THE LETTER REBUS (PART 2)

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Editor’s Note: This article continues the survey of the letter rebus begun in the February 1984 Word Ways; readers should refer to that issue for a general discussion including taxonomy.

Characteristics of Individual Letters (Continued)

Letters can be distorted in ways other than by mutilation—by squeezing or stretching in one dimension, by rotation (including inversion), or by reflection. In the first group below, underlined rebus letters are taller and thinner than the others; in the second, wider (or even traced in outline); in the third, distorted in more complex ways.

the thinG they have in common 73, Breadth inDex 83, great Minds thinK Along similar LinEs 79, one thinG after another 73
black muslim 75
as the nicE_Est 82
BeNthic 84, thick OF thinGs 81
broad twelveS [X][X] 81
the GODfather [symbol for Venus] 74, gibStaff 76, Timon Of at-HenS 83, flatSh 79, double-dIGit inflation 83, flatten [X] 80
Open wide the Pearly Gates 79, wide Open spaceS 83
great Minds thinK Along similar LinEs 79, ElongatE 79
Smashed 82
roundAbout 79
jutLaNd peninSULA 73
twistO [pen name of NPL member] 83
natural bent [musical notation] 84

The verticality of a letter is described by rebuses like plumb­isM 72 or MalignitY 79. In contrast, consider rotation and reflection of individual letters. In the groups below, the underlined letters are respectively rotated 90 degrees, rotated 180 degrees, tilted, mirrored right-to-left, and mirrored up-down.

Flying 23, DandElion 48, you are lying down on a bee 73.
Flying WinDMillS 81
SupPlies 54, anaLyze 60, philLies 81
double Play 22, MandAlay 75, PlayMateS 83
dead seaS Scrolls 73, one-ldea’d 86
Vanilla ConEs 74, when there’s a Will 79, Carillon 78
pulpitS 72, ANtiparticles 74, tiptOE 59
ANtiOverTY67, tiPOver FIRE extinguisher 82

Pitfalls
lazyBonE
for’eN’s
word IN
RedisTIl
MatRllat
theShaxPAller 83
pronate
countY c
overRAt
SandPAll
sleepY he

two side
from the
HIK SOX
model T
over ElEveN 7
piedMonI spinaCh

Dangle s
make a C
great SI
fly to fai
tumblewe
a VAcan
tip; aDd
DisincIn
philateal
big roun
skewER 6
BOLD-out
crazywee
out of the
goodYEa

counterP
Pawk 30,
Preflection
aBreacti
diSincIn
backBonE
power of
SELf-EFF
Ec’hose
that is
upside

Two rebus{
SupPlies 54
The letter orders should taxonomy.

Illustration - by underlined the second, in more great Minds ever 73 Timon Of a t- en [X] 80

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Dangle a carrot° in front 80, Bangles 79, star-spangled 73 make a Clean Breast of it 81, the Spring Cleaning is over 81 great Black cockAtoo 84 to fly far away 73 tumbleweEd 75, Stumbling 75 a Vacant apartMeNT upstairs 79, can't you° 77 Stilted 73 Tip; add it to the check 81, tipsY 79, ConStipaTion 82 Dismatic 42 Philatelist 81, anNalist 80 big round Of apPLause 81 skewER 62, as kewpie dOLLS 80 BOLD outLawry 66, DOwry 63 crazyweEd 75 out of the CRADLE, endlessly rocking 76 goodYEaR Blimps 84 counterPlead 30 Pawk 30, HawkisH 31 Preflection 57 aBreaction 71 backBone 71, HandsPRing and a backBend 71, Fatback, wardeN74 power of aTorn°Ey° 82, noCTurn° 82, SandWic©H tern° 83, turn back the Clock° 83, turned six 82 SELF-EPfacing 72 Ec°hose reverBeraTE 77, FreE verse [F, E in reverse] 80 that is bunco; it is upside down 55, SWIMS right side up or upside down and backwards 71, upside down c°aKE on top 72 Two rebuses specifically contrast turned and upright characters: SupPlies 54, StiPUp 72.
Most rebuses are printed with capital letters, although there is no reason (other than historical precedent) why this need be so. However, it becomes important to pay attention to the letters in a small subcategory of rebuses: those in which capital or lower-case letters are specified in the rebus description.

