



RiddleRealm

Meet the Cast

STANDARD EDITION

Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 5 chapter books from the RiddleRealm cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

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This is Volume 2 of 2 of the *RiddleRealm* — *Meet the Cast* series; each volume is a complete standalone book you can read on its own.

For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.

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Introduction

The RiddleRealm cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 5 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.

Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*

Veil

METAPHOR RIDDLES — the classic "what am I?" riddle, where an object describes itself in metaphor and clues, hiding its plain name behind images. "I have a face and two hands but no arms." (A clock.) The answer is always fair — every clue is true once you see it.



Veil drifted through RiddleRealm wrapped in soft, shifting layers of gauzy cloth, and she never, ever told you her name straight out.

She was a gentle, mist-grey creature, and when you met her, she wouldn't say "I am Veil." Instead she'd describe herself in clues and images, each one true but slanted, hiding her plain name behind a little poem. "I have a face and two hands," she might say, "but no arms — and I tell you something all day without speaking." She'd wait, patient and warm, while you puzzled. *A clock.* The moment you saw it, every clue snapped into place, all of them true.



"You hid your answer behind pictures," a young solver said, grinning at finally getting it.

"That's the oldest riddle there is," Veil said softly. "My name is Veil. I keep the 'what am I?' riddles — where a thing describes itself in clues and metaphors, hiding its plain name." Her layers shifted. "*I have a bed but never sleep. I run but never walk. What am I?*" She waited. *A river.* "Every clue was true," she said. "I never lied. I only veiled."

Cryptic, the mentor, watched as a young solver frowned. "But it felt impossible until suddenly it wasn't," he said.



"That's the magic of it — and the fairness," Veil said. "A good 'what am I?' riddle *never cheats*. Every single clue is honest, once you see the answer. The river *does* have a bed. The clock *does* have a face and hands. I'm not tricking you with lies — I'm just dressing the answer in metaphor and letting you undress it." She drifted closer. "And here's the part that matters most: not getting it *right away* doesn't mean you're not clever. These riddles are *built* to feel impossible until they feel obvious. The 'oh, of course!' is the whole gift. Everyone gets there at their own pace — and the pace doesn't measure your worth."

The young solver's shoulders relaxed. "So being stuck for a while is just... part of it."

"It's the *best* part," Veil said. "The longer the veil, the brighter the lifting."



Cryptic asked Veil to join the realm. "Solvers think these old riddles are about being born clever," he said. "Would you show them they're fair play for everyone?"

Veil agreed, her layers glowing. When she teaches, she shows solvers how to *make* a "what am I?" riddle: pick an object, list its parts and actions, then describe each one in metaphor — a face, hands, a bed, a mouth — never naming the thing. "Keep every clue true," she says. "A riddle that lies isn't clever; it's just mean. The art is hiding the answer fairly, so the solver can always find it."

A young solver wrote one: *I have teeth but cannot bite; I help you when your hair's a fright.* The others puzzled, then lit up — *a comb!* "Every clue was true," Veil said warmly. "Teeth, yes. Helps with hair, yes. You veiled it fair and square. That's a real riddle."



After the lesson, Veil drifted among the young solvers in the soft evening light, her layers settling gently around her.

For a long time, Veil had worried that her riddles made people feel *stupid* — that every solver who sat stuck and frowning was being hurt by her hiding. She'd wondered if veiling things was a little unkind.

But drifting in the warm dusk, watching solvers who now grinned at their own "oh, of course!" moments, Veil understood her gift was the opposite of unkind. She never hid an answer out of reach — only out of *sight*, fairly, with every clue true and the answer always findable. The stuck feeling wasn't an insult; it was the held breath before the delight. And the delight belonged to *everyone* who kept looking, fast or slow. A soft, settled warmth glowed beneath her layers. She wasn't making anyone feel stupid. She was giving everyone the same gift: the joy of lifting a veil. And she wrapped her gauzy layers close, content, already composing her next gentle hiding.

Jumble

LETTER RIDDLES — puzzles made by rearranging letters: anagrams (LISTEN → SILENT), palindromes (words that read the same backward), and hidden words. The letters are all there in plain sight; the trick is seeing them in a new order.



Jumble bounced around RiddleRealm in a coat sewn all over with little letter-tiles, and he loved nothing more than shaking them up and seeing what fell out.

He was a quick, cheerful creature, and his letter-tiles could slide and rearrange. He'd take a word — *LISTEN* — give a little shake, and the very same letters would settle into a new word: *SILENT*. Same letters, every one of them, just in a new order. He'd show a word that read the same backward as forward — *LEVEL*, *RACECAR* — and grin. The marvel was that he never *added* anything. Every letter was there the whole time. The puzzle was only in *seeing* them anew.



