

KICKSHAWS

Readers are encouraged to send their own favorite linguistic kickshaws to the Kickshaws Editor. All answers appear in the Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue. Guest editors will continue to appear occasionally.

A Visit From St. Alphabet

Christmas is coming like a stampede of reindeer. Muzak is beginning to pipe the spirit electronically to mall shoppers, but to me the season doesn't really begin until the first snowfall. This year, instead of snowflakes, imagine the letters of the alphabet whirling around, picture the children building alphabet forts and throwing alphabet balls at each other, listen to the faint jingling of sleigh-bells in the distance, and then read this poem.

'Twas the night before X, when all through the Y
 Not a letter was stirring, not even an I;
 The S's were hung by the T's with care
 In the hope that St. Alphabet soon would be there;
 The Z's were nestled all snug in their beds,
 While visions of W's danced in their heads;
 And U in your kerchief, and I in my cap
 Had just settled down for a long winter's nap --
 When out on the paper there rose such a clatter
 I sprang from my sentence to see what was the matter.
 Away to the period I flew like a flash,
 Tore open the commas and threw up the dash.
 The pen on the crest of the new-fallen O
 Gave the lustre of adverbs to pronouns below;
 When what to my wondering I's should freeze,
 But a miniature A, and eight tiny B's,
 With a little word writer I'd never met --
 I knew that it had to be St. Alphabet.
 More rapid than pencils his pages they came,
 And he wrote and typed, and called them by name:
 "Now, P! now, O! now, E and T!
 On, P! on, A! on, G and E!
 To the top of the shelf, to the top of the wall!
 Now tell away, yell away, spell away all!"
 As dry leaves that before the wild W fly,
 When they meet with a question mark, mount to the sky,
 So up to the bookshelf the pages they flew,
 With the A full of nouns -- and St. Alphabet too.
 And then in the books on the shelf I heard
 The prancing and pawing of each little word.
 As I drew in my ear, and was watching the sound,
 Down the pages St. Alphabet came with a bound.
 He was dressed all in A's, from his B's to his C's,

And his D's were all tarnished with F's and with G's;
 A bundle of E's he had flung on his H,
 And he looked like a poem just opening its page.
 His I's, how they twinkled! His J's, how merry!
 His K's were like roses, his L like a cherry!
 His droll little M was drawn up like a bow,
 And the N on his chin was as white as the O.
 The stump of a P he held tight in his T,
 And the Q it encircled his head like a V.
 He had a broad R and a little curved S
 That shook when he laughed in his anagrammed vest.
 He was U! He was W! He was X, Y, and Z;
 And I laughed when I saw him, alphabetically.
 A wink of his I and a twist of his J
 Soon gave me to know he had nothing to say.
 He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
 And filled all the pages; then turned with a jerk,
 And laying his pencil aside of his nose,
 And giving a nod, up the pages he rose.
 He sprang to his A, to his B's gave a C,
 And away they all flew like the down of a Z.
 But I read in the sky, ere he wrote out of sight,
 "Happy Alphabet to all, and to all a good write!"

Compass Words

Tonight I was doodling in one of my notebooks, and I came up with a simple form of crossword -- compass words, since they point in four directions. The challenge is to find two words of equal (odd-numbered letter) length with the same middle letter and write them in a cross so that they can form as many different words of the same length by reading from any straight direction (across, down, backwards, forwards) or at any right angles.

K	In this example, SLICK, KNITS, and STINK are the
N	straight words, and SLINK, SLITS, KNICK, and STICK
S L I C K	are the angle words, for a total of 7 out of a possible
T	12. The minimal requirement is that all 4 angles
S	participate in making at least one word.

The editor suggested that compass words could be expanded to include words of unequal lengths as well as words in three or more dimensions. It should be easy to locate other 5 x 5's, but can you come up with one that forms the maximum 12 words? Or compass words with more letters, unequal lengths, or added dimensions?

