

BEST ANAGRAMS AND ANTIGRAMS

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There are several criteria available for judging the quality of an anagram. To begin with, an anagram should be self-explanatory. The anagram

THAT'S PRIME NEWS? NO, IT PREYS ON THE WEEK

The newspaper is not The New York Times

is deficient in this respect; it must be explained that it refers to a New York weekly which regards sensationalism as "prime" news.

Unnecessary words detract from the theme, as THE GREAT and THE LATE, GREAT in the anagrams

THE GREAT THOMAS ALVA EDISON

The good man, he lit vast areas

THE LATE, GREAT DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING

Think tall -- a "dreamer" greeting truth

The superfluous words most frequently formed from left-over letters are NOTE, OH, AH, HA, LO, and HALL. The letter O should only be used in a poetic context as an alternative to the standard OH.

In the ultimate anagram, every word relates to the subject. A "prime" example is Emmo W.'s April 1948 Enigma anagram ELEVEN + TWO = twelve + one. The perfect anagram is completely transposed and grammatically correct. It is a rule among veterans of this art that an anagram should never contain more than three letters in the same sequence as in the original word(s) (the first anagram above uses NEWS). Repeating a word detracts even further, as WORD in the anagram

WORD WAYS MAGAZINES

I saw zany word games

Topical and obscure subjects are not recommended. Although initials and abbreviations are usually acceptable, they seldom work as well as complete words unless they are common usage. In the following anagram, I included the initials of my name to deal with the extra letters OM.

I'LL SETTLE FOR WRITING ANAGRAMS

Arranging as letters will fit --O.M.

By adding RE, however, I solved the problem with the anagram

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I'LL SETTLE FOR REWRITING ANAGRAMS

Arranging as more letters will fit

An anagram should either complete the sentence of the base, or be complete in itself, if possible. Many "acceptable" anagrams read like newspaper headlines. For example,

A TRIP AROUND THE WORLD

Hard to plan wider tour

relates to the subject, but the anagram is missing the article A. It would be ungrammatical to write " _ around the world"; I don't see why the same standard shouldn't apply to the anagram as well.

In selecting one hundred anagrams for the following list, I omitted those which contain four or more letters of the original words in the same sequence and included those with the best sentence structure, containing the articles A, AN, and THE where needed. My other criteria were apposition, wit, historical content, permanence of subject matter, and fewest unnecessary words.

Of the many thousands of anagrams I have found, a high percentage are either grammatically incorrect, refer to people and events long forgotten, or contain words and expressions that are esoteric or obsolete.

In The Handy-Book of Literary Curiosities, published in 1903, the English author William Walsh stated:

After centuries of endeavour, so few really good anagrams have been rolled down to us. One may assert that all the really superb anagrams now extant might be contained in a pillbox.

Nearly a century of anagrams have been written since those words, and the fact remains.

In the following list, all dated anagrams with no source specified have been taken from The Enigma or (before 1920) The Eastern Enigma of the National Puzzlers' League.

THE ACTIVE VOLCANOS cones evict hot lava [Viking (Erik Bodin, Norfolk VA), in Palindromes and Anagrams, Howard W. Bergerson (1973)]

ALEC GUINNESS genuine class [Dick Cavett]

THE AMERICAN INDIAN I am in a thinned race [Hercules (Howard B. McPherrin, Denver CO), Jul 1924]

ANAGRAMS ars magna [D.C.Ver (George B. King, Philadelphia PA), Nov 1931]

AN AISLE is a lane [Awl Wrong (Patrick J. Flavin, Dorchester MA), Dec 1939]

ANIMOSITY is no amity [Lord Baltimore (Simon J. Block, Baltimore MD), "Mystery", the National Tribune, Feb 6, 1896]

THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN a pistol in an actor's rebel hands, a fine man is shot [Jessie McPherrin, Feb 1957]

ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATIONS to scan a visible star or moon [Atlantis (V.E. Beckley, Benton IL), Anagrammasia unpublished manu-

