

Puzzles and Riddles



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Included in this supplement are a variety of puzzles and riddles you can use to spice up your adventures.

Puzzles and riddles have a strong history in fantasy literature, stretching from the ‘Riddle of the Sphinx’ to Tolkien’s tricky “What have I got in my pocket?” It is only natural that they would also fit well in an RPG game. Solving a difficult puzzle or riddle gives players a strong sense of satisfaction they cannot get from defeating monsters in combat. Conversely, failing to solve a puzzle or riddle can be extremely frustrating and turn an otherwise enjoyable adventure into an exercise in frustration. There are a few things to remember when incorporating puzzles/riddles into a D&D adventure.

Do not make the solution to a puzzle/riddle required to continue the adventure. Instead, use them to give the party some sort of advantage, or greater reward. For example, solving a riddle may allow the party to access a secret door and bypass a tough encounter. Alternatively, it may reveal an item that will make the next encounter easier to win. There will be times a party will fail to solve a puzzle/riddle and you do not want that failure to derail the entire adventure.

If possible, work in a way to provide clues as needed. Since solving a puzzle/riddle is rewarding, and failure is frustrating, we would prefer that players solve the puzzle/riddle! Try to anticipate in-game methods you can use to provide clues to stumped players. For example, a wandering monster may provide a clue or possess a scrap of paper with a crucial piece of information.

Riddles

I’m tall when I’m young and I’m short when I’m old. What am I? *A candle*

If I drink, I die, If I eat, I am fine. What am I?
A fire

If I have it, I don’t share it. If I share it, I don’t have it. What is it? *A secret*

What is light as a feather, but even the strongest warrior couldn’t hold it for more than a minute? What is it? *His breath*

What is so delicate that saying its name breaks it? *Silence*

What has one eye but cannot see? *A needle*

They come out at night without being called and are lost in the day without being stolen. What are they? *Stars*

What does through towns and over hills but never moves? *A road*

What has a head but never weeps, has a bed but never sleeps, can run but never walks, and has a bank but no money? *A river*

Who makes it, has no need of it. Who buys it, has no use for it. Who uses it can neither see nor feel it. What is it? *A coffin*

Take off my skin and I won’t cry, but you will. What am I? *An onion*

The more you have of it, the less you see.
What is it? *Darkness*

Ripped from my mother's womb, beaten
and burned, I become a blood thirsty killer.
What am I? *Iron ore*

All about, but cannot be seen. Can be
captured, but cannot be held. No throat,
but can be heard. *Wind*

I drive men mad for love of me, easily
beaten, never free. *Gold*
Each morning I appear to lie at your feet.
All day I will follow you no matter how fast
you run, yet I nearly perish in the midday
sun. *Your Shadow*

It cannot be seen, it weighs nothing, but
when put into a barrel, it makes it lighter.
What is it? *A hole.*

You saw me when I never was and where I
could not be. And yet within that very
place, my face you often see. What am I? *A
reflection*

A box without hinges, lock or key, yet
golden treasure lies within. What is it? *An
egg.*

What has roads but no wagons, rivers but
no water and hills but no trees? *A map*

It speaks with a hard tongue, it cannot
breathe, for it has no lung. What is it? *A bell*

I give you a group of three. One is sitting
down, and will never get up. The second
eats as much as is given to him, yet is
always hungry. The third goes away and
never returns. *Stove, smoke, and fire*

At the sound of me, men may dream, or
stamp their feet. At the sound of me,
women may laugh, or sometimes weep.
Music

You heard me before, yet you hear me
again, then I die, 'till you call me again. *An
echo*

My life can be measured in hours, I serve by
being devoured. Thin, I am quick. Fat, I am
slow. Wind is my foe. *A candle*

You cannot keep this until you have given it.
Your word

I have six faces, but cannot smile. I have 21
eyes, but cannot see. What am I? *A die*

