

A TRIVIA CHALLENGE

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Many word buffs enjoy a solitary investigation, and for them Pears Advanced Word-Puzzler's Dictionary (Pelham Books, London; 1987), reviewed elsewhere in this issue, offers a unique feature. Certain words in the dictionary have unusual features worthy of recording as footnotes to their individual entries:

aegilops the longest word in the English language to have all of its letters in strict alphabetical order

smithery contains no fewer than 17 different pronouns: he, her, hers, him, his, I, it, its, me, my, she, their, theirs, them, they, thy, ye

triennially every alternate letter forms a completely different word; the odd-numbered letters form *tinily*, the even-numbered letters form *renal*

uncomplimentary the longest of 3 English words which contain all 5 vowels, once only and in reverse alphabetical order (the others being *subcontinental* and *unnoticeably*)

zoosporous one of the longest words to be composed solely of letters of the second half of the alphabet, M to Z (the longest-known one using letters from the first half is *Hamamelidaceae*)

Readers are invited to submit their superlatives for like words, the best of which will be included in future editions of Pears. The author (195 Derby Road, Chesterfield) will gladly acknowledge an individual reader's contribution and be pleased to send a copy of the first printing of the book containing such an addition directly to the contributor. The field is wide open, and the only stipulation is that the word must appear in an English dictionary (identified by the contributor).

In conjunction with a pencil-and-paper game, Crossword, look for the longest words which can be successively built up by single-letter terminal additions, starting with each letter of the alphabet. For example, A or S yields AS-HAS-HAST-HASTE-HASTEN-CHASTEN-CHASTENS.