Sam Swallow and the Riddleworld League: notes for teachers

Sam Swallow and the Riddleworld League tells a story about a boy named Sam Swallow who wants to join a baseball team. Will this be easy? Not for Sam. On the way to the tryouts, he gets sidetracked into a really strange world that's been taken over by Large Cats and a Mechanical Raven. More peculiar still, Sam discovers that he's been turned into a bird! How will he survive? Will he get to join a team? Can he ever find his way home to his family? The challenges multiply. If he's going to free himself—and all the other birds—from their predicament, he has to work with his new friends Cort and Doriana to solve at least 10 riddles and puzzles and reach the far side of Riddleworld. It's quite an adventure. It's a pretty funny book, too. And along the way Sam finds out a few things about baseball—and a great deal about himself.

These notes assume that you've read the book already. You might have noticed how many times Sam runs into Ten Important Things. Sometimes he knocks them over. Sometimes he has to figure them out. He's 10 years old and there are even 10 chapters. I figure there have to be at least Ten Ways to Read *Sam Swallow*. Or maybe I mean Ten Things to Think About while you're reading the book—so this guide to the book is written with that in mind. If you have other suggestions, I'd very much like to hear them.

1. *W-5*

When you start reading a story it can often be useful to do what good journalists do when they're writing for a newspaper: first establish what they call the 'five W's'—*who, what, when, where, why.* In this case, answering Question (1)—'*Who'*—is fairly easy: the book tells Sam's story. We hear what Sam hears. We see what Sam sees. We're inside his head as the story proceeds, and we have to try to work out the answers to the riddles at the same time as Sam is solving them.

Other characters come into the story—Sam's father, mother, sister, and two brothers (one older, one much younger); his tricky uncle Donovan, who seems to have two sides to his character (he's funny, he's crabby; he's supportive, he's dismissive); the Weaver twins; the baseball coach; two pets—and also Sam's friends Cort and Doriana and the flurry of birds who inhabit Riddleworld (do they remind you of the people in Sam's 'real' life?).

Answers to the questions (*2) 'When*' and *(3) 'Where'* are clear as well: the story starts on a summer morning, in Sam's ordinary house at the end of the tramline. But how long does the whole story take? (This is a trickier question. How long do you think Sam's journey takes?)

(4) 'What' happens? The answer to this question is a little more complex. Sam races out of the house to go to baseball tryouts, falls and hits his head, and suddenly the world is transformed, himself included. If he is to get 'home' (both back to his house and around the bases to home plate), he has to solve a series of riddles that will prove his skills.

As for *(5) 'Why?'*—well, this is a different kind of question: all answers to this question need thinking about, maybe by asking 'Why does it matter what Sam finds out?'

2. *The Boy Who Finds Himself*

Sam is Ten Years Old, he tells us, and he's also pretty smart. He loves words and numbers and plays games with them. He's active and determined. He has many talents. But he's also uncertain about a lot of things. He's 'excited and on edge,' for instance. What does 'on edge' mean—literally or figuratively?

Could it mean that he's on the edge of discovery or accomplishment? about to grow? lives on the edge of town? Could it mean that he's marginalized in some way, or thinks he is? Could it mean something else?

For instance, Sam definitely wants to prove his skills to the other kids at school (or to himself?). He's maybe aware of his place in the family (he feels 'alone' on the day this story opens, and he's relatively recently become the 'middle boy' in the family rather than the 'youngest'—does he see his siblings as 'rivals'? If so, rivals for what? affection? attention? praise? Why would he feel such an emotion—doesn't his family support him?). He's also definitely aware of being 'short for his age.' ('*Short*'—but *not little*, he says: what's the difference?) And he wants to be called *Sam.* Why? Why does he want to join a team?

Is the 'team' just the baseball team, or does 'team' also refer to his family, or to having friends? Does he learn to get along with others? Why is it important in the story that at the end he is 'wearing his name' on the back of his uniform? Has he gained confidence? What does he learn about himself? By solving riddles, does he also learn about his own strengths and the riddling play of real life?

