KICKSHAWS

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Kickshaws is currently being assembled by a series of guest editors. All contributions should be sent to the editor in Morristown, New Jersey.

Policy

There will be no editorial 'we' while we are writing this column.

Word Ways ought to establish standard abbreviations for the most-used references, perhaps listing them on the inside front cover. Failing that, I can at least establish some for this column. For the next few pages, MWPD is the Merriam-Webster Pocket Dictionary, NI2 and NI3 are the Second and Third editions of the Merriam-Webster New International, and TIG is the Times Index-Gazetteer of the World.

Quick Quiz

The following list was extracted from NI2 and NI3, but the last word has been omitted: absolute, bard, capital, dark, eye, face, gee, hail, igneous, jack, knot, lead, make, native, off, panel, quail, rage, sanction, take, up, value, warrant, xiphiplastral. What rule defines the list? What is the missing word? If you don't have these dictionaries available, this quiz is impossible, but don't despair -- the answer is given in a later Kickshaw.

Logology For The Layman

Of all wordplay for the general public, the most sophisticated is the British cryptic crossword puzzle. Forbidden are the drab definitions that make the American crossword a mechanical plug-in-the-synonym affair; instead, each clue is a miniature word-puzzle. Transposals, hidden words, charades, word deletions, homonyms, and other cryptic devices are used to make the crossword a challenge to thought rather than memory. For example, 'Who's going back if Adam isn't? There's no need to pick holes in this.' clues SIEVE, for a sieve has holes in it already, and EVE IS is SIEVE backwards.

The British have also developed the 'variety' crossword, the pinnacle of crossword ingenuity. There are literally hundreds of types. Examples are 'Vwllss', where all vowels are dropped from the clues and must be dropped from the answers before they are entered in the

diagram; and 'Letters Latent', where a letter must be dropped from each answer before it is entered, and the omitted letters, in order, spell out a quotation.

The best short introduction to the British crossword is in The Penguin Book of Sunday Times Crosswords and The Second .... (both $1.95 if you can find them). In addition to the usual explanations and examples of the clue types, there are extensive lists of cue words for the types, like 'smashed' and 'in disarray' for transposals, 'back' and 'upset' for reversals. There is also a list of the commonest part-word clues, like 'loud' = F (forte), 'the French' = LA/LE/LES. Best of all is Alec Robins's Teach Yourself Cross-Words, but I haven't seen it in the United States.

If you want a more readily available and cheaper source, there are at least four U.S. periodicals that carry such puzzles. All you need is graph paper and a public library. The simplest are the London-Times-style puzzles in Washington Monthly. They generally have a number of politics-related clues, and are fairly transparent.

Next come Frank Lewis's crosswords in The Nation and the Sunday (London) Times reprints in New York. In the November 1971 Kickshaws, Dave Silverman praised Lewis's crosswords above all other cryptics, including those of the Times and the Observer. I find this judgement strange; Lewis's clueing can be sloppy, even non-cryptic, and I'd rank him below even the Times. But he's still enjoyable, and more suitable for Americans than the Times, which often requires knowledge of British and London geography, cricket, etc.

Last, and by far my favorite, are Richard Maltby Jr.'s variety crosswords, which have been running in Harper's since January 1976. These are the most challenging of the lot (though still accessible to beginners), and also the most entertaining; he has yet to repeat a type. Harper's (and The Nation) provide explanatory booklets if you send a self-addressed stamped envelope, so you don't have to rely on the books mentioned above. Maltby had an excellent article on solving in the January 1976 Harpers, and he annotates all solutions.

If you want to move on to the really hard stuff, there is The World's Most Difficult Crossword Puzzles, edited by Azed (Pantheon, 1976, $3.95), and The Listener Crossword Puzzle Book (Penguin). To give you an idea: doing Listener puzzles (the hardest), using all my reference books, I average six times as long as I do on Times crosswords, using none. If I didn't own Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary, the standard reference for expert-level cryptics, I'd have much more trouble. The Azed book also has a short introductory explanation of cryptic clue types, Glossa knows why. Any beginner trying one of the Azed crosswords that start it off would give up in despair. Fortunately, the puzzles by other contributors are often easier.

