UNUSUAL WORDS

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GIGANTIC is a word familiar to readers of Word Ways in having two letters G with strikingly different pronunciations. Other words which have two like letters with obviously different pronunciations include JACKAL, ACETIC, EGRET, GORGE, INSIDE, JERONIMO, BASES, UNUSED, XEROX and YELLOWY. There are thousands of other words with 2 like letters which have different pronunciations. Many of these differences are more subtle than those in the above examples, sometimes only being able to be confirmed by reference to a phonetics list. I use the Phonetics List of the Oxford English Dictionary. The phonetic symbols are here used solely in reference to single letters, as distinct from bigrams etc. References to the phonetic symbols are given in superscript.

1. THREE LIKE LETTERS WITH DIFFERENT PRONUNCIATIONS

The words I am seeking currently have 3, rather than 2, like letters which all have different pronunciations represented by different phonetic symbols. UNUSUAL is an example (see U below).

LETTER A

Phonetic symbols used: æ 1 (as in pat) a: 2 (bath) i 3 (damage) e 4 (alert) ɐ 5 (ate)

ɛə 6 (daring) a 7 (ballet) ɔ 8 (call) ɒ 9 (wash)

a 1 dvə 2 nta 3 ge ba 8 lsa 4 ma 5 tion
ca 4 pa 1 cita 5 te pa 1 tta 4 wa 9 llə 4

LETTER E

Phonetic symbols used: ɛ 1 (egt) i 2 (begat) ɛ 3 (merringue) i: 4 (deified) ɛə 5 (hysteria)
e 6 ve 3 nne 2 ss e 1 che 4 ve 5 ria be 2 de 1 vilme 9 nt

LETTER I

Phonetic symbols used: ai 1 (bite) i 2 (pit) ɛə 3 (rifled) ai 4 (Brio) i: 5 (bijou) j 6 (onion)
i 1 anθə 2 ni 3 te
i 4 ri 2 di 1 te vi 4 ri 2 ci 3 ə dal di 1 ami 2 di 3 ne mi 3 ə lli 6 oni 1 ze

LETTER O

Phonetic symbols used: œ 1 (so) ɒ 2 (odd) ɔ 3 (collate) Λ 4 (govern)
aerə 1 lithə 2 lo 3 gy zo 1 o: 2 lo 3 gy bro 2 nchə 3 sco 1 pe co 4 lo 3 rpə 1 bia

LETTER U

Phonetic symbols used: Λ 1 (hump) ju: 2 (use) u: 3 (abstruse) e 4 (upon) w 5 (quell)
ju 6 (emulate) ju 8 (cure) (j)u: 8 (lupin) u 9 (fully)
u 1 nu 2 su 3 al biu 1 ngu 5 icu 6 late
crepu 1 scu 2 luə 4 m qu 5 antu 6 lu 4 m acu 2 pu 1 ncu 7 re
su 8 perstruçtu 7 ral u 1 ntru 3 thfu 8 u 1 nsu 4 ccessfu 9 l
2. FOUR LIKE LETTERS WITH DIFFERENT PRONUNCIATIONS

These words are rare.

de^1 cre^2 me^3 te^4 r  
e^1 (pet)  
i^2 (begif)  
i^3 (deified)  
e^4 (meringue)
e^1 le^2 ctrome^3 te^4 r  
i^1 (deified)  
e^2 (pet)  
i^3 (begif)  
e^4 (meringue)
u^1 niu^2 ngu^3 icu^4 late  
ju^1 (use)  
Λ^2 (hump)  
w^3 (quell)  
ju^4 (emulate)

3. TWO PAIRS OF LIKE LETTERS WITH DIFFERENT PRONUNCIATIONS

A and C  
c^3 yc^4 la^1 ma^2 te  
e^1 (alert)  
e^2 (ate)  
s^3 (cease)  
C and E  
c^1 e^3 re^4 bric^2
C and G  
c^1 is-g^3 ang^4 etic^2
C and I  
i^3 c^1 i^4 c^2 le
C and O  
c^1 irc^2 umro^3 tato^4 ry
C and S  
ac^1 ros^2 tic^2 is^4 m
C and U  
c^1 irc^2 u^3 mfu^4 se

E and G  
g^3 e^1 og^4 raphe^2 r  
i^1 (deified)  
e^2 (meringue)  
dz^3 (giant)  
E and I  
de^1 poe^2 ti^3 ci^4 ze  
i^1 (deified)  
e^2 (as in pet)  
i^3 (pit)  
E and O  
ne^3 o^3 log^4 gise^2 s  
i^1 (deified)  
ir^2 (begif)  
E and S  
me^1 ns^2 e^2 s^4
E and U  
ce^1 ru^3 le^2 u^4 m  
i^1 (begif)  
i^2 (deified)  
u:^3 (abstruse)  
e^4 (upon)

G and I  
g^1 i^3 g^2 anit^4 c
G and O  
g^1 ig^2 o^3 lo^4
G and S  
di^3 g^1 org^2 es^4
G and U  
see 4 below

I and O  
br^3 nchi^1 o^4 li^2 tis  
i^1 (pit)  
ai^2 (bite)  
p^3 (odd)  
I and S  
Chris^4 ti^2 ani^3 se^5 e  
i^1 (pit)  
j^2 (onion)  
ai^3 (bite)  
s^4 (sag)  
I and U  
di^1 su^3 lphu^4 ri^2 c  
ai^1 (bite)  
ir^2 (pit)  
Λ^3 (hump)  
jeu^4 (cure)
4. THREE PAIRS OF LIKE LETTERS WITH DIFFERENT PRONUNCIATIONS

2A + 2G + 2I
$g^5 \text{anti} \text{cam} \quad a^1 \text{pat} \quad e^2 \text{alert} \quad d^3 \text{giant} \quad g^4 \text{go} \quad a^5 \text{bite} \quad i^6 \text{pit}

2A + 2G + 2U
$u^5 \text{nla} \text{a}g^3 u^6 \text{a}g^4 \text{ed} \quad a^1 \text{pat} \quad r^2 \text{damage} \quad g^3 \text{go} \quad d^3 \text{giant} \quad a^5 \text{hump} \quad w^6 \text{quell}

This word has 3 of the letter E:
2A + 2C + 3E
$a^1 c^4 e^5 e^6 r^4 a^2 d^7 \quad a^1 \text{pat} \quad e^2 \text{ate} \quad k \text{crow} \quad s^4 \text{cease} \quad e^5 \text{ptg} \quad e^6 \text{mringue} \quad i^7 \text{befit}

5. THE MOST WIDELY REPRESENTED PHONETIC SYMBOL?

During the above exploration, I discovered that $\theta$ appears to top the list of phonetic symbols with regard to the number of different single letters of the alphabet that it can represent. I found 7 such different letters and there may be more. 6 of the letters, perhaps predictably, are A, E, I, O, U and Y. Examples for I,U and Y are not common. The 7th letter is R, a true rarity!

LETTER I
brrrr v.- to emit a whirring noise (when used as a noun, birr has a different pronunciation)

LETTER U
upon

LETTER Y
martyr  zephyr

LETTER R
$v$baite - the sulphide $Tl_4Hg_5Sb_2As_8S_{20}$

LETTERS A, E and O
The next, and final, 2 words each have an A, an E and an O with the same pronunciation, represented by θ. Incidentally, the bigram OU in the second word is also represented by θ.

abandonment  polymerosomatous