**Divergent Thinking Puzzles**

I like to use these at the beginning of the year to help me learn students’ names. I do a couple at the end of each period. Students can ask any question, as long as I can answer with a yes or a no. Some of these come from a series of books authored by Paul Sloane and Des MacHale titled Lateral Thinking Puzzles.

1. A man is running away from home, a man in a mask is chasing him. Why is the masked man chasing the other man?
2. A woman gave a man a single article of food; he died as a result of eating it. What happened?
3. The woman drowned, but she never left her room. What were the circumstances of her death?
4. Two men were drinking iced tea that was poured from the same container. One died and the other did not. What were the circumstances of the first man’s death?
5. When this book came out only the rich had it. For a long period of time almost everyone had it, and now almost no one has it again. You cannot buy the book at the bookstore or check it out at the library. What book is it?
6. A man was the proud owner of a beautiful and expensive Mercedes sports car. One day he drove it to an isolated area and then smashed the windows, scratched the doors, and tore out the stereo. Why?
7. A well educated stamp collector found an advertisement for a complete set of U.S. stamps for a fraction of what they were worth. He quickly purchased this genuine and splendid collect at a bargain price, but he was very angry. Why?
8. Deep in the forest there was a man found in his swim trunks with a snorkel and facemask. He was miles away from the nearest lake or ocean. How did he die?
9. Little Billy was four years old when both his parents died. His guardian put him on a train to send him to a new home in the country. Since Billy could not read or write, a large sign was put on a string around Billy’s neck clearly indicating his name and destination. Despite the best efforts of the staff, Billy never got there. Why?
10. A man saw something at a certain price and went to buy it. An official refused to sell it to him even though the man had the money and others were sold it later. Later the man was very happy his purchase had been refused. Why was he refused and why was he glad?

Bonus- A woman was at the funeral of her mother when she saw a man she did not know. She thought he was amazing, her perfect dream guy that she was searching for and immediately fell in love. However she did not ask for his name or number and no one else knew who he was. She then killed her own sister. Why?

**Solutions**

1. The men are playing baseball. The man in the mask is the catcher, and the man running away from home is the batter.
2. This is the story of Adam and Eve. Adam became mortal after accepting the apple from Eve.
3. She was in a houseboat that sank.
4. The ice cubes had been poisoned in the first man’s drink.
5. This is the phone book.
6. The man had been involved in a hit and run accident that left a man dead. The man then damaged his car, took a cab back to work, and then called the police to report his car stolen. This is a true story where a man was trying to make it look like a thief had been the driver in the hit and run, but it did not work.
7. The man had recently left his wife for his mistress. The scorned wife started selling all his belongings. The man was buying his own collection.
8. The man had been snorkeling in a lake when a fire was burning in a forest a few miles away. A fire fighting plane came by to pick up water and accidently picked up the man and dropped him on the flyer. Students may say they have heard this story (most likely an urban myth), but others may say they say MythBusters disprove this.
9. Little Billy was a goat who ate his label, and thus no one knew where he was to go.
10. The man was African American and was trying to buy a first class ticket on the Titanic. He was not sold it due to his ethnicity.

Bonus- This has made its rounds on the internet for a few years as a test for serial killers. The email will often state that 90% of serial killers know the answer, but those who are not sociopaths will not. The answer is that the woman killed her sister so there would be another funeral where she would meet her dream guy again.