- script, Newton B. Lovejoy]
- ATHLETICS lithe acts [Mabel P., "Enigmatic Oddities", the Pittsburgh Sunday Post, Apr 17, 1900]
- A BARTENDER beer and art [Arcanus (Jacob E. Reizenstein, Iowa City IA), The Newark Puzzler, Apr 28, 1907]
- THE CARDINALS in cathedrals [Viking, Feb 1965]
- CHRISSE EVERT it's her service [author unknown, Word Ways, May 1990]
- CHRISTIANITY I cry that I sin [Of Anagrams, Henry B. Wheatley, England, 1862]
- CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLE, LONDON an old lone stone replaced [Chambers Journal, England, 1900]
- CLINT EASTWOOD old West action [author unknown, The Oxford Guide to Word Games (Oxford University Press, 1984)]
- THE COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATES our "green" shall get educated [Mollemi (Morton L. Mitchell, St. Louis MO), "Complications", the Weekly Inter-Ocean, Chicago, Jan 19, 1912]
- THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE pick Marlowe: ask if he wrote all these poems [Mona Lisa (Linda Bosson, New York NY), Feb 1978]
- THE COMPULSORY EDUCATION LAW you must learn; police do watch [Amaranth (Newton B. Lovejoy, Pittsburgh PA), Feb 1916]
- CONSIDERATE care is noted [D.C. Ver, Jun 1919]
- THE COUNTRYSIDE no city dust here [Su San (Mrs. Susan Eagleton, Norfolk VA), Feb 1948]
- THE DAWNING night waned [Dreamer (A. Preston Mellish, Providence RI), Feb 1926]
- THE DEATH OF ROBERT G. INGERSOLL, THE FAMOUS AGNOSTIC goes, a-gathering the belief that no Lord comforts us [C. Saw (Lewis C. Truckenbrodt, later Lewis Trent, New York NY), Ardmore Puzzler, Jul 27, 1899]
- THE DEATH OF WOLFE ON THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM on a path to fame, both he and his war foe fell [Sam Weller (Torry Kirk, Lima OH), "Puzzledom", Golden Days, Dec 24, 1881]
- A DECIMAL POINT I'm a dot in place [A. Chem (Mrs. Helen M. Miller, Glenside PA), Aug 1928]
- DESEGREGATION Negroes get aid [Pacifico (H.J. Wismar, Sherman Oaks CA), Jul 1956]
- THE DESERT OASIS does ease thirst [Ab Struse (David Shulman, New York NY), Jun 1936]
- DESPERATION a rope ends it [Air Raid (H.H. Bailey), Apr 1920]
- DISINTEGRATION darn it! it is gone [E.S. Crow (William B. Kirk, Lima OH), Feb 1911]
- A DOMESTICATED ANIMAL docile, as a man tamed it [Spica (Mrs. Bardwell, Whitney Crossings NY), May 1913]
- DORMITORY dirty room [T.H. (Thomas I. Houston, Dixfield ME), "Complications", the Weekly Inter-Ocean, May 2, 1899]
- EARNESTNESS a stern sense [Amaranth, Sep 1924]
- EDGE TOOLS good steel [Enavlicm (E.J. McIlvane, Washington DC), The Newark Puzzler, Jan 12, 1907]

