Readers are encouraged to send their own favorite linguistic kickshaws to the “Kickshaws” Editor.

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Meaning and Origin

For the initial appearance of this feature, it seems appropriate to define its name and disclose its history, which will no doubt elicit some surprise from our non-etymologically minded readers.

A “kickshaw” is defined either in a neutral manner as “a bauble, trifle, or knickknack” or more flatteringly as “a fancy tidbit; a delicacy.” The purpose of this feature is to satisfy both definitions by presenting linguistic items of light weight and vast diversity, designed to appeal to the tastes of all recreational “linguists.”

The word is of recent origin (from the point of view of the etymologists), having been introduced into American speech in Colonial times as a Yankee corruption of the French phrase “quelque chose” meaning “something.” Once kickshaws became part of our language, it was natural to treat it as a plural form and to coin “kickshaw” as the singular form—an example of a “back-formation.” Another such example is the word “pea.” The plural “peas” (earlier “pease”) was originally singular in meaning, though plural in sound. Since sound almost always triumphs over sight in the evolution of language, “pea” was formed from “peas” rather than vice versa.

Two Curiosities

Define the verbs “best” and “worst.” Correct: they both mean “to defeat.” Now define the verb “cleave.” Your dictionary will offer: 1. “to adhere closely” and 2. “to separate into parts.” The English language need never be accused of consistency. (Note also two diametrically opposite definitions of the verb “let.”)

Word Cycles

It is simple to create a closed chain of words such as GROUND WATER MARK TIME PIECE WORK HORSE PLAY in which each pair of adjacent words (in-
Chilling the last and the first) form a familiar two-word formation. Cycles of three such as: SAW HORSE POWER; MEAL TIME PIECE; BACK WATER WING; DOG WATCH FIRE; and SALT WATER TABLE are harder to come by, and cycles of two, e.g., BOAT HOUSE, are downright scarce. I'll welcome hearing of any "bi-cycles" or "tri-cycles" you are able to create.

Anagrams

Though I was bowled over in reading Dmitri Borgmann's LANGUAGE ON VACATION to find that "xylophone" has an anagram ("oxyphcnol"), there were a few of my favorites which did not appear. Can you find anagrams for "insatiable," "proselyte," "shattering" and "pepsi-cola"? Answers to this as well as to subsequent questions are found at the end of this issue.

Ghoti Revisited

Most readers will recall George Bernard Shaw's clever example of the hopeless disparity between English spelling and pronunciation. By his lights, "GHOTI" should be pronounced "FISH," using the "f" sound in "laugh," the "i" sound in "women," and the "sh" sound in "nation." Using the same principle, how would you pronounce "NOST LIEUT TOLON"? (Hint: the words from which the sounds are extracted are all military.) Answer: using the "o" sound in "provest marshall," the "le" sound in "lieutenant" (British version), and the "ur" sound in "colonel," the correct pronunciation is "NO LEFT TURN." Using "gunwale" "boatswain," and "colonel" again, one can derive "Hello, Zen Master" from "Hwaleost, Tswain Mastolo," but for brevity I like "forecast," pronounced "folks" a la "forecastle."

Unnegatives

Many negative forms such as "uncouth" and "unkempt" have lost their positive forms. Others, such as "unwieldy" and "ungainly" have positive forms which, though not quite obsolete, are rarely used and will probably acquire obsolete status within our lifetimes. Still others such as "disdain" probably never had a positive form in English. In order to enrich our language a sample list of "unnegatives" together with their definitions is given below. The alert reader will note that the "negative" form of some of these is so in appearance only, but that minor objection should not be allowed to interfere with this worthwhile project.