3. *Chaos! Adventure! Comedy! Dream!*

What kind of world is Riddleworld? Does it seem illogical—or, within its terms, does everything proceed in logical fashion? Clearly, from a strictly literal perspective, Sam isn't a bird, can't talk to a duck or a cassowary, won't be picked up

by a raven, and doesn't learn to fly. But in Riddleworld, such events are accepted as normal. So is Riddleworld chaotic, or is it misleading, or does it simply express the kinds of upheaval that might lead to creative understanding?

It's less a separate fantasy world, therefore, than a distorted mirror of the real world—like those in amusement parks? (Like the 'hall of mirrors' in Riddle City Maze, perhaps, a riddle within a riddle?) Does the 'reality' of Riddleworld in any way 'reflect' the reality of Byrd City? Are things that happen inside Sam's head any less real than things that happen in his back yard or at the park? (*Can* he solve riddles? *Ca*n he join and team and play baseball? Or can't he?)

In Riddleworld, Sam is told, everything is a riddle, a puzzle: upside-down or backwards. The rooster crows at twilight. The garden grows 'unflowers.' All clues are indirect. It's an '*un'* world—*like* but also *unlike* the world he's been used to. Think about how the syllable 'un' changes the meaning of words. Is Riddleworld *unbalanced, uncertain, uncharted, uneasy, uneven, unexpected, unsettling?* Maybe *uncompromising* and *unconventional*, too. But is it *unfair*? It's not *unfeeling* or entirely *unfriendly.* And what about Sam? Is he *unflappable, unflinching, unhappy*? Does he have to stretch in order to figure out what he has to do?

Sam falls easily from his ordinary end-of-the-tramline world into the extraordinary 'world' of riddles and danger. His quest (to find himself, use his skills, and gain friends and confidence) will bring him back 'Home' by the end, but the heart of the book lies in the comedy and adventure of the riddling world. What connects this world with the 'ordinary world,' then? What connections link Cort and Doriana with Cory and Annie? Do any other real-world characters and things have parallels in Riddleworld? (Sam's shirt and the colour of a barn swallow's feathers? The two Uncle Donovans—one playful and clever, one raucous and crabby—and the two Ravens? The Owls? The Eagle? the Weaver twins? Ollie?) Does the reader make these connections, or does Sam? (Maybe both do, though in different ways—Riddleworld clearly happens inside Sam's brain. But does Sam, in the last chapter, ever reinterpret his adventure, or does he simply accept it?)

More abstractly, do any events or experiences in Riddleworld reflect on values or practices in Sam's 'real' world? For example, if in Riddleworld the Umpire is a clock, does that say anything about people being ruled by time? Does the story that the whispering birds allude to ('The Swallow and His Friends') imply anything about narratives of heroes (or of self-reliance) that children's fiction so often tells? And what does Sam learn about friendship and family that he can bring home with him?

4. *How to Unriddle.*

When his world turns upside down, everything Sam encounters becomes a riddle, a puzzle, a challenge that he has to put his mind to. It's by using his brain (and

working with his friends) that he manages to progress step by step towards his goal. Acquiring skills, he also acquires self-confidence. His story is not just a series of *individual* puzzles that he finds immediate solutions to; it's also a *cumulative sequence* of different kinds of challenge that lead him to understand the advice he's given early on in Riddleworld: *Whenever you think you are done, there will still be more to do.* He learns something, that is, about the puzzle and play of life.

