



## INTRODUCTION

This is a game played commonly by the children who lived in The Singing Plain. If you are a child, congratulations! You're already ready to play. If you are an adult, fear not. Close your eyes, and imagine being a child again. Keep imagining that as we play.

In this game, you are children pretending to be wise oracles. You will be discovering a mystery, solving it, and competing to seem the most wise among your peers.

*Here's some advice for play: be sure to say "hmmmmm" and "I see..." often. This will make you seem **very** wise. Try nodding and looking into the distance. Anything you imagine a wise old adult would do.*

## SETUP

Count how many people are playing. Remember that number when you are gathering items!

To get ready to play, you will need these things:

- A set of items that are similar, but not exactly the same. Make sure you have two per player. Here are some examples:
  - A pile of rocks you found outside
  - Some chips or snacks, all different shapes
  - A bunch of dice, if you roll them
  - Anything else you can think of! Pick something that feels lucky.
- One “wise oracle cloak” per player. Each player should find a blanket, pillowcase, pile of leaves, or other fancy item. Wrap this around your shoulders to appear mysterious.

That’s all! Once you have these things, it is time to finish setting up. Whoever found the items should spread them out on the ground between all players. Everyone huddle around the items. Make sure you nod wisely. It is time to begin!

## BEGINNING

Whoever found the auspicious items will be the Head Oracle for this game. If they were found together, or you need another way to decide, a staring contest is in order. The winner will be Head Oracle.

It is the Head Oracle’s job to look at the items and think of a mystery. This is a mystery told by the items, so look carefully while deciding. Here are some examples of good mysteries:

- The mystery of how birds learned to fly
- The mystery of where all the bread disappeared to
- The mystery of why the goats love to scream

Head Oracle: Don't say your mystery out loud (yet)! Keep it a secret until the end of the game. When you are ready, just tell the other players "I am ready."

## TAKING TURNS

Whoever is sitting to the left of the Head Oracle goes first. To take a turn, do the following steps in order:

- Select an item from the center pile. It can be any item you want!
- Choose to *either* add this item to an existing side-pile *or* make a new one.\* If you put it in an existing pile, it needs to match the pile's theme (explained below!).
- Give the item a name! If it's in an existing pile, it again needs to match the theme. A name can be any noun (person, place, thing, or idea) that hasn't already been given to another item (no duplicates).

Every item added to a pile should share a common trait. Let's say our items are rocks. If the first player starts a pile with a blue speckled stone, the next player can add a blue stone or a speckled stone. Whatever they pick, the next player needs to match too, and so on.

Item names work this way too. If the blue speckled rock is given the name "Rabbit", the next player needs to come up with a way their name is similar. They could pick "Lizard" and say it's a pile for small animals, or "Deer" and say it's a pile for mammals. Be creative! (And wise!)

## HEAD ORACLE TURNS

Since the Head Oracle knows what the mystery is, they can't name items the same way as everyone else. Instead, on their turn they place an item as usual. But they don't name it. All the other players work together to name it while the Head Oracle nods sagely.

## *REVEALING THE MYSTERY*

When all the items from the original pile are placed in new piles and named, normal turns stop. It is time for the Head Oracle to reveal what the mystery is.

Head Oracle, say your mystery out loud. Give the other players a chance to think about it. It is now time to work together to solve the mystery, using the items you have sorted!

### ENDING THE GAME

In The Singing Plain, people tell stories and memorize songs instead of using writing. This game helps children (and adults) practice remembering details and telling good stories. There are three ways your group can choose to play the ending of the game. They are all equally good practice, so choose whichever one sounds the most fun!

#### **Cooperative**

In this version, nobody competes during the mystery-solving. The point is only to tell a good story and practice your skills.

Beginning again with the player left of the Head Oracle, take turns. Each player on their turn selects one of the named objects and adds it into the story. If a mistake is made or nothing can be thought of, ask the other players for help! The Head Oracle will go last, revealing the final truth that should wrap up the mystery (when the final item is used).

#### **Loud**

This version is the most commonly played by children left to their own devices. It is competitive, so get ready to try to win!

There are no turns! Once the Head Oracle has delivered their mystery and waited ten seconds, they will declare "begin!" The Head Oracle themselves may not be the first to speak.

Whoever speaks first (besides the Head Oracle) goes first. The goal is to tell a story that answers the mystery and uses every item. When you are

speaking, try to string together a coherent story using as many items as possible.

When the player speaking pauses for too long, says “umm”, or makes a mistake (like calling an item the wrong name) another player may jump in and take over the story. This continues until every item is used and the story is completed. Whoever delivers the ending to the mystery is the winner!

## **Contemplative**

This last version is sort of a combination of the other two. There are turns, but it is still a competition. This version is often played by older children, or those more familiar with modern board-game type games.

Again, the player to the left of the Head Oracle goes first. They will begin telling the story that answers the mystery. They must select one or two items (no more) from the piles to include in their part of the story. When they are finished, the turn passes as normal.

If at any point on their turn a player pauses too long, says “umm”, or makes a mistake (like calling an item the wrong name) they must take a Mark of Shame for their poor storytelling. Any time this happens, the player may choose to pass their turn (even if they used no items yet). They can also keep going, but if they make another mistake, they take another mark. Marks can be counted on one’s fingers, memorized, or noted using a separate pile of items from the game’s mystery items.

The game ends when a player uses the final item and provides an ending to the mystery. Whoever has the fewest Marks is the winner. In the case of a tie, traditionally another round would be played. But if you do not have time for this, it can be settled with another staring contest (staring is a very useful Oracle skill, you see).