

RYAN'S BIRTHDAY MYSTERY

- Ryan is in a coma!
- Oh no!
- Did someone try to MURDER him?
- Who could have done such a thing to your wonderful friend???
- There are five suspects—
- —and they're all cats!!!
- There's a puzzle for each cat.
- The answer to each puzzle is an English word or phrase.
- Also there's a metapuzzle that uses the answers from those puzzles.

PUZZLE STRATEGY TIP: "INDEXING"

Sometimes when you're solving a puzzle, there's a point where you've figured out all the clues, but you don't know how to extract an answer from them. Often what you need to do is take one letter from each of the answers. *But which letter?* Well, if there's a number associated with each answer, and you haven't done anything with that number, you can try *indexing* into the answer by that number.

For example, look at a clue like this:

Birthday Boy (3)

Usually a number after a clue indicates the number of letters in the answer, but obviously the answer to the clue is "**Ryan**." That leaves the "(3)" as unused information. If you were to interpret this number as an index, you'd extract the third letter, **A**. Which is the grade that you'll get on your puzzle-solving exam! Congratulations!

Buster

"I'm innocent! You have to believe me! Even if lying does run in my family..."

I	R	A	C	S	O	N	W
L	H	M	A	E	B	Y	G
A	I	T	D	I	R	N	L
E	C	N	T	I	O	G	E
O	G	N	D	Y	I	O	A
B	S	E	N	S	T	B	H
U	H	N	O	E	A	K	C
S	A	O	T	R	R	Y	I
T	E	E	O	M	G	A	M
E	E	L	B	I	N	E	E
R	V	L	I	C	K	I	G
D	E	I	A	H	S	N	R
A	T	C	S	A	M	E	O
T	S	U	R	E	A	V	E
E	L	L	I	L	N	G	G

"Go, fatty." (7 letters)

"My Army training tells me that this is going to be a hot mission." (6 letters)

"I have to prepare for the Sabbath." (6 letters)

"I've no right to call myself Mister Manager." (13 letters)

"Return from whence you came!" (3 letters)

"Wait—This is the water I thawed the chicken in." (7 letters)

"They don't allow you to have bees in here." (7 letters)

"This is important: you have to say it in my own words, okay?" (5 letters)

"I'm Chareth Cutestory, a pirate lawyer." (7 letters)

"Have you seen my other pair of pants?" (5 letters)

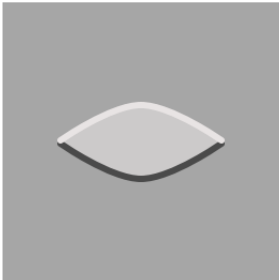
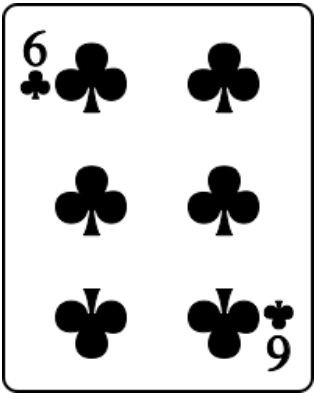
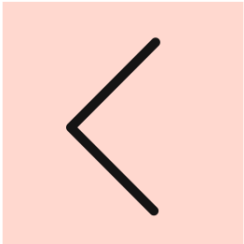
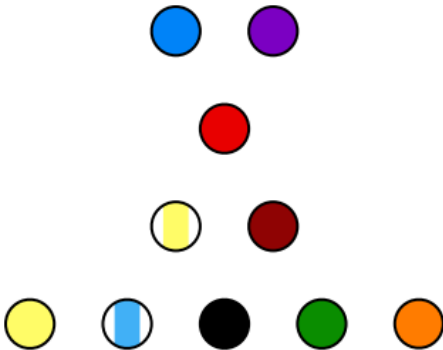
"I've been wondering my whole life who he is. A scientist? A doctor? A senator?" (5 letters)

"My purse overfloweth, as do my high spirits, so a-shopping we must go." (6 letters)



Nimbus

"I recognize all these clues from my favorite Curious Mystery. I'll have no trouble putting them in the right order."



Nixie

"I'm the smartest cat: I have a particularly healthy brain. I love reading—even prodigiously heavy books. And it pains me that nobody loves math problems as much as I do. It's positively heart-breaking."

α = "For some, the chosen name is a noble quest. For others, it's a grim destiny."

β = "A human lurks in the shadows of an alley while his accomplice prepares for her part in the ambush."

γ = "Because you're calling in a favor, you can't be certain of a schedule or route that will meet your every need."

δ = "This cord is your tether to your material body."

ϵ = "Beyond the portal is a magnificent foyer with numerous chambers beyond."

ζ = "A creature caught in the wall can move by swimming."