Sam has to solve several kinds of puzzle. They include the following:

a) *anagrams:* where the exact set of letters in a word or phrase can be rearranged to form a different word or phrase. The letters in the word 'rearranged,' for example, can be rearranged into 'green radar' or 'rear garden' or 'rare danger' or 'drag nearer' or 'grander ear.'
b) *conversions*: where one set of data finds an equivalent in a different system or code, as between Imperial and Metric measures, for instance. Sam knows that 1 metre = 39.3701 inches, and that 1 inch = 2.54 cm.
c) *puns:* where a word, or the sound of a word, can suggest two different meanings at the same time, often for comic effect. [NB: all homophones are not necessarily puns.]
d) *embedded clues:* where the exact sequence of letters in a word or set of words can contain or hide another word; 'hide another' contains the name 'dean' for instance.
f) *crosswords:* where clues lead to words that can fit into a designed set of spaces; sometimes the completed design reveals a hidden message, often running in a different (e.g., vertical or diagonal) direction.
g) *a Fibonacci sequence:* where each number in a sequence equals the sum of the two preceding numbers. The sequence 0,1,1,2,3,5,8, etc was known in Indian mathematics as early as 200 BC. In his book *Liber Abaci* (= 'Book of Calculation' 1202), the mathematician Leonardo of Pisa (known as Fibonacci, which is short for *filius Bonacci,* or 'son of Bonaccio) introduced the concept to Western Europe, along with the Arabic system of numbering that we use today. [How would Sam have written his numbers in Roman numerals?]
h) *acrostics:* where the first letters in a sequence of words spell out another word or message. In Sam's story, the word LEVEL is both an acrostic and part of a palindrome.
i) *palindromes:* where the word or phrase reads the same forwards and backwards. [Simple *Reversals,* however, sometimes produce a contrary message rather than a confirmation.]
j) *word picture puzzles (a form of rebus):* where pictures or the visual arrangement of letters have to be read as words. The phrase 'I see you are too wise for me,' for instance, can be rendered as '[eye picture] C U R [two eye pictures] 4 me.'

In Sam's story, *rhymes* might be read as yet another kind of puzzle, one that Sam learns to play with rather than dismiss. Does Sam 'unriddle' anything else? Reversals in life? Relationships? Do any of the puzzles *amuse* Sam?

5. *Wordplay, Number-play, Sound-play*

Sam has to deal with specific riddles and puzzles in Riddleworld, but his story throughout plays with numbers, words, and sound—in puns, rhymes, recurrent images, wingdings, and indirect allusions. The message written in *Wingdings font* is the easiest to see. (Does it read as a code?) The verses written in rhyme are the easiest to hear.

Why is Sam so 'averse to verse' early on? How does he come to value rhyming? Why are all the birds except Nevar-the-Cold associated with rhymes, and why does Sam have to learn to *listen* in order to solve one of his puzzles? Not every verse form rhymes, of course [Coach's unrhymed poems in the last chapter are examples of *haiku*]. Nor do all rhymes appear in verse form. Try reading parts of the story out loud, listening for rhymes—e.g., during the episode when Nevar holds the trio and Cort and Sam discover the effect of (unintentionally) speaking in rhyme.

Puns also play with sound. Many of the puns in the book are Sam's ('the arrows are pointless,' 'the roads are not well marked'). Many others appear quietly in the story, reflecting how Sam (or sometimes Uncle Donovan) reads the world—like the *a-mews-ing name*, the *booby trap,* or being *penned in* by 'quills.' Several homophones (which are not necessarily puns) also play with sound, as with *seed/cede, tern/turn, Byrd/bird, Bard/barred, fowl/foul, must/mustard.* What others do you find? Are the names of the statues puns?

The Fibonacci sequence that Sam uses to count by is the most obvious number puzzle in the book, though his impulse to transform metric and imperial measures back and forth might suggest another. Why do you think Sam does this? Why is there a countdown at the end of the Riddleworld baseball game? Why in the last—the 10th—chapter does he not bother to count? And why does the number 10 keep coming back into the story?

