

# UNBALANCED WORD DIVISION

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In an article in the November 1974 *Word Ways*, Merlin X. Houdini explored and solved the problem of dividing an eight-letter word, ESTHONIA, into 35 different pairs of four-letter words, such as HENS and IOTA, using only Webster's Second Edition as a base of operations.

Unbalanced divisions are more numerous than balanced ones. Thus, it is theoretically possible to divide eight letters into 56 different pairs of words where each pair consists of one five-letter and one three-letter word. The process is substantially more difficult, not merely because the number of pairs to be found is increased by 21, but also because five-letter words are longer and therefore more difficult to form, and also because the need arises to locate four different all-vowel and four different all-consonant words.

The problem can be solved. I have solved it. However, it requires an incisive penetration into the very soul of the Second Edition, the like of which has never before even been attempted. The solution is presented here, in fully annotated form. As you read the explanations given, be humbly aware of the fact that you are watching logological history being made, that you are an honored observer of wordplay without historical antecedent.

HOE, SATIN

EON, SAITH saith: an inflectional form of the verb "to say" used in solemn or poetic discourse

EOS, HIAINT Eos: Greek goddess of the dawn; hiant: gaping

TOE, HAINS hains: spares or saves (a Scottish and Irish term)

HOL, ANTES hoi: to haw, as cattle; antes: poker stakes

ION, HATES

IOS, NEATH ios: large Hawaiian hawks; neath: beneath (a poetic word)

ITO, ASHEN Ito: a Jewish organization furthering Territorialism

HIE, ASTON Aston: Francis W. Aston, English scientist (1877-1945), in the Biographical section

NIE, OATHS nie: a quaint spelling of "nine", shown in the Oxford English Dictionary as still used in the year 1225

TIE, NOAHS Noahs: men named Noah

IES, ANTHO- ies: Pacific island screw pines; antho-: floral  
 Note: the logologist, upon being asked to find words, knows that what his questioner is really asking him to find is morphemes. These include combining forms such as antho-, which the logologist joyfully seizes the opportunity to trot forth for inspection and approval.

OAT, SHINE

SAO, THINE sao: an Annamese length measure equal to about eight yards; thine: a pronoun used in solemn or poetic discourse

NOA, HEIST noa: common or profane, the opposite of taboo; heist: an extremely informal term for a robbery or burglary  
 Note: the logologist understands the Second Edition as a living, breathing entity, with roots or extensions both in the past and in the future. This enables him to recognize the Third Edition as an altered present form of the Second Edition, and freely to draw words such as heist from the Third Edition.

AHO, TINES aho: an interjection of triumph or surprise

AHI, STONE Ahi: a Vedic sky serpent or cloud dragon

ANI, SHOTE ani: a black bird of the cuckoo family; shote: a young hog

ALS, THONE ais: three-toes sloths; thone: damp (a term now restricted to certain parts of England)

TAI, SHONE Tai: Siamese, insofar as language is concerned

TEA, SHION Shion: a Biblical town near Nazareth, as spelled in the Revised Standard Version

SEA, OTHNI Othni: in the Bible, a son of Shemaiah, a Levite

EAN, HOIST ean: to bring forth young, as a goat or sheep (a term now restricted to certain parts of England)

HAE, SINTO hae: to have (a term now restricted to certain parts of England; Sinto: a variant spelling of Shinto)

AIE, THON'S aie: an interjection of grief or despair, culled from the pages of the Third Edition, that rejuvenated form of the Second Edition; thon's: the explicitly shown possessive form of thon, a proposed genderless pronoun of the third person

IAO, SHENT iao: the wattled honey eater, a bird; shent: the past tense of the nostalgically archaic verb shend, meaning to blame or reproach

OAE, THINS Oae: a location, apparently a native village, on the island of Maupiti, west of Bora-Bora Island, in the French Society Islands in the South Pacific

Note: just as the Third Edition is a lineal extension of the Second Edition, so is Webster's New Geographical Dictionary a lateral extension of the Third Edition. Shown on pages 908-9 of that work is a map of the Pacific Ocean, including Bora-Bora Island. The map isn't large enough to show Maupiti Island and

the villages on that island, but we know they are there from the Times Index-Gazetteer of the World, and we can readily visualize the name Oae as we study the Websterian map.

EO I., SHANT    Eo I.: the more compact form of Eo Island, a small island in the French Loyalt Islands in the Southwest Pacific, northwest of the larger Uvea Island; shant: a quart or pot of drink (an extremely informal term)

Note: once again, we have taken the liberty of selecting Eo. I. from the Times Index-Gazetteer of the World. The map of the Pacific Ocean on pages 908-9 of Webster's New Geographical Dictionary shows the Loyalty Islands and Uvea Island. While its scale does not permit the inclusion of Eo Island, our knowledge of its existence makes us see it there as we gaze contemplatively at the Websterian map.