Library Subject Headings, Believe it or Not

John R. Likins has collected some of the weirdest actual subject headings in modern times. His article, "Subject Headings, Silly, American--20th Century--Complications and Sequelae--Addresses, Essays, Lectures" (in *Technical Services Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 1/2, Fall/Winter 1984), reprinted them from Library of Congress and from CIP (Cataloging in Publication) data. He used to edit a column for the magazine PLAFSEP, which held a Silly Subject Heading contest a few years ago. The hands-down winner was "BUT-TOCKS (IN RELIGION, FOLK-LORE, ETC.)". Here are some of Likins'

library lunacies:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| AMERICAN GIANT CHECKERED RABBIT | HEMORRHOIDS--POPULAR WORKS |
| BANANA RESEARCH | JESUS CHRIST--PERSON AND OFFICES |
| BANKRUPTCY--POPULAR WORKS | LABORATORY ANIMALS--CONGRESSES |
| CATASTROPHICAL, THE | LOVE NESTS--DIRECTORIES |
| see also COMIC, THE | MANURE HANDLING |
| CHILD ABUSE--STUDY AND TEACHING | MUD LUMPS |
| CONTANGO AND BACKWARDATION | ODORS IN THE BIBLE |
| DENTISTS IN ART | PRAYERS FOR ANIMALS |
| FANTASTIC TELEVISION PROGRAMS | SEWAGE--COLLECTED WORKS |
| FOOD, JUNK | SICK--FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS |
| GHOSTS--PICTORIAL WORKS | URINARY DIVERSIONS |
| GREAT TIT | see also URINE DANCE |
| see also BLUE TIT--BEHAVIOR | WASPS (PERSONS) |
| GOD--ADDRESSES, ESSAYS, LECTURES | |

Highly Structured Verse

Highly structured verse, a kind of poetry that has been around in one form or another for millennia, includes palindromic, acrostic, lipogrammatic, and other poems whose rules can make them fairly tricky to write. In fact, even higher-order structures can be devised with such complexity that content is almost completely a product of form. So it is with the following verse, titled Spiral Nebula. Its form can be deduced purely by looking at the word patterns.

The stars drifting through clouds can't go above
city lights. Move there! Light up, shifting, twinkling
terribly tonight, so far. However, come outside. The
rainy lamps we now lost slowly are clear.

The clear stars are drifting slowly through lost
clouds now. Can't we go? Lamps above rainy
city, the lights outside move. Come there, however,
light far up, so shifting tonight, twinkling terribly.

The terribly clear, twinkling stars tonight are shifting,
drifting so slowly up through far, lost light.
Clouds, however, now there, can't come. We move,
go outside! Lamps, lights above the rainy city.

The city, terribly rainy: clear, the twinkling above
stars. Lights, tonight. Lamps are outside, shifting. Go
drifting, move, so we slowly come up, can't
through there. Far now, lost, however light clouds.

The clouds: city light (terribly, however rainy, lost).
Clear, now, the far twinkling there above, through
stars, can't--lights up tonight. Come, Lamps. Slowly
are we outside, so shifting? Move, go drifting.

The drifting clouds go. City, move light, shifting
terribly so. However, outside rainy, we, lost, are
clear. Slowly, now, lamps! The come--far--tonight
twinkling up there, lights above, can't through stars.

Still can't get the drift? See Answers and Solutions.

Perfect Number Names in Neo-Alphabets

There are no number names in English whose letters have alphabetical values that add up to the number itself, a fact previously mentioned by Bergerson, Borgmann, Lindon and other logologists. However, perfect number names can be found in neo-alphabets whose letters have been rearranged to accommodate the letter values.

The smallest number name that can be so created is SIX. Let the neo-alphabet begin SIX... instead of ABC... and the new values ($S = 1$, $I = 2$, $X = 3$) total 6. Since all permutations of the letters SIX work the same way, SIX is perfect in six different neo-alphabets. (Because the remaining 23 letters can be arranged in any order, each neo-alphabet has 23! complete arrangements.)