Another kind of play is involved in just telling the story. Did you notice that Sam is 'on edge' at the beginning? How do the references to fences, doors, gates, walls, the 'extreme edge,' 'the far side'—and keys— further intensify and then help resolve Sam's uncertainties? Do the references to tower, stairs, well, and alcove extend your understanding of how Sam feels? Why is the landscape in Riddleworld hilly, winding, uneven, not straightforward? What about the references to fields, parks, trees, gardens, vines, streets, and the tramline—are these just part of the background, or do they have something to do with Sam learning *where* (and *how)* he

fits into the world—even learning his place on the baseball field perhaps? and in the family?

Try writing an account of a baseball game. Pay special attention to how the players (and the spectators) *move*. Notice the verbs in just the first few pages of *Sam Swallow and the Riddleworld League*: *bounce, knock over, crash, climb, leap, stand, pounce, hop, slam, catch, pitch, bat, play, dive, rock, sing, hover, slam, push, stumble, bump, blurt, hop, skip, skid, trip, cough, sneeze, laugh, fly*— What else happens? What happens later, for example in the scene where the birds are escaping Klaw's Tower? How do action words accelerate the story?

6. *What's in a Name? (Birds and Others)*

(a) *Birds.* Imagine a mural, or a set of posters (a *flock* of posters?), that pictures all of the birds that are *mentioned* in *Sam Swallow and the Riddleworld League.* (A list of all these birds would include at least 75 species, not including the different varieties of Owls.) What would your mural or poster look like? Of course, the birds that the book mentions do not all live in the same part of the world, nor do they require the same environment. How do you think Sam might have heard of them? What about the Moa and the Dodo, both of which are extinct? (When the Umpire Clock strikes '*Moa—No more*,' is that a joke or a criticism? Or both?) For photographs and more information about the birds of the world see [carolinabirds.org/HTML/WLD.htm].

Would you include the flying pterodactyl in your mural, the dinosaur that paleontologists believe had feathers and was an early form of bird? (Is it ironic, then, that the pterodactyl statue is celebrated by the Cats?) The word pterodactyl is itself interesting; it comes from two Greek words: *ptero,* meaning 'wing,' and *dactyl*, meaning 'finger'—so Fingerwing's name is one of the many word jokes in the book. A 'dactyl' is also the name of a 'metric foot' in English prosody—it represents the rhythm **/ u u** (a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables, as in the word *Fingerwing*). The relation between the finger and a dactyl in verse can be seen by looking at the fingers of your hand: one long and two short bones: **/ u u.**

The Owls who have roles in Sam's story are only five of at least 217 varieties of owl (this number is accurate as of 2012). Snow is a Snowy Owl. Bard is a Barred Owl. Like them, the Burrowing, Saw-Whet, and Great Horned Owls are all familiar in North America. The largest owl is the Great Grey Owl (as much as 84 cm or 33" in length); the smallest, just slight smaller than the Saw-Whet, is the Elf Owl (13.5cm or 5" head to tail). Owls in nature are nocturnal raptors. (What's a 'Night Owl'?)

Now imagine posters depicting birds that are *not* mentioned in the book. Which birds would you choose? A bird-of-paradise? A great blue heron? An ostrich? A colourful quetzal? What else?

The word 'flock' is a common general or collective noun to refer to a group of birds together. The Audubon Society lists at least a hundred more collective nouns that refer to specific bird species, including a *bevy* of swans, a *charm* of finches, a *colony* of gulls (or penguins), a *convocation* of eagles, a *covey* of grouse, an *exaltation* of larks, a *flight* of swallows, a *gaggle* of geese, a *murder* of crows, a *parliament* of owls, and an *unkindness* of ravens. Could Nevar-the-Cold, in Sam's story, be called the 'King of Unkindness'? What collective nouns refer to people, besides *crowd*?

(b) *Others*. Towards the end of the Riddleworld adventure, Doriana asks 'Do you know I'm named after the ocean?'—to which Cort replies, 'Everyone's name means something.' Later on, Sam adds a postscript: 'The trick is to make it matter.' Throughout the book, Sam has wanted to be called Sam, not Sammy. Why? What's the function of a diminutive form of a name? or the purpose of a nickname? Is it demeaning? or is it a sign of endearment or friendship or even admiration? How does context affect our appreciation of a nickname?

