had that understanding independently of each other and at different times in history. The Mayans had a written symbol to represent zero; the Incas represented zero with the absence of a knot on a string.

Denali

Riddle 73

(CD 2 track 26)

Vocabulary

a gold prospector
a caribou
a summit

a grizzly bear
a slope
official

a wolf/wolves
a glacier

- 1) This mountain has two names.
- 2) One was given to it * by the local people, * the Athabaskans.
- 3) It was given its other name * by a gold prospector.
- 4) He gave the mountain * the name of a man * who later became a U.S. president.
- 5) Grizzly bears, * wolves, * and caribou * live on its slopes.
- 6) Five large glaciers * cover parts * of its seven summits.
- 7) The highest summit * is 20,320 feet * above sea level.
- 8) It's the highest mountain * in North America.
- 9) Its official name * in the United States * is Mount McKinley.
- 10) In Alaska, however, * it's known by * its Athabaskan name, Denali.

Notes:

It is a rare day when a tourist sees the peaks of Denali, due to the almost constant cloud cover.

Denali is climbed on a regular basis. A little over 50% of the expeditions are successful. However, by 2003, nearly 100 climbers had lost their lives in their attempts to reach the summit.

The Alaska Board of Geographic Names changed the name to Denali after it was named McKinley by the prospector. In 1975, the Alaska state legislature requested the U.S. Board of Geographic Names to make Denali the official name, but the request was blocked by an Ohio congressman. His district included the birthplace of President McKinley. Members of the Ohio delegation continue to protect the McKinley name, but Alaskans and many others call it by its original name, Denali.

Chocolate

Riddle 102

(CD 3 track 16)

Vocabulary		
beans	to trade/trading	to conquer/conqueror
bitter	to discover	

- 1) The Latin name * for these beans * means “drink of the gods.”
- 2) Montezuma, * king of the Aztecs, * loved the drink * made from these beans.
- 3) He drank it * from golden cups.
- 4) People say he would drink * as many as * fifty cups a day!
- 5) The Aztecs also used * the beans as money * for trading.
- 6) The Spanish conquerors * thought the drink * was bitter.
- 7) Sugar was added * to make it sweet.
- 8) Then someone discovered * how to use the beans * to make a candy bar.
- 9) We can all thank * Montezuma and the Aztecs for chocolate!

Notes:

This is a great riddle for cold weather if you are allowed to take hot chocolate or small chocolate bars to class.

The Spanish took “theobroma cacao” beans back to Spain to plant so they would have the beans to use for trading with the people in the New World. They also cultivated “money plantations” in the Caribbean.

The Spanish conqueror who first had Montezuma’s drink was Hernan Cortes. It was served in a golden cup. Cortes, of course, was more interested in the golden cups than the drink. Montezuma’s drink was flavored with vanilla and spices and reduced to froth the consistency of honey. The drink was served cold and gradually dissolved in the mouth.

Montezuma (c. 1466 – 1520; reigned 1502 – 1520) was actually Montezuma II.

Wangari Maathai (1940 – 2011)

Riddle 116

(CD 3 track 30)

Vocabulary		
to develop	to found	to conserve
activism	to be targeted	an assassination
to win a seat	parliament	overwhelming
a PhD	a recipient	to be awarded

- 1) I was born in 1940 in Kenya.
- 2) As a child, * I developed a love of trees.
- 3) Girls in Kenya * rarely received an education.
- 4) I was lucky * and studied in the United States and Germany.
- 5) Upon my return to Kenya, * I founded * the Green Belt Movement *
to plant trees * and conserve the environment.
- 6) My pro-democracy activism * was not popular * with my government.
- 7) I was called a “crazy woman” * and was targeted * for assassination.
- 8) In 2002, I won a seat in parliament * with an overwhelming 98% * of the vote.
- 9) I was the first * East African woman * to earn a PhD.
- 10) I was the recipient of * the first Nobel Peace Prize *
awarded to an African woman.
- 11) Who knows who I am? I am Wangari Maathai.

