

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 nic*EST 82

BeNthic* 84, thick OF thinGs 81

broad twelves [XII] 81

the GODfather [symbol for Venus] 74, gibStaff 76, Timon Of at-
HeNs 83, flatS 79, double-dIgit inflatlon 83, flatten [X] 80
flatterY 78

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 plumb-
ism 72 or MalignitY 79. In contrast, consider rotation and reflec-
tion 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, anaL*lyze* 60, phiLlies 81

double Play 24, MandAlay 75, PlayMateS 83

dead sea* Scrolls 73, one-idead 84

Vanilla ConeS 74, when there's a Will.. 79, CaRillon 78

puLpitS 72, ANTiparticles 74, tipt*Oe* 59

ANTipoverTY67, tipover FIRE extinguishER 82

Pitfalls 79, Crestfallen 27

lazyBoneS 74

for*eN*sic* 37

wordIN edgewise 66

RedisTillatlon 72, ConsiderR 68, Misplaced ConsideRatlon 73

MatRllaterally 74

thetac*iturn one 75

Pallor 81, readY to* roll 82

pron*ate* 80, aproneD 83

countY down 74

overr*ate* 74

SandPail 83

sleepY hollow 83

two sides to EVERYTHING 57

from the bottom UP 57

HIS SOX ON upside down 58

model T convertible 63

over Easy* 83, spot ReMover 82

Elevon 75

piedMonT 77

spinaCH 82

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, ConStipaTlon 82

Disinclined 42

philatealist 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* 84, noCturnE 82, SandWic*H tern* 83, turn

back the ClockS 83, turned six 82

SELF-Effacing 72

Ec*hose reverBerATE 77, FreE verse [F, E in reverse] 80

that is bunco; it is upside down 55, SWlMS 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, StipLup 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.

smallY 22, smallISH 25, aBYsmallY 26, Dismally 29, Dismaller 66, aBandoned smaller 80
 weel 24, overweeNING 39, Peewee 48, Plow under Sweet Clover 51
 aPpetite 24. Man'S aPpetite 65
 little GO and great GO 25, Belittle 33, Belt tile 38
 minute HandS and second HandS 29, minuteS 56
 GlowerinGs 31, SOlo* 34, lower caseY inTO 49, Slower case 79,
 ChoOSes a crew old 82, capital Flower caseS 81
 shortHorNs 40, Stop in FOR a short Visit 72, His undershortS 74
 microBe 41
 minorlTE 58, geronimO 73, majorCA and minorCA are not close 83
 see Amer*ic*A first 60
 theM pianoforteS 75, theSpian is simoN 77
 shrunken headS 75
 mutiny 75, DEStiny 50, the CAinE mutiny 81
 Grunt 82
 nethHnim 82
 SPend CASH if there 82

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

lNin: lNdifferent 39, i lE: differentlatE 69, ie lE: differentlatE 71
 Mmmmm: Mothers 38, Y yy: why* otherwise* 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, capitallZaTlon 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
 RedisTlllatIon 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:

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

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

tallOWtopped 25, FonD Of araBlan StalllonS 73, frontStallS 53,
toler*ate* 27

a big broadWAY HIT in 1922 63, abigEUS 80, A: gibberella 79

titanOthere 71

immenseE 76

elephantlasis 76

longlCorN 83

superB 77, superVisE 79

marc*ū*s wel*By* 77

INtegral 78, eNlargetD appendIX 80

great MinDS 79, great UnwAshed 80, great circle 83

calliPYgian tOO 80, gigānticlDe 83

megalorNis 81

babyLon 80

shortHand note BOK 83

perloD in every weeK 84

Finally, rebuses can be either printed or written in longhand. There are a few references specifically to printing.

aUtype 21, sLeepytiMe 82, typesetTER 24, DAinty peRson 78,
Tintype 79, STereOtyped 80, a tautotype 76

Sprinted 23, UNprinted 25, lMprinted 30, printemPS 78, FinGER-
print 70, TireprintS 53

Kinked 26

picaROon 80

it a lick and A 74

romanCE 22, romanY 26, onelromanCY 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 in-
TERest in the Land DEscribed above 81