Verbs

dulate: to move in a straight line
gruntle: to put in a good humor
ocate: to drain serum or vaccine from the blood
pede: to expedite
poveryish: to enrich
ub: to soothe

Nouns

agon: a geometric figure with less than or greater than nine sides
dain: approval
nomer: appellation

Adjectives

ane: sensible
chalant: concerned
ferior: of equal quality
func: extant
"Oolly": a lump or loop of iron when taken as a pasty mass from the crucible. A real crossword puzzle type of word—one which you and I might never have had an inkling of, had it not been for Mr. John Ferguson of Silver Spring, Md., who pointed out to me several years ago that the word appeared in *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* (2nd Ed.) out of alphabetical order! In disbelief I checked and Mr. Ferguson was correct. The positions of “oolly” and the word that preceded it had been transposed at the expense of alphabetical order, a mistake, comparable, I would think, to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* inadvertently omitting an entry on the Duke of Wellington. Mr. Ferguson mentioned at the time that he had written the publishers of Webster's about the error and that they had thanked him courteously while pointing out that the word was only “slightly” out of alphabetical order—a response which amused me in the same way as would the description of the Vicar's daughter as “only slightly pregnant.”

I anxiously awaited the appearance of the Third Edition to see if the error had been corrected. It had, though in a rather drastic manner; Webster's has dropped the word completely. "Oolly" is no longer a word!

Animal Adjectives

We're all familiar with the more common generic terms from zoology such as "feline," "bovine," "ursine," etc. Readers are challenged to match the ten adjectives given below with the associated animal. (Both the adjective and the animal lists have been given in alphabetical order.) A score of six correct is "qualifying," and eight entitles you to an "expert" rating. Any reader who scores ten must be a professional biologist, and he is encouraged to send in his own list of ten:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADJECTIVE</th>
<th>ANIMAL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cervine</td>
<td>civet cat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>colubrine</td>
<td>deer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hircine</td>
<td>goat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>larine</td>
<td>gull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lutrine</td>
<td>otter</td>
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<tr>
<td>musteline</td>
<td>seal</td>
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<tr>
<td>ovine</td>
<td>sheep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phocine</td>
<td>snake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sciurine</td>
<td>squirrel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viverrine</td>
<td>weasel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Matched Homonyms

Can you find a pair of homonyms (e.g., "way" and weigh”), both of which have anagrams with the further property that the two anagrams are also homonyms? I know of only 2 such sets of "matched homonyms"; perhaps you can find more.

WORD WAYS
A Subtle Code

Given below are some samples of encoded abbreviations. The coding principle is simple in concept, but difficult to discover, and the poser should in fairness encode 15 or 20 abbreviations suggested by the solver. Since that is impossible in this case, an elongated sample of "cribs" is given. Break the code and encode L.B.J.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABBREVIATION</th>
<th>ENCODED FORM</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F.B.I.</td>
<td>L.U.N.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.D.R.</td>
<td>N.O.T.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>D.S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.O.P.</td>
<td>D.D.Y.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.A.R.</td>
<td>S.N.N.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.O.D.</td>
<td>H.N.Y.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.F.L.</td>
<td>N.N.R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.B.S.</td>
<td>A.G.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.V.M.</td>
<td>R.Y.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.P.M.</td>
<td>S.R.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.S.R.</td>
<td>N.T.T.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.P.C.A.</td>
<td>Y.N.Y.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.P.O.E.</td>
<td>T.E.R.S.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ghost

In the standard game of GHOST the players sit in a circle. One player selects a letter to start play, and the players in turn cyclically have the option either of adding another letter or challenging the previous player. In the event of a challenge, the challenger must either produce a word (usually restricted to uncapitalized, unhyphenated words) starting with the given sequence of letters, in which case the challenger loses a point, or else suffer the loss of a point himself. Loss of 5 points puts a player out of the game. (Each player is identified as an incipient "ghost" according to the number of points he has lost; e.g., a player who has lost three points is a "CHO.")

Consider the two-player version of this game. Suppose both you and your opponent are "GHOS's," so that the next point determines the winner. Suppose in addition that you were the last player to lose a point (either by 1. failing to answer a challenge, 2. challenging unsuccessfully, or 3. having been forced to "finish" a word of three or more letters). You now have the dubious advantage of starting the last round. If you and your opponent have agreed to use Webster’s Unabridged as authority, he has a decided advantage. For instance, an opening of O could be fatal. An experienced opponent might add another O. The only word in the big Webster’s starting with double O is OSS (a Chinese unit of weight) and it ends with O (Pun intended.) Your opponent could also be ghosted. Suppose instead you begin with D. Your opponent sees what he thinks is an unbeatable move, and quickly adds an H. What is your reply?