Topsy Turvisms

Cleverness in American crosswords, what there is of it, seems

largely restricted to the New York Times Magazine. The Word Buff was impressed by J.S. Lasher's January 16, 1977 puzzle, 'Variations', in which ten well-known phrases were turned inside out and woven into the crossword. Since you don't have the intersecting words, the Buff has furnished clues to the original expressions in addition to the number of letters per word for the inverted version (watch out for changed plurals and articles). An example to show the way: Labor pains (5 2 3 5, musical event). The answer, BLUES OF THE BIRTH, is a Topsy Turvism of BIRTH OF THE BLUES.

1. Egret plumes, e.g. (8 2 1 4, like seeks like)
2. Tennis shortcoming (2 6 2 5, don't sharpen your boomerang)
3. Turkey-stuffing situation (1 4 2 3 4, aviarist's delight)
4. One at an early bash in Eden (4 2 3 5 5, legalese for number 1)
5. Duncan's murder, Macbeth: II, i (5 2 3 5, where criminals are supposed to go)
6. Official scorer's job (8 2 3 6, mistake in deciding)
7. Pawn to king four, e.g. (6 2 3 5, part of what's going on)
8. Painful instant for Trigger (6 2 3 4, hasty impulse)
9. Dark brown, to a chestnut (5 2 7 5, a different matter)
10. Demonstration staged by food fish (3 5 2 4, fatal day)

Update

A crash between two equal-length words is a letter in the same position in both; thus WORDS and MORSE have two crashes. In the game of Uncrash, two players alternately add words to a list such that no word crashes any preceding one, and the last to play wins. Uncrash is much played in a postal game club called NOST, usually with five-letter words and the MWPD as dictionary. Under these conditions, what is the shortest Uncrash game? In other words, what is the shortest list of words that crashes every word in the MWPD? In a February 1972 Kickshaw, Ross Eckler offered BANAL CLOSE DITTY GREED HERON POUCH QUIRT STAIR. NOST Michael Keller now reduces this by one: BOSOM DEUCE FLEET MYRRH NAIAD PIOUS QUAIL. If this checks out, it should be unbeatable.

A variation is Alphabetical Uncrash, in which the words added must begin successively with A, B, C, etc. NOST Garry Crum recently demonstrated an almost certain first-player win: play AUDIO, C*---, E*---, G*---, where * is a different vowel each time. If the second player can find a second-position vowel for his H---- word, he will surely have none left for his J---- word. Given this, what is the shortest Alphabetical Uncrash game? See Answers and Solutions.

Rudolf Ondrejka, in the August 1976 Kickshaws, asked for further groups like SUASTIKA/SVASTIKA/SWASTIKA, three synonyms obtained by substituting alphabetically adjacent letters. How about CHIRK/CHIRL/CHIRM, all of which mean 'to chirp or chirr', noted by 'Neophyte' in the March 1977 Enigma?

In the last issue Ralph Beaman said that C_2HBr_5 'is correctly PENTABROMETHANE, despite the preference of most organic chem-

ists for the BROMO- prefix.' I disagree. Usage, not the fallible NI, is the arbiter of correctness; the usage of organic chemists is the only sensible standard for organic chemistry terms. I have found many references to the compound, dating back to the earliest Chemical Abstracts, and all list it as PENTABROMOETHANE, so that is the right form. In fact, even NI3 agrees: the second entry under brom-/bromo-, which is the one relevant here, has the label now usu bromo-. I think that's the same usu as in usu cap, synonymous with alw ('there are one or two relict forms with brom- that may not have vanished yet').

Richard Lederer of Concord, New Hampshire says that Charles Bostick's parting thought is a slightly garbled Samuel Johnson quote: I should be punished / For every pun I shed / Do not leave a puny shred / Of my punnish head.

