"X" AS IN XERXES

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It is the awesome responsibility of parents to choose names for their offspring. In picking suitable names, they must try to find ones meeting certain standards regarded as desirable in our society. Specifically, names should be (1) short, (2) modern, (3) euphonious, (4) free of unpleasant connotations, (5) easy to pronounce, (6) matching the sex of the child being named, and (7) distinctive.

As far as the last of these criteria is concerned, one way of assuring the distinctiveness of the name selected is to use one beginning with the letter X. That letter is one of the strongest in the alphabet, and only a handful of reasonably common words begins with it: XENON, XENOPHOBIA, XEROX, XMAS, X-RAY, and XYLOPHONE.

Most medium-sized dictionaries include first names, either in the main alphabetical section or in a supplementary section in the back. Let's check three of the leading such dictionaries published in recent years, savoring the feast of X-names spread before us:

- Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (1963)
- Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary (1963)
- The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (1971)

Alas and alack! The combined resources of these three dictionaries do not yield a single name, masculine or feminine, beginning with the letter X. A just published dictionary, Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1973), with more than 150,000 entries, goes a step further yet, eliminating all first names.

Aside from being virtually inconceivable, such dereliction is also intolerable and unacceptable. As logologists, it is our bounden duty to compile a comprehensive list of X-names for consideration by prospective parents. Accordingly, we commence a thorough search of English-language dictionaries, biographical dictionaries, baby name books, fact finders, books of purported name etymologies, lists of Biblical names, lists of classical names, Shakespearean concordances, and related reference works, recording all X-names that enter our field of vision. Eventually, our list stands at 150 names, consisting of 100 masculine names and 50 feminine names.

Is this list, given at the top of the next page, complete? No, such a list can never be complete. Pick up any reference work that comes to hand, and you are likely to find names not included in the above. For example, the list above did not include the first name XIT, so...

The list includes the following names. Why? I leave that to your great strength, and your own good judgment. Second, that is the first list of the kind ever published.

Xagus
Xander
Xanon
Xanthias
Xanthicles
Xanthicus
Xanthippos
Xanthippus
Xantho
Xanthopolus
Xanthus
Xanticles
Xantippus
Xaver
Xaverius
Xavery
Xavier
Xaviero
Xenaenetus
Xenaeus
Xenagoras
Xenagus
Xenarchos
Xenarchus
Xenares
Xana
Xantha
Xanthe
Xanthella
Xanthia
Xanthica
Xanthine
Xanthippe
Xantippe
Xara
Xativa
Xaverie
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language (1971)
dictionaries do