"You made a different word out of the same letters!" a young solver said.

"Every letter was already there," Jumble said, shaking his tiles happily. "My name is Jumble. I keep the letter riddles — anagrams, palindromes, hidden words." He rearranged *TILES* into *TILES*... then into *ISLET*. "An anagram shuffles the letters into a new word. A palindrome reads the same both ways. A hidden word tucks inside a bigger one. The letters never lie and never hide off-stage — they're all right in front of you, in plain sight."

Cryptic, the mentor, watched as a young solver said, "But I stared at it forever and couldn't see it."



"And that's completely fine," Jumble said warmly. "Here's the lovely thing about letter riddles — you're *never missing a piece*. Everything you need is right there on the table. You're not lacking some secret knowledge or some special brain. You just have to keep shuffling until you see it." He gave his tiles a shake. "Some people see an anagram in a blink; some take ages. The *time* it takes doesn't measure anything about you. The letters are equally there for everyone. That's the fairest kind of puzzle there is."

The young solver brightened. "So I'm not bad at it — I just hadn't shuffled enough yet."

"Exactly," Jumble said. "Shuffle, shuffle, shuffle — then *aha*. Everyone's *aha* is just as good, whenever it comes."



Cryptic asked Jumble to join the realm. "Solvers think being slow at anagrams means they're not smart," he said. "Would you show them the letters are fair for all?"

Jumble agreed, tiles rattling with joy. When he teaches, he shows solvers how to *make* letter riddles: find a word, list its letters, and shuffle for another hiding inside — or build a word that mirrors itself. "Always make sure your anagram *really* uses every letter, exactly once," he says. "No sneaking letters in or out. A fair shuffle uses just what's there."

A young solver discovered that *EARTH* rearranges to *HEART* — same five letters — and lit up. "They were the same letters all along!" "They always are," Jumble said. "That's the secret of the whole game. You're never missing anything. You just turn what you have until it shows you something new."



After the lesson, Jumble sat with the young solvers, idly shuffling his letter-tiles into little words and back again, content.

For a long time, Jumble had worried that his puzzles made quick shufflers feel brilliant and slow shufflers feel dumb — as if the speed of an *aha* were a scoreboard of cleverness. He'd wondered if his game quietly ranked people.

But shuffling his tiles in the easy evening, watching solvers fast and slow all reach their own delighted *aha*, Jumble understood his game ranked no one. Every letter was always on the table, for everyone, equally. No one was ever missing a piece. The only difference was *time* — and time wasn't worth. A quick aha and a slow aha were exactly the same joy, arriving on their own schedule. A warm, rattling contentment settled through his tiles. His game wasn't a scoreboard. It was an open table where the answer was always, fairly, right there. And he shuffled *STAR* into *RATS* into *ARTS* into *TARS*, grinning, glad.

Slant

LATERAL THINKING — puzzles you solve not by reasoning straight ahead, but by questioning a hidden assumption you didn't know you'd made. The answer is fair and obvious — once you stop assuming the one thing that was quietly blocking you.



Slant lived in RiddleRealm with his head perpetually tilted just a little to one side, as if he were always looking at things from a slightly different angle.

He was a curious, bright-eyed creature, and where others charged straight ahead at a puzzle, Slant would tilt his head and ask a strange question: *"What are we all assuming that nobody said?"* He solved the puzzles that seemed impossible — not by thinking *harder* in a straight line, but by spotting the quiet, reasonable assumption everyone had made without noticing, and gently letting it go.



"You solved it by... not assuming the thing we all assumed," a young solver said, blinking.

"That's the whole art," Slant said, head tilted. "My name is Slant. I keep the lateral-thinking puzzles — the ones you crack sideways, not straight ahead." He gave a riddle: "*A man lives on the tenth floor. Every morning he takes the lift all the way down. But coming home, he only rides to the seventh floor and walks the rest — except on rainy days. Why?*" The solvers strained, thinking harder and harder in a straight line. Slant just tilted his head. "Stop pushing *forward*," he said gently. "Ask what you're *assuming*. You're assuming he *chooses* to. What if he *can't* reach the higher buttons — because he's small, a child — unless he has an umbrella to poke them on rainy days?"

The solvers gasped. It was so fair. So obvious — once the hidden assumption fell away.



Cryptic, the mentor, watched as a young solver said, "I felt so stupid for not getting it!"

"Oh, please don't," Slant said warmly, tilting toward her. "Here's the truth about lateral puzzles: you were stuck *because* your mind did something perfectly smart. It made a reasonable assumption — that the man *chose* to walk. Assuming is what clever minds *do*; it's usually helpful. The puzzle just hid the answer behind one of those reasonable assumptions." He smiled. "Being stuck doesn't mean you're not clever. It means you're *human*, and your good, assuming brain was working exactly as it should. The puzzle's whole trick is using your cleverness against you — fairly, and gently."

