

Introduction

Teacher Suggestions

With the advent of artificial intelligence, it is generally agreed that the most useful skill and tendency of the future will be flexible thinking. Flexible thinking, the heart of all creativity, involves looking at things from more than one direction. The exercises included in this series, will require the solver to do just that. Everyone loves a puzzle that sparks curiosity and discovery—and these puzzles will engage your students with laughter, focus, and the satisfying challenge of finding hidden connections between everyday objects.

Thinking Skills

Associative reasoning—recognizing relationships between objects, ideas, and words—is a fundamental component of creative and critical thinking. Associative Reasoning Puzzles build this skill by encouraging students to recognize important features of an item, consider its associations, and connect it to a related object. These teachable skills foster flexible thinking and prepare students for open-ended problem solving.

Role of the Student

Though these activities are fun and inviting, they are not merely play. Students must apply careful observation, vocabulary knowledge, and reasoning as they complete the partial spellings and determine relationships between objects. Encourage students to think beyond surface-level connections—does a brush relate to hair, feathers, or cleaning? Is the connection based on use, category, or characteristic?

Role of the Teacher

At first, teachers may need to help students think more broadly about object relationships. This can be done by asking guiding questions, such as:

- What do these two objects have in common?
- How are they used together?
- Could there be a less obvious relationship between them?

Over time, students should be encouraged to ask these questions themselves, building independence and confidence in associative reasoning.

Classroom Application

Associative Reasoning Puzzles is ideal as a sponge activity, warm-up exercise, or independent station work. It lends itself well to individual, paired, or small group work, encouraging cooperative thinking and discussion. As students explain why they matched two objects, they practice articulating their reasoning—an important academic skill across subjects.

The puzzles progress gradually in complexity, allowing teachers to choose the right level of challenge for their students. Because the materials draw from familiar, real-world objects, they provide a rich context for building vocabulary, background knowledge, and cultural understanding—particularly valuable for English language learners.

About the Author

John H. Doolittle, PhD, is an Emeritus Professor of Psychology at California State University, Sacramento, where he taught in the Departments of Psychology, Teacher Education, and Computer Science. John's first of many works with the Critical Thinking Company were the Creative Reasoning Test in 1989, and the Dr. Dooriddles series which started in 1991 and continues today.

John is proud to share authorship of this book series with members of his family, who constructed most of the puzzles, especially his late sister-in-law Meg Gillman, to whom this series is dedicated.

Use a pencil to fill in the missing letters for each picture name. Next, draw a line between each picture on the left and the related picture on the right.

Please note each page contains an extra answer option on the right.



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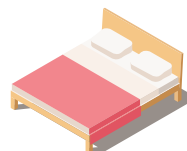
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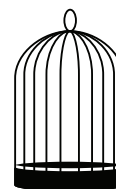
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