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Xagus & \quad Xeneas & \quad Xenomedes & \quad Xestes \\
Xander & \quad Xeneatus & \quad Xenomene & \quad Xever \\
Xanther & \quad Xeniades & \quad Xenomenes & \quad Xixer \\
Xanthias & \quad Xenias & \quad Xenon & \quad Ximenes \\
Xanthicles & \quad Xenicus & \quad Xenophane & \quad Ximenez \\
Xanthicus & \quad Xenides & \quad Xenophanes & \quad Ximeno \\
Xanthippos & \quad Xenik & \quad Xenophon & \quad Xiphares \\
Xanthippus & \quad Xenion & \quad Xenophantus & \quad Xiphephorus \\
Xantho & \quad Xenius & \quad Xenophile & \quad Xiphilin \\
Xanthopolus & \quad Xeno & \quad Xenophilus & \quad Xiphilinus \\
Xanthus & \quad Xenocleides & \quad Xenophrone & \quad Xiphus \\
Xanticles & \quad Xenocles & \quad Xenophostus & \quad Xisuthros \\
Xantippus & \quad Xenoclides & \quad Xenophon & \quad Xisuthrus \\
Xaver & \quad Xenocrates & \quad Xinotes & \quad Xlhetemoc \\
Xaverius & \quad Xenocrates & \quad Xopenos & \quad Xolotl \\
Xavyer & \quad Xenocritus & \quad Xenos & \quad Xopher \\
Xaviro & \quad Xenodamus & \quad Xenoposis & \quad Xuaires \\
Xenaeus & \quad Xenodamus & \quad Xenopodes & \quad Xuaress \\
Xenaenetus & \quad Xenodicus & \quad Xerces & \quad Xuthus \\
Xenagoras & \quad Xenodochus & \quad Xeres & \quad Xychus \\
Xenagus & \quad Xenodorus & \quad Xerex & \quad Xydias \\
Xenarchos & \quad Xenodotes & \quad Xerolophos & \quad Xylander \\
Xenarchus & \quad Xenoetas & \quad Xerolybe & \quad Xyloctetes \\
Xenares & \quad Xenobrotus & \quad Xeron & \quad Xynias \\
Xenastes & \quad Xenodice & \quad Xerus & \quad Xysuthrus \\
Xana & \quad Xaviera & \quad Xerxes & \quad Xysythrus \\
Xantha & \quad Xema & \quad Xiphene & \quad Xyni \\
Xanthe & \quad Xena & \quad Xironia & \quad Xirolith \\
Xanthella & \quad Xene & \quad Xirolithzin & \quad Xymay \\
Xanthia & \quad Xenea & \quad Xerolibya & \quad Xyan \\
Xanthica & \quad Xeneala & \quad Xerophagia & \quad Xochitl \\
Xanthine & \quad Xenelasia & \quad Xerophila & \quad Xylia \\
Xanthippe & \quad Xenia & \quad Xerxene & \quad Xylina \\
Xantippe & \quad Xenisma & \quad Xesta & \quad Xylona \\
Xara & \quad Xenissa & \quad Xie Mae & \quad Xylopa \\
Xativa & \quad Xentana & \quad Ximen & \quad Xylophila \\
Xaverie & \quad Xenoclea & \quad Ximenia & \quad Xylota \\
Xena & \quad Xenolea & \quad Ximenia & \quad Xypete \\
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to hand, and you are likely to find in it names omitted from the list above. For example, look at The Harrap Book of Boys' and Girls' Names, by Charles Johnson and Linwood Sleight (Harrap, London, revised single-volume edition 1973). You will quickly find in it the first name XIT, seemingly not listed anywhere else.

The list includes twice as many masculine names as it does femi-
monic ones. Why? There are two reasons. First, the letter X suggests
great strength, and strength is a masculine rather than a feminine attribu-
t. Second, that period of time in which X-names were extremely popular -- the period of classical antiquity -- was a time when most of
the civilized world's illustrious individuals were men, so that a focus on masculine names was natural.

Some of the names on the list, upon investigation, seem rather strange. For example, XENELASIA turns out to be an English word defined as the banishment of aliens from ancient Sparta by official action, while XEROPHAGIA is another word, designating a strict Lenten fast observed in the Eastern churches. Yet, who are we to doubt what we find in published reference works? If words such as FAITH, HOPE, and CHARITY can be feminine first names, and if TUESDAY WELD can be named after a day of the week, then XENELASIA and XEROPHAGIA become plausible names, just more exotic ones.

Parents, take full cognizance of the treasures brought to your attention in this list of names! Use it, not merely for first names but for middle names as well! Think of the children among your relatives and friends turning green with envy upon learning that your son's name is XENOCLEIDES XYSTHRUS MILLER, or that your daughter bears the proud name of XEROLIBYA XIUTLALTZIN BROWN. (For the benefit of skeptics, we hasten to mention that XIUTLALTZIN was an 11th-century queen of Tula or Tollan, the capital of the Toltecs in Mexico, and that she is listed in A Dictionary of Universal Biography by Albert M. Hyamson, First Edition, George Routledge & Sons Ltd., London, 1916.)

If you feel that using two X-names is a bit too much, you have the option of using one name spelled with two X's -- a masculine name such as XERXES, or a feminine name such as XERXENE. Both come highly recommended!