All the names in the book have resonance of some kind, though none of the meanings directly affects the story. (Numerous online sites provide a range of meanings for both names and surnames.. See, for example, [http://www.behindthename.com/], [http://www.thinkbabynames.com/, and [http://genealogy.about.com/od/surname].) The name 'Sam,' for instance, is perhaps a name in its own right, or perhaps a shortened version of Samuel (= prophet and listener) or Samson (= bright as the sun). Does it matter? Annie = *favoured.* Cory (a name related to Corbin, *crow*) = *active, courageous, sensitive.* Cort = *brave.* Oliver = *affectionate.* Donovan = *dark-haired.* Sullivan = *dark-eyed.* Blake = *black (*or, paradoxically, *white*). Notice that the names of Sam's Eagle team-mates, in Chapter 10.

Coach Eaglehart's name is straightforward, and *Nevar*, of course, is simply a reverse form of *Raven*. As for Byrd City and the statue of Admiral Byrd, they're named for Admiral Richard E. Byrd (1888-1957), the American polar explorer, whose trans-Atlantic and Antarctic exploits in the 1920s demonstrated the possibilities of aircraft exploration, but whose claim to be the first to fly to the North Pole proved controversial.

The pets' names resonate more playfully. Parker the Parrot, for example, might be read as a sign of the family's appreciation of the great jazz saxophonist and composer Charlie 'Bird' Parker (1920-1955), who sometimes combined jazz with blues and classical musical forms. Clio the Cat is named for Clio, the Muse of History (hence Uncle Donovan's pun about the name being a-*mews*-ing). In the visual arts, Clio (who in Greek myth is the daughter of Zeus and Mnemosyne [= Memory]) is often represented holding a book (*words* being a record of history) and a wheel or a clock (suggesting the passage of time).

7. *How Long is an Afternoon?*

One of the 'W-5' questions asks 'When does the story take place? How long does the adventure last? How do we know?' In this story, time is important but elusive. At the start, ordinary clock time seems to be at work (morning, lunchtime, specific numerical references—'five minutes to one'). 'TODAY IS THE DAY,' shouts Sam. In Riddleworld, however—as in a dream—time seems both to expand and to collapse, resisting mechanical clock time. Sam's journey with Cort and Doriana can be said to last all day and into the dark, but then sunshine reappears abruptly and unexpectedly. Has time passed? Or does the entire Riddleworld adventure take place in a matter of seconds? When Sam wakes up at 'Home plate,' what is the first thing he asks? What would be an appropriate answer? As for the last chapter, when does it take place? How do you know? (Do we measure time visually and by distance as well as by the clock? Can something be 'an hour away from here'? What's changed in Sam's world? How old are Cory and Annie? How much has Ollie grown?)

In order to suggest the elasticity of time, Sam's story uses numerous familiar phrases involving time. Early on, Sam thinks things happen 'ten times,' 'at least a hundred times,' 'a thousand times.' But Sam's father 'never has the time,' 'no time today, sport.' When the cuckoo reaches the Old Owl, 'time flies.' As a basketball player, Cort seeks great 'hang time.' In Riddleworld, things can take 'a long time' or not; they can happen 'now,' 'then,' 'next,' 'this time,' 'at no time,' 'in time,' 'just in time,' 'every time,' 'all the time,' 'sometimes,' and 'on time.' The characters can even complain of 'wasting time.' Yet Sam, going towards the Umpire Clock, wants to 'pass the time.' How does Sam negotiate time by the end of his story?