CowardLY Llon 73, COWard 77, REwarded 80, ANDrew JackSon 79

Onward 72, Knees TURn inward 77

penTalpha 78, penCIL 73, penEplain 78, jutLand peninSULA 73,
pentHOUSE 73, penultimate LinES 75, penNy wisE and ... 74

indit*ED 74

sketchY 75

great Britain* 62

Discursive 80

sign OF fall 82, spRlng 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, OOOOD: 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: Flaggging 48, Yeast 77, consider 48, Converge 47, thitherTO 56, farO 75, Bright 64, faraway placeS 79, philatealist 81, see the Bright side 49, starboardER 49, subsequentLY 79, right marginS 77, UNjustified 77, Safaris 77, postUlate 77, Yonside 57, $\frac{1}{2}$: quarterback 64, #: outer space 81, onesided 58, farFetched 75

left side: Yearly 48, tropic*S 79, lefthanded 78, Cleft 27, SHE is left alone 79, XXX: tench i eXport 79, sea*port 77, west ALL-is 78, edgewise* 81, black sea* port 83, Bear left 81, puNni-gram 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: heigh*tens 82, leave 1T up to you* 83, atticisM 76, over-ruled 82 [D above top line on page], upupA Epops 82, Braised 82, .O: that's potatO soup 83, Supposition 79, the high five 83, cross the border 84 [X on border], sight*S high 78

low: on a flatCaR 82, humble pie* 82

Rebus letters can be specified with respect to the location of the verse, as in Converse 27, overallS 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, Win-ter posed 81, inflatED 74, read BEtween the lines 75, readS between the lines 83

underneath verse: HEREafter 45, underived 45, fur*belowS 45, loweLL 51, THunder on the left 57, Slowdown 58, Glower 62, mink seal ermine: furbelow 59, Blowdown 72, eNtails 79, Sunder 79, aGlow 73, 1N conclusion 74, aRse 77 [R southeast]. DEtermina-tion 81, deep six 83

combinations: WEL [above] OOK [below]: WE LOOK before and after, NE [above] EN [inside]: NEVer seEN 80, G9 [above] G [in-side]: Game-openinG 83

Twice, letters have been written on top of the verse text - X: over-seXed 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, 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.
The shade-giving REBUS
Its greenness displays

clued 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 clued the answer Versailles* [verse I].

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: cap-
Z
aRison 81, REBUS: topaZ 80, REBUS^C : Cover up 79, REBUS^G :
Genesee [Ge n.e. see] 83, REBUS: THunderhead 70, BREBUS: aBad-
don 78, TH

Letters can be placed in the REBUS sequence.

REJBUS: popinJay 82, REBUSS: stuffineSS 83, SUGBER: niGgard
80, SUGIBER: lGnites 82

Finally, the letters of REBUS can themselves be used.

SREBU: prepositionS 83, REBU S: nothing comes between US 83,
E_NIGMATIC REBUS: parts unknowN 83, REBU_S : hand-me-downS

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

MAB...KL: Misleading 31, IJ..OP: Plastic* 48, AB^{CD}..YZ : after
the Ball is over 43, AB..YZMU: eMulate 53, LMNOPPPQ..T: ex-
trapeze* [extra Ps] 68, AB..GHJK..Z1: isolate 74, AB..MNPQ..ZO:
disconsolate 74, ACDE..NOQR..ZPB: Blast Plate, AB..NPPQ..WOXYZ:
extraPOLate 70, TUVWXYE: finale 73, AB..WX: exTermination 79,
R A
AB..QRS..YZ: puRported 75, ABCDEFGHAJ..Z: anAis nin than dis-
cover ingE 74, AB..N^SPQR^OT..Z: alphabet SOup 72.

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 BY 81, U: after tea* 34, and S:

just past Rami 84.

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

N			N		
W	D	Disoriented 63	W	LE	Least 24
S			S		

ER					
ER	ER	northernER, westernER, southernER, easternER 48			
ER					

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

N	X		
W	S	E	chinese [chi n.e., s.e.] DinnerS 73
	S	D	

R	A	R	Answer [A n,s; w,e,R] 82	A	sPan 82
	A			P	

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 rebuses 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, GRafterS 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
 EPipastlC 27, REpastS 27, pastIME 39, pastERN jointT 47
 Apriorl, Aposteriorl 27, anterOPosterior 72
 An extrA SHare of fish 32, UnextERMinATED 67
 MANIPulate 43, spec*Ulator* 28, eSCalator* 29, IDOlator* 67
 dexterOUS 29
 repeating FlrearM 47, DrearineSS 72, HE is found .. in aRRears
 CatTails 29, Cat O'nine tails 71 82
 ..Day follows nighT.. 39, a left JaB on the JaW followed by a
 right hook 51, THE following letterS 60

MitrailLEuse 80
 subsequentLY 79
 middle Platter Of ormerS 83
 iamBic* pentAMeter* [iter] 80
 backwardS and forwardS 48
 GRandaddy 23, highLand LaddiEs 23, addUCtoR 29
 PaddingS 29, PaddingTon 80
 TO gainsaY 67
 TaTtoo 24, SaWtoothED 40, Boot TRees 43, c*Oc*KAtoo 47
 SalsoDA 27, a topICal soNG 36, KalsoMinER 46, Gal so Sweet 56
 night aTtack on the russians 74
 c*onStipaTlon 80, DandELLon 82, hy*perlon 82 [on = to right]
 SHorter 72
 P1: postPone 70, postDisSEisin 72, post MorTeM 74
 LYE: EasternLY 59, great Pastern BonE 73
 a presUPposition 83
 beyond the FringE 82
 star board an Oc*Ean LinER 82, star boardER 49
 B =S: BeastlinesS 80, make a Clean BREast of it 81, at Least
 Be 81