HAS, TENIO    tenio: a South American timber tree

SHE, TAINO    Taino: a native Indian language of Haiti

HIS, NOTAE    notae: the first word of the phrase notae tironianae, an ancient Roman shorthand system

SOH, TAINÉ    soh: an exclamation of vexed surprise; Taine: Hippolyte A. Taine, French historian and critic (1828-1893), in the Biographical section

HAT, NOISE

THE, AINOS    Ainos: members of an indigenous Japanese race

HIT, AEONS    aeons: alternate spelling of eons

HOT, AISNE    Aisne: a river in northern France, in the Gazetteer section

SAN, OTHEI    san: a letter of the primitive Greek alphabet; Othei: in the Catholic Bible, a Judahite who dwelt in Jerusalem after the Captivity

SON, AITHE    aithe: a Scottish form of the word oath

SIN, TAHOE    Tahoe: the first word of the term Tahoe trout, a large trout found in Lake Tahoe, on the California-Nevada border

SEN, A HOIT    sen: one hundredth of the Japanese monetary unit, the yen; a hoit: a foolish or worthless person (a Scottish contribution to the riches of our language)

Note: the logologist realizes that a noun such as hoit, standing by itself, is an incomplete thought. It must be preceded either by the definite or by the indefinite article to fulfill its glorious destiny as communicator of thought. Consequently, he leaps at the opportunity offered him to place an article in front of the noun, as is here the fortuitous case.

ANT, HOLSE    hoise: an alternate spelling of heeze, to raise or exalt (a colorful Irish term)

NET, AHIOS    Ahios: individuals such as the Biblical Ahio, an uncle

of King Saul

TIN, HOSEA Hosea: a masculine first name

NOT, HALES haies: plural of haie, a vintage spelling of hay, recorded by the Oxford as still in use during the 17th century

SAT, HOINE hoine: an alternate spelling of hone, to grumble or pine (a word still used in certain parts of England)

SET, HANOI Hanoi: the capital of North Vietnam, in the Gazetteer section

SIT, HONEA Honea: the first word in Honea Path, a town in western South Carolina

Note: once again, the logologist has recourse to Webster's New Geographical Dictionary, the source of Honea Path.

SOT, HAINE haine: hatred, a word now restricted in use to certain parts of England

HAN, IOTES iotes: jots

Note: the word jots is, of course, a Websterian word. An elder statesman spelling of it, shown in the Oxford as being used in Shakespearean times and beyond, is iotes. It does take exceptional perspicacity to detect all collateral forms of the word when looking at the single spelling of it given in the Second Edition, but that is what the logologist is there for.

HEN, IOTAS

HIN, OATES hin: a Hebrew liquid measure; Oates: Lawrence E.G. Oates, English Antarctic explorer (1880-1912), in the Biographical section

HON, SAITE hon: sweetheart, in the Third Edition; Saite: a native of Sais, a city in ancient Egypt

NTH, EIAOS Eiaos: islands such as Eiao, a small island in the Marquesas, given in Webster's New Geographical Dictionary

NHS, IOTAE nhs: non-abbreviation symbol for nanohenries, billionths of a henry, the practical unit of inductance in physics

Note: the Second Edition informs us that the word iota entered our language from Latin. Since its plural in Latin was iota<sup>e</sup>, it is obvious to the logologist that its plural immediately after entering English was also iota<sup>e</sup>, and that only later was its plural changed to iotas, a corruption symptomatic of the decadence of modern times.

Note: the Third Edition provides us both with the basic word henry and the combining form nano-, commendably allowing us the initiative in attaching the latter to the former to produce the scientific term nanohenry. There is, indeed, such a term, as reference to other dictionaries substantiates. We find that the correct scientific symbol for a nanohenry is the letter combination NH (written without periods), according to the unabridged edition of The Random House Dictionary of the English Language.

From the way in which other symbols are pluralized, it is a reasonable inference that an acceptable symbol for the plural nanohenries is NHS. Again, it takes extraordinary clarity of vision to perceive this entire train of inexorable consequences when looking at the disjointed nano- and henry in the Third Edition, but it is all there for him who has eyes wherewith to see.

TH'S, IONAE th's: the plural of th' used as a word (th' is a shortened form of the, found in Modern English poetry in front of nouns beginning with vowels); Ionae: towns such as the town of Iona in Bonneville County, Idaho

Note: the plural of a word used as a word is called its citation form plural, or its quotation noun plural, or its hypostatic plural. All words, irrespective of part of speech, have such plurals, and the logologist avails himself of this language resource in his pursuits.

Note: Webster's New Geographical Dictionary features a map of Idaho on page 527. One of the towns on that map, though not entered in the dictionary itself, is Iona. The name is of classical derivation, and the classical language closest to us is Latin, in which the correct plural of Iona is Ionae. It is a fair presumption, therefore, that the original or first plural of the name Iona usable in English must be Ionae.

N'T'S, A HOIE n't's: the citation form plural of n't, a shortened form of "not" used in popular speech; a hoie: a small coasting vessel, usually sloop-rigged

Note: to conquer this particular word division, the logologist has availed himself of several tactics familiar to the reader: the use of a quotation noun plural, the perfection of an incomplete solitary noun by attaching the indefinite article to it, and the selection of a word, hoie, from the First Edition. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, hoie is another spelling that was last used in the 17th century.

Naturally, the five-three division of an eight-letter word is not the only unbalanced one. There are 28 different ways of dividing eight letters into one six-letter word and one two-letter word, and there are 8 different ways of dividing them into one seven-letter word and one one-letter word. The reader will surely wish to construct these 36 remaining combinations himself. For that reason, I am omitting them from this article.