

FORTUNATE REVERSALS

RICHARD LEDERER
San Diego, California

We intrepid logologists love to switch around letters within words--adjacent letters (UNITED UNTIED), separated letters (CONVERSATION CONSERVATION), and initial and terminal letters (LATCHES SATCHEL). In some words we can interchange each half to form new words. Dmitri Borgmann called these leapfrogging specimens "cyclic transpositions." I prefer the more playful "fortunate reversals."

At least two letters must vault from front word to back word. Thus, single-letter looping anagrams are excluded, such as (and I'm sticking to just animals here) ANT TAN, ASP SPA, DRAKE RAKED, EMUS MUSE, EWE WEE, FLEA LEAF, MANATEE EMANATE (magnificent!), MITE EMIT, OWL LOW, RHEA HEAR, SHARK HARKS, SNAIL NAILS, and SWINE WINES.

Also outlawed are reversible compounds, such as BIRDSONG SONGBIRD, BOOKCASE CASEBOOK, GUNSHOT SHOTGUN, HORSERACE RACEHORSE, and even JAYVEE VEEJAY and TOKYO KYOTO (a reversal of two morphemes that mean "capital city"). That's because the soul of logology is letter play, not morphemic manipulation, alphabetic accidents, not the syntactic rearrangement of meaning-bearing elements. That's also why I bar particle verbs, such as HOLDUP UPHOLD, OUTTAKE TAKEOUT, and SETUP UPSET, and reduplications and other double-identity words, such as BONBON, DODO, HOTSHOTS, MEME, MURMUR, MUUMUU, and TESTES.

But if, when morphemes are interchanged, two new morphemes emerge, the fraternal twins qualify as bona fide fortunate reversals. The likes of ALLOCATION LOCATIONAL, BLOODSHOT HOTBLOODS, HEADSHOT HOTHEADS, and OWNERSHIP SHIOWNER do not pass muster because, in each switcheroo, one morpheme changes, and one stays the same. But if two transposed morphemes metamorphose into two new morphemes, as in the two 8-letter examples at the end of this disquisition, they gain an honored seat in the pantheon.

Each reversal must be written as a single word. Hence--weep weep, sob sob, honk honk!--CALLOW LOW-CAL, HOT POTS POTSHOT, and HOT SPOTS POTSHOTS are denied entry.

Finally, as has been my practice over the decades, I minimize arcane words, such as ADMEN MENAD, ANCLE CLEAN, BALSA SABAL, and DOZEN ZENDO.

I do include a smattering of names of people, places, and things, such as LYON ONLY; free-standing roots, such as GAME MEGA; and the British spelling *-re*, such as CENTRE-RECENT.

Now cast your eyes upon more than one hundred clusters of 4-to-8-letter imposing, transposing, swapping, flip-flopping, rotating, relocating, reciprocating, stupendous, tremendous, end-over-endous fortunate reversals:

4 letters

ALAN ANAL	BOLO LOBO	ELSE SEEL	LYRE RELY
ALBA BAAL	CAIN INCA	EMIT ITEM	MESA SAME
ANKH KHAN	CHET ETCH	ERGO GOER	META TAME
ANNA NAAN	CHIN INCH	ERIC ICER	MOSH SHMO
ARCH CHAR	CHIT ITCH	GAME MEGA	OTTO TOOT
ARNE NEAR	CHOU OUCH	GAVE VEGA	PORE REPO
ARSE SEAR	CODE DECO	ILSA SAIL	PYRO ROPY
ARTS TSAR	DAVE VEDA	ISLE LEIS	RAVE VERA
BOHO HOBO	DEMO MODE	LOOS OSLO	RUTH THRU
	DYED EDDY	LYON ONLY	

5 letters

ADORE OREAD	COSTA TACOS	PEDRO ROPED
ALLOY LOYAL	DERRY RYDER	PESKY SKYPE
ANGLE GLEAN	HADJI JIHAD	PESTY TYPES
ANGST STANG	INTRA TRAIN	PETRI TRIPE
ARCED CEDAR	JASON SONJA	RAISE SERAI
ARSON SONAR	KARMA MAKAR	RINSE SERIN
ASIDE IDEAS	LITRE RELIT	ROUTE UTERO
ASPIC PICAS	MANOR NORMA	SEVER VERSE
BARRE REBAR	MENSE SEMEN	SITAR TARSI
BOLES LESBO	MITRE REMIT	SLATE TESLA
BOWEL ELBOW	PASTA TAPAS	STATE TESTA
BRAZE ZEBRA	PAVES VESPA	STAVE VESTA

In the above lineup, we observe some semantic relationships within BOWEL ELBOW, HADJI JIHAD, PASTA TAPAS, and ROUTE UTERO. But one 4-step example stands atop this 5-letter cluster: PESTO yields STOPE and TOPES, which in turn yields ESTOP.

6 letters

ABACAS CASABA	CENTRE RECENT	INSOLE OLEINS
ABLEST STABLE	CONGAS GASCON	LYSING SINGLY
ALPINE PINEAL	DENTIN INDENT	MOTHER THERMO
ALTARS TARSAL	ENLIST LISTEN	PERVES VESPER
ASCENT CENTAS	ERRING RINGER	RIPEST STRIPE
BEDLAM LAMBED	GERMAN MANGER	SELVES VESSEL
BERGER GERBER	INGROW ROWING	TACTIC TICTAC
	INHERE HEREIN	

Gleaming out from the 6-letter reversals is ERRANT, which yields RANTER, which in turn yields TERRAN, which, as every sci fi fan knows, means "earth dweller."

7 letters

ASQUINT QUINTAS
INGRAIN RAINING
INSPECT PECTINS
KERSTIN STINKER
KINGPIN STINKING

LESSING SINGLES
QUESTOR TORQUES
REDRIVE RIVERED
REENTER TERREEN
RESPECT SPECTRE

8 letters

BARSTOOL TOOLBARS

MENTALLY TALLYMEN

While it could be argued that BARSTOOL and TOOLBARS share the same morpheme, BAR, the credentials for MENTALLY TALLYMEN appear to be impeccable.

CLOSE CALL

LOUIS PHILLIPS

**The artist Chuck Close,
Standing close
To the actress Glenn Close,
Asked: "Should I close
The door & make a close-
up of you in your birthday clothes,
Ms. Close?"
"No. Thank you" replied Glenn Close
To Chuck Close.**