Notes:

Her countrymen call her “Mama Miti,” the mother of trees.

Wangari Maathai’s Nobel Peace Prize was for “her contribution to sustainable development, democracy, and peace.”

In addition to being elected to parliament, she served as Assistant Minister for Environment and Natural Resources. She was also the first woman to become a university department head (veterinary medicine).

She and the Green Belt Movement have assisted in helping women plant more than 30 million trees on their farms and on school and church compounds.

Dr. Maathai died in Nairobi, Kenya, on September 25, 2011, after a long battle with cancer.

The Outback of Australia

Riddle 137

(CD 4 track 14)

Vocabulary

boundaries	nonexistent	urban
a diversity	a landscape	a sand dune
an umbrella (of stars)	to carpet	blistering
shimmering	a mirage	a horizon
a myth	the Aborigines	to intrigue
sacred	feral	

- 1) My boundaries are nonexistent.
- 2) You'll know when you get here * because of the feeling * I'll give you.
- 3) I am a lonely place, * because most of the people * in my country *
live in urban coastal areas.
- 4) However, about 150 million sheep * and the world's largest cattle station * are here.
- 5) You'll find a diversity of landscapes – * rocky hills and sand dunes.
- 6) The night sky * is an umbrella of stars, * and after a rain, *
wildflowers carpet the red sand.
- 7) The blistering sun * creates shimmering mirages * on my endless horizons.
- 8) The myths and great stories * of the Aborigines * will intrigue you.
- 9) Uluru, * the large sacred rock formation, * is here.
- 10) The kangaroos won't surprise you, * but one million feral camels might.
- 11) You'll be in a part of Australia * that the Aussies call the Outback.

Notes:

A cattle station is a cattle ranch. The 150 million sheep outnumber the human population by about 130 million.

Australia is like no other continent when it comes to pests! There are 4,000 species of ants, 348 species of termites, 1,500 species of spiders, 7,786 species of flies, 20,816 species of butterflies. The world's most venomous spider, the Sydney funnelweb spider, is in Australia. There are about 140 species of land snakes and 32 species of sea snakes. It is also home to the saltwater crocodile, the world's largest reptile (the record is 23'). The crocodile population is about 150,000.

It is home to the world's largest wild population of dromedary camels. They were imported between 1840 and 1907 for riding, for use as pack animals for exploration and to supply goods to remote mines and settlements, and for help with construction of rail and telegraph lines.

The Galapagos Tortoise

Riddle 142

(CD 4 track 19)

Vocabulary

lonesome
a subspecies
to bask
bone

rare/rarer/rarest
extinct
an herbivore

a creature
cold-blooded
a shell

- 1) This is the story * of Lonesome George * of Pinta Island.
- 2) He is the rarest * living creature on Earth.
- 3) He is the only one * of his kind left.
- 4) When he dies, * his subspecies will be extinct.
- 5) This giant * cold-blooded animal * travels at a speed of * .19 miles per hour.
- 6) After waking,* he likes to bask in the sun * for a few hours.
- 7) He's an herbivore * and normally eats * seventy to eighty pounds of food daily.
- 8) He is between ninety * and one hundred years old.
- 9) He could possibly live * another fifty years.
- 10) He has a shell made of bone, * but don't call him a turtle!
- 11) Lonesome George is a resident * of the Galapagos Islands, *
and he is a Pinta Island Galapagos tortoise.

Notes:

The Pinta tortoise was believed to be extinct until 1971, when a researcher spotted Lonesome George. He was taken to the Darwin Research Center on Santa Cruz Island. Zoos have been offered a \$10,000 reward for a Pinta female, but it has never been claimed. (Each Galapagos tortoise is unique to the island it inhabits and has different DNA.)

In 1991, George gained the company of two females from Española Island. They both laid eggs several times, but all proved infertile. At this writing (2011), scientists have replaced the two females with two "fresh" ones, also from Española Island, hoping they will have better luck. If successful, George will be able to pass his genes along, even if not by a true Pinta mating. Search "Lonesome George" on the internet for an update.