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The August 1968 Word Ways contained a short problem entitled Vowel Rotation which ran as follows:

Five common English words with an obvious letter relationship are LAST, LEST, LIST, LOST and LUST. Unfortunately, modern English does not include a word LYST. Can you, perchance, find a group of six such words all of which belong to modern English?

As no other Word Ways reader has ventured a solution to this problem, we felt it was time to come up with one. The answer to the problem as stated is "yes". But since that would fail to satisfy most, if not all, readers, perhaps we should elaborate, and describe the six words that we found.

They are MATH, METH, MITH, MOTH, MUTH, and MYTH. Five of these (all except METH) appear in Webster's Third New International Dictionary, which should prove that all are "modern English", as the problem required. The sixth word, METH, is also modern, being found in two dictionaries published in the 1970s. The word appears in The Underground Dictionary (MacGibbon & Kee, London, 1971) by Eugene Landy, and A Dictionary of New English (Longman, London, 1973) by Clarence Barnhart, Sol Steinmetz and Robert Barnhart. The latter dictionary was reviewed in the February 1974 Word Ways.

What do the six words mean? Only MOTH and MYTH are common enough not to need defining. MATH is short for "mathematics"; METH is a stimulant drug (also called "methamphetamine" and "speed"); MITH is a chiefly Scots variant of "might"; and MUTH is a Hindu temple. While these last four words are not particularly common, they can certainly all be considered as "modern English".

ANSWER

SLANG AFTERNOON
1. insane 5. station 9. poker, th
2. finger 6. Federal 11. saloon
3. feather 7. a train 15. a stee
cabin 8. policeman
12. a train 16. a steel
13. a train 17. a steel
14. a train 18. a steel
19. a train 19. a steel
20. a train 20. a steel
21. a train 21. a steel
22. a train 22. a steel
23. a train 23. a steel
24. army

KICKSHA

Look Alike
1. insane
2. finger
3. feather
4. ache

Permitted
5. station
6. Federal
7. a train
8. policeman
9. poker, th
10. jen
11. saloon
12. cabin
13. a train
14. a train
15. a steel
16. a steel
17. a steel
18. a steel
19. a steel
20. a steel
21. a steel
22. a steel
23. a steel
24. army

Two Sequences
1. insane
2. finger
3. feather
4. ache

Rhyme Quizzes
5. station
6. Federal
7. a train
8. policeman
9. poker, th
10. jen
11. saloon
12. cabin
13. a train
14. a train
15. a steel
16. a steel
17. a steel
18. a steel
19. a steel
20. a steel
21. a steel
22. a steel
23. a steel
24. army

Websterian
1. insane
2. finger
3. feather
4. ache
5. station
6. Federal
7. a train
8. policeman
9. poker, th
10. jen
11. saloon
12. cabin
13. a train
14. a train
15. a steel
16. a steel
17. a steel
18. a steel
19. a steel
20. a steel
21. a steel
22. a steel
23. a steel
24. army