More political logology: Loris B. Curtis of Mason, Michigan suggested the fine antigram MONDALE / DOLE MAN in the October 1976 Enigma. Dmitri Borgmann suggests that every time President Carter makes a statement, the Republicans can retort with the palindrome RETRACT IT, CARTER. As for the Vice President, the Republican slogan is RIP MONDALE, a transposition of PALINDROME.

Desiderata

An article on punctuation, foreign and domestic. Burmese has none; Cambodian has symbols for the ends of sentences, paragraphs, and works; Turkish sets off the subject with a comma; English writers used to be crazy about colons. Whatever happened to the interrobang (an exclamation point superimposed on a question mark)?

An article describing how various logologists first became interested in this field. I proposed this to the editor in late 1974, and he suggested I do it. For the last 2 1/2 years I've had his and my descriptions. Anyone want to get this moving?

More articles based on other languages and dictionaries. Chambers and the Funk & Wagnalls Standard get little mention in Word Ways.

SI Si!

SI (the metric system, with chrome accessories) could also make a nice little article, if anyone cares to try it. The 16 prefixes and about 24 standard units combine to give a virtually untouched field for investigation; the only result I know of is the Margaret / teragram reversal.

Units of Measure, by S. Dresner (Hastings House, 1971), and A Dictionary of Scientific Units, by H. G. Jerrard and D. B. McNeill (London: Chapman and Hall, 1972) provide a variety of other interesting information on measures. For example, though the names of the commonest SI units seem to me as constant as 'foot' or 'mile', there have been alternative names proposed: kanne for litre, grave

for kilogramme, bes, brieze or stathm for gramme, and stab for metre. Some make sense -- what's the basic mass unit doing with a kilo- on it? should we call the gramme a millikilogramme? -- but I can't see the world adopting the 'stab system'. I regret the substitution of 'siemens' for 'mho', the cleverly-named unit of conductivity, which is the inverse of resistance, for which the unit is the 'ohm'. Lost also are the symbols mho (the ohm symbol upside down) and the gemmho (inverse of the megohm).

Time is conspicuously unmetricized. The natural units (day, lunar month, year) are incommensurable, definable in various ways, and worst of all variable, so the only official unit is the artificially-defined second. There have been some day-based proposals, though. The centiday has been named the cé and degré (or degree). I like the latter because with it came the moment (.001 degree or .864 second), also called the blink, and the instant (.1 moment). At the other end of the scale is the cron, one megayear. There's more fodder for metric humorists -- split-1.16-blink timing, last-69-instant reprieves, never in a cron!

Some unit names are interesting in themselves. The donkeypower, 250 watts, about one-third horsepower. The duty, a measure of work. The glug, about .98 kg. The inferno, one billion degrees Kelvin, of use to astrophysicists. The jerk, a measure of acceleration change -- one foot per second per second per second. Nuclear physicists seem to enjoy coining such terms, viz. the crocodile (1 megavolt), dollar (a measure of nuclear reactor reactivity, as is the k, the only one-letter unit name), the barn (1 quintillionth of a square centimeter -- see the NI3 entry), and the shed (1 quintillionth of a barn).

Some units have direct logological interest. The millihg and centihg, units of pressure (1 millihg is almost exactly 1 torr) are the only uncapitalized nouns I know that end in -hg. (The H is silent.) The kip (kilopound), puff (picofarad, pF), and typp (thousand yards per pound, a unit of yarn size) are acronymic. So is the vowelless rhm, a measure of radiation intensity. It may look like a throat-clearing or an abbreviation, but everyone agrees it's a legitimate noun. That includes NI3, which rhymes it with 'rum'.

Brought Up From Down Under

Some time ago, Darryl Francis's Australian cousin pointed out a logological tidbit containing five doubled letters: Woolloomooloo, a suburb and bay in Sydney. He couldn't find it in recent geographical sources like TIG, but Dmitri Borgmann tracked it down in various editions of the Encyclopedia Britannica(1911, 1922, 1926). According to the 1958 Australian Encyclopedia, the original spelling (in the 1793 land grant) was Woolloommooloo. This has six double letters, five of them consecutive; I believe both are records. The encyclopedia article gives other variant spellings; unfortunately, they do not include Woolloomoolloo. With a thirteen-letter internal palindrome, that would set another record.

