KICKSHAWS

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Readers are encouraged to send their own favorite linguistic kickshaws to the Kickshaws Editor. All answers known to the editor appear in the Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

A Bet That Was Lost

In the November 1969 issue of Word Ways, Faith W. Eckler prefaced her article "On Searching for Three-L Lamas" with an Ogden Nash quatrain:

A one-L lama, he's a priest:
A two-L lama, he's a beast:
But I'll bet you a silk pyjama
You never saw a three-L lama.

A charming bit of shaggy doggerel, familiar to many. But how many are aware that Nash lost his bet? As a New Yorker, he could not be blamed for being unfamiliar with the peculiar accents heard on Beacon Hill. Richard Epstein, the author of Theory of Gambling and Statistical Logic (Academic Press, 1967), informs me that shortly after publication of the poem, Nash received a letter reading substantially as follows: "Dear Sir: You owe me a silk pyjama. You claim I never saw one, but I've seen half a dozen or more. And I've heard more than I've seen. You see, that's the way we refer in Boston to a major conflagration." According to legend, Nash promptly sent his correspondent a silk "upper". After all, he hadn't promised a pair of pyjamas.

More on Word Cycles

In the May 1969 issue I defined a word cycle as a chain of words in which each adjacent pair (including the last and first) is a familiar two-word formation. Example: GROUND WATER MARK TIME PIECE WORK HORSE PLAY. They are not hard to come by, and I remarked that the shorter the length of the cycle the harder it becomes to create one. I gave a few tricycles and then was imprudent enough to assert that bicycles such as BOAT HOUSE are "downright scarce." The
great English logophile, Leigh Mercer, fired back BOARD SCHOOL promptly. Kevin Kearns of Chicago suggested WORK DOG and WORK DAY. But Faith Eckler has demolished the scarcity claim completely; for details, the reader is referred to her article elsewhere in this issue.

Shaggy Doggerel

Leigh Mercer of London has sent a pair of poems for this department, the first an original, the second from a 1960 competition held by Punch. On reading it you should be able to describe the nature of the competition.

On A Purveyor of Chocolate

A merchant who traded in cocoa
Much admired that strange style called rococo.
You’ll be happy to learn
That the name of his firm
Is to be The Rococo Cocoa Co.

More Beer, Poor Fool!

When days drag long (dull word, dull deed),
This mere half pint won’t meet your need.
When luck runs skew (sunk bond -- lost pool),
This lone half pint won’t help, poor fool.
When shot your bolt, when lost your race,
This bare half pint can’t help your case.
Come fill your mugs; soak care away.
Each pint will make this life less grey.

My correspondents report that in the MENSA Bulletin of April 1969 appeared the following by K. F. Ross of New York City (shall we call it spoonerhyme?):

Ill wit.
Will it
Die out?
I doubt.

Very clever, I thought. I’ll have a shot at this new verse form:

Lines by an Eskimo Pilot Flying a Polar Bear Pelt to His Beloved

By air
I bear
Hoar fur
For her.
The rules are simple enough, poet-readers. Have a go at it.

Pseudo-Opposites

The simplest way to explain this curious category is by examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maternity dress</th>
<th>Paternity suit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Night hawk</td>
<td>Mourning dove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catwalk</td>
<td>Dog trot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ant hill</td>
<td>Uncle Sam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water mark</td>
<td>Fire brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water strider</td>
<td>Fire walker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire eat</td>
<td>Water fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth rates</td>
<td>Death duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowlands</td>
<td>High seas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additions to the list will be welcomed.

Vocabulary Quiz

Sanford Levy, the lexicographer of Los Angeles, has collected a list of adjectives all of the "shaped or formed like a" variety. For each of the 27 adjectives, you are asked to name the object described by the adjective. Where more than one adjective appears in the same entry, they are synonyms. A score of 9 (one out of three) is high enough to qualify your vocabulary as being in good shape:

1. falcate, falciform
2. campanulate
3. taeniod
4. botryoidal, aciform
5. cornute
6. peltate, scutiform
7. cordate
8. sagittate
9. bacillary, virgulate
10. reniform
11. aciculate, acuminate
12. uncinate
13. pectinate
14. ensiform, xiphoid
15. cribriform
16. moniliform
17. concatenate
18. dendraiform
19. pyriform
20. fusiform
21. acinaciform
22. cuneiform
23. spicate
24. stellate
25. foliate
26. pisiform
27. cannulate