A cloud was my mother, the wind is my
father, my son in the cool stream, and my
daughter is the fruit of the land. A rainbow
is my bed, the earth my final resting place,
and I'm the torment of man. Who am I?
Rain

What is put on a table, cut, but never
eaten? *A deck of cards*

What travels up a hill faster than it travels
down? *Fire*

You can see me in water, yet I am not wet.
Your reflection

Make a hole in me and I will have fewer
holes. *A net*

The more you take, the more you leave
behind. *Footsteps*

With potent, flowery words speak I, Of
something common, vulgar, dry; I weave
webs of pedantic prose, In effort to
befuddle those, Who think I wile time away,
In lofty things, above all day. The common
kind that linger where Monadic beings live
and fare; Practical I may not be, But life, it
seems, is full of me! And so adventurer I
cry, can you tell me what am I? *Riddles*
(*Riddler*)

I cannot be measured until I am done, but
how you miss me when I am gone. *Time*
(*Lifespan*)

Arriving stealthily during the night, I greet
the world with the morning light. By the
midday sun, I have again departed. *Dew*

You will always find me in the past. I can be
created in the present, But the future can
never taint me. *Memories*

I have not flesh, nor feathers, nor scales,
nor bone. Yet I have fingers and thumbs of
my own. *Gloves*

You use a knife to cut up my head, but you
weep beside me when I am dead. *An Onion*

I do not breathe, but I run and jump. I do
not eat, but I swim and stretch. I do not
drink, but I sleep and stand. I do not think,

but I grow and play. I do not see, but you
see me every day. *A leg*

What gets bigger, the more you take out of
it? *A hole*

Making mortal privation once firmly in
place. An enduring summation etched in my
face. *A tombstone*

I am a word, who's hardly there. Remove
my start, and I'm a herbal flair. *Sparsely*

What can the hand only sow, yet the eye
only harvest? *Writing (stories)*

In marble walls as white as milk,
Lined with a skin as soft as silk,
Within a fountain crystal clear,
A golden apple doth appear;
No doors there are to this stronghold,
Yet thieves break in and steal the gold.
An egg

Whatever we caught, we threw away;
whatever we did not catch, we carry. *Lice*

Four hang, four sprang, two point the way,
two to ward off dogs, one dangles after,
always rather dirty. What am I? *A cow*

If you had taken me in my youth, haply you
would have drunk the blood shed from me;
but now that time has finished making me
old, eat me, wrinkled as I am, with no
moisture in me, crushing my bones
together with my flesh. *A raisin*

We are little airy creatures, All of different
voice and features; One of us in glass is set,
One of us you'll find in jet, Another you may
see in tin, And the fourth a box within; If
the fifth you should pursue, It can never fly
from you. *Vowels*

I have nothing inside me and everything is inside me, and I grant the use of my virtue to all without charge. *A mirror*

Fill me, that I may tell you what is lost. *A ledger*

We outnumber man trillions to one, owe our allegiance to the sun. Our armies stand everywhere, silent and still. Yet whisper through the wind we will. *Grass or a field*

I have a tail, I have a head, yet a serpent I am not. *A coin*

How many letters are in the answer to this riddle? *Four*

What means everything to you, yet nothing to me? *Your life*

I have no legs to walk, but my steps you still stalk. Over rivers and mountains I give the guidance you seek, unspoken for I cannot speak. *A map*

I am hoarded by nobles, Kings rarely break me, and peasants rarely find me. I am valuable, but can be shared by all. *The Truth*

Puzzles

These puzzles can be adapted in a variety of ways to an adventure setting. Most of the puzzles have some sort of limitation to their solution, such as only moving one piece. These should be imposed through magical means as necessary. Included in each puzzle is a short box text that may be used to easily incorporate the puzzle into an adventure.

Puzzle 1

The old man's gaze sweeps across you and your friends. It feels as if his eyes penetrate deep into your soul.

"You want me help do you? You must first prove yourself worthy. You will face many foes and you must show me you can outsmart them."