Speaking Of Palindromes

Maxey Brooke sent in the following intriguing entry from Chemical and Engineering News, October 18, 1976: in the index to the 57th edition of the Handbook of Chemistry and Physics (CRC Press) appears the entry 'Sea water, see Water, sea'. Try murmuring that sometime when you can't get to sleep at night.

What's The Guide Word?

The most salient words in dictionaries are the catchwords at the top of each page. I may not know what Epanagoge, garboard strake, tahsildar, and urticaria mean, but I'm familiar with them all from flipping through NI2. They were the basis of the earlier Quick Quiz: each word in the list was the first term under a letter (beside the letter itself) that was a catchword in both NI2 and NI3. The missing word in the list is zyzzogeton, the last word in both dictionaries. I wonder how many there are in all? And how many of the total are rare words like xiphiplastral and zyzzogeton? (These are the only rare matches I know between NI2 and NI3, but proceleusmatic is a guide word in both NI3 and Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary, about the size of the Collegiate.)

Perfidious Helvetia

One NI3 catchword that I passed by many times was moazagotl cloud. It looked very Nahuatl, but when I finally read the entry it turned out to be Swiss German dialect.

That's a deceptive language. Another example is the name Abplanalp, which was discussed here a couple of years ago as suitable for use in palindromes. Murray Pearce assumed it was Welsh, perhaps from the Ab-, but no; Schwyzertütsch again. Apparently it means 'from the flat alp', but I have difficulty envisioning a flat alp.

Memory Nudging Expressions Made On Names' Initial Character Set

Wordplay using the acrostic principle is not uncommon. An example is the party game of Characteristic Initials (Edgar Allan Poe = Eminent American Poet, A. Ross Eckler = A Real Editor). Another is the mynorca, christened in the February 1973 Kickshaws: a phrase defining its acronym, like This Is The Labelling Entity = TITLE. But in at least one case the principle is used seriously -- mnemonics. Outside of foreign-language rules, most mnemonics are acrostic in nature. Some, like ROY G. BIV for the spectrum and Every Good Boy Deserves Fun for the lines in the treble clef, are quite well-known. One of my favorites is a mother's mnemonic for presentability of children, Hideous Fools and Morons, Keep Silent! The checklist is Hair brushed? Face washed? Middle (shirt tucked in, belt on)? Knees clean? Shoes tied and brushed?

Mnemonics can be treacherous. A sequence of initial letters is a slim memory hook; one may interchange items with the same initial

letters, substitute words in the mnemonic that make more sense but have the wrong initials, or forget what an initial stands for. It is even possible -- and annoying -- to remember a mnemonic, but have no idea what it represents.

I would like to put you in that position. Below are ten mnemonics, chosen from about 160 in A Dictionary of Mnemonics (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972). Your task is to figure out what they mnemonize. All sequences, except possibly the last, should be recognizable, if not always familiar. Answers can be found in Answers and Solutions.

1. Sergeant-Major Hates Eating Onions (geography)
2. Men Very Easily Make Jugs Serve Useful Nocturnal Purposes (astronomy)
3. No Plan Like Yours To Study History Wisely (history)
4. Did Mary Ever Visit Brighton Beach? (precedence)
5. Some Officers Have Curly Auburn Hair To Offer Attraction (mathematics)
6. Camels Often Sit Down Carefully. Perhaps Their Joints Creak? Early Oiling Might Prevent Permanent Rheumatism (geology)
7. Kindly Place Cover On Fresh Green Spring Vegetables (biology)
8. Retaliating For Long Frustration, Moses Badgered Hostile Leader Demanding Freedom (Bible)
9. Better Get Ready While Your Mistress Comes Back (optics)
10. TAll GYroscopes CAn FLy APart, ORbiting QUickly TO COmplete DIsintegration (mineralogy)

The last example, you'll note, is a bigram mnemonic: the first two letters of mnemonic and keyed word are the same. One step further, acrostically, is the 'stump-compound', made up mostly of syllable-sized initial chunks. This is much beloved by the U.S. Navy and Russian bureaucrats. My favorite example is the Navy's Chief of Naval Airship Traffic. With penultimate accent, CHNAVAIRSHIPTRA sounds like the eleventh avatar of Vishnu.

