



# Maryland/DC Odyssey of the Mind

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## Verbal Spontaneous Problem: Stormy Story

A. *When the team members enter the room, tell them, "This is a verbal problem. All team members may compete. Those who choose not to participate must sit quietly in these seats (indicate seats) and watch or leave the room. They cannot participate in any way."*

**B. JUDGE READS TO TEAMS:** (Do not read material in parentheses.)

**(1) You have 2 minutes to think and discuss the problem and 5 minutes to respond. You may ask the judges questions; however, time will continue. You are not allowed to talk to each other during response time.**

**(2) Your problem is to tell a story starting with the prompt "It was a dark and stormy night..." The first person must say the prompt and then continue on with the story.** For example they might say "it was a dark and stormy night when we set out on our adventure." The second team member will continue the story and so on.

**(3) There are 35 tokens on the table. With each response, you will place one of the tokens in the container.** (*point to container(s)*)

(4) Scoring will be as followed

- 1 point for a common response and 5 points for a creative response
- 1 to 10 points for how well your team works together
- 1 to 10 points for the overall creativity of the story

**(5) Speak loudly and clearly. Once time begins, it will not be stopped.**

(6) You should not repeat a response that has already been given. A Judge may ask for you to repeat a response only if it was not heard clearly.

**(7) You will be finished when response time ends or when you have used all the tokens.**

*(After reading the entire problem aloud, repeat the items in boldface. Begin by saying, "I repeat. ")*

### C. FOR JUDGES ONLY:

- (1) Judges should discuss and practice solving the problem before the first team competes. Make any necessary decisions and or notes. All decisions must be applied uniformly to all teams.
- (2) Practice reading the problem out loud before the first team competes. When reading to the team, illustrate the problem by indicating items and portraying actions.
- (3) Place two copies of the Team’s Copy of the problem in full view of all team members before you read the problem to them. They may use them as a reference during the competition.
- (4) Place the sheet with the prompt in full view of the team.
- (5) Place 35 tokens randomly on the table. Tokens can be small wooden cubes, small straws, poker chips, small rocks, etc. Anything that is easily picked up and placed in a container, but not something that distracts team members.
- (6) Place a container or two within reach of all team members. Make sure it is large enough to hold all 35 tokens. Make sure team members place a token in the container with each response.
- (7) No matter how many team members participate, there are still 35 tokens on the table.
- (8) Team members do not have to respond in any certain order nor do they have to have the same number of responses.
- (9) Be sure to give exactly 2 minutes to think and 5 minutes to respond. Timing is critical. Team members responding as time ends may finish and be scored.
- (10) When scoring **creativity of the solution**, think about how cohesive the story was. Was there a beginning, middle, and end, the variety of ideas considered, interesting or unexpected story elements, etc. When scoring **how well the team works together**, consider the extent that all team members are involved in developing the solution: Did the team delegate duties? share ideas? Did the team members value one another’s input?

(10) Score: 1 point for each common response, 5 points for each creative response.

(11) Examples of Common Responses:

- Statements that do not make sense.
- Statements that are not associated with the previous one.
- Statements that are plausible but do not add to the story.
- General descriptive statements (for example, “The pyramid is green”).
- Statements that add to the story but are predictable.

(12) Examples of Creative Responses:

- Original, unexpected or humorous statements that continue the story.
- Statements that continue the story and allow an opportunity to change the story completely.
- Statements that rhyme and continue the story.
- Unusual or humorous comments about a previous response.
- Creative puns that add to the story.

NOTE: If a team member gives a response very similar to a previous one, count it as common. Do not ask team members to explain their answer, or to give a different response. You should ask a team member to repeat a response only if you did not hear it. Time continues.

Prompt

**“It was a dark and stormy  
night ...”**

# Team Copy

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- (2) Your problem is to tell a story starting with the prompt “It was a dark and stormy night...” The first person must say the prompt and then continue on with the story. For example they might say “it was a dark and stormy night when we set out on our adventure.” The second team member will continue the story and so on.
- (3) There are 35 tokens on the table. With each response, you will place one of the tokens in the container.
- (4) Scoring will be as followed
  - 1 point for a common response and 5 points for a creative response
  - 1 to 10 points for how well your team works together
  - 1 to 10 points for the overall creativity of the story
- (5) Speak loudly and clearly. Once time begins, it will not be stopped.
- (6) You should not repeat a response that has already been given. A judge may ask for you to repeat a response only if it was not heard clearly.
- (7) You will be finished when response time ends or when you have used all the tokens.