

RHYME TIME

Hink Pinks, Hinky Pinkies, Hinkety Pinketies, and announcing the birth of Hink Pink

Swinks and Hink Pink Swink Thinks!

by Jock Mackenzie

Some students get quite a kick out of these rhyming definitions while others seem to find them, well, not so much fun. My experience has been to introduce (or in many cases, re-introduce) the idea, run with it if it works, or let it go if it doesn't. For my money, the following Level Two and Three challenges are more fun and well worth dealing with—at least to see if they fly with a particular group. Rather than creating worksheets (you could call them playsheets), my preference is to use the Hink Pink activity to begin or end classes over a period of days. Another option is to have students create the riddles in spare moments and then hold a contest pitting one group against another, with only the students who chose to participate taking part in an EXHIBITION COMPETITION.

The clue regarding syllables comes from the number of syllables in the type of riddle. Is it a “Hink Pink” (one syllable words) or is it a “Hinky Pinky” (hink – y = two syllables)?

LEVEL ONE – Hink Pinks and Hinky Pinkies

A “Hink Pink” is a riddle whose answer is two, one-syllable rhyming words.

Riddle: What do you call an extra seat?

Answer: Spare Chair.

A “Hinky Pinky” is a riddle whose answer is two, two-syllable rhyming words.

Riddle: What do you call a pleased father?

Answer: Happy Pappy.

Students, initially, should be introduced to Hink Pinks and Hinky Pinkies that are relatively straightforward. Next, more difficult ones could be attempted. Finally, students could be asked to invent their own.

My students often had difficulty preparing the riddle part. Intuitively backward in design, the student would think of two rhyming words for an answer but would often use one of the words when asking riddle, e.g., answer = fat cat then the riddle became “What do you call a fat kitty?” Oops! This is an excellent time to allow students to use both a rhyming dictionary and a thesaurus.

The second most common problem is nonsensical answers. Students would find any two rhyming words and then try to force some kind of riddle. If the answer were Chase Face, no riddle that I know of would enable anyone to make sense of the answer. By getting students to critique one another's riddles and answers, embarrassment and futility are avoided.

LEVEL TWO – Hinkety Pinketies

The “Hinkety Pinkety” is a riddle whose answer is two, three-syllable rhyming words.

Riddle: What would you call an evil preacher?

Answer: Sinister Minister.

LEVEL THREE – Hinkhinkety Pinkpinketies, Hink Pinkies, and so on.

The “Hinkhinkety Pinkpinkety” is a riddle whose answer is two, four-syllable rhyming words.

Riddle: What term would describe philanthropic interchange?

Answer: Generosity Reciprocity.

The “Hinky Pinks” are riddles whose answers rhyme, as always, but in this case, the first word has two syllables, the second word has one syllable.

Riddle: What would you call an over-excited boyfriend?

Answer: Gung-ho Beau.

For “Hinky Pinketies”

Riddle: What do call hunger by the campfire?

Answer: Firelight Appetite.

For “Hink Hinks” and Hinky Hinkies” or any of the other variations if they begin with H's, the answers are homonyms. (A homonym is one of two or more words that have the same sound and often the same spelling but differ in meaning.)

Hink Hink Riddle: What do you call an ordinary aircraft?

Answer: Plain Plane.

Hinky Hinky Riddle: What might you be in if you ate too many brine soaked cucumbers?

Answer: Pickle Pickle.

LEVEL FOUR – Introducing the “Hink Pink Swink,” a 3-word challenge

The only difference with a “Hink Pink Swink” is the addition of the third rhyming word. The HPS may even be easier because more clues are given. It could also be more challenging if longer syllable words are included. Try these:

Hink Pink Swink Riddle: What do you call a regulation used when teaching donkeys?

Answer: Mule school rule.

Hink Pink Swinky Riddle: What would you call a square dance party in a village of jesters?

Answer: Clown town hoedown

Hink Pink Swinkety Riddle: What would you call a fight involving chefs throwing their recipe collections?

Answer: Cook book donnybrook.

LEVEL FIVE – Finally, the “Hink Pink Swink Think,” a 4-word challenge

This four-word rhyming definition builds on the tradition of its predecessors. It has all of the same permutations and combinations but adds one more word.

Hinkety Pinkety Swinky Thinky Riddle: What would you call a farmhouse for a poorly nourished, recently married genius?

Answer: Underfed, newlywed egghead homestead.

I think the success of Hink Pink Rhyming Definitions depends largely on teacher enthusiasm and timing. If the teacher is one who encourages students to join the avowed proud crowd of wordsmiths, who enthuses over the process as kids fiddle with a riddle, and who is thrilled with the solution resolution, then kids are more likely to enjoy rhyme time.

Timing is also important. To me, timing means both when and for how long. Having offered the new HINK PINK SWINK and HINK PINK SWINK THINK, let me offer HINK PINK TIME as an exit strategy—whenever there is ample time. Too often, I have seen students lined up at a classroom door, ready to exit at the bell. I assume that the prepared lesson ended early and the teacher had no “fill-in-the-idle-moment” activities up his sleeve. Enter HINK PINK TIME. Students who successfully answer the Hink Pinks, Hinky Pinketies, Hinky Pinkety Swinkswinketies, etc. can line up at the door—and even while they're there, they can still mentally participate in the action.

I am a big fan of *The Scholastic Rhyming Dictionary* by Sue Young. I would also recommend this web site: <http://www.rhymer.com/RhymingDictionary/>

Despite officially retiring in 2005, Jock continues his involvement in education by working in schools, and speaking at teacher gatherings. He shares his ideas in teacher reference books and on his blog (jockmackenzie.wordpress.com). This activity is adapted from a draft of Jock's second teacher reference book. The book's working title is “Poetry and Song.” 

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