AND and 'and' and "and" and ...

Bell Labs News awhile back asked for a meaningful sentence containing five consecutive occurrences of 'and'. Their answer: suppose a man were instructing a painter on how to paint the sign 'Fish-and-Chips'. He would say, 'I want to have a hyphen between the words Fish and and and and and Chips'.

With hypostases, of course, any number of ands can be produced; the challenge is to find a plausible situation to evoke the sentence. They've given me the opportunity to reach eleven: 'The words in their quote are I and want and to and have and ...' If they'd played fair and put quotes around the citation forms, the nature of their achievement would be clearer, but it wouldn't have looked as nice.

Ahoy!

Dmitri Borgmann writes that the Hawaiian word aloha, the Italian

ciao, and the Hebrew shalom possess the unique distinction of having two diametrically opposite meanings: each means both 'hello' and 'goodbye'. Logologically, the one thing that the three words have in common is the letter A followed by the letter O -- corresponding to the Greek Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end! (I've heard that the Spanish adios also has this dual meaning; if so, Dmitri's observation still holds true.)

I'd say these words have two translations, not two meanings. Aloha 'love', schiavo vostro 'your slave', and shalom 'peace' have simply become greetings usable at arrival or departure, like 'cheerio' or 'good morning'. Their users might wonder why we need two different greetings. This raises the question: what words have single meanings in English but two antonymic translations in other languages? (This excludes words like 'dust', 'rent', and 'cleave', which even English speakers will agree have two opposing meanings.) One simple example is kinship terminology. English 'brother' translates to Mandarin Chinese gege 'elder brother' and didi 'younger brother', two words as antonymous as English 'brother' and 'sister'. Similarly for hundreds of other languages. Any better examples?

Blackboard Gleanings

The Cornell Linguistic Lounge blackboard blossoms now and then with jokes, mostly in, but some comprehensible to tois pollois. 'Linguistic magazines for the layman', for example, produced Listen (it ceased publication in 1971), Parole Match, Playverb, Saturday Review of the Literature, Speaker's Digest, Tense, and Women's Dative.

Even inner was 'Foreign and domestic plurals'. Linguists naturally would not stop at everyday English examples like sloop/sleep, spouse/spice, Milhice, soxen, and my favorite, eye/wee. Latin and Greek contributed, of course: box/boces, data/datata, sex/seges, window/windownes, dogmae, hippopotamodes, Kleenices, vermilioi. And German: pal/päler. And the prefix language, Swahili: jingle/mangle, kibitzer/ vibitzer. The actual pluralized plural datum/data/datas (ugh) was surpassed by two quadruple-deckers: lock/lox/loges/loges and Camu/Camus/Camera/Camerae. But the most remarkable example comes from Arabic. I'm told that reindeer is a phonologically possible Arabic word. If it were one, its regular plural would be ar-rundara'u.

In Brief

Mary Youngquist writes, 'A person would really be in bad shape if he were under the weather, over the hill, beside himself, downright miserable, and left out of everything. At least he'd be a little confused as to his location.'

Are regional dialects always denoted by monosyllables? Dave Silverman notes that we have Irish brogue, Scotch burr, Southern drawl, Midwestern twang, and occasionally one hears of the Somersetshire drone. Are there others? And if there are not recognized names for

the following regional dialects, can readers coin good ones for Brooklyn? New England? Wales? Yorkshire? (One bisyllabic example comes to mind, Welsh singsong which appears in a NI3 citation.)

'Proparoxytone' is a proparoxytone.

