THE INFLUENCE OF RIDDLES ON CULTURE AND EDUCATION

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DOI:https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.24081050

Abstract
Riddles have long been regarded by peoples around the world as one of the most concise and entertaining genres of oral folklore and as an effective means of developing wisdom, ingenuity, intellectual ability, and concentration. Their significance has not diminished over time; on the contrary, their many educational and developmental benefits are increasingly recognised. The advancement of modern knowledge has also led to the emergence of new and diverse riddles and puzzles. This article examines the influence of riddles on education and culture.

Keywords: riddles, logical thinking, culture, education, speech development, riddle genres, customs.

People have created many remarkable and useful forms of oral literature, among which riddles occupy a particularly important place. The origins of riddles can be traced back to ancient times. They help people develop their intellectual abilities, sharpen their wits, and enhance their resourcefulness. Mahmud al-Kashgari notes that riddles were known in ancient times as “tabzug”. He cites the expression “Tabzug‘uq tabuzdim” (“I asked him a riddle”). This evidence indicates the ancient origins of the riddle tradition. Riddles have the following genre characteristics:

1. They are brief and concise in form.
2. They may take either poetic or prose form.
3. Their purpose is to challenge the audience to identify an object or phenomenon concealed within the text.
4. They indirectly describe the features of animals, plants, celestial bodies, and objects from everyday life, inviting the audience to identify them.
5. The object to be guessed is usually singular, although it may sometimes consist of two or more items.
6. The principal literary device used in riddles is metaphor. [4, 77]

These characteristics also make riddles enjoyable and uplifting. It is no coincidence that riddles are often described as one of the most entertaining genres of oral literature. The following are some examples:

1. It has shoulders but no head;It has legs but no hands. (A chair)
2. A stick on the outside,Paint on the inside. (A pencil)
3. I saw thousands of needles, Yet not one had an eye. (A hedgehog)
4. My short grandfather is inside,While his beard is outside. (A turnip)
5. A golden stake beneath the ground,A nourishing food for all around. (A carrot)

The final example is a well-known two-line poetic riddle among the Uzbek people, and many know that its answer is a carrot. Like numerous other riddles, it is based on metaphor. The expression “golden stake” alludes to the carrot’s golden-orange colour and stake-like shape, as well as to the fact that most of it grows underground and can be eaten. Guided by these clues, listeners try to work out the answer.

Folk riddles play an invaluable role in helping individuals grow into well-rounded, capable, and responsible members of society. To a certain extent, riddles interpret and reflect the life, living conditions,

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culture, and customs of a people. They contribute significantly to the development of children's worldviews, cognitive abilities, vocabulary, and breadth of thought. They also increase children's enthusiasm for and interest in learning. By reflecting on a riddle, children broaden their thinking, develop an aesthetic outlook, and become accustomed to observing and analysing life from different perspectives. [3, 100] Another important benefit of riddles is that, while searching for an answer, children consider different approaches, which helps develop their critical thinking. Such activities can also contribute to stronger verbal abilities. In particular, the systematic use of riddles in learning can enhance their educational effectiveness and help young learners develop a critical attitude towards the events and phenomena around them. This, in turn, can lay the foundations for their development into mature individuals. Intelligent and perceptive young people have always been one of the key factors determining the quality of education in any society and era.

When considering the influence of riddles on culture, it is important to recognise that they are undoubtedly created in ways that reflect the lifestyle, living conditions, customs, culture, and broader experience of a particular people. The regular use of riddles, their continued transmission to younger generations, and the preservation of this tradition encourage each nation to remember its culture and customs and foster greater respect for them. For example, in the riddle "A thousand holes in a single hollow" (Answer: a thimble), anyone trying to solve it may investigate the object and, once the answer is discovered, be reminded of traditional Uzbek handicrafts such as sewing and embroidery. If someone shares this riddle with another person who struggles to solve it, explaining that the answer is one of the tools used in traditional crafts further draws attention to this aspect of cultural heritage. Riddles of this kind are widely known among the people.

According to their period of origin and content, riddles can be divided into two groups:

Traditional riddles are a body of riddles rooted in the distant past of a people. They encode objects and phenomena that reflect the way of life and socio-aesthetic views of our ancestors throughout history. In earlier times, riddles sometimes served as a means of determining social, political, spiritual, and cultural relationships between people. At that time, they were not merely forms of entertainment, as they often are today; rather, they served as tests of intelligence, strength, and determination. Riddles were reportedly used to select leaders (kings). During conflicts, the correctness or otherwise of commanders' answers to riddles could determine the victor and help prevent unnecessary bloodshed.

