ONOMATOPOEIA: THE DAILY GRIND

A. ROSS ECKLER
Morristown, New Jersey

This is the second of two articles on the onomatopoeia of words for sounds produced by inanimate objects; the first article appeared in the May 1991 Word Ways. In that article, a taxonomy was developed relating the pitch and loudness of a sound to the vowel of the word representing it, and the duration to the initial and final consonants (or consonant clusters). The article restricted itself to sounds associated with accidental bumps, bangs or falls of solid objects (both human and inanimate), including the deliberate collisions of war and sport, and the related sounds of friction and breakage.

In contrast, this article restricts itself to sounds associated with

* liquids and gases
* daily life (motors, telephones, sirens, switches and the like)
* bodily noises other than vocalizations (snores, sneezes, coughs, kisses, chewing, etc.)

To finish off, a selection of highly-unlikely sounds is given such as SHOOF (a loose shirt falling about one's ears while one is standing on one's head) and FOOM (all the leaves of a tree drop off simultaneously). Most of the examples are taken from comic strips appearing between Mar 1988 and Mar 1992.

I add to the earlier taxonomy the following consonant interpretations:

final R Z: buzzing or whirring sounds
initial S F, final S F: air escaping under pressure
initial PL SPL: objects falling in liquids (or semi-solids)
second-syllable LE: sound of extended duration

As before, the comic strips from which the sounds were taken are identified with one-letter codes (see appendix).

LIQUID (OR SEMI-SOLID) HITS SOLID OBJECT

head hit by rain drop PLINK li: by snowball SPLAT hjl WHAP c
SMACK c DOOF g: by water GOOSH g SPLITSH q: by pie FFFFFFFWWOPP h
SPLAT g SPLUT g: by mustard SPLITIT g: by ketchup SPLITOT l: by ice cream
cone SPLAT K: by vegetables SPLIT KONG BLAT g: by food SPLAT kgI
SPLITOT g SPLUT gi: SPLLOP y FLOP h: by bird droppings SPLUT h: by tomatoes
SPLAT ge
wet mop hits dog SCHLOP g
pie hits wall SPLAT g, egg hits wall SPLAT a, food flung SPLUT y FLING k
BLUE t, throw soup on table SPLAT h, throw hash in bowl PLOP l, food
dish dumped in bed SPLINE g
egg falls, breaks SPLOOSE t, apple hits ground SPLAT b, gas slops on
floor SPLAT d

SOLID FORCIBLY STRIKES (FALLS IN) LIQUID

man falls in outhouse pit SPLOOSE g, in water SPLISH n, SPLASH o, box
lid falls in water SPLASH s, snake dives in water SPLASH b, gold fish
dives into tank SPLASH p, pack falls in water PLOONK c, golf ball falls
in water SPLASH b, big rock thrown in water SPLOUNK c, newspaper thrown
in puddle PLOP SPLASH t, truck hits puddle SPLOOSH e, head falls in food
dish SPLAT SPLAT SPLAT g, fist hits plate of food
SPLAT g, bat hits meatball SPLAT e, wet ball hits catcher’s mitt
SPLOSH b, SPLORK b, galoshes in snow GALOSH c

AGITATED LIQUIDS (POURS, DRIPS)

privy topples SPLAT b, food tray falls on floor SPLAT s, water-filled
balloon bursts SPLAT g, hair curler CURICLE k, wave onto beach SPLOOSH o
pour coffee KAP-FLOP d, pump gas GLUG t, food down sewer SLURP g, pour
gas from can GLUG d, hard rain GOOSH g, watering can FOOSH s
flush toilet FOOSH d, FLUSH c, KASNOOSH c, paper down toilet SPLOOSH k,
run faucet hard WHOOSH d, FNOOSHIII c, shower head WHOOSH d, reduced-flow
shower head TWIT d, plumbing sounds GLUG DRIP BLOOP FLUMP i,

drizzling ice cream DRIP l, roof leak DRIP o, faucer drip BLIP m, water
drips PLIP PLOP d, DRIP s, glue from tube PLOP l, blow bubbles in water 3-6-B-B-B-B-B g, drink last juice through a straw
SLOOR-SLOR-SLOR SLORREEERRRKK-K-K g, sip through straw SLOOK K
SLURF k, SIP g, SLURRRPP c, SZIPPP h, elephant blows through trunk SPLASH o,
perfume bottle SQUIRT h, plant mister SQUIRT g, squirt gun SQUIRT i
water sprinkler FISSSS ZIT ZIT ZIT g, KLIK KLIK t, leak under pressure FOOSH s,

man swimming SPLISH SPLASH o, man kicks puddle SPLASH SPLOOSH s, man
jumps in puddle SPLASH l