Relatively few perfect numbers can be created by alphabetic reordering: the next seven are 9, 10, 19, 20, 29, 30, and 33. The following neo-alphabets generate NINE: EIN..., IEN..., IN.E..., EN.I..., N.IE..., N.EI..., NE..I..., and NI..E... Similarly, TEN can be found in 16 neo-alphabets, one of which is N..TE... For the larger numbers, the number of neo-alphabets rapidly increases; TWENTY-NINE is perfect in 252 neo-alphabets.

Some neo-alphabets generate more than one perfect number name. Taking the previous cases of NINE (NI..E...) and TEN (N..TE...), the two neo-alphabets can be combined into NI.TE... NINETEEN and TWENTY can be similarly combined in a single neo-alphabet, ENT.WYI...

These considerations raise several questions: (1) Which neo-alphabet generates the most perfect number names? (2) Which number name is perfect in the largest number of neo-alphabets? (3) How many perfect number names exist? (4) Which neo-alphabet produces a perfect number name with the most consecutive letters in that alphabet? (5) What is the mathematically largest perfect number name generated by any neo-alphabet? The first four questions are unanswered as yet, but the fifth can be solved by focusing on end-of-the-alphabet values. For my answer, turn to Answers and Solutions.

Finally, perfect number names can be produced by multiplication instead of addition of letter-values in the neo-alphabet. SIX works for the same neo-alphabets used in addition, and TEN is perfect in a neo-alphabet beginning TE..N... or in the five other combinations of these letters. How many more perfect number names can be formed by multiplication? See Answers and Solutions for answer.

Spanish-English Linguistic Foreplay

AYUNTAMIENTO, according to Susan Eckler's Spanish dictionary, has three definitions: 1. town council, 2. city hall, 3. sexual intercourse. Given the behavior of some politicians, the definitions seem compatible. Her discovery reminded me of comical misuses of words that sneak across the border.

One word in particular, MOLESTAR, often confuses native Spanish speakers learning English. MOLESTAR looks like "to molest," but

means "to bother." "¡No me molesta!" translates as "Don't bother me!" Several Latinos use the look-alike English word even after becoming fluent. A friend told me, "I was working hard at the office today, when my boss molested me with paperwork."

Another time, my wife Milagros, who is from Venezuela, and I were doing our first Christmas shopping together. She said, "Now we have to buy some paper to rape the gifts." Looking around, she asked one of the K-Mart attendants, "Sir, where do you keep the raping paper?" Maybe it's the same kind of paper that molested my friend.

In Venezuela, PANTl means "pantyhose" and PANTALETAS means "panties," which sets up another bilingual trap. One midsummer's afternoon in St. Louis, my wife didn't wear pantyhose to the office as she usually did. She told her co-workers, "It was so hot today I didn't wear any panties." I explained their laughter later, and she never confused the two words again.

Similarly, there's a bawdy parody of the balcony scene in Romeo and Juliet, which Mili sometimes sings to our son as a lullaby: "Romeo, Romeo, donde estas que no te veo?" "Julieta, Julieta, donde estan las pantaletas?" ("Romeo, Romeo, where are you that I can't see you?" "Juliet, Juliet, where are your panties?")

A Greeting That Could Get You Arrested

Greetings between friends or acquaintances take a variety of forms, from the sedate "Hello, Percy" to the boisterous "Yo, Brenda!". There is, however, one greeting which can get you arrested if you utter it in the wrong place. What is the greeting, and what is the place it should not be used? See Answers and Solutions.