smallly 22, smallish 25, abysmally 26, Dismally 29, Dismaller 66, aBandoned smaller 80
weel 24, overweenING 39, Peewee 48, Plow under Sweet Clover 51
apetite 24. Man'S aPetite 65
little GO and great GO 25, Belittle 33, Belt tile 38
minute Hands and second Hands 29, minuteS 56
Glowering eyes 31, SOlo 34, lower caseY inTO 49, Slower case 79.
Chooses a crew o1D 82, capital Flower caseS 81
shortHorNrs 40, Stop in FOR a short Visit 72, His undershortS 74
microBe 41
minorITE 58, geronimo 73, majorCA and minorCA are not close 83
see Amer'ic'a first 60
theM pianoforteS 75, theSpan is simoN 77
shrunken headS 75
mutiny 75, DesTiny 50, the CAinE mutiny 81
Grunt 82
netHinim 82
SPend CasH if there 82

Lower case letters have sometimes been characterized as different or strange when compared with capital ones.

I Nin: INdifferenT 39, i 1E: differenTlatE 69, iE: differenTlatE71
Mmmmm: Mothers 38, Y yy: why 65
paRd=e: a strangeR in PARaDisE 72
st: queer street 76

In the same vein, the 1930 rebus hon°esTy° is . . . pol POL Pol the best POLicy° was clued by this rebus: ST

Capitals are specified not only when lower case letters are present, but also when they stand alone or with other capital letters.

capItalS 22, capitalIzaTIon 27, capital ManSE 29, the capSTone 73
little GO and great GO 25, great DanE 31, Belittle greatNeSS 49,
DisInTEgrate'-'s 43, HE lowerED HER down with the greatest of Ease° 47
largeNeSS 72, largeSSe° 37
majorCA and minorCA are not close 83
PREdominant 54
HIS small following WAS enlarged 58
the superB CUisine 65, superSonIC 72
nighT shiftS 82
RedisTillation 72
theM pianoforteS 75
Distress 36

Note that the word shift has been used to indicate both capital and lower case letters. Occasionally the alphabet has been used to emphasize capitalization: mnopqrStuvwx: featureS 41, jklMnop:
though there is no need for the letters to be capital or lower-case.

capitalism 42. In 1973 T was capitalized in the words of the accompanying verse, the answer being the predominant characteristic:

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In recent years, the practice of physically enlarging or shrinking letters to indicate size has become quite common.

tallowtopped 25, FonD Of arabian StallionS 73, frontStallS 53, toler*ate® 27

a big broadWay HIT in 1922 63, abigeus 80, A: gibberella 79

titanOtherE 71

immenseE 76

elephantlasis 76

long1CorN 83

superE 77, superVisE 79

marc*Us's wel*By® 77

ENTEgral 78, eNTargeD appendIX 80

great MinDS 79, great Unwashed 80, great circle 83

calliPygian too 80, giganticDe 83

megaloRNis 81

babyLon 80

shortHand note BOok 83

period in every week 84

Finally, rebuses can be either printed or written in longhand.

There are a few references specifically to printing.

autotype 21, sLeepy tiMe 82, typesetTER 24, DAinty peRson 78,

typeS 79, STereOTyped 80, a tautotype 76

Sprinted 23, UNprinted 25, UNprinted 30, printemPS 78, FinGERprint 70, TireprintS 53

Kinked 26

picaROon 80

it a lick and A 74

romanCE 22, romanY 26, oneromanCY 28

Written letters were much slower to be exploited, flourishing only since 1970.

noNDscript 68, NAboth in the scriptURES 77

scribbleMANIAc [pen name of NPL member] 75, AN undivided interest in the Land DEScribed above 81