EXPLOSIONS, ESCAPING GAS

thunder and lightning BOOM ce GRAACK k, ZOT b, KASOOM c, CRACK CRASH i
volcano RUMBLES FOOM b

military explosions: grenade BOOM e, gun BKOWWW x BLAM ejt, POM g
BANG ut BANG-G t, BANG e, machine gun RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT j, RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT T
RAT-A-TAT-TAT-TAT T, keg of gunpowder BOOM h, cannon
BOOM BAM e, tank artillery BLAM e, artillery shell BOOM e, KA-BOOM d, bomb
BOOM t, flamethrower WHOOSH e, rocket launcher FOOM e,
fireworks POM CAPANG SSSSHHHH BAM i, BOOM is
auto tire BLAM l, can POM c, trick cigarette BOOM k, flashbulb FOOM c,
FLASH c, charcoal lighter ignites FOOM y, acetylene torch WWFFFFFFFFFFFF y
propane torch PZZZ T T, TV set falls PFFFT t, light burns out PF-F-T-T-T c, overworked hand cal-
culator gives up POM g, soap bubble bursts BIP c, bubble gum pops SNAP c, POM c,
Spray can FSSSS t, PSPPPPHHH g, shaving canister FOOSH h, open soda can
PZZT d, POM SSSSSS e, FOOSH i, open champagne bottle POP FFIIZZZZZZZZ b
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ice in glass of soda FZZZ d Alka-Seltzer in glass PLOP FZZZZZZZ 1
snuff cigarette FZZZ d bomb fuse SSSS s
acid on scalp SSSSSSSSS j acid rain falls in puddle SPUTTER POP FIZZ HIZZZZ s
steam iron HSSSS k air exiting tire valve SSSSSSSSSSSSSSS SS fill helium balloon from canister SSSS i air-bag inflates POINK m fire extinguisher FSSSS j leaf-blower WOOSH m wind blowing hard WOOSH m
type: leaf-blower WOOSH m leaf-blower WOOSH m
inflates balloon with compressed air FOOOOOSHHHH s blow from mouth WOOSH s
TENSION RELEASE OF SPRING (VIBRATIONS)

toy mouse on spring DOING g springs on feet BOING g on inflatable

sneakers DOING g jack-in-the-box spring release SPRONG i toast pops up BWOING c trap sprung TWANG m box on springs KA-BOING s
tennis racket bounces on head THWANG y electric guitar ZOOM ZOOOOOM

SLAP WHUPA TUNK d guitar DOING SPRONG i PLINK m xylophone PLINK s
tree branch a catapult TOING g slingshot THWING m stretched dog leash TWANG m whip CRACK m baby spoon catapulted TWANG m

TENSION RELEASE OF SPRING (VIBRATIONS)

food

TENSION RELEASE OF SPRING (VIBRATIONS)

ice in glass of soda FZZZ d Alka-Seltzer in glass PLOP FZZZZZZZ 1
snuff cigarette FZZZ d bomb fuse SSSS s
acid on scalp SSSSSSSSS j acid rain falls in puddle SPUTTER POP FIZZ HIZZZZ s
steam iron HSSSS k air exiting tire valve SSSSSSSSSSSSSSS SS fill helium balloon from canister SSSS i air-bag inflates POINK m fire extinguisher FSSSS j leaf-blower WOOSH m wind blowing hard WOOSH m
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telephone switchboard RING BEEP k phone busy signal BZZZ t off-hook
signal BZZZ t recording signal BEEP i intercom signal BZZZ e
bathroom scale DING s beeper BEEP eu fax machine BEEP k radiation
detector BEEP k electric timer BING c DING g
video game ZAP s BEEP s BIP s ZAP PING WHIRRRRRR WHACKA e
ice cream truck DING DONG u DING DINGA LING LINGA m taxi meter KLUNK
DING s snack cart bell DING o
bells on jester's hat JINGLE h sleigh bells JINGLE b JINGLE g
fire bell CLANG q DING t DING s h andbell CLANK CLANK t DING t BONG b
BING k New Year's BONG u grandfather chimes BONNING w school
bell RINGGGGG c
siren REEEEEEEEE WOOP s WEEEO v on motorcycle RRRRRRRRRR o smoke
alarm WOO-OP W-OOP W-WOO WOO-OOP t WOOP i FTWEEREEREERE x SCREE... y
B-BEEP BEEP-P B-E-EEP e
train horn BLURRRT y bus horn HONK BEEP p car horn HONK blat BEEP bo
H-NM-K H-NM-K HONDA B-BEEP t AU-OOGA s rubber squeeze horn HONK p
duck call HONK a QUIACK b
deferee whistle WHWEET e TWEET b blow air into whistle FFFFEF F B whistle
WHWEET b
party horn HONK g BLAT g trumpet HONK o
CLICKING (AND SNAPING) NOISES
TV switch (including remote) CLICK bcdijklmrst CLICK d CLICK i internal
TV channel TINK s
television hang-up CLICK glmz CLICK l telephone pushbutton tones BEEP
BOOP c touch-tone buttons TAP k answer recording terminates BIP d
clