

# A Message from Teddy Bears

Boys, you've always taken good care of your stuffed animals. For example, if you've ever left them behind, you've always gotten them back quickly. As a token of their appreciation, several teddy bears and other plush creatures have prepared a hint for you. Which reminds me, did you ever wonder where that "teddy" comes from in "teddy bear"? Would you believe it was named after president Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt after he refused to kill a bear on a hunting trip in 1902? It's true.

Many words have surprising origins. For example, I'm sure that every parent has invented the game of making a baby laugh by pressing their lips against the baby's tummy and blowing a raspberry. What do you call it when you do this? I call it "zrbtt", ever since seeing an episode of The Cosby Show in the 80s. I don't know which writer invented or borrowed that word, and I haven't yet found it in any standard dictionary. So, perhaps you might not consider that a "real" word yet. But what about blowing a "raspberry" as I mentioned above? What does all this noisy tongue and lip flapping have to do with a tasty fruit? Well, I'll tell you, (but don't ask me why the word "raspberry" has "berry" in it even though a raspberry isn't a "berry" in the botanical sense—but a banana is, surprisingly enough).

So let's talk about rhyming slang, (sometimes called Cockney rhyming slang), for a moment. Like other slang, rhyming slang involves substituting alternate words for standard words, and often functions to separate people familiar with the slang from those who are not. Not surprisingly, the substitutions in rhyming slang are words and phrases that rhyme with the word being referred to. So, to talk about "stairs" in rhyming slang, you might substitute the rhyming phrase "apples and pears". But rather than stopping there, rhyming slang often abbreviates the substituted part to completely eliminate the rhyme from what is spoken. So you end up with "apples" to mean "stairs": "Run up the apples and fetch me another box." As another example, someone might tell you to "use your loaf" when they want you to use your head, ("loaf" is short for "loaf of bread")—get it? Or, perhaps you've heard someone use the word "bread" as a slang word for "money"? That comes from rhyming slang too—"bread" is short for "bread and honey".

Try inventing your own rhyming slang with your friends. A great thing to use is proper names that your friends will know. You know a park named after Walt Morey, so you might say "What's the walt?" for "What's the story?" or from the school named Boones Ferry you could say something was "boones" to mean it was "scary". How about the picture book about the toddler and the laundromat? Was that a boones walt?

But, getting back to "raspberry". This is actually a case where a slang word has evolved into standard usage and become a "real" word, (check the dictionary). The non-abbreviated version was "raspberry tart"—can you guess what the rhyme was for?

Oh, and I was trying to tell you about a puzzle, too. To be clear, there's no hidden puzzle in the message above—I just wanted to share all of that with you. Instead, the bears and animals puzzle is simply that: a puzzle. And you don't need any instructions for that.

Solution: \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

*(My boys received these pieces already cut out in a bag attached to the "A Message from Teddy Bears" puzzle. I'm sorry I can't cut them out for you. Good luck!)*