He pulls 7 copper pieces from his pocket and places them on the table in two rows.

[show players first diagram]

"Show me your cunning! You may move only one coin, but you must end up with two rows, each made up of four coins"

He crosses his arms and waits expectantly.



They must form two rows of 4 by only moving one coin.

The solution is to move the coin on the far left on top of the coin shown below:



Puzzle 2

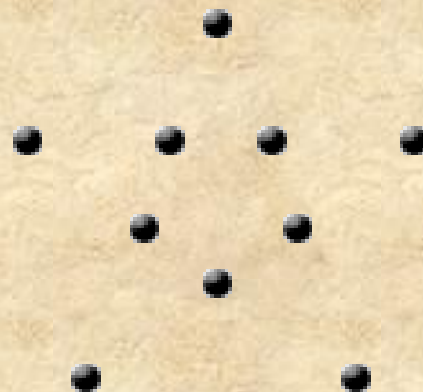
The old man's breath reeks of garlic and spittle flies from his mouth as he addresses you, "You think yourselves smart, do you? There is a difference between smart and cunning. You must be cunning! Show me that you are worthy of my efforts!"

He reaches into his pocket and places ten copper coins on the table. "You must arrange these ten coins into 5 rows. Each row must contain 4 coins, no more, no less. Someone who is cunning will find the solution. Wake me when you are done."

With that, he closes his eyes, leans back and begins to snore loudly.

Place ten coins into 5 rows, with each row containing 4 coins, without placing any coin on top of another coin.

Solution:



Another example of the solution using real coins.



A distance of 12 feet separates the ring upon which you stand from the square island in the center.

[Show players figure below]

Beyond the solid stone is a maelstrom of magical energy. You see no other solid surfaces.

Resting on the stone next to you, are two mithrial planks, each 11 ½ feet in length.

The fey says, "You may have the object if you can reach the island using only those planks."

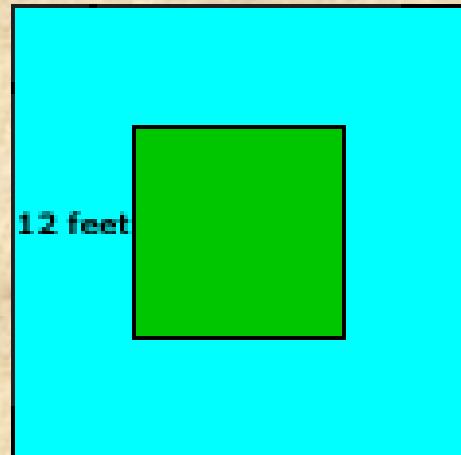
Puzzle 3

This puzzle will require the characters to cross a 12 foot gap using only two 11 1/2 foot boards. Feel free to put something suitably nasty in the 12 foot gap.

The fey creature looks at you with some annoyance.

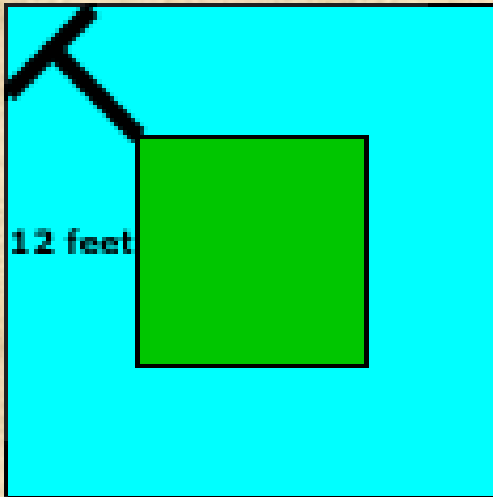
"You seem to have made it this far, aye, but I will not surrender my valuables as easily as you might think."

With a snap of his fingers, you are instantly transported a strange and terrifying place. You stand upon a square of solid stone, hollow in the middle. Within the hollow space floats another small stone island, upon which is placed the object you desire.