Rollercoaster Words Going Up

In a rollercoaster word, the letters alternate alphapositional values in relationship to each other (e.g., for SIP, S is the 19th letter, I is the 9th, and P is the 16th; thus, S goes down to I, and I up to P). [Editor's note: these were called zigzag words by Philip Cohen in "On The Inter(e)state" in May 1980.] Tom Pulliam found much longer ones in Webster's Unabridged, Second or Third editions. He notes that it isn't length so much as "the great likelihood of double letters" occurring that makes longer examples hard to find. Here are some whoppers:

- 15: Siphonocladales, arithmetization, systematization, multilateralism, hydroseparation, hematopathology, Franklinization
- 16: stereocomparator, remineralization
- 17: provincialization, pseudohyoscyamine, pseudohydrophobia

Taller Word Stepladders

In word stepladders, one letter in each word differs in one alphabetic step from the word that comes before or after it. Using the MWPD, I found an 8-rung stepladder, and soon Tom Pulliam topped it with a 9-runger. A few days later, Sir Jeremy Morse sent nine he'd found in Chambers which had different word-lengths and/or longer stepladders. The first is Tom's, and the rest are Sir Jeremy's:

tale-tame		
rake-sake-sale-same-sane-sand-rand		mind-lind-kind
aw-ax-ay	ear-far-gar	nine-mine-line-kine
	gas-has	mime-lime
bat-cat-dat-eat-fat-gat-hat		like-mike-mile
	eat: gau	mild
	carr	
	cars-bars	
dart--cart	bass	gaur
		gaus
	cast-bast-batt-bats-cats-dats-eats-fats-gats-hats	
burr-burs-buss-bust-----butt	(a ring)	dating
curr-curs-cuss-----cuts-butts		eating
		easing
	cards-bards	faring-earring
carer-cares-bares-barfs	(add caret,	daring
barer	dares to	baring-caring
cases-cates-cater	cares)	basing-casing
baser-bases		bating
	dates-dater-eater	
burring-curring-cursing-cussing-bussing-busting-butting-cutting		

Ballad of the Bards

Each line in the poem below is an anagram on the name of a famous poet who wrote in English. Show your versatility by figuring out all 24 poets in this anagramarama. Time yourself, and score as follows: 24 seconds - amazing; 24 minutes - alright; 24 hours - awful; 24 days - amazing. See Answers and Solutions.

I gulp a dry drink.
O, Ted took her here.
Ten pens reach
Her cold cavalier.

Law! Haw, I'm TNT.
Ah, sly devil can
Send me red puns.
Lewd marvel ran.

God hit ol' Mr. Elvis!
Ink my docile sin;
I sleep like a warm ash,
A proud zen.

N-n-nose job?
Born... born... it grew.
Wow! I will storm hard.
Thanks, Joe.

An ape explored
Tom, a sly hand.
Torn rubbers?
I--I'll wake lamb.

My gosh! A rat!
Terrors of TB!
No rime on a ream.
Want art? Hold me.

Tonto Rides Again

According to Tom Pulliam, "TONTTO is the brainchild of Pat McCormack...he's the tall, heavy, funny guy who was a writer for most major comics, then appeared in a number of movies...in company with his sidekick, the small musical composer Paul Williams. In any case, he first broke them out on the Johnny Carson show many years ago. No one has since done anything with them."

So let's do something with them. Each Tonto is a dialog in which the Lone Ranger asks a yes/no question about a well-known person, and Tonto replies with a line that plays off the person's name. The first five Tontos are by Tom, the second five by me. To get

into the mood, read them with the William Tell Overture playing in the background.

Did the Emperor suffer a clean break rather than a sprain? Yes,
Napoleon Bonaparte

Do you mean to tell me the inventor weighed exactly 2000 pounds?
Yes, Robert Fulton

Is the surrealist painter playing the feminine lead in a well-known musical? Yes, Salvador Dali

Is the Scottish poet still upset and angry? Yes, Robert Burns

Did the eccentric American poet raise his hand to get attention?
No, Ezra Pound

Is the vice president chicken? No, Dan Quayle

Is the Tonight show host the child of a mother trucker? No, John-
ny Carson

Is South Africa's ex-president a white and a Boer? Yes, Pieter
Botha

Did you tell me Khadafi was the spiritual leader of Iran? No,
Ayatollah Khomeini

Did the British actor appeal to women because of his sexual prowess?
Yes, Peter O'Toole