Ralph Beaman notes that 'latchstrings' is often cited as the longest word having only two vowels (analogous to 'strengths' with one vowel); however, in the January 1977 Scientific American he has discovered a two-vowel word one letter longer: Schwarzschild radius. In a related bit of wordplay, James Rambo of Palo Alto asked himself: using the vowels once each in order, how long a sentence can be written. He challenges you to improve on 'Schmaltz's strength thrills throngs, sculpts rhythms'.

Why no Chinese has won a Nobel Prize in chemistry: a check of various dictionaries reveals four different characters each for gallium, antimony, cesium, samarium, and gadolinium; five for osmium; and six for scandium. Mercury has two characters, but five pronunciations. One character is given as meaning both scandium and cesium, another for masurium and samarium. Elements with one undisputed character and pronunciation are distinctly in the minority.

It May Not Be Logology, But It Sure Is Science Fiction Department

From 'The / One / Word / People', a fragment by Harlan Ellison in his collection From the Land of Fear:

> There are some that can be met, strange and twisted ones you know by an aura, a scent, a feel about them, that if you had one single word -- like 'junkie' or 'nympho' or 'hooker' or 'Bircher' -- a key word that labeled their secret bit, you would understand all the inexplicable, off center things about them ...
>
> Or your friend who picks fights with Italians, and aside from not telling you what his real name is, couldn't be a better drinking buddy. If you had the word 'deportee' you'd understand that he was picked up for anarchist reasons in Italy, and deported, and is in this country illegally.
>
> It's like that. The one word people ...

Then there's Poul Anderson's 'Turning Point' (If, May 1963; also in his Time and Stars, Doubleday 1964, Manor Books 1970), which begins, 'Please, mister, could I have a cracker for my oontatherium?' The Earthman narrator is greatly shocked by this sentence, spoken by a five-year-old girl. His party has been on the planet Joril for a couple of months, meeting the pastoral natives, and has just landed in a new part of the planet. A native from near the original landing site has invented navigation and tacking, landing here a week ago. Since then, he has casually passed on to everyone a command of idiomatic English, including verbatim knowledge of a Kipling poem about the 'oont' (camel), understanding of the root '-therium' (from the offhand conversation of a biologist), and the ability to join them to name a native mammal appropriately. In short, the average inhabi-

tant is a high-grade genius by Earth standards. The people have no advanced technology simply because the gentle conditions never forced them to develop any.

The story is not convincing, but it has stuck in my mind, particularly the first line. Perhaps it's the topic -- super-geniuses are interesting, but probably impossible to make believable -- but I have another theory, formed when I saw the word 'uintatherium' in a discussion of extinct mammals.

It's a one word story.

I've seen many stories that were obviously based on a recent science article, but I can't remember any others that seemed to have arisen from a single word. They must exist; some writers, and not just SF writers, try to start the creative juices flowing by working from a phrase or story title. Any candidates?

Split Alphabet Soup

In the quiz below, rules have been applied to pick certain letters out of the alphabet, and your task is to discover the rules. If the rule divides the alphabet into more than two groups, all groups are given. An example from a similar quiz by Dave Silverman in the August 1974 Kickshaws: F G J L P Q R, for which the rule is 'completely asymmetric letters'. Dave used most of the easy rules, so you may need to consult the clues below in many cases. Where the rule mentions a specific dictionary, it's NI3.

1. A C I J L M N R S U V W Z, sometimes Q
2. A B C D E F G Q R S T V W X Z
3. B C F G J K M P Q V W X Y Z
4. A F H I K M N P R T X Y
5. E T / A I M N / D G K O R S U W / B C F H J L P Q V X Y Z
6. B D F G H I J K L P Q T Y
7. C K O P S U V W X Y Z
8. A B C D E F G I J K L N O P Q R T U X Y, maybe M
9. A C D E G I J K M O P S T U Y
10. A / B C E I K / D F H J L M O S U / G N P R T V W X Z / Q Y

Clues: 1. shape 2. keys 3. frequency 4. shape 5. didah 6. lowercase shape 7. shape 8. sound 9. N 10. blind. Answers are in Answers and Solutions.

Food For Thought

ghosts in a Martian department store