Magic will not work if the fey pocket dimension. If the characters try to use any objects besides the plank, the fey will remind them that is not allowed and threaten to take the object and leave.

Solution:



Puzzle 4

In this puzzle, the characters are provided with a set of ropes that each take exactly one hour to burn. The ropes **do not** burn at a uniform rate. They are required to measure exactly 45 minutes.

Solution: Start burning one rope at both ends and a second rope at one end only. When the first rope finished burning (which will take 30 minutes), light the other end of the second rope. 45 minutes is up when the second rope finishes burning.

Puzzle 5

You drop onto a platform surrounded by a ring of lava. You see the faint shimmer of a magical barrier gradually cover the opening above.

Seven pipes, about 1' in diameter, are spread evenly around the outside wall and spew lava into the pool surrounding the platform. You can just see the top of another large pipe, easily 3 or 4' in diameter, submerged in the lava pool.

On the platform in front of you is a control panel with 7 levers and a button. The levers are marked with the numbers 1 through 7. The button is marked 'Override'.



In this puzzle, the characters are presented with 7 lava spewing pipes arranged in a circle. Each lever on the control panel with change the state of a pipe (if it is spewing lava it will stop, if it is not spewing lava it

will start). The problem is, if a character flips the switch for any given pipe, it will change it, **and its two neighboring pipes**, to the opposite of their current states. That is, if a pipe is spewing lava, it will go stop. If it is not spewing lava, it will start. The goal is to turn off all 7 pipes so the group can exit through the large pipe at the bottom. The button resets all pipes so they all spew lava.

Only one switch can be activated at any one time. If the characters attempt to activate more than one switch at the same time, randomly determine the order in which they are activated and apply the effects in sequence.

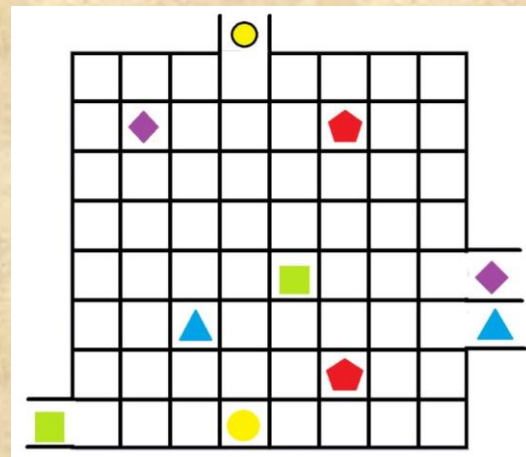
Solution: The easiest solution is to throw the switches in sequence, starting at switch one and proceeding clockwise, or counterclockwise. After all 7 switches have been toggled in sequence; none of the pipes will be spewing lava.

This is a very visual puzzle and the easiest way to present it is to represent the pipes with circles on a paper, or battle mat, and use dice to show when a pipe is spewing lava. Remove the die when a pipe is no longer spewing lava.

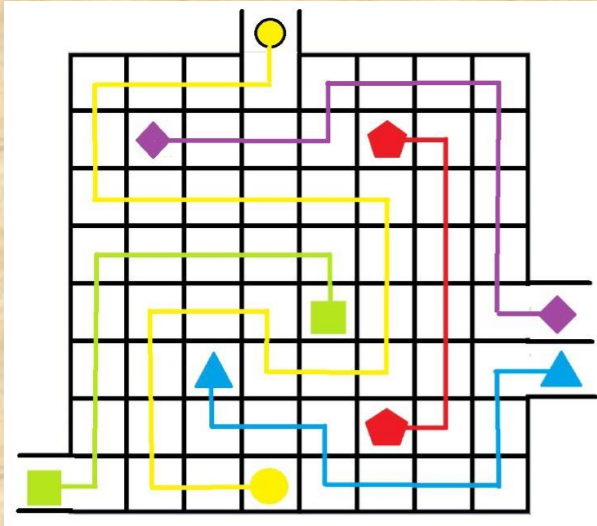
Puzzle 6

This is a pathing puzzle. It can be used in a variety of ways. One method would be to require the characters to each start on one of the colored locations and walk to the other location.