International House of Names

In 1986, I worked for the International Student Program at Washington University. My co-workers were a jovial lot, and we cracked up over some of the language twists that occur when foreign students encounter the US. Names, as many people know, are an eternal source of amusement, but we had to keep a straight face while being introduced to our guests. There were two types of names: (1) Those that had "dangerous" connotations, and (2) Those that were unusual for other reasons. The first type could cause embarrassment or worse. Consequently, the International House policy was to inform some students that it would be to their advantage to select an American first name as a temporary replacement. FOOK YEW KHAW, for example, took the alias CLARENCE KHAW. Here are 20 memorable names of 1985-86. Type 1 names are in column 1, and type 2 in column 2.

JOSEPH PEE	FOO WEE LEAN
PEE TOO SOON	YANG YANG
SHIDDY	CHINCHANG CHENG
HARSHIT SHAH	WANG BANG LOOI
FOOK YEW KHAW	MAUREEN GUGU NHLNGETFWA
DICK LEONG	GOH WEE CHEW
YOUNG SUK SUH	BAHA TAHA ALI
FUKKI LEE	KAR LOCK WONG
LOWELL LAY	HASHIM HISHAM
RATZAS	HYUN-GUN SONG

Rereread All About It

While browsing through Webster's Collegiate, I found the noun REREMOUSE. Before reading the definition, I tried guessing it. A MOUSE is a small rodent, so a REMOUSE might be a wounded mouse

that required plastic surgery. A REREMOUSE might be a remouse so badly injured that it had to be rebuilt with bionic limbs. (By extension, a REREREMOUSE would be an android rodent.) Logical enough, especially when you think of the experiments that go on in today's laboratories. This suggests a menagerie of bionic animals such as RERECATS, REREDOGS, REREREPTILES. When I checked the definition, I did a double take -- do you know what it is?

Have a Jolly, Polyglot Christmas...

If you're planning on traveling to 31 countries this December, the quiz below may help you communicate with the natives. On the left are the countries; on the right, in mixed order, are the ways that different people express "Merry Christmas." Can you match countries and greetings? See Answers and Solutions.

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. Armenia | a. Roomsaid Joulu Phui |
| 2. Belgium | b. Meri Kurisumasu |
| 3. Brazil | c. Sarbatori Vesele |
| 4. Bulgaria | d. Ida Saidan Wa Sanah Jadidah |
| 5. China | e. Glad Jul |
| 6. Czechoslovakia | f. Bono Natale |
| 7. Denmark | g. Vrolijkje Kerstmis |
| 8. Estonia | h. Boas Festas |
| 9. Finland | i. Glaedelig Jul |
| 10. France | j. Priecigus Ziemas Svetkus |
| 11. Germany | k. S Roshestvóm Khrystóvym |
| 12. Greece | l. Schenorthavor Dzenount |
| 13. Holland | m. Nodlaig Nait Cugat |
| 14. Hungary | n. Joyeux Noël |
| 15. Iraq | o. Vesele Vanoce |
| 16. Ireland | p. Wesolych Swiat |
| 17. Italy | q. Boas Festas |
| 18. Japan | r. Noeliniz Ve Yeni Yiliniz Kutlu Olsun |
| 19. Lithuania | s. Hauskaa Joulua |
| 20. Norway | t. Een Plesierige Kerfess |
| 21. Poland | u. Chrystos Rozdzajetsia Slawyte Jeho |
| 22. Portugal | v. Feliz Navidad |
| 23. Rumania | w. Zalig Kerstfeest |
| 24. Russia | x. Nadolig Llawen |
| 25. South Africa | y. Chestita Koleda |
| 26. Switzerland | z. Srećan Božić |
| 27. Turkey | aa. Boldog Karacsony |
| 28. Ukraine | bb. Kung Hsi Hsin Nien |
| 29. Venezuela | cc. Fröliche Weinachten |
| 30. Wales | dd. Gledelig Jul |
| 31. Yugoslavia | ee. Kala Christougena |

... And a Happy New Decade!