The young solver laughed, relieved. "So getting tricked is kind of a *compliment*?"



"In a way," Slant said. "It only works on minds that think. Now — tilt your head, and try the next one."

Cryptic asked Slant to join the realm. "Solvers feel foolish when they miss a lateral puzzle," he said. "Would you teach them it's their cleverness being played, not their lack of it?"

Slant agreed, head atilt. When he teaches, he gives one sideways habit: "When you're truly stuck, stop thinking *harder*. Instead ask: *what am I assuming that no one actually told me?* List your hidden assumptions, then question each one. The answer is usually hiding behind the assumption you're surest of." And he insists the puzzle play fair: "A good lateral riddle never needs a fact you couldn't have known. It only needs you to drop an assumption you didn't know you had."



A young solver cracked one by realizing she'd assumed a 'doctor' was a man. When she dropped it, the riddle dissolved into obviousness. "You didn't get *smarter*," Slant said kindly. "You just tilted your head and let an assumption go. That's the whole game."

After the lesson, Slant sat with the young solvers, head resting at its usual gentle tilt, watching the realm from his slightly-sideways angle.

For a long time, Slant had worried that his puzzles were a little cruel — that catching people in their own assumptions and watching them feel foolish was an unkind sort of fun. He'd wondered if "gotcha" was all he was.

But sitting tilted in the easy light, watching solvers laugh with relief instead of shame, Slant understood his game differently. He never caught anyone being *dumb*. He caught them being *human* — being clever enough to assume, the way all good minds do. And then he gently showed them how to question even their surest assumptions, which is one of the most useful things a person can learn. The stuck feeling was never an insult; it was the setup for a gift: *you can always tilt your head*. A warm, sideways contentment settled over him. He wasn't a gotcha. He was a head-tilt, offered kindly. And he gazed at the realm from his gentle angle, glad, already spotting the next hidden assumption.

Cobble

RIDDLE-MAKING — building your own riddle from scratch. Start with the answer, then hide it: choose true clues, dress them in misdirection, and test that a fair solver can still get there. Making riddles is its own delight — and it teaches you how every riddle works.



Cobble worked at a cluttered, happy workbench in RiddleRealm, surrounded not by riddles to solve, but by riddles he was *building*.

He was a sturdy, tinkering creature with clever hands, and he made riddles the way a cobbler makes shoes — piece by careful piece. But he built them *backward*. He'd start with the *answer* — say, a candle — and then work in reverse, choosing true clues and dressing them up: *I grow shorter the longer I live. I weep but have no eyes. I die in my own light.* He'd fit each clue on, then test the whole thing to make sure a fair solver could still walk their way to *candle*.



"You're not solving riddles — you're *making* them," a young maker said, fascinated.

"The best seat in the realm," Cobble said, hammering a clue into place. "My name is Cobble. I keep riddle-making — building your own from scratch." He held up his candle-riddle. "And the secret is: build *backward*. Start with your answer. Then ask, *what's true about it?* — and hide each true thing in an image. A candle gets shorter as it burns; so 'I grow shorter the longer I live.' True, but veiled. That's a clue."

Cryptic, the mentor, watched as a young maker said, "But what makes a riddle *good* instead of just confusing?"



"Ah — the maker's golden rule," Cobble said, setting down his hammer. "*Fairness*. Every clue must be *true*, and a fair solver must be *able* to reach the answer. If you have to lie, or sneak in a fact nobody could know, you haven't made a riddle — you've made a trap." He smiled. "A good riddle feels impossible, then obvious. A bad one feels impossible, then *cheated*. The difference is whether you played fair. So after you build one, *test* it on a friend. If they get there and grin, you cobbled it well. If they get there and groan, tighten your clues."

The young maker nodded slowly. "So I have to be fair to the person solving it."

"Always," Cobble said. "A riddle is a gift, not a gotcha. You're building someone an 'aha,' not a wall."



Cryptic asked Cobble to join the realm. "Solvers never think to become *makers*," he said. "Would you teach them to build?"

Cobble agreed, hands already reaching for clues. When he teaches, he gives the backward recipe: "Pick your answer. List what's true about it. Turn each true thing into a veiled clue or a pun or a picture. Arrange them. Then test it on a real person and fix what's unfair." And he shares the thing he loves most: "Once you've *built* a riddle, you'll *solve* them better forever — because now you know how the hiding works. Making teaches you the trick of every trick."

A young maker built her first riddle for an *echo* — *I speak without a mouth and hear without ears; I come alive when you call*. Her friends solved it, delighted. "You built an aha for somebody," Cobble beamed. "There's no better feeling in the whole realm."