As they walk on a square, the square becomes impassable to others (As you can see, each square is used once, and only once in the solution). If they backtrack, the square is once again passable (that way they can reset the grid by returning to their starting locations. When the entire grid has been traversed, and the five characters are at their finishing locations, whatever needs to be unlocked or revealed will be triggered. The red position is located in the center, rather than the outside, and the player can start on either space and work toward the other.



Puzzle 6 Solution



Puzzle 7

This is a logic puzzle. The characters are presented with three individuals; they could be NPC, monsters, magic mouths, or anything capable of speech. One of the individuals is truthful and the characters need to determine which one it is, perhaps to find a safe route or the path to the treasure.

Each individual will offer one statement:

Orc: The goblin tells lies.

Goblin: The kobold tells lies.

Kobold: The orc and the goblin tell lies.

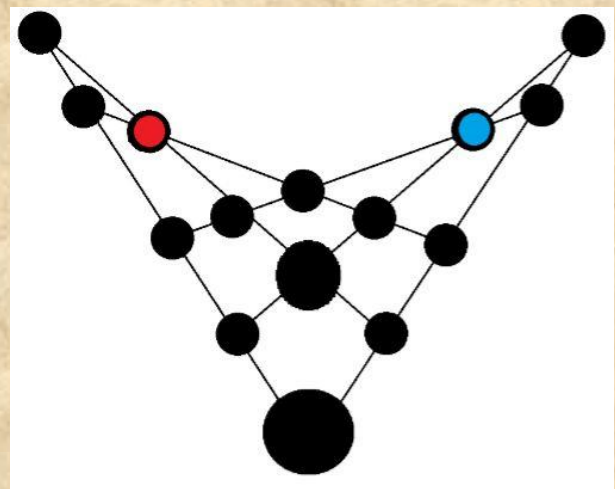
Solution: The goblin is telling the truth.

The orc lies when he says the goblin is lying.

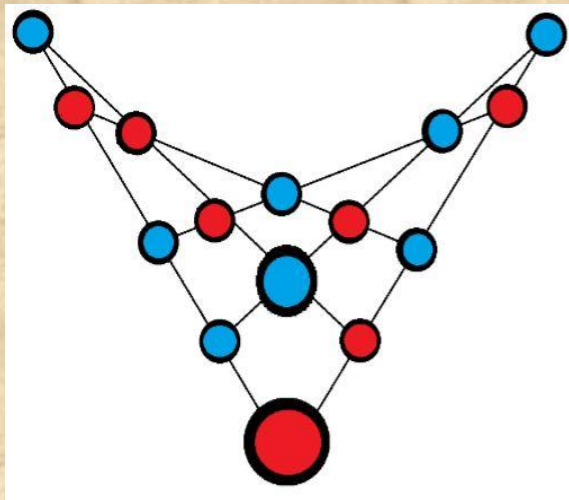
The goblin is telling the truth when he says the Kobold is lying. The kobold is lying when he says both the orc and goblin are lying since one of them is telling the truth.

Puzzle 8

In this puzzle, the characters are presented with a pattern. Two locations in the pattern are already colored red and blue. The characters have the ability to color each of the other locations either red or blue (the original two locations may not be changed). The goal is to color the pattern in such a way that there is never three of any single color in a row along any of the straight lines. In a dungeon setting, the locations could change color magically by touch, or perhaps provide a bowl of colored stones or gems next to the pattern. Depending on how hard you want to challenge your players, you could allow them to figure out the solution condition (all circles lit and no rows of three of the same color) through trial and error.