Sandwich Fillings

There are many three-word series that are more or less hackneyed. In this quiz, the middle word is given, e.g., place or liberty, and the end word(s) are required. In the first case, win (or straight) and show is the answer; in the second, life and the pursuit of happiness. Nothing less than a perfect score is considered passing:

1. writing
2. willing
3. hope
4. wide
Porcus

That's "pig" (Latin), which brings up the strangely neglected topic of English words whose Pig-Latin equivalents are also English words or phrases. The following list exhausts my own ideas (and the editor's) on the subject. Readers are invited, even solicited to add to it:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Pig Latin</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Pig Latin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lover</td>
<td>overlay</td>
<td>stover</td>
<td>overstay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devil</td>
<td>evil day</td>
<td>wonder</td>
<td>underway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slice</td>
<td>ice sleigh</td>
<td>lag</td>
<td>agley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rex</td>
<td>X-ray</td>
<td>sass</td>
<td>assay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plunder</td>
<td>underplay</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>estray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plover</td>
<td>overplay</td>
<td>stout</td>
<td>outstay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trash</td>
<td>ashtray</td>
<td>route</td>
<td>outre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trice</td>
<td>ice tray</td>
<td>sun</td>
<td>unsay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beast</td>
<td>East Bay</td>
<td>shear</td>
<td>hearsay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Crash

In the August 1969 issue, the game of Crash was described; a crash between two words of equal length is an occurrence of the same letter in the same position. Thus, truce scores two crashes with cruet and four with truck. How many words can you find having exactly one crash apiece with all the words in the following set?

ALBUM, BERTH, GLOSS, JUNTA, PANEL, PECAN, TRUSS, VIDEO

Four-Word Words

Leigh Mercer collects them and would like to add to his list, which includes AMENITIES, PERTINACITY, and WHEREINSOEVER. Are there any five-word words?

Nouns of Multitude

Mr. Mercer collects these also, marvelling occasionally that collective nouns in common usage seem to bear so tenuous an association with the objects they modify, e.g., tissue of lies, chapter of accidents. He is concerned primarily with inanimate objects. To
those interested in nouns of "animultitude" I recommend James Lipton's An Exaltation of Larks (Grossman Publishers, 1968) in which are revealed such beauties as a skulk of foxes, a plague of locusts, a cowardice of curs, a parliament of owls, a plying of turtle doves, an ostentation of peacocks, an unkindness of ravens, and a multitude of other collective nouns, none coined by Mr. Lipton -- all of them traditional words in our language.

My lawyer friend, Jack Carney of Long Beach, California, has coined some nouns of multitude that capture the essence of a civil action as he sees it: an indignation of litigants, an arrogance of attorneys, a corpulence of bailiffs, a petulance of judges, and a somnolence of jurors. Good luck with the State Bar Association, Jack!

Phobias

"The only valid phobia is phobophobia" to paraphrase Franklin D. Roosevelt. Some time in the future, I'll assemble a phobia quiz for you, but in the meantime, I'm fascinated with the word lyssophobia. It means "fear of rabies" and since rabies (or hydrophobia) means "fear of water" lyssophobia is "fear of fear of water!" Frankly, I have a morbid fear of lyssophobia.

I Didn't Realize the Carbon 14 Dating Process is so Precise Dept.

News item from the Los Angeles Times: "Engineers surveying for a railroad in Northern Turkestan have uncovered the skeleton of a massive saurian that must have passed away 3,000,000 years ago last Friday."

Corrections and Additions

In the August 1969 issue I listed what I thought was a complete list of four-letter words of three syllables: AERO, AERY, AIDA, AREA, ARIA, IEDA, IOTA, IOWA, OHIO, OLEO, OLIO and UREA. This was the result of communication among Noel Longmore of London, former editor Howard Bergerson, and me. Murray Pearce of Bismarck, North Dakota responded in such a way as to make us feel that we had been hasty in thinking our list was exhaustive. He added the following words, all taken from Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AANI</th>
<th>AGIO</th>
<th>ELIA</th>
<th>IIWI</th>
<th>ODEA</th>
<th>OMAO</th>
<th>URIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AARU</td>
<td>AMIA</td>
<td>ELOI</td>
<td>INIA</td>
<td>OHIA</td>
<td>UBIU</td>
<td>UTIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGAO</td>
<td>ANOA</td>
<td>EOAN</td>
<td>IOLE</td>
<td>OIS</td>
<td>ULUA</td>
<td>UTIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGAU</td>
<td>ARUI</td>
<td>ERIA</td>
<td>ITEA</td>
<td>OKIA</td>
<td>UNIO</td>
<td>UVEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AKIA</td>
<td>EDEA</td>
<td>EVOE</td>
<td>IXIA</td>
<td>OLEA</td>
<td>URAO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mr. Pearce also has done definitive research on another kickshaw from the same issue, A College of Interesting Cardinals. I listed NI, SAN, TPIN, FOUR, VIER and CINCO, meaning, respectively, 2 and 3 in Japanese, 3 in Russian, 4 in English and German, and 5 in Spanish, as words which denote the number of letters in their respective word-forms. I asserted that no other words of this type exist in any of the languages mentioned, and invited the readership to extend the list using other languages, including dead ones. Using the Second Edition of Webster's New International Dictionary, Eric Partridge's Origins, and Peter Bergman's Concise Dictionary of 26 Languages, Mr. Pearce added to and extended my modest list as follows:

2: TO (Danish, Norwegian)
   DU (Esperanto, Lithuanian)
   TU (Anglo-Saxon)
   DA (Erse, Gaelic)

3: DRI (Old High German)
   TRE (Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Italian)
   TRI (Esperanto, Czech, Welsh, Serbo-Croatian, Sanskrit, Erse, Gaelic)

4: FIRE (Danish, Norwegian)
   KVAR (Esperanto)
   FYRA (Swedish)
   VIER (Dutch)
   DORT (Turkish)
   ARBA (Hebrew)
   FIER (Yiddish)
   FIOR (Old High German)

5: PENKI (Lithuanian)
   PANCA (Sanskrit)
   PEMPE (Aeolic)
   FINEF (Yiddish)
   CINCO (Portuguese)
   CINCI (Rumanian)
   VIISI (Finnish)
   PENTE (Greek)

"I am using old Chinese words separately because required to teach Chinese, I acquired knowledge of Chinese characters and their respective sounds with the ideograms and 'long' signs..."

Since the right form of the cranial bone, the cranium, as in France, came up in HIPPONPIM, HIPPO came up, followed by RHINO.

More Conclusions

In the same form of words and BAS, and IMMA pointed out by Mr. Pearce, FELLALO points out the cranium in France, and in all the right forms.
But the four-syllable word kickshaw listed NI, 2 and 3 in Spanish, 1.47

CHAMS (Arabic)

6: CHWECH (Welsh)  
KHSVAS (Avestic)

7: SEPTYNI (Lithuanian)  
SCHIVAH (Hebrew)

8: SCHMONAH (Hebrew)

15: CHAMISCHAH ASSAR (Hebrew)

"I am unable to find any examples from 9 through 14" writes Mr. Pearce. However, Dmitri Borgmann, in Problem 83 (Good at Figures?) of Beyond Language (Scribner's, 1967) has given examples from 1 through 16!

Since the Chinese alphabet is ideographic, it must be treated separately. Ralph G. Beaman of Boothwyn, Pennsylvania points out that Chinese words are listed in dictionaries by the number of strokes required to form them; thus, strokes are analogous to letters. The Chinese characters for 1, 2, and 3 use one, two and three strokes, respectively; for example, the number 3 resembles the capital letter E with the vertical bar removed. The common Chinese for 15 (using the ideographs for ten and five) has six strokes; but, for legal documents and other uses to prevent fraud, there are more elaborate "long" forms. The long form for 15 (reproduced to the right) is classified as a fifteen-stroke character.

More Corrections and Additions

In the August 1969 issue, I pointed out that AXES is the plural form of both AX and AXIS, and BASES the plural form of both BASE and BASIS. Murray Pearce suggests IMAGINES, the plural of IMAGO and IMAGINE, an obsolete noun meaning device or scheme. I also pointed out that the word OCTOPUS possesses three different plurals. Mr. Pearce adds DRACHMAS, DRACHMAE and DRACHMI, and FELLAHEEN, FELLAHIN and FELLAHS. Mr. Beaman suggests HIPPOPOTAMUSES, HIPPOPOTAMI and HIPPOPOTAMUS. However, in Language on Vacation (Scribner's, 1965), Dmitri Borgmann came up with a quadruple plural: RHINOCEROSES, RHINOCEROTES, RHINOCERI and RHINOCEROS.