CowardLY Lion 73, CDoward 77, REwarDeD 80, AnDrew JackSon 79

Onward 72, knees TURn inward 77

pen TalphA 78, penCIL 73, penPlain 78, jutLand peninSULA 73,

discursive 80

sign OF fall 82, spRing is Here 82

thoroughWORT 25

Absolute Position of Rebus Letter

Many rebuses attempt to describe where a letter (or letter group) is located in an absolute sense, without respect to other letters in the rebus. For right-left positioning, dummy letters were used
in the rebus a handful of times, as BETH: aboriginally 27, OOOD: Determination 61, and OOOOX: extermination 61. However, it was early recognized that more economical clueing was achieved by moving the rebus toward the appropriate margin.

right side: Flaging 48, Yeast 77, consider 48, Converse 47, thither TO 56, farO 75, Bright 64, faraway places 79, philatelist 81, see the Bright side 49, starboardER 49, subsequently 79, right margins 77, unjustified 77, Safaris 77, postulate 77, fonside 57. : quarterback 64, #: outer space 81, onesiDEd 58, far fetched 75

left side: Yearly 48, tropics 79, left handed 78, cleFt 27, SHE is left alone 79, xxx: tench i export 79, sea port 77, west allis 78, edgewise 81, black sea port 83, Bear left 81, puniGram 83

One rebus used dummy letters to indicate the center instead of the extremes, RUMMAGE SALES: in the middle AGES 35.

For up-down positioning, similar techniques have been used. Only one rebus, the letter Z placed above a string of Os clueing topaz in 1935, used dummy letters. It was soon recognized that the rebus could instead be moved up toward the title, or instead down toward the accompanying verse.

high: height tens 82, leave it up to you 83, atticism 76, overruled 82 [D above top line on page], upupap Eops 82, Braised 82, . O: that's potatosoup 83, Supposition 79, the high five 83, cross the border 84 [X on border], sight's high 78

low: on a flat car 82, humble pie 82

Rebus letters can be specified with respect to the location of the verse, as in Converse 27, overall 31, and O: discover 81. In the latter, the verse is implied rather than specified.

It is only a small step to let the rebus letters move between the lines of the verse, or below the verse.

inside verse: netherlands 35, center of a flat pencil 80, winter posed 81, inflated 74, read between the lines 75, reads between the lines 83

underneath verse: HEREnfter 45, undeceived 45, fur below 45, lowelll 51, Thunder on the left 57, slowdown 58, Glower 62, mink seal ermine: furbelow 59, Blowdown 72, eltails 79, Sunder 79, aglow 73, in conclusion 74, a rse 77 [R southeast], determination 81, deep six 83

combinations: WEL [above] OOK [below]: WE LOOK before and after, NE [above] EN [inside]: NEVER see EN 80, G9 [above] G [inside]: Game-opening 83

Twice, letters have been written on top of the verse text - X: oversessed 81, OFC: taken out OF Context 82. In 1964, a rebus was presented in which the spaces between words in the text (not a verse) formed the shape CS, which was the rebus for Cats. In similar vein, a verse in 1983 had alternating long and short lines tracing the letter W on its side; this formed the clue for Wangled.

In 1982 letter E, with rebus con verse: Lit. Sometimes For examp

The sc

The st

Its gr

They e

(1'd t

Then I

which clu

Rebus the title. In letter-sequen no use is

NS

REBUS: aRison 81
Genesee [gen
don 78,

Letters can

REBUS: 80, SUG

Finally, the

SREBU: E, LGMA...

The alg

absolute p

MAB...K

the Bal

trapeze', discons<

extraPO

AB...QRS

cover is o

Very brie

...is over 4

45, Q: p1
In 1982, the verse Lo: Eau! was written entirely inside the letter E, with an RI above it: River seinE. In contrast, in 1984 a rebus consisting of the letters LT was completely encircled by the verse: Linen closeT.