Puzzle 8 Solution



Puzzle 9

In this puzzle, the characters find a bottle stoppered with a cork, the top of which extends past the top of the bottle by about an inch. Inside the bottle, they can see an object they will need to get out. It can be a key, small note, or any other object able to fit through the mouth of the bottle. Two additional facts make getting the object out more difficult. First, the bottle is unbreakable. No mundane or magical means will allow the characters to break open the bottle. Second, no matter how hard they try, they are unable to pull the cork from the bottle. The cork cannot be broken into pieces or destroyed.

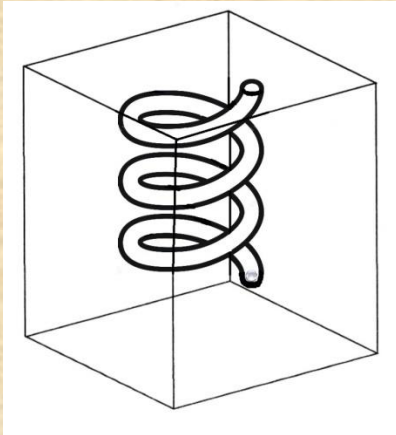
Solution: Simply PUSH the cork INTO the bottle and then remove the item located inside.



Puzzle 10

This is a complex puzzle with a few magical elements. As the characters enter the puzzle space, they will see a fragile translucent glass sphere with an object inside. The object could be a small key, a note, or some other item they need. The sphere will slide into a tube set into a metal, or stone, block and roll to the bottom. The block should be part of the floor or wall to prevent the party from moving it. It is preferred that the tube have several twists and turns to prevent easy solutions to the puzzle. In order for the characters to observe the tube, and its twists and turns, it works best if the block is transparent. 5th edition lacks a glasteel spell, but it is reasonable to assume some mage could figure a way to make metal, or stone, transparent. As a final twist, the sphere has anti-magic effect radiating from it. No spells cast on the sphere will work. This will prevent easy solutions like levitate. The goal is for the party to get the sphere out of the tube to recover the item inside.

Solution: Fill the tube with water, or some other liquid, to make the sphere float to the top of the tube.



Puzzle 11

In this puzzle, the character must choose one of three colored gems. The gems are colored red, green, and blue. The characters are given the following riddle:

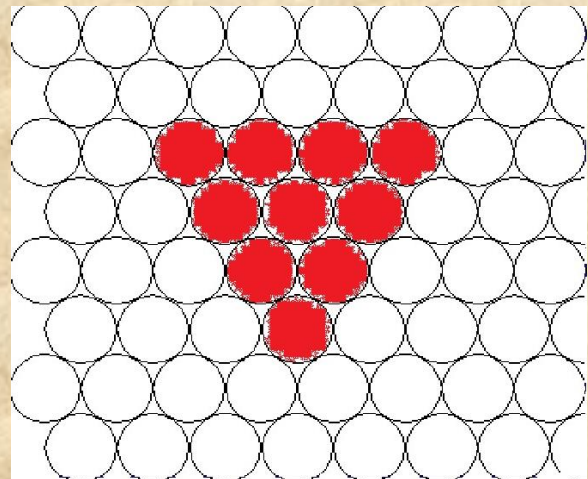
2/5 of Elves guess know the right answer,
3/7 of dwarves, but no goblin are ever
correct!

Solution: Red is the correct color. The fractions refer to the proportion of letters for 'RED' in each of the races names. **E**lves, **d**warves, **g**oblin.

Puzzle 12

In this puzzle, the characters are presented with 10 gems laid out on a table. There are multiple depression in the table, most empty, but each of the gems occupies one space. The point of the triangle formed by the gems points toward the open doorway the group used to enter the room. On the opposite side is a magically sealed doorway, the group wishes to open.