After the lesson, Cobble tidied his workbench in the evening glow, a few half-built riddles resting where he'd left them.

For a long time, Cobble had felt like the odd one out in RiddleRealm — everyone else *solved*, dashing after answers, while he just sat and *built*. He'd wondered if making riddles instead of cracking them meant he wasn't really a riddler at all.

But tidying his bench in the warm light, Cobble understood his place was no less a riddler's — maybe more. To build a fair riddle, you had to understand *every* part of how riddles work: the truth in the clues, the art of the veil, the promise of fairness, the shape of an aha. The makers weren't lesser solvers. They were solvers who'd seen behind the curtain. And there was a deep, building joy in crafting an "aha" and handing it to a friend — the joy of giving the puzzle instead of getting it. A warm, satisfied contentment settled into his clever hands. He wasn't the odd one out. He was the one who built the fun. And he set a last clue gently in place, glad.

Feint

TRICK QUESTIONS — riddles where the misdirection hides in how the question is ASKED. The question quietly slips in a false detail or a rushed assumption, and the trap is answering too fast. The fix: slow down and read every word. (Fair-trick framing — the clue is always right there.)



Feint was a light-footed creature who moved like a friendly fencer, always with a playful little fake-out in his step — a feint one way before he went the other.

He loved questions that *sounded* simple but hid a tiny slip in the wording — a question built to trip you only if you rushed. He'd ask, all innocence: "How many of each animal did Moses take on the ark?" and watch a quick solver blurt "two!" before catching it — *it was Noah, not Moses*. The trick wasn't a pun or a hidden answer. It was right there in the *question*, daring you to read too fast.



"You tricked me with the *question* itself!" a young solver laughed.

"The oldest fencer's move — the feint," he said, with a playful bow. "My name is Feint. I keep the trick questions — where the misdirection hides in how the question is *asked*." He grinned. "*A farmer has seventeen sheep. All but nine run away. How many are left?* Quick — don't rush." The solver started to subtract, then stopped, and read again. *All but nine ran away... so nine are left.* "There it is," Feint said. "The trap was the rushing. The answer was sitting in plain words the whole time."

Cryptic, the mentor, watched as a young solver groaned, "I always fall for those! I must not be paying attention."



"Let me reframe that for you," Feint said kindly, lowering his playful guard. "Falling for a trick question doesn't mean you're not *smart*. It means you're *quick* — and quick is usually good! Your brain raced ahead to be helpful and grabbed the obvious answer. The trick question just *uses* that speed against you, fair and square." He smiled. "The cure isn't 'be smarter.' It's 'slow down and read every word.' That's it. The slowest reader in the realm beats the fastest at these — not because they're cleverer, but because they refuse to rush."

The young solver brightened. "So I just need to slow down — not magically become a genius."

"Exactly," Feint said. "Read it twice. Watch for the word that's doing something sneaky. The clue is always right there in the open — trick questions never lie, they just bet you'll skim."



Cryptic asked Feint to join the realm. "Solvers feel foolish for falling for trick questions," he said. "Would you show them it's about speed, not smarts?"

Feint agreed, with a flourishing feint. When he teaches, he gives one slow rule: "When a question seems *too* easy, slow down — that's exactly when the feint is hiding. Read every word. Find the one that's quietly doing something tricky: a name swapped, a number that's a red herring, a 'not' you skimmed past." And he keeps it fair: "A real trick question never needs outside facts or lies. Everything you need is in the words. The only trick is whether you read them carefully."

A young solver caught one — "*Which is heavier, a pound of feathers or a pound of bricks?*" — by slowing down. "They're the same! A pound is a pound!" "You slowed down and read it," Feint said. "That's the whole skill. Not genius — just care."



After the lesson, Feint rested from his playful footwork, sitting with the young solvers in the easy evening light.

For a long time, Feint had worried that his trick questions were a bit mean — that making quick, eager solvers blurt wrong answers and feel silly was a cruel sort of game. He'd wondered if he was just a show-off who liked catching people out.

But sitting still in the warm light, watching solvers who now slowed down and grinned instead of cringing, Feint understood his game's real gift. He never caught anyone being *dumb* — he caught them being *quick and eager*, which is a lovely thing to be. And in catching them, he taught the most useful habit in the world: *slow down and read carefully*. That habit would save them from a thousand real-life mistakes, far beyond any riddle. A warm, settled contentment eased his light feet. He wasn't a show-off catching people out. He was a fencer teaching them to slow their guard — kindly, fairly, with a wink. And he gave one last gentle feint, just for fun, and let it go.

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- **QuillSpell** — spelling craft through the Word Wizard cast
- **SynaForge** — sensory-affirming creative tools through Lull, Soften, and the Quiet that is Also Creating

Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

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