

Structures in Language: Riddle Poems

PREPARATION

Needed: Slide Presentation ([make a copy](#)) / **Optional:** Student Handout

BACKGROUND

A kenning is a **literary device in which two words are used to describe or name something**. A compound word or pair of words is used as a **poetic substitution** for a noun. *Couch potato, gas guzzler, bookworm* and *skyscraper* are modern-day examples of kennings. In this lesson, students will solve and create riddle poems using kennings.

LESSON PRESENTATION

(1). Begin with the slide presentation. Say, "**I'm going to share some RIDDLE POEMS with you but you can't say a word. Raise your hand when you think you might have a guess.**" Share the examples of the Kenning Riddle Poems. Display the clues slowly, one at a time, and call on students to guess. Elicit more than one guess, if possible, with the first clue. The answers will become more obvious as additional clues are displayed.

(2). The slides will **introduce the term "kenning"** and lead students to **identify the structure** of the riddle poem (4 lines with two-word clues).

Explain that all cultures have words and phrases that are nicknames for things, words and phrases that only the people in that region recognize and use. For example, in Australia, someone might refer to a young child as an **ankle biter!** You might ask students how they think that nickname came about (e.g., toddlers bite things as their teeth come in or crawling children's heads are at ankle height).

(2). **Practice creating kennings** as a class. Begin with people, animals, and objects more familiar to students. Here are some ideas to get you started.

MOM – hug giver, meal maker, homework helper

NURSE – temperature taker, bandaid giver, wound washer or cut cleaner

CAT – lazy licker, sofa scratcher, pouncing pet

BASKET – laundry catcher, picnic carrier, egg holder

(3). Tell students that it's really fun to combine kennings to form riddle poems. Use the kennings developed as a class to create a riddle poem together.

(4). If time allows, have students work independently or in pairs to try to create their own Kenning Riddle Poems. The two-page STUDENT HANDOUT is probably better for older students; you may prefer the one-pager with primary students. Or, just have students experiment and write on blank lined paper!

If students seem frustrated, try writing a few more together as a class.

Name: _____

Kenning Riddle Poems

A kenning is made up of two words. The words describe a person, place, or thing using two words. Follow these steps to write your own kennings.

<u>Step One</u>	Choose a word.	<u>Example:</u> toothbrush
	Ask: "What does it do?"	cleans teeth
	"What are its parts?"	plastic handle bristles (brush)
	"What is similar?"	scrubber; broom

<u>Step Two</u>	Think of words that are related or similar.
clean	—————→ wash; scrub; polish
teeth	—————→ chompers; biters; canines
broom	—————→ sweeper; mop

Now, try to think of clever two-word nicknames! Here are a few:

chomper sweeper
biter broom
canine cleaner
tooth tickler

You don't have to use only the words you wrote. Others might come to mind! Look at the phrases above. We could turn it into a riddle!

<p>I AM A chomper sweeper biter broom canine cleaner tooth tickler WHAT AM I?</p>

Now, try to come up with your own! It can be tricky, so you can use scratch paper, too!

YOUR WORD →	
WHAT DOES IT DO?	
WHAT ARE ITS PARTS?	
WHAT IS SIMILAR?	

Now, think of related and similar words and try to think of clever two-word nicknames! If you can think of at least 3, you have enough for a riddle!

I AM A

WHAT AM I?

My Kenning Riddle Poem

Use your imagination to describe something or someone using kennings (two-word phrases).

I AM A

WHAT AM I?