Sealed Doorway



Open Doorway

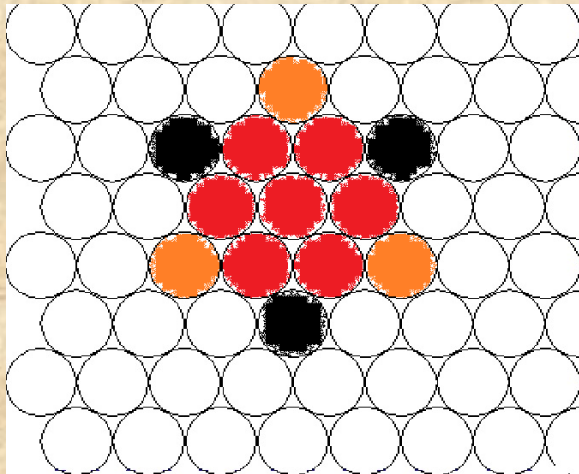
As soon as one gem is removed from the pattern, the open doorway will close and magically seal. Replacing the gem will open the doorway, so long as the point of the triangle is pointed toward the doorway.

The characters can only move 3 gems from their starting locations. If they attempt to move more than 3, any additional gem will be stuck in place and no force will move it.

Replacing a gem to its starting location will allow another gem to be moved.

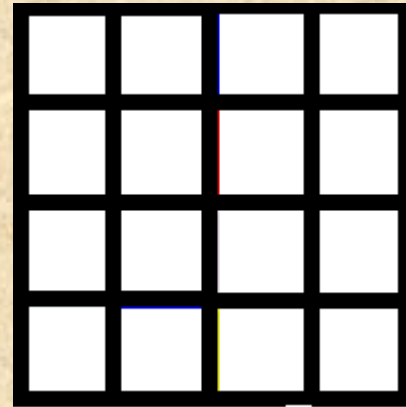
Through trial and error, the party should realize they need to make the point of the triangle point toward the sealed doorway by moving only three gems.

The solution is show below. The black gems have been moved to the orange locations, reversing the point of the triangle and opening the sealed doorway.

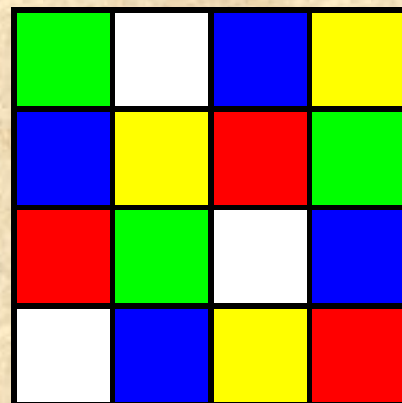


Puzzle 13

In this puzzle, the characters are presented with 16 colored gems, or stones, and a 4 by 4 grid.



The 16 gems are colored: 4 blue, 3 red, 3 white, 3 green, 3 yellow. The characters must place the gems such that no color appears more than once in any horizontal, vertical, or diagonal line.



Puzzle 14

In this puzzle, players must place nine weights onto a grid such that it is evenly balanced. The weights vary from 1 to 9, in single step increments. It is a physical manifestation of the magic square puzzle.

Basically, the grid needs to be perfectly balanced in order to solve the puzzle and activate a switch or lock.

Solving puzzle should open a door, or unlock a lock, etc. There are multiple ways you could include this in a dungeon setting, here is one:

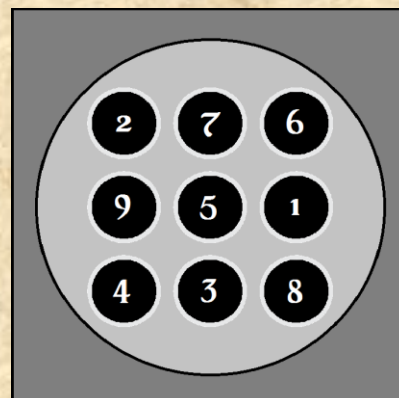
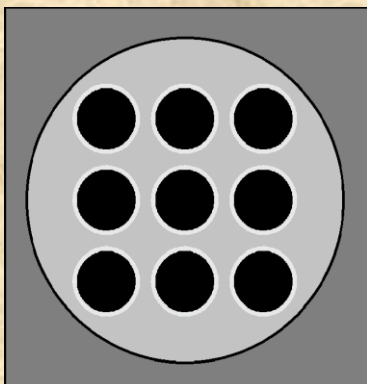
In the center of this room is a pedestal. On top of the pedestal are nine small metal cylinders, of varying heights. They are all the same diameter. There is also a lever on the side of the pedestal.