Sometimes, the letters of the rebus are part of the verse text. For example, in 1982 the letter L above the following verse

The song of the warbler
Reechoes, replays.
Its greenness displays
cued the phrase Linden tREE. Even cleverer was the 1984 rebus

They asked me, "When you go, by chance,"
(I'd thought on it a lot)
"Will you see the sights in France?"
Then I responded, "Not I"

which cued the answer Versailles

Rebus letters can also be positioned with respect to the REBUS title. In the examples below, REBUS is merely regarded as a letter-sequence with respect to which rebus letters can be positioned; no use is made of the actual letters in REBUS.

NS TH R
REBUS: uprightNess 53, REBUS: This above all 74, REBUS: capRison 81, Z REBUS: topaZ 80, REBUS C : Cover up 79, REBUS G : Genesee [Ge n.e. see] 83, REBUS: THunderhead 70, BREBUS: a Bad-don 78, TH

Letters can be placed in the REBUS sequence.

REJBUS: popinjay 82, REBuess: stuffiness 83, SUGIBER: niGgard 80, SUGIBER: niGgites 82

Finally, the letters of REBUS can themselves be used.


The alphabet (or fragments thereof) has been used to indicate absolute position of letters since earliest days.


Very brief alphabetic fragments are evident in AB: after the Ball is over 40, AB: a Blast 28, S: night letter 37, SU: night letters 45, Q: postPone 70, CZ: by the BF 81, U: after tea* 34, and S:
just pastRami 84.

A final strategy for the absolute positioning of rebus letters is a pattern of compass directions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>D</td>
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ER ER northernER, westernER, southernER, easternER 48

H H His newest [n.e., west] Hit is at the top of the chart 81

N X

<table>
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<tr>
<th>W</th>
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R A R Answer [R A, S, W, E] 82 A sPAn 82

Note how the cardinal directions have been gradually suppressed, until in 1982 one must infer their existence from the pattern alone.

Relative Position of Rebus Letters to Each Other

The description of how one letter is positioned with respect to another is a venerable rebus device; the vast majority of the re­buses in the puzzle columns of the weekly magazine Golden Days in the early 1880s were of this type. Undoubtedly, these are the commonest rebus in the Enigma - over, under, in and on have each been used hundreds of times. As elsewhere in this article, the earliest-known Enigma examples are presented.

The first set denotes how a rebus letter can follow on the right:

RafterS 22, GAfterS 22, afterWisE 22, afterThought 26
AthenS 22, HEAthenism 27, aUthenTic 28
behindHAND 24, 10:30 pm S: behind the timeS 29, One arm behind
His back 54, hind PART before 52
ABaft 24, aBandoneD .. 34, D&DRS: Dampers and DraftS 52
rightS and leftS 25, Cannon to the right of theM .. 41, WainWright
46, BE on the right side of the LAw 67
EPIpastIC 27, REPastS 27, pastIME 39, pastERN joint 47
Apriorl, ApoAfter 27, anteROposterier 72
An extrA SHare of fish 32, UnextrERNaTED 67
ManIPulate 43, spec*ulator* 28, eSCalator* 29, IDOlator* 67
dexterOUS 29
repeating FlrearM 47, DrearinesS 72, HE is found .. in ARReas
CatTails 29, Cat O'nine tails 71
..Day follows night .. 39, a left JaB on the Jaw followed by a right hook 51, THE following letterS 60

In contrast:

beforeH, A foreC
prime
Pleading
conCeAl
CereMon
leftHand
AFFront
ApoAfter, 
preHisT
One arm
Pay in
Pearly in
middle I
backward ahead on
EHMP:

Note that precede-le
bus letters

...
In general, rebus letters are positioned adjacent to each other; however, spaces can appear, particularly when words such as left or right, front or rear, port or starboard, or early or late are used. A few words guarantee the existence of an intervening space:

- Land office 29, An extra share of fish 32, Standoffish 38 down on the farm 48, far from the Maddening crowd 54
- Safari 45, Niagara Falls 72
- Land beyond the seas* 48
- Flying off the handle 46
- Apple A: Appalachian [shun]

**Spring is here** 82, Zeno's paradox [p.s.]

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