In contrast, a rebus letter can precede another on the left:

beforeHAND 24, herelNbefore 31, spots before the eyes* 33
 A foreGone ConCLUSIon 30, aBandoneD the CRAFT thereFORE 34,
 primeVAL foreSt 41, PlNafore 72
 PleadingS 31, Aa: A leading article 29, PleadingLY 35
 conCeAled 39, thisTledOWN 56, AM: Misled by an article 67
 CereMonY 24, night-Blooming CereUS 32, BE bothered 39
 leftHandED 24, rightS and leftS 25, left withOUT a DIME 63
 antePENultimate 27, anteroPosterior 72, etna SpuRTS 74, Banter 78
 AFfront 29, frontStalls 53, ConfrontS 64, FinlSH in front 61
 ApriorI, AposteriorI 27, Apriorism 27, priorlTY 56
 =S: portlinesS 49, TRAnSport 79, portManteaU word 76, portE CO-
 Chere 81, noN tropPO 79
 preHisTorlC 38, TM: preeMpT* 39, LaSerptium 82
 One arM behind His back 54
 PaY in advance 54
 Pearly lateX 83, Pearly GateS 42, Pearly Clatter 81, tenDerly* 83
 middle Platter Of ormerS
 backwardS and forwardS 48, thenCEforward 56
 ahead of ME 61
 EHMP: the Eastern HeMisPhere 40

Note that one word, astern, appears in both the follow-right and precede-left lists!

A somewhat different vocabulary is used if the letter is at the left or right end of a sequence:

His first Blast 41, aT last I'M first 66
 THE beginning 29, FROM beginning TO end 62
 AstartE 82
 headS or tailS 59
 Hind eND foremost 83

iconOClast 24, SandBlast 24, aGElast 25, A Blast 28
 antePENultimate 27, RiamBa Cult 79, SomeRsAult 80
 GRand finale 37
 headS or tailS 59
 double ENTendRE 55, aDDendA 60, herewith Tender 60
 PatenT Pending 45, aTTending 50, Bending the PinES 54
 foreGonE conclusionS 46, fore*Gone conclusion 72
 spRIng is Here 82, Zeno's paRaDOX 74 [p.s.]

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 offlCE 29, An extRA SHare of fisH 32, STandoffisH 38
 down ON the farM 48, far from the MaDDinG Crowd 54
 SafarI 45, niagara faLLS 72
 LandS beyond the seas* 48
 the CADET ached in CAMP 73
 Flying off the HandLE 46
 APPLE A: appal*Achian* 43 [shun]
 HandoutS 51, There with His Mouth agapE 60, outsideRS 72
 SEaside 29, ConsideRaTlon 32
 TEtrapetalous 80, apartHROSis 29
 R OCK: ROCKaway 50, T ED: wastED away 60
 SwaybackED 72
 cross BoneS on black Flags 39
 RECover from it 61
 thitherTO 56

The vertical vocabulary is as rich as the horizontal one. To indicate above, one has:

BonBonS 22, Nonplus 22, PRisonER 23, Sand MonitOR 23
 CatopTER 23, THANatopSis 23, onOMatopOESis 26
 aUtopSY 24, DEspotS 38, TOspotS 46
 tallOW-topped 25
 topS and bottomS 25, StopS 26, to pUT two and two together 29
 ManStopping 26
 CAKE with lCinG on top 57, upside-down c*aKE on top 72
 PERSon to pERSON 61, Won't opERatE 55, on the top of His HEaD 70
 CLOver blossoms 22, Dover SandS 23, overEat 24, Cover points 25
 hy*PERBore*AN 30, CanDor*S 23 [o'er]
 on one'S upperS 24, breakFAST, Dinner and Supper 31
 upS and downS 25, upSIDE down 26, HandS up 28
 highFlowN 26, hy*PERBoreAN 30, highLandS and lowLandS 33
 aboveBOARD 26, THoughts above distinctionS.. 40
 a PEal of tHunder 28, a great DEal of teNslon 66
 onCE upon A time 30, COuponS 47, COupon BondS 53
 SponDYloListheSis 81 ['pon]
 eScapADE 30, EScapEs 31, HandlcapS 32
 Handlcapping 76
 superDreadnought 43, superanNUatE 28
 REcoverY 45, Discovered by colon 41, Discovered by ME 48
 Salt RisiNG Bread 31