Etched into the pedestal top is a pattern of 9 circles. The center of the pedestal appears able to move as there is a gap between it and the outside of the pedestal.

Through experimentation the characters will discover:

- The cylinders weigh in increments from 1 to 9. That is cylinder 2 weights twice as much as cylinder 1. Cylinder 6 weights 3 times cylinder 2. Etc.
- The diameter of the circles on the pedestal matches the diameter of the cylinders.
- Pulling the lever causes the circular center of the pedestal to make a grinding sound and tilt slightly unless the weights are arranged correctly. Pulling the lever without the correct solution may also cause some sort of damage to the party (some sort of magical damage based on level).
- Pulling the lever while the cylinders are arranged in the correct configuration will cause the center portion to sink into the pedestal and unlock or open whatever you have placed in the room or dungeon.

The proper configuration is one in which the weight totals equal 15 along each horizontal, vertical, and diagonal axis.



Puzzle 15

This puzzle would be used to open some type of door, either into a room or into a strongbox.

Either etched into the door, or found previously by the players will be a strange riddle,

“THE SERENE MAY NOT ENTER HERE. LET GO YOUR EMOTIONS AND BECOME LIVID TO PROCEED”

On the door are three combination type dials. They are set in a vertical row. Each has numbers differing in range and increments.

The top dial ranges from 1 to 100 in increments of 1.

The middle dial ranges from 1 to 10 in increments of 1.

The bottom dial ranges from 25 to 1000 in increments of 25.

Players must figure out the correct combination: 51, 6, and 500 from the clue given. The answer is the roman numeral value for the word LIVID: LI=51, VI=6, D=500.

Puzzle 16

This puzzle is called “Petals Around the Rose”, a fact that might be mentioned to the players at the start of, or sometime during, play.

It is a simple pattern matching task using four or five tradition (using pips to indicate value) six sided dice. An NPC will challenge the PC's with the task of providing the correct value following a roll. The NPC will first roll the set of dice and make a declaration of the correct answer. The NPC will then roll another set and ask the PC's for the correct answer.

The rules to determine the correct answer are simple. The center pip on any die face represents the ‘rose’ and any pips surrounding the center pip count as ‘petals’ and add to the total. Any die that does not possess a center pip is ignored (as is ‘1’ since there are no pips, or ‘petals’, surrounding the center pip).

Thus: ‘1’, ‘2’, ‘4’, and ‘6’ have no value. A roll of ‘3’ adds 2 to the value. A roll of ‘5’ adds 4 to the value.

It will usually take several rolls for players to begin to understand how the number is calculated. For this reason, the puzzle is best presented in a low pressure setting, such as a challenge by an NPC to a group attempting to acquire information.

Dastardly Trap

Read the first text box when players open the door to the hallway.

In front of you is a 50 foot hallway with a door on the opposite end. In the center of the hallway is a 10 by 10 foot pit. The pit is 40 feet deep and the bottom is lined with iron spikes, a greenish ichor appears smeared across their sharp tips.

The pit the players see is an illusion. Where the players see a pit, is actually solid floor. BUT...the 10 feet after the illusory pit is a trap door to a REAL pit, with a nasty surprise at the bottom!



If players attempt to jump across the illusory pit, they will land on the real pit and be dumped 30 feet into the room below, surrounded by undead. The trap door will then spring shut.



As you can see, no matter where the player stands, they will be subjected to multiple attacks. As an option, you may have the bars descend into the floor allowing the undead to surround the player.