- ELEVEN + TWO = twelve + one [Emmo W. (Melvin O. Wellman, Lansing MI), Apr 1948]
- THE EYES they see [Anonyme (William Grossman, New York NY), The Oracle, Jan 15, 1896]
- FAMILIES life's aim [Enavlicm, Nov 1917]
- FRAILITY, THY NAME IS WOMAN it's a whim of male tyranny [The Strand Problems Book, W.T. Williams and G. H. Savage, London, 1935]
- GOLD AND SILVER grand old evils [Johank (J. Henry Wickham, Baltimore MD), Dec 1903]
- A GOOD NAME IS BETTER THAN GREAT RICHES be not a hoarder; right acts gain esteem [Gwen (Mrs. E.M. Weingart, New York NY), Feb 1934]
- THE GOOD SAMARITANS hearts go to man's aid [Larry (Loris B. Curtis, Mason MI), Nov 1989]
- THE HOLY GOSPEL helps theology [Awl Wrong, Jul 1941]
- INNOMINATE no name in it [Spud (Harlan J. Murphy, Yazoo City MS), Dec 1922]
- IN THE SOUTH SEA ISLANDS a thousand islets shine [Ellsworth (Norman E. Nelson, Fort Worth TX), Jan 1925]
- ISRAEL PUTNAM Salem Puritan [Remardo (Edwin Smith, Ardmore PA), Mar 1915]
- KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE bold hearts fought in Kent [Amaranth, "Enigmatic Oddities", Pittsburgh Sunday Post, Oct 20, 1901]
- THE LANDING OF THE PILGRIMS English in flight, made port [Viking, Jul 1931]
- THE LEANING TOWER OF PISA what a foreign stone-pile! [Sam Weller, "Puzzledom", Golden Days, Jul 2, 1881]
- THE LIQUOR HABIT quit! I rob health [Jemand (McCullough B. Wilson, Wilmington NC), Dec 1915]
- MADAM CURIE radium came [Twisto (S. James Nesi, New York NY), Apr 1936]
- MAINE I am N.E. [Sue De Nymme (Mrs. Mabel V. McKeown, Chicago IL), Jun 1935]
- THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE theatre to harmonious people [Resolute (F.W. Dougherty, Pittsburgh PA), "Complications", the Weekly Inter-Ocean, Chicago, May 30, 1906]
- MIGUEL CERVANTES DE SAAVEDRA gave us a damned clever satire [Bolis (George W. Haywood, Rutherford NJ), Dec 1898]
- NAPOLEON BONAPARTE no, appear not on Elba! [The Boy's Own Book, 1828]
- NO TRESPASSING stop an ingress [D.C. Ver, Dec 1898]
- THE NUDIST COLONY no untidy clothes [Ellsworth, Oct 1933]
- OLD MASTERS art's models [Traddles (Torry Kirk, Lima OH), Dec 1898]
- OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES he'll do in mellow verse [Ahmed (George M. Woodcock, Buffalo NY), "Our Mystic Circle", Jun 1887]
- ONE GOOD TURN DESERVES ANOTHER do rogues endorse that? no, never! [Roger M'Gregor (Leigh Mercer, London England), Aug 1953]
- ORCHESTRATE score the art [Double-H (Henry Hook, East Rutherford, NJ), Nov 1983]

PAYMENT RECEIVED every cent paid me [D.C. Ver, "Puzzledom", Golden Days, Jul 14, 1897]

PIET MONDRIAN 1 paint modern [Barry L. Cohen, The Four-Star Puzzler, Aug 1983]

THE PLAGIARIST lag this pirate! [Travv (Walter P. Travinski, Vancouver WA), Sep 1989]

POSTPONED stopped? no [Towhead (E.W. Dutcher, Lake City MN), Jan 1922]

PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN planned lrangeate orders? [Elgar (William E. Moles, Cresskill NJ), Mar 1987]

THE PROFESSIONAL GAMBLER reaps the blame for losing [Gi Gantic (Dr. Arthur F. Kleykamp, St. Louis MO), The Ardmore Puzzler, Oct 15, 1908]

PROSPERITY is property [Arty Fishel (Theodore G. Meyer, Philadelphia PA), The Study, Oct 1886]

RALPH WALDO EMERSON he pens a moral world [Ab Struse (David Shulman, New York NY), Oct 1988]

ROME WAS NOT BUILT IN A DAY any labour 1 do wants time [H. Ernest Dudeney, late 1920s?]

RONALD REAGAN an oral danger (author unknown, More Joy of Lex (1982) by Gyles Brandreth]; a darn long era [author unknown, "Dr. Crypton" column by Paul Hoffman, United Features Syndicate, Feb 1989]

SAINT ELMO'S FIRE is lit for seamen [Hercules, Mar 1931]

SAINTLINESS least in sins [N. Jineer (Olive W. Dennis, Baltimore MD), May 1925]

SALMAN RUSHDIE dare shun Islam! [Alf (Alan Frank, Medford MA), Apr 1989]

THE SATURDAY NIGHT SPECIAL a gun they list as dirt-cheap [Viking, Oct 1972]

SCHEHERAZADE, THE SIREN SULTANA she read us the rich zenana tales [author unknown, The Eurekan, Feb 1903]

SCHOOLMASTER the classroom [Molemi, Sep 1928]