η = "Its weight increases by a factor of ten, and it ceases aging."

θ = "This bustling planar metropolis holds countless portals to other planes and worlds."

$$\kappa = (\eta * \zeta) \text{ modulo } (\zeta + (\epsilon / 29))$$

$$\lambda = (\theta - \zeta) * (\beta - \mu) * (\eta - \zeta) / (\epsilon + \eta)$$

$$\mu = \gamma - (\beta + \alpha)$$

$$\nu = \delta - (\zeta - \beta)$$

$$1 = A$$

$$26 = Z$$

$\overline{\kappa} \quad \overline{\lambda} \quad \overline{\mu} \quad \overline{\nu}$

Sprite

"You can't possibly suspect me. I have a very low threat index."

In this region we take our themes very seriously, but these Leaders have made some mistakes. (Each Leader has made exactly one mistake.) Inspect their teams, identify the odd ones out, and make a special note of each offender's position in the lineup.

Dante leads the Gym in Tinder Town, where he rewards successful challengers with the coveted Caustic Badge.



Avery of Hollowbone City is in charge of distributing the Downy Badge.



Cycad hails from Cambria Town and hands out the Sediment Badge.



Puristina of Viridian City still carries the Earth Badge, in deference to her predecessors.



Doppell from Kellogg Village hands out the Bookkeeper Medallion. (He doesn't like the word "badge" for some reason.)



Snoogums of Oshkosh Town awards the Binky Badge to any Trainer who can defeat his team (which is most Trainers).



Taco

“I couldn’t have done it—I was moving around all day long, broadening my horizons.”

First I was admiring the Rembrandt, and then the Velázquez. The two huge canvases were so impressive, I almost missed the Vermeer, with her haunting gaze. So I gave that a close look for a while. I could stare at those Old Masters for hours. But then my friend dragged me over to this cheesy Post-Impressionist landscape with a cartoon moon. It looked like a desktop background!

Then we stared at a sea butterfly for a few minutes.

Our guide showed us two bizarre creatures: An amphibian so ancient that it still had gills, followed by an even ancier fish-like thing that didn’t have a lower jaw. How does that even work?

The next part of our outing was completely terrifying. We saw a creature with huge claws that burrowed through the earth. A furry beast that scuttled through the foliage on too many legs. And a deadly monster that ruled the desert with an iron pincer.

By this time it was already dark out. A spider almost landed on my head, and I screamed! I wanted to go home, but my friend wanted to see a bunch of beetles first: One that looked like a string instrument, followed by a weird neon blue one, and then an iridescent little guy that tried to hide from us under a bench. Then, finally, we could leave. The last bug I had to look at was a noisy brown thing.

We admired the spots on *Oncorhynchus masou*, the weird ridge along the back of *Acipenser medirostris*, and the big goofy eyes on *Zacco platypus*. And then I saw a cute little frog!








METAPUZZLE

Using the answers from the other puzzles, navigate the maze and reach Ryan's bed to discover exactly what happened to put him in that coma!

Rules:

- You must not retrace your steps! You can't pass through the same space twice.
- Start in the _____ corner. [emissae]
- Make sure you pass the _____. [gobreatyna]
- You're not allowed to pass over any of the letters in _____. [arvsteibylb]
- Any time after you pass over the *n*th letter in _____, change it to the *n*th letter in _____. (This rule applies **after** the rule about what letters you can't pass over.) [ldargo]
- When you've reached the goal, write down every _____ letter you passed over. [oakskbpylco]

N	I	V	E	R	M	F	O	P	N	K	D	H	A	M	K	I
B	U	A	O	F	P	M	C	C	H	L	E	N	P	M	J	O
G	V		A	T	E	O	Y	T	W		M	B				
I	T		A	U	M	P	A	W	R		G	M				
A	N		I	S	D	T	H	M	A		D	F				
E	Y	H	G	K	D	D	P	L	Q	H	C	O	X	D	R	G
B	A	G	S	I	N	G	B	T	O	I	X	S	T	G	E	N
D	H	R	A	F	P	W		T	J	U	L	A	B	Y		
N	T	M	P	T	N	O		D	T	R	B	P	I	S		
U	F	E	N	M	L	C		S	C	Z	D	S	X	A		
I	E	T	N	B	T	W	Y	N	G	K	C	E	L	O	U	X
A	H	W	I	A	C	I	D	T	W	A	R	F	O	M	E	R
I	L		T	O	P	I	Y	I	N		S	T				
S	B		I	A	A	W	M	B	N		T	A				
A	H		T	S	Y	G	A	C	C		S	C				
S	W	L	Y	A	M	E	U	A	E	T	E	U	A	T	C	W
J	I	C	A	T	R	I	E	L	E	S	L	I	N	G	T	Y