8. *Base-running*

The game of baseball, based on any number of earlier bat-and-ball games, had emerged in something close to its present form by the mid-19th century. The game is now widely played informally on streets and sandlots and in rough playgrounds. *League* teams adopt more rigid rules governing everything from composition of equipment to the size of home plate (a 17" rubber square, cut into a five-sided trapezoid so that one side remains 17" long, two sides are 8 ½" long, and the remaining two each 12" long). In league play, teams compete (nine players to a team: pitcher, catcher, three basemen, three outfielders, and a shortstop) on a regulation size infield (though the dimensions of the outfield vary). On a field designed for adult play, the distance between the pitcher's mound and home plate is 60'6" (18.39 metres) and the distance between bases is 90' (27.4 m.). In *Little League* (founded in 1939), play takes place in several categories, each grouping players in a particular age group.. For children in the 9-12 league, the distance from pitcher's mound to home plate is 46' (14.02 m.), and the distance between bases is

60' (18.29 m.). In the *Pony League* (for 13-14-year-olds), the equivalent distances are 54' (16.459 m.) and 75' (22.86 m.). [http://www.baseball-almanac.com/stadium/baseball_field_construction.shtml]

The game of baseball that takes place *in* Riddleworld is, of course, part of Sam's fantastic adventure, an imagined game, full of a number of possible but unlikely events. By contrast, the game in Byrd City Park, in the last chapter, is scarcely described, and unlike the 'dream' game it is definitely not critical to a league championship. Why? Is it because the reality of winning (or losing) matters less to Sam by the end of this story than just making the team (or 'all his teams') does?

Is Sam's story one about *saving the day* or one about *learning his strengths?* Does it have to be either? Could it be both? Is the importance of the game simply the fact that it's a *game*, that it's *a form of play*, like other forms of play in the book, including numbers, riddles, and words? Or does it mean something more to the characters?

The slang terms in the CrossWord puzzle are all actual slang terms used in real-life baseball commentary (several originally coined by sports radio announcers, later becoming more widespread), though some of them are currently a lot more familiar than others. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_baseball] [http://www.baseball-almanac.com/stadium/baseball_field_construction.shtml]. Bird terms continue to be commonly used in baseball practice (the term *crow-hop*, for example, describes the lateral motion a fielder uses to pick up a ground ball and throw it to another player; a quick online search will find several Youtube demonstrations).

Are 'bird and animal terms' used in other sports—besides team names? [http://10000birds.com/sports-teams-with-bird-names.htm] Think of 'wings' in hockey, 'bird' in badminton, 'birdie' and 'eagle' in golf.

Try designing a logo for a sports team, or a T-shirt, using one of the birds in Sam's story as a starting-point.

9. *What Might the Others Say?*

Everything we readers understand about Sam's journey comes through Sam's eyes (or his brain). How do you suppose the other characters might tell his story (or tell their own story)? Perhaps Annie's story, for example, might begin like this:

> Hi. My name's Annie Swallow. You're probably reading this because of that book about my brother Sam—about the time he fell off the porch and knocked himself out. He was always doing crazy things like that—well, not knocking himself out exactly, but leaping off fences and roofs and who-knows-what-all. This time when he came back to his senses

> (regained consciousness, I mean) , he wanted to tell us where he'd been—*Riddleworld*, he said—you can guess what the rest of us thought. My parents just said *'Mm-hmm'* and sent him to bed. As for me and my older brother Cory, we'd been worried about Sam ever since his two best friends moved away. I think he'd tried to fit in with those other kids at school, but he just didn't seem to. Not like me and Cory—we were always meeting up with *our* friends. Sam had been the youngest in the family for a long time, too, before Ollie was born, and that seemed to affect him somehow. So when he said he wanted to join the baseball team, Cory and I wondered . . .

How would this story end up being different from Sam's? (Why couldn't it go into Riddleworld—or could it?) How would *you* write Annie's story—or Cory's—or even Uncle Donovan's?