Solving riddles can be just as valuable for developing logical thinking as solving mathematical problems and exercises. Some pupils regard solving riddles as mere amusement. This view is mistaken, because whenever a riddle is posed, the pupil has to engage their intellect, reflect, and reason. [1, 85] Riddles have even served as tests of intelligence for prospective bridegrooms when young men and women were choosing suitable life partners. Certain legends and fairy tales in oral folklore also confirm these observations.

For example, according to the Greek myth of the Sphinx, the wise Oedipus not only saves his own life by correctly answering the creature's riddle but is also appointed ruler of the wealthy and exceptionally beautiful city of Thebes. Similarly, in the Uzbek folk tale "The Wise Girl", the king tests the intelligence and wisdom of the girl he intends to marry by posing a riddle before deciding to marry her. In a number of fairy tales, the protagonist defeats evil giants and wicked witches by solving riddles and thereby achieves their goal. In short, traditional riddles are unique artistic examples of our ancient cultural heritage. They offer insight into the accumulated social experience of our ancestors, as well as their reflections and observations concerning the surrounding world and existence.

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New riddles. These are created under the direct influence of traditional riddles and generally preserve their conventional forms, artistic devices, and methods of concealing meaning. However, they primarily address contemporary themes. This is one of the factors that ensures the continuity and ongoing vitality of the riddle genre.

People observed particular rules and calendars when reciting riddles because they regarded them as a form of magical speech. For example, in accordance with their Christian beliefs, Russians recited riddles during the two-week "Svyatki" festival, held from 25 December to 5–6 January to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Among Uzbeks and Tajiks, by contrast, riddles were traditionally recited during the long winter evenings after farmers had completed the autumn harvest. Reciting riddles during the daytime was prohibited so that it would not interfere with daily work.

Our ancestors believed that if riddles were told about wheat as it sprouted and grew, trees as they blossomed and bore fruit, or animals as they awoke from winter hibernation, evil forces would become envious and harm them. In winter, however, they believed that evil forces also assumed that living nature had died and therefore fell asleep. Such beliefs and perceptions gave rise to the traditional calendar governing when riddles could be recited.

Riddles also had a significant influence on written literature. In classical poetry, they contributed to the development of genres such as lug'z, chiston, muammo, ta'rix, and muvashshah. In the twentieth century, they helped establish the writing of literary riddles as a tradition in Uzbek children's poetry. The tradition initiated by outstanding poets such as Jahon Otin Uvaysiy and G'afur G'ulom has been continued by writers from different generations of children's literature, including Shukur Sa'dulla, Ilyos Muslim, Adham Rahmat, Po'lat Mo'min, Safar Barnoyev, Tursunboy Adashboyev, Rauf Tolib, and S. G'afurov. The creative work of the prominent children's poet Quddus Muhammadiy in the genre of poetic and literary riddles is particularly noteworthy for its productivity. In poems such as "Toping-chi?" ("Can You Guess?"), "Viz-viz", "O'ylab top" ("Work It Out"), and "Buni toping bolalar, aytib bermang onalar" ("Children, Guess This; Mothers, Don't Tell Them"), the poet draws on traditional elements characteristic of folk riddles. In "Militsioner amakim" ("My Uncle the Police Officer"), however, he describes the distinctive features of law-enforcement officers in the form of a riddle, concealing the profession while presenting it in an honourable light. As a result, each stanza of the poem takes the form of a riddle. The six stanzas comprise six riddles that together convey a single overarching poetic idea. Each stanza describes a particular quality of those who protect the public, while concealing the identity of the person to whom these qualities belong. The answer to each riddle is revealed in the final line of the stanza:His uniform and shoulder straps fit him just right, A leather holster at his side, his pistol held tight. The bravest of young men, confident and strong, Children, do you know him? Tell me, who is he? — My uncle the police officer, wearing his belt! In this way, the poet creatively employed the compositional structure of the riddle genre and succeeded in creating new subtypes of poetic literary riddles. Accordingly, alongside folk riddles, literary riddles of this kind are widely and effectively used to educate and nurture younger generations, serving didactic and moral purposes. Riddles have now become an integral part of children's cultural and intellectual heritage. They help children respond quickly, think resourcefully, understand the essence of objects and phenomena more deeply, and observe their surroundings with sensitivity and attentiveness.

In conclusion, riddles play an important role in developing people's wisdom, resourcefulness, logical and critical thinking, and overall intellectual and moral growth. They are also essential for children's speech development and their ability to express their thoughts freely. Riddles have maintained an important place in human life from ancient times to the present day.

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