

Lateral Thinking Problems

The term lateral thinking was coined by Edward De Bono to denote a creative problem-solving style that involves looking at the given situation from unexpected angles. This approach is typically necessary to the solution of these problems. The term "lateral-thinking puzzle" was popularized by Paul Sloane in his 1992 book Lateral Thinking Puzzlers.

Lateral-thinking puzzle puzzles are usually played in a group, with one person hosting the puzzle and the others asking questions which can only be answered with a "yes" or "no" answer. These puzzles are inexact and many puzzle statements have more than one possible answer. The puzzle is solved when one of the players is able to recite the narrative the host had in mind.

Example

A man walks into a bar, and asks the bartender for a drink of water. The bartender pulls out a gun, points it at the man, and cocks it. The man pauses, says "Thank you" and leaves. What happened?

The question-and-answer segment might go something like this.

Question: Could the bartender hear him? **Answer:** Yes

Question: Was the bartender angry for some reason? **Answer:** No

Question: Was the gun a water pistol? **Answer:** No

Question: Did they know each other from before? **Answer:** No

Question: Was the man's "thank you" sarcastic? **Answer:** No

Question: Did the man ask for water in an offensive way? **Answer:** No

Eventually the questions lead up to the conclusion that the man had the hiccups. His reason for requesting a drink of water was not to quench his thirst but to cure his hiccups. The bartender realized this and chose instead to cure the hiccups by frightening the man with the gun. Once the man realized that his hiccups were gone, he no longer needed a drink of water, thanked the bartender, and left.

The following statement from Apple Inc. shows the value that they put on those people who are able to think out of the box.

"Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. The only thing you can't do is ignore them, because they change things. They push the human race forward. While some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the only ones who will." **Apple Inc.**

Give these problems a try.

**Don't' think that you cannot do these type of problems. Never be afraid to try.
Remember... Professionals built the Titanic and amateurs built the ARC!**

- 1 . Five pieces of coal, a carrot and a scarf are lying on the lawn in front of a house. Nobody put them on the lawn but there is a perfectly logical reason why they are there. What is it?

Solution: They were used by children who made a snowman. The snow has now melted.

2. Frank leaves home. When he tries to return, a man wearing a mask blocks his path. Who was the man in the mask.

Solution: A catcher in a baseball game

3. A man pushed his car. He stopped when he reached a hotel at which point he knew he was bankrupt. Why?

Solution: He was playing Monopoly.

4. A magician stands on a concrete floor holding a raw egg in his outstretched hand. He is able to let go of the egg directly above the concrete floor and have it drop two feet without having it break. How does he do this?

Solution: The egg was dropped from 3 feet

5. A prisoner was put in an escape-proof cell and told that he would be pardoned if he could break out. He was also given permission to keep any plants he wished in his cell. He was released in less than a week. How did he do it?

Solution: He requested a poison ivy plant. Soon after receiving it, he broke out—in a rash. Of course, he then received his pardon."

6. Two policemen walked into a room with no windows and found a dead man who obviously hung himself from the ceiling, though they couldn't figure out how. He was hanging from the middle of a large room with a 10 foot ceiling. There was no chair beneath him that he might have jumped off of, or a table. Just a puddle of water. How'd he do it?

Solution: He climbed on a block of ice put the rope on and then waited for the ice to melt.

7. A man is found dead in a puddle of blood and water on the floor of an otherwise empty locked room. with no windows. How could this happen?

Solution: He stabbed himself with an icicle.

8. A man is lying awake in bed. He makes a phone call, says nothing, and goes to sleep.

Solution: He is in a hotel and is unable to sleep because the man in the adjacent room is snoring. He calls the snorer up (at this hotel, the phone numbers are based on the room number). The snorer wakes up and answers. The first man hangs up without saying anything and goes to sleep before the snorer starts snoring again

7. A man is replacing a wheel on his car, when he accidentally drops the four nuts used to hold the wheel on the car, and they fall into a deep drain, irretrievably lost. A passing girl offers him a solution which enables him to drive home. What is it? (keep you mind out of the drain)

Solution: Use one nut from each of the four other wheels.

