

AN INTERLACED CHARADE

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Words may be called interlaced if composed of overlapping shorter words. Fagot is a good example, with its regular overlap of fag, ago and got. It also contains fa, go, a and o forwards and to, tog and and toga in reverse order. Thus this five-letter word has ten component words, a ratio of two to one for a measure of interlace.

Almost every day I see a nine-letter word boldly displayed on signboards, but so interlaced that I involuntarily read only component words instead of the whole -- like not being able to see the forest for the trees. Listing its 21 components (an interlace ratio of 2.33 to 1), I had material for the following charade, beginning with the shortest words and vaguest definitions and progressively introducing longer words with more tangible clues. The reader may test his introspection by uncovering the clues one at a time, in order, to see how few he needs. The clues will be followed by a scale to convert the number of clues used into a personal rating.

1. My 2 is one of our shortest words
2. My 7 is another
3. My 3-4 is a step on solfege
4. My 6-7 is a preposition
5. My 7-8 is another
6. My 8-7 isn't
7. My 2-1 is a famous poem
8. My 1-2-3 is an abies
9. My 2-3-4 is a reaction to controversy
10. My 3-4-5 is the gist of a controversy
11. My 6-7-8 is heavy
12. My 7-8-9 is less than nine
13. My 8-7-6 is not
14. My 3-2-1 is an African
15. My 1-2-3-4 is a Greek element
16. My 2-3-4-5 is a cause of hypertension
17. My 3-4-5-6 is a therapy for hypertension
18. My 6-7-8-9 is a sound of music
19. My 1-2-3-4-5 is what Beatrice saw
20. My 5-6-7-8-9 is 6-7-8/160
21. My 5-4-3-2-1 is often at top of letters

Still puzzled? Here are several clues which involve the whole word rather than its parts.

22. My whole is a primitive sparker
23. My whole is etymologically pyrite
24. My whole is a tiring and retiring product
25. My whole is a boulevard in Los Angeles
26. My whole was a buddy of Edison and Ford
27. My whole had a rabbit-like first name

Those still baffled can find the answer in Answers and Solutions. If you found the interlaced word, you can rate your introspective skill from the following scale which is graduated to the number of clues you needed:

- 27 - mediocre, but honest
- 24 - fair for a first attempt
- 20 - good; hooray for you
- 15 - excellent; cheers
- 10 - perfect; congratulations
- 5 - psychic, or you peeked