

CHARADE SENTENCES

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Charades -- the division of words into parts that are also words, such as PLEASURE = PLEA + SURE -- have been known for a very long time. However, charade sentences, such as

Flamingo: pale, scenting a latent shark!
Flaming, opalescent in gala tents -- hark!

were apparently first devised by Howard Bergerson of Sweet Home, Oregon in the early 1960s; Dmitri Borgmann cites several (including the example above) in Language on Vacation (Scribner's, 1965).

Howard Bergerson also noted the close relationship between charade sentences and a palindromic sentence; in the latter, the letters in the second half of the sentence must be read in right-to-left order, as

Doc, note, I dissent. A fast never
.doc no teid I .ssentaf a stneverp

In palindromes, unlike charade sentences, an extra letter can appear at the center.

Charade sentences are featured in an article by Howard Bergerson in the February 1969 Word Ways; Bonita C. Miller contributed two charade poems in May 1974. The purpose of this article is to acquaint recent readers with examples of this type of literary constraint. Daniel G. Porter of New York, N. Y. has constructed seven charade sentences that tell a story of sorts, and James Rambo of Palo Alto, California has devised the longest charade poem known.

UNICORN

Dear the Pony, mousy ethos telling ersatz Eros tales --
Dearth, eponymous - yet - "hostel", lingers at zero, stales --

So erect, Hon! Ice ravish nuance, darling
So ere cthonic era (Vishnu) an' Cedarling

Then undo us, escargo in God drest ...
(The nun douses car going odd; rest.)

As knot or seed own soil loaf
Ask not; or see down; so I'll oaf

Form, Indra; infer . . . 'til ebony Jew elect opiate as E.S.P. -- UN
 For Mind (rain-fertile, bony jewel), ectopia teases. (pun.)

Or crusted leaf lying there turns
 Orc-rusted lea, flying the returns!

" You there, Fir, sting others with arbors of tension . .
 Youth, ere first ingot hers, wit, harbors often sion."

THE POET'S REPLY

I

Use fulsome howl
 Or direst word
 In galling us;
 Toil over a shoddy ode?
 Listen,
 Dressed in gyves, tiger,
 Allies fall,
 Ensnared in timeless eras,
 Mentally in agony,
 Essays in gall.
 Outwit Hades,
 Ignore verses,
 You real lover?
 Come!

II

Useful somehow, Lord,
 I rest, wording all
 In gusto I love.
 Rash odd yodel
 Is tendresse;
 Dingy vestige
 Rallies fallen snared.
 Intime, lesser as men tally,
 I nag on -- yes, say,
 Sing all out --
 With a design.
 O reverses,
 You're all overcome!