Uncle Donovan's presence in the family is only briefly explained, and neither his name nor Sam's parents' names are ever specified in full. So maybe another story could invent their names. Maybe Donovan's story would begin something like this:

> I've always loved doing 'magic' tricks and telling stories—right from early on, when my twin sister and I were young (my parents named us *Nessa* and *Nestor*, can you believe it?) Yes, I know that 'Nestor' means 'traveller'—maybe that's why I've moved around so much, and why I've called myself *Donovan Sullivan* ever since I was four: because I keep changing. *Nessa's* name sort of suits her, I think—'Vanessa' means 'butterfly'—and I thought it was great when she married Arn Swallow ('Arn' means 'eagle power')—but me, no: I wanted to be named something dark and mysterious . . . 'Blake,' maybe. And play tricks. Am I a Transformer? You never know—

Or maybe it would start some other way. Whose story would you like to write? Is it important to keep in mind how Doriana and Cort express themselves in the story? Do their actions and decisions display different personalities from that of Sam? How would Annie's or Cory's perspective differ from Sam's?

Do you think it's possible that you could write a story from Klaw's perspective? Or Corbin-the-Dark's? Or Fingerwing's? How would you write a story that began 'Sam never tells the *whole* story—'?

10. *Some Leftover Questions*

a) *Song & Dance*:

—Why do you think Sam remembers the kookaburra lullaby, and later sings it? Here it is in full: '*Do you ever hear the osprey in the hollow of the night? (don't worry little kookaburra, sleep) / Do the kestrel and the condor hover, cutting out the light? (don't worry little kookaburra, sleep) / If you ever hear the falcon in the furrow of a sigh, just sing little kookaburra songs (you are strong).'*

—Why do the birds on the Hill of Distraction dance to different dance rhythms (the robin's *hop*, the sandpiper's *jitterbug*, the booby's *soft shoe shuffle*)? Try reading their rhythmic dances out loud.

—Voice is important throughout Sam's story. So is Silence. What effect does the sound of a voice have on a listener? Why does Nevar's voice keep changing, and what's its effect on Sam and the others?

—What words do we use to convey bird sound and movement? E.g., *cheep, chirp, crow, cuckoo, glide, hoot, hover, moan, scream, shriek, skitter, snatch, swarm, tweet, twitter, warble, wheel, whistle*—what else could you add? Do we use these same words to talk about people's voices and actions? What does 'crane the neck' mean?

—What would the band in Riddle City sound like?

b) *Cats:*

—Why is Clio the only cat who actually appears in the book?

—Do all the 'cat words' in the book help establish the presence of the Cats even when they can't be seen? Look for the words *catnip, catch, catcher, catcall, catastrophe,* and perhaps even *scatter.*

c) *Resolutions:*

—At one point Sam resolves to forget the signs and dismiss the rhymes—was that wise? Is the Coach's Eagle poem (the set of *haiku* in the last chapter) still 'verse,' even though it doesn't rhyme? (Count the syllables. Why are syllables important?)

—The sign at the entrance to Riddle City says 'You'll Be Amazed'—and the city turns out to be a maze. Try drawing a maze. Is it more important to get in to the centre or to get back out again?

—Why are the C's and D's in the CrossWord puzzle already? Does it have anything to do with Cort and Doriana? (Is it relevant that the C's and D's are *helpers* in the puzzle?)

—If 'nothing makes sense' in Riddleworld, what's the importance of nonsense?

—Is Sam's story less about finding easy solutions than about his slow growth? about the cumulative development of his ability to meet challenges?

—In what ways is Sam more like his father than he thinks? or his mother, sister, brothers? or uncle?

—Who do you think is really the One Who's Lost in Riddleworld? Owlet—or Sam?

d) *And finally, Laughing:*

—Many things happen positively for Sam when he grins and laughs. Why do people laugh? When? Why do we find incongruity to be funny—but not always?

Sam Swallow and the Riddleworld League is a book of puzzlement, upset, adventure, discovery, and play. So MOST OF ALL, have fun reading it and sharing Sam's story with your friends.