Finally, Mr. Pearce adds the following to my list of "twelves": the cranial nerves, the Apostles of Ireland, the Peers or Paladins of France, the tables of Roman Law, and, of course, the hours on a clock face.
In the same August, 1969 issue, in The Last Shall Be First Department, I posed the following sort of question: what word has the form --AU-- in which the initial group of three letters is the same as the terminal group? Answer, BEDAUBED. I posed a few others, including --RE--, to which I gave as the solution the word ARREAR. I promptly heard from John Ferguson of Silver Spring, Maryland who is the originator of this sort of poser, which he calls "Heads n Tails". He asked why I hadn't given the alternate solutions: ADREAD and TERETE. Answer: because I hadn't thought of them. That will teach me to check with the experts before rushing into print. Mr. Ferguson poses a pair which should not give too much trouble: --CAP-- and --HAT--.

Readers are invited to find Heads n Tails words having each of the 26 letters as cores. For example, A is the core of PAP, I of ONION, M of PAMPA, N of SENSE, O of BOB, R of VERVE, etc.

Walter Penney of Greenbelt, Maryland takes me to task for my isomorphs in the same issue. In my solution, I implied that ROCOCO was the only word with the 123232 pattern, but Mr. Penney adds the common words BANANA and MANANA. Likewise with 1221314, to which I gave the answer ILLICIT. Mr. Penney adds ASSAGAI.

Query: what word with pattern 12345678 has four anagrams with respective forms 28741356, 35186247, 47182356 and 47821356?

1969 Challenges

Regrettably, no reader solved the challenge problem of finding three synonyms with respective letter patterns 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8, 9 10 5 2 3 4 5 4 1 5 10 11 8 12, and 6 13 14 4 5 3 1 7 15. Answer: ISTANBUL, CONSTANTINOPLE, BYZANTIUM.

A second challenge was to concoct a logical, intelligible and grammatical sentence beginning with the words: "If I was the President .. " I received 22 solutions, the drollest of which was Murray Pearce's "If I was the President, and Mrs. If I was the First Lady." But my favorite was offered by Elizabeth Byrnes of Philadelphia: "If I was the President for four years, how come the Electoral College never notified me of the fact?"

The Unspeakable

Most readers are familiar with the concept of sentences that can be spoken but not written: "There are three ways to spell (to, two, too?)." Howard Bergerson has proposed a sentence that can be written but not spoken: "There are three ways to pronounce 'slough'".

Subtraction

In Ferguson's, 1969's one letter word: S, Andrew C. Mercer added three syllables "HIDEOUT". Structure could be repeated.

Volatile

Some words with letter is repeated: T S A R .

Neologisms

Most language by occasion: elderly lady, to the rail, to the occasion: she to some member, deli-founding.
Subtracting Syllables by Adding Letters

In Problem 64 (A Syllabub of Syllables) in Beyond Language (Scribner's, 1967), Dmitri Borgmann observes that one can frequently add one letter to a one-syllable word and convert it into a three-syllable word: SMILE into SIMILE, LIEN into ALIEN, CAME into CAMEO. Andrew Griscom of Menlo Park, California is interested in the reverse process -- reducing the number of syllables in a word by adding letters to the front of the word. He changes AGED into STAGED, RUGGED into SHRUGGED, and AGUE into PLAGUE. Can the reader find further words of this kind?

Volatile Words

Some words change their pronunciation radically when only one letter is altered. What is the longest such word you can find? Leigh Mercer and J.A. Lindon have an interesting list of such words, including a few with seven letters: PARISH - PARIAH, HIDEOUS - HIDEOUT, COMBINE - COMBING, CHEMISE - CHEMIST. BELL YACHT - BELLYACHE would be a nine, but let's forbid anything but single words. Can you improve on the present record of 7 letters?

Neologism Department

Most of us would like to make a lasting impression on our language by coining a useful, enduring word, but few of us find the occasion. I have found it! We need a transitive verb to denote what an elderly lady on an ocean liner in mid-Atlantic does when, leaning over the rail, she inadvertently drops her purse (book, hat, umbrella) into the ocean. The needed verb should be obvious. Think of it by analogy: she didn't drop it on purpose, but it is still likely to find its way to some remote beach along with cotton bales, crates of rice, lumber, deliberately thrown overboard to lighten a ship in danger of foundering. Ah, I believe you have it. The word is FLOTTISON.

A Challenge

In the letter chain WASHERAYETAGMUD, every group of three consecutive letters forms a word, and no word is repeated. An analogous chain of words of four letters is given by T S A R I D E S K. Can the reader produce longer chains? A related game was presented in "Word Groups With Mathematical Structure" in the November 1968 issue. In that game, no letter could be repeated in the chain, but each group of consecutive letters could be anagrammed to form a word.