SEMOLINA is no meal [D.C. Ver, Jul 1933]

A SENTENCE OF DEATH faces one at the end [Q (William Lawrence, Mount Vernon NY), Jan 1927]

THE SEPTUAGENARIAN near that supine age [Hercules, Jul 1924]

SHERMAN'S MARCH TO THE SEA the massacre on the marsh [Maud Lynn (Henry C. Vansant, Baltimore MD), Mysteriarchy, Dec 1895]

A SHOPLIFTER has to pilfer [Ess Ell, "Complications", the Weekly Inter-Ocean, Sep 4, 1908]

A SIGNAL OF DISTRESS it's S.O.S. read in flags [Viking, Feb 1932]

SIGNING OUR DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA thirteen colonies post defiance dead against future foreign dominance [Ann S. Thetics (William George Jordan, New York NY), Jan 1924]

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA hot sun, or life in a car [Josefa Heifetz Byrne, Word Ways, May 1970]

THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA hasten on to fair Charlotte [Su San, Feb 1934]

A STITCH IN TIME SAVES NINE this is meant as incentive [author unknown, The Oxford Guide to Word Games Oxford University Press 1984]

SUGGESTION it eggs us on [Arty Ess (Rufus T. Strohm, Scranton PA), "Complications", the Weekly Inter-Ocean, Chicago, Jun 19, 1908]

SURGICAL INSTRUMENTS smart curing utensils [Francolin (F.M. Walling, Meadville PA), Sep 1915]

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW her mate won the fights [Evening Star (J.B. Walsh, Philadelphia PA), Mystic Promoter, Jul 1904]

TELEVISION NEWS it's now seen live [Tut (James I. Rambo, San Francisco CA), May 1975]

TEN COMMANDMENTS can't mend most men [Justa Parson (Rev. George Gassner, Philadelphia PA), The Oracle, May 1897]

TO CAST PEARLS BEFORE SWINE one's labor is perfect waste [author unknown, in Palindromes and Anagrams, Howard W. Bergerson, 1973]

TOTAL ABSTAINERS sit not at ale bars [Jamaica (John J. McAlinney, Pittsburgh PA), The Newark Puzzler, Aug 20, 1905]

TRADESMEN need marts [D.C. Ver, The Newark Puzzler, Aug 4, 1906]

THE UNITED STATES BUREAU OF FISHERIES I raise the bass to feed us in the future [Minnie Mum (Mrs. Paul Smith, East Orange NJ), Jul 1925]

THE UPHOLSTERERS restore the plush [A. Chem, Apr 1930]

THE U.S. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS it's only for research bugs [Darryl Francis (Mitcham, Surrey England), Word Ways, Nov 1968]

VACATION TIMES I'm not as active [E.S. Crow, Aug 1910]

WASHINGTON CROSSING THE DELAWARE he saw his ragged Continentals row [Skeeziks (William L. Ougheltree, New York NY), Thedom, Nov 10, 1890]

WESTERN UNION no wire unsent [Le Dare (L.D. Reas, Pittsburgh PA), Dec 1931]

WHAT IN THE WORLD! halt with wonder [The Gopher (Joseph M. Heinen, St. Paul MN), May 1927]

WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE we want a mild legislator [Of Anagrams Henry B. Wheatley, England, 1862]

Two anagrams that I feel are worthy of mention, but too topical for this list are

THE TOWERING INFERNO

one fire went right on

by Brutus (Jeane E. Roman), Dec 1978, and

THE WHITE HOUSE SPOKESMAN

"I mouth hot news," he speaks

by Hart King (Arthur K. Harris), Dec 1983, referring to press secretary Larry Speakes who served during Reagan's term.

I found the earliest-known sources of most of these anagrams through my research in various archives along the East Coast.

Howard W. Bergerson's Palindromes and Anagrams (Dover, 1973) was an especially helpful reference. It contains 1,169 anagrams, most of which had appeared in The Enigma (the official organ of the National Puzzlers' League) and Newton B. Lovejoy's unpublished volume, Anagrammasia, which is a collection of early anagrams from The Enigma and other puzzle magazines and newspapers.

