

LIFE-CYCLE RECYCLE

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John Henrick's "Limits of the Human Life Cycle" in the August issue of *Word Ways* inspired several readers to send in additions, most notably Dmitri Borgmann who supplied over 225 examples. A collection of the best is presented below, arranged according to the type of wordplay used.

Rhyming is, of course, the most common device: WOMB (or BLOOM) to DOOM, BRED to DEAD, NURSE to HEARSE, GERM to WORM, EGGS to DREGS, START(ing) to (de)PART(ing), BEGOT(ten) to FORGOT(ten), BIRTH to EARTH, YOUNG to HUNG (life of a murderer?), LYING-IN (hospital) to DYING IN (nursing home), NATAL(ity) to FATAL(ity), COPULATION to DEPOPULATION, VENEREAL to FUNEREAL, THRILL to CHILL, BUST (nursing) to DUST, OBSTETRICIAN to MORTICIAN, LACTATION to MACTATION (act of killing), PAPS TO TAPS (life of a military man), EROTIC to NECROTIC, CARNALITY to FINALITY, (germ) CELL to (death) KNELL, BORN to MOURN, GERMINAL to TERMINAL, PLEASURES (of love) to TREASURES (of heaven), (first) BREATH to (accurst) DEATH, CLINGS (to mother) to WINGS (of angel), (tiny) TOT to (burial) PLOT, NESTING (place) to RESTING (place), MATERNITY to ETERNITY, GENERATION to VENERATION, (en)GENDER to ENDER, and the extremely clever and evocative BAIRN to CAIRN.

The following defective pairs fail to rhyme on the last accented syllable, but are still worth mentioning: BIRTHDAY to DOOMSDAY, CARNAL to FINAL, HEARTHSTONE to BRIMSTONE, NATUARY to OBITUARY (or MORTUARY), PENIS to FINIS, GENESIS to NEMESIS, PARITY to ETERNITY, and VENTER (womb, in law) to WINTER (of life). One pair is a sight-rhyme: ASS to CARCASS.

Alliteration is frequently used: TODDLE to TOTTER, CRECHE to CROAK, AFTERBIRTH to AFTERLIFE, QUICK to QUIET, EMBRYO to EMBALMER, OVUM to OBIT, INTERCOURSE to INTERMENT, CYESIS to CESSATION, DESCENT (of birth canal) to DECEASE, GRAVID to GRAVE, AMOUR to ADIEU, and LAYETTE to LAID AWAY. However, consonance, in which both the beginning and the end of the word pair match, is more satisfying: MATERNITY to MORTALITY, SEED to SOD, 'GINNER to GONER, EXERCISE to EXEQUIES, INSEMINATION to INCINERATION (or INHUMATION, or INANIMATION), SUCKLING to SICKLING, WEANING to WANING (of life), BLINK to BLANK, FETUS to FINIS, FETAL(ism) to FATAL(ism), LAUNCHING to LYNCHING (life of another murderer), LOVING to LEAVING, MATING to MEETING (one's maker), LITTLE to LETHAL, BIRTHING to BURYING, BREED to BROOD (on death), and CONFINEMENT to CONSIGNMENT. FORNICATION to FORMICATION (the sensation of having ants crawling over one) is by all odds the most vivid consonance-pair.

If the central parts of the words match in sound, this is called assonance. Two examples are ZYGOTE to THY GOD, and BABE to GRAVE.

Another device used is to select a single word with two different meanings, such as LIBERATION (from the womb, or from life's cares), ALOHA (both a greeting and a farewell in Hawaii), RATTLE (a baby's toy, and a respiratory impairment), PASSAGE (through the birth canal, or to an afterlife), UNION (sexual, then divine), DARKNESS (of the womb, and of the tomb), IMPLANTATION (of sperm, and of the body in the ground), ROCKING (cradle and chair), and the exceedingly graphic FERTILIZATION (of the ovum, and of the earth).

One antigram, well-known to members of the National Puzzlers' League, can be adapted to the human life cycle: REAL FUN (sex, producing a child) to FUNERAL.

Somewhat less interesting are a collection of inherently antonymic word pairs: A to Z, ALPHA to OMEGA, BEING to NONBEING, EXISTENCE to NONEXISTENCE, ENTRANCE to EXIT, AMOR to MORS (Latin gods of love and death), EROS to THANATOS, DESCENT (of the birth canal) to ASCENT (to Heaven), and COMING to GOING.

A handful of word pairs are quasi-homonymic: AWAKE to A WAKE, BORN to BOURNE, COITUS to QUIETUS, "SO, COME!" to SUCCUMB. Others add internal letters (or sounds): IMMORALITY to IMMORTALITY (documenting the life of an illegitimate child), PASTIME to PAST TIME, CREATION to CREMATION, and INTERCOURSE to INTER CORPSE.

Since terms for birth and death are so easy to find, how about headings for BIRTH, MARRIAGE and DEATH suitable for newspaper columns? Years ago, I recall seeing HATCHED, MATCHED and DETACHED in the Readers' Digest. Some possible expansions of examples given above are BRED, WED and DEAD; START, HEART, and PART; TOTS, KNOTS and PLOTS; and (germ) CELL, (wedding) BELL, and (death) KNELL). Any others?