

# QUASI ELEVEN-SQUARES

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The following 11-by-11 word square appears in Language on Vacation (Scribner's, 1965), and is described by the author, Dmitri Borgmann, as a 'quasi square'. The seven central words are of impeccable quality, but the two sets of letter combinations at each end are complete gibberish.

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J X A P M P A H S Z V
X Q N R E R N E E W K
A N T I D O T A L L Y
P R I M I T I V E L Y
M E D I C A M E N T S
P R O T A G O N I S T
A N T I M O N I T E S
H E A V E N I Z I N G
S E L E N I T I C A L
Z W L L T S E N A J Z
V K Y Y S T S G L Z Q

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Of course, as Dmitri points out, we cannot be absolutely sure that words such as JXAPMPAHSZV, XQNRERNEEWK, ZWLLTSENAJZ, and VKY-YSTSG LZQ do not exist.

Inspired by the above effort, I recently tried to construct a quasi 11-square containing seven legitimate terms, and four others having at least a semblance of sense. As you will see, I have not been particularly successful, and have resorted to somewhat strained two and three word contrivances in order to complete the square. The result is not aesthetically pleasing, but does show that there is at least a tiny glimmer of hope for the 11-square.

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C E N T I G R A D E S
E X O R G U E R I M U
N O M I N A T I V E S
T R I T I C A L I T Y
I G N I C O L I S T S
G U A C O N I S I N G
R E T A L I A T O R Y
A R I L I S T E N E R
D I V I S I O N I S T
E M E T T N R E S C H
S U S Y S G Y R T H S

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Explanations for each of these entries are:

- CENTIGRADES thermometers using the centigrade scale (Webster's Third Edition).
- EX-ORGUE RIMU a nonce-term describing rimu wood formerly used in an orgue (and now for some other purpose). 'Orgue' is defined as 'any of a number of long, thick timbers, pointed and shod with iron, formerly suspended over, or in the vaulted passage behind, a gateway, to be let down in case of attack; also, these pieces collectively.'
- NOMINATIVES words in the nominative case, in grammar.
- TRITICALITY triteness.
- IGNICOLISTS worshippers of fire.
- GUACONISING variant form of 'guaconizing', treating with guano (see '-ise').
- RETALIATORY tending to, involving, or of the nature of, retaliation.
- ARI LISTENER a listening person from the small community of Ari, Indiana. For example, a conversation between a resident of Ari, and one from Fort Wayne (12 miles away) could involve a Fort Wayne speaker and an 'Ari listener'.
- DIVISIONIST an advocate of the painting method known as divisionism.
- EMETT 'N RESCH Emmett and Resch are both surnames listed in the 1983 Melbourne, Australia, telephone directory. The form 'n is shown in Webster's Third Edition as a shortening of 'and'.
- SUSY'S GYRTHS a nonce-term describing the refuges of someone named Susy, back in olden times. 'Susy' is shown in What to Name the Baby, by Evelyn Wells, as a diminutive of 'Susan'. 'Gyrth' is an obsolete form of 'grith', a refuge or sanctuary.
- All definitions have been taken from Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition, unless otherwise specified.

### OXYMORONS

*Oxymorons have been a perennial Word Ways topic, and those who aren't satisfied can now buy a bookful: Jumbo Shrimp & Other Almost Perfect Oxymorons, by Warren S. Blumenfeld (Perigee Books, 1986). It's a good buy, \$4.95 for 94 pages packed with real and quasi-oxymorons: all the classics, like fast food, even odds, and military intelligence, and over a thousand more despite repetitions. Some that I particularly liked were kickstand, diamond ring, back-up forward (sports term), and assistant principal. To avoid endless lists, the majority are incorporated into text, sometimes with forced effect (I'm sure people have said 'always occasionally', but it doesn't read well). It's more of a reference collection than Patrick Hughes's More on Oxymoron, and therefore not as interesting to read, but no oxymoron collector should be without it (PMC).*