Without a copy of Webster’s Unabridged handy, solution is hopeless, so we’ll wait a few minutes for those who do have copies to decide on their reply: All right, time’s up. If you say A, he can reply M and win with DHAMNOO. If you pick E,
he'll choose R and win with DHERI. If you pick I, he will challenge you and win. Pick O, and he'll reply L and beat you with DHOLE. You can't pick U, since that completes the word DHU (from Gaelic, meaning "black"). That leaves you only one choice, Y, which wins (DYANA).

A very tough game, which can be made still tougher by playing it "open-ended" (letters may be added in front as well as at the end) or simpler by using a smaller dictionary, e.g., WEBSTER'S NEW COLLEGIATE, or even one of the smaller paperback dictionaries. Using one of the latter, readers can, with little effort, list the "safe" and "unsafe" openings in two-player ghost. Perhaps such a list even for the open-ended version is not beyond the powers of a patient "exorcisor." (The name is appropriate since such an analysis lays the game of GHOST to rest.)

Words With Two Origins

There are many examples in English of so-called "doublets," words of different appearance such as "regal" and "royal" which are nearly identical in meaning and arise from the same source. Both words derive from Latin "rex, regis," the first directly, the second indirectly through French. However, a more interesting phenomenon is the presence in our language of words with two distinct meanings, identical in spelling and pronunciation, but derived from two different sources. An example of such a word is "tattoo." The noun, signifying a military call on drum, bugle, or other instrument, notifying seamen or soldiers to repair to quarters, is derived from the Dutch word "taptoe," meaning to shut the "taps" or taverns. The verb, meaning "to adorn the skin with patterns," is of Polynesian origin. (Ernest Weekly, THE ROMANCE OF WORDS, Dover Publications, p. 129). Another example is "squash." As a verb, or as the name of a sport akin to handball, it is derived from Old French "esquachier," meaning "to drive together." As the name of the vegetable, the origin is the Massachusetts Indian word "asquash" (plural of "asq" meaning "vegetable") (Greenough and Kittredge, WORDS AND THEIR WAYS IN ENGLISH SPEECH, Beacon Press, p. 139). Can the readers supply additional examples?

Minipuzzles

For those lovers of crossword puzzles who like to finish them quickly the following two "minipuzzles" plus one "micropuzzle" are offered. Warning: they are not as easy as they look; even some puzzle addicts on whom I've tried these three have failed to solve one. (I won't tell you which.)

Authority on all three is WEBSTER'S NEW COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Across</th>
<th>Down</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. fail</td>
<td>1. tighten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. mature</td>
<td>2. dwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. declare</td>
<td>3. frank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. confined</td>
<td>4. lively</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WORD WAYS
In the same spirit as in "minipuzzles" here is a very short message which you are challenged to decipher: SHAD FOR DICK. The original message consists of three words with lengths as given. It was encrypted using a "reciprocal" substitution cipher, i.e., one in which X is enciphered Y, then Y is enciphered X. To make it a bit easier, and to assure a unique decipherment into simple English, you may assume that no letter enciphers into itself. Also you are allowed this crib: PLUM enciphers into WXZQ.

Vocabulary Quiz

No alternative definitions are provided on this quiz. All words can be found in any clothbound desk-size dictionary. Use your own dictionary to determine how many you defined correctly, and in so doing, be a stern judge. A score of 2 out of 10 is passing, 5 correct is excellent, and 7 is incredible!

Unacknowledged Equals

While browsing through a bartender’s guide, I once discovered two cocktails, about 100 pages apart, with no recognizable difference in ingredients or mixing procedure: the "Clover Club" and the "Pink Lady." No cross reference was given on either page, and no bartender since has been able to point out the slightest distinction between the two.

The linguistic counterpart of the above oddity is a pair of adjectives with virtually identical meanings and with the same violent history underlying their absorption into the English language, one from the Malay, the other from Old Norse. Yet no dictionary I have ever seen has listed them as synonyms. The first and only time I have seen them associated in a common list of synonyms was in Roget’s INTERNATIONAL THESAURUS 3rd Ed. The words: "berserk" and "amuck" (or "amok").