An antigram is a rearrangement of letters in a word or phrase into another word or phrase that is opposite in meaning. The term, according to the editor of Word Ways, was coined by San Souci in the September 22, 1900 issue of The Ardmore Puzzler. There are far fewer antigrams than anagrams; I presume this is because they are usually discovered accidentally. One favorite that I consider too topical for the following list of best antigrams is

MONDALE

Dole man

by Larry (Loris B. Curtis) in The Enigma for Oct 1976. There seem to be a higher proportion of one-word antigrams than there is of one-word anagrams.

AILED ideal [Longman Anagram Dictionary (1985), R.J. Edwards]

ADVERSARIES are advisers [Gi Gantic, Jun 1926]

ANARCHISTS arch saints [Yercas (Dr. W.L. Sacrey, Philadelphia PA), Jan 1931]

ANHEUSER BUSCH shun such a beer! [Corn Cob (Laura A. Hayes, Raleigh NC), Jan 1986]

ANTAGONIST not against [Arcanus, Dec 1898]

DEANSHIP pinheads [Longman]

DESECRATION care is noted [D.C. Ver, Jan 1916]; considerate [D.C. Ver, Jan 1916]

DIPLOMACY mad policy [Jemand, Jan 1916]

EARLIEST rise late [Longman]

EPITAPHS happiest [Hap (Dr. Harry W. Hazard, Rochester NY), Jun 1973]

EVANGELISTS evil's agents [Hi Kerr (Everett Ewing, Norfolk VA), Jun 1927]

FILLED ill-fed [Enavlicm, May 1930]

FORTY-FIVE over fifty [Longman]

HONESTLY on the sly [Longman]

INFERNO non-fire [Osaple (J.W. Foster, Sun City AZ), Apr 1978]

A LIBELER reliable [Hoosier (Theodore A. Funk, Detroit MI), May 1932]

MAIDENLY men? daily [Ulk (Eugene J. Ulrich, Enid OK), Feb 1990]

MEDICATE decimate [Longman]

MELODRAMATIC a more mild act [Fred Domino (H. Grady Peerey, Corinth MS), Sep 1952]

NOMINATED not named [Midurndist (Fred J. Schwab, St. Petersburg, FL), Feb 1975]

PERSECUTED due respect [Longman]

PROTECTIONISM nice to imports [Hercules, Feb 1928]

REFORESTATION no fair to trees [Te-Zir-Man (Jed Martinez, Elmont NY), Jan 1990]
 RICK MEARS cars irk me [Te-Zir-Man, Aug 1988]
 ROOSEVELT vote loser [Language on Vacation (1965), p. 269, by Dmitri Borgmann]
 SAINTLINESS entails sins [Sphinx (Douglas Fink, Fairfield CT), Jun 1986]
 SPIRO AGNEW gains power [Longman]
 THOMAS A. EDISON Tom has no ideas [Wrong Font (Robert G. Evans, Holland MI), Jan 1930]
 A VOLUNTEER FIREMAN I never run to a flame [Famulus (Stanley Newman, Massapequa Park NY), Aug 1984]
 THE WINTER GALES sweltering heat [A. Chem, Jul 1967]
 WITHIN EARSHOT I won't hear this [Hoodwink (James Lloyd Hood, Bastrop TX), Aug 1964]

THE PLAY OF WORDS

Remember Richard Lederer's *Word Ways* articles *Dynamic Trios* (Aug 1988), *Author! Author! Author!* (Nov 1987) and *Whose What?* (Aug 1986)? These have been assembled with similar quizzes in his latest book, *The Play of Words*, published for \$16.95 by Pocket Books. It is arranged in six broad categories: metaphors (on clothes, colors, horses, food, etc.), clichés, sound (alliterations, inky pinkies, reduplications), names (venereal terms, thingumbobs, phobias and ologies, eponyms), diction (doublespeak, irregular verbs), and logic (gotcha!, Aunt Matilda's likes and dislikes, rebuses, formulas such as $AL + JG + WM + JFK = A P$). *Word Ways* readers will probably be familiar with much of this material, but it is aimed at a far broader audience; the book could be profitably used as an enrichment in a high-school English class, or as the basis of a set of party games for adults who delight in exercising their gray matter.