

PALINDROMIC CONSTRUCTION

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LIVE NOT ON EVIL

ABLE WAS I ERE I SAW ELBA

DEGAS, ARE WE NOT DRAWN ONWARD, WE FREER FEW, DRAWN
ONWARD TO NEW ERAS AGED?

These statements are all palindromes, as they all spell the same when read right-to-left as when read in the conventional left-to-right manner. The construction of palindromes is not as difficult as it seems once one understands their symmetrical nature.

All of the above palindromes share a similar structure. In each one there is a shorter palindrome that can serve as a base for construction.

Hidden within the palindrome LIVE NOT ON EVIL, there is the shorter palindrome NOT ON. Therefore, whatever is to the left of this central core must balance in reverse what is to the right. LIVE spelled backward is EVIL; therefore the symmetry remains and the palindrome remains intact.

Other possibilities we can work off the NOT ON core include

STRESSED? NOT ON DESSERTS

GNAW NOT ON WANG

STEP NOT ON PETS

Perhaps this last admonishment would be stated after your pet Rottweilers mangled your father's Wang computer.

The palindrome ABLE WAS I ERE I SAW ELBA is one of the best known palindromes in the English language. It is purported to have been said by an enisled Napoleon. Why he was speaking in English and who was there to hear him are questions that sceptics have raised. Nevertheless, it has endured as one of the best-known and best-liked English-language palindromes.

When I first heard this palindrome many years ago, I was impressed that someone could compose a coherent statement which could be read frontward and backward. At the time, I had problems writing properly just in one direction. The structure of this palindrome, however, is actually quite simple.

There are two cores to this palindrome. The first is the word ERE (itself a palindrome) which is placed in the middle of the palindrome. There is, however, a larger symmetrical core in this palindrome. The word WAS spelled backward is SAW. Since the word WAS is followed by the word I and the word SAW is preceded by

the word I, the words WAS I spelled backward yields I SAW. So at this juncture we have an enlarged symmetrical heart which reads frontward and backwards WAS I ERE I SAW. Whatever appears to the left of this phrase must be balanced in reverse to what appears to its right. Since ABLE spelled backward is ELBA, we can add these words to complete the palindrome ABLE WAS I ERE I SAW ELBA.

Using the enlarged core WAS I ERE I SAW as a base, we can make the following palindromes.

A SLUT WAS I ERE I SAW TULSA
 SNUG, RAW WAS I ERE I SAW WAR GUNS
 DEFACED WAS I ERE I SAW DECAF, ED
 ANALYTIC WAS I ERE I SAW CITY, LANA

No doubt the last was said by Superman to his girl-friend Lana Lang when he moved from Smalltown to Metropolis.

A minor rearrangement of letters produces the palindrome AGLOW AS I ERE I SAW OLGA. Here we have added AGLO to the front and OLGA to the back, but we have borrowed the W in WAS to make the words AGLOW AS.

Our third palindromic statement at the start of this article is more complicated, but there is still a central core. The heart of this palindrome is the words DRAWN ONWARD, even though it does not appear in the middle of the statement.

Let us start with the palindromic phrase DRAWN ONWARD. If we add the words ARE WE NOT to the front of the palindrome and its reverse, TO NEW ERA, to the end, it yields ARE WE NOT DRAWN ONWARD TO NEW ERA.

The phrase WE FREER FEW is a palindrome in itself. If we interject this into our sentence, however, we destroy the palindromic equilibrium. The phrase ARE WE NOT DRAWN ONWARD, WE FREER FEW, TO NEW ERA when reversed yields ARE WE NOT, WE FREER FEW, DRAWN ONWARD TO NEW ERA. To restore equilibrium we must add the phrase DRAWN ONWARD after the phrase WE FREER FEW to balance the DRAWN ONWARD phrase that occurs before it. Thus, at this juncture we have the palindromic phrase ARE WE NOT DRAWN ONWARD, WE FREER FEW, DRAWN ONWARD TO NEW ERA.

But what about our protagonist Degas, the recipient of our query? His inclusion entails minor surgery. SAGED is a non-word, but the S can be borrowed and added to ERA to yield the palindrome at the start of the article.

For neophyte palindromists, starting with a palindromic core like DRAWN ONWARD, NOT ON or ON NO is a good starting point. All that is required to enlarge the palindrome is words or phrases that can be reversed like LIVE-EVIL, MOOD-DOOM, etc. The core need not be a complex phrase; a word like DID or SEES will do.

Writing palindromes that make sense is like the search for the Holy Grail: out there lurks a palindrome of immense beauty and logic just waiting to be discovered. Good luck.