Although Spenser and Shakespeare coined blends ("wrizzled" and "glaze" respectively), it was not until Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky," begun in 1855 but not completed and published until 1872, that the blend became a truly popular method of word coinage. One measure of the blend's recent popularity is a list of twenty-nine synonyms for "blend" itself published in the December 1933 issue of American Speech. Since then Theodore Bernstein has suggested in The Careful Writer that the figurative term "centaur word" is preferable to either "portmanteau" or "blend" because it is more descriptive. I suspect, however, that because "blend" requires no knowledge of the French language or Greek mythology it will remain the most commonly used term.

But readers of Lewis Carroll, I feel sure, are not likely to give up "portmanteau." Carroll captures the pure pleasure of the blend when discussing "Jabberwocky" in the preface of The Hunting of the Snark:

This also seems a fitting occasion to notice the other hard words in that poem. Humpty-Dumpty's theory of two meanings packed into one word like a portmanteau, seems to me the right explanation for all.

For instance, take the two words "fuming" and "furious." Make up your mind that you will say both words, but leave it unsettled which you will say first. Now open your mouth and speak. If your thoughts incline ever so little toward "fuming," you will say "fuming-furious"; if they turn, by even a hair's breadth, toward "furious," you will say "furious-fuming"; but if you have that rarest of gifts, a perfectly balanced mind, you will say "frumious."

For the words which follow, reverse the balancing act required to coin a blend, and determine which two words were originally combined to form each. Answers can be found in Answers and Solutions.