8. A man buys rice at \$1 a pound from American growers and sells it for 2 cents a pound a pound. As a result of this he becomes a millionaire. How could this be?

Solution: The man is a philanthropist who bought the rice to sell to poor people at prices they could afford. He started out as a billionaire, but lost so much money in his good works that he became a millionaire! (this is Warren Buffets goal)

9. A man drive his VW van down the freeway at 90 miles per hour. He passes three cars going 60 miles per hour, then gets pulled over by a police officer. He doesn't get a speeding ticket. Why?

Solution: He is driving the wrong way down the freeway.

10. A horse is tied to a 15 ft. rope and there is a bail of hay 25 ft. away from him, yet the horse is able to eat from the bail of hay. How is this possible

Solution: The horse is ties to one end of the rope but the other end of the rope is not tied to anything so the horse walks over and eats the hay

11. A cowboy rode into town on Friday, spent one night in town, and left on Friday. How do you account for this?

Solution: His horse is named Friday

12. You are driving down the road in your car on a wild, stormy night, when you pass by a bus stop and you see three people waiting for the bus: An old lady, an old friend who once saved your life and the perfect partner you have been dreaming about. There can only be one passenger in your car, whom do you choose?

Solution: The old lady of course! After helping the old lady into the car, you can give your keys to your friend and have him drive the old lady. You get to wait for the next bus with your perfect partner.

13. A New York city hairdresser recently said that he would rather cut the hair of 3 Canadians rather than cut the hair of one New Yorker. Why?

Solution: He would rather earn three times as much money!

14. A man comes up to the border of a neighboring country on his motorcycle. The customs officer at the border crossing stops him and searches the man. He finds nothing so he lets him cross. The next day the same thing happens. This goes on every day for several months. Then one day, the man doesn't show up. The border official meets up with him in a restaurant in the city. The officer says, "I know you're smuggling something and it's driving me crazy. It's all I think about. I can't even sleep. Just between you and me, what are you smuggling?" What is the man smuggling?

Solution: Motorcycles.

15. A man was born in 1972 and dies in 1952 at the age of 25. How can this be?

Solution: He's born in room number 1972 of a hospital and dies in room number 1952.

16. The police raid a house to arrest a suspected murderer. They don't know what he looks like but they know his name is John and that he is inside the house. The police bust in on a carpenter, a truck driver, a mechanic and a fireman all playing poker. Without hesitation or communication of any kind, they immediately arrest the fireman. How do they know they've got their man?

Solution: The fireman is the only man in the room. The rest of the poker players are women.

17. A man picked up his rifle and hung up his hat, and then someone blindfolded him. The man walked 100 yards, turned around and shot a bullet straight through his hat. How did he do it?

Solution: He had hung the hat on the end of his gun.

18. A man and his son are in a car crash. The father is killed and the child is taken to hospital gravely injured. When he gets there, the surgeon says, 'I can't operate on this boy, he is my son!!!' How can this possibly be?

Solution: The surgeon can not operate on her own son; she is his mother.

19. There are six eggs in a basket. Six people each take one of the eggs. How can it be that one egg is left in the basket?

Solution: The last person took the basket with the last egg still inside.

20. What five letter word becomes shorter when you add two letters to it.

Solution: Short.

21. Glass breaks, and George and Gracie are dead in a puddle of water.

Solution: George and Gracie are goldfish; and their tank broke

22. Beulah died in Florida, while Craig died at sea. Everyone was much happier with Craig's death.

Solution: Beulah and Craig were hurricanes.

23. A train pulls into a station, but none of the waiting passengers move.

Solution: It is model train set

24. She grabbed his ring, pulled on it, and dropped it, thereby saving his life. How can this be?

Solution: They were skydiving. He broke his arm as he jumped from the plane by hitting it on the plane door, and he couldn't reach his ripcord with his other arm. She pulled the ripcord for him.

25. Bruce wins the race, but the one million dollar prize is given to Max instead.

Solution: Bruce is a horse, Max is the owner

26. Two guards watch as the queen kills the king. The guards then shake hands and leave the room." What just happened?

Solution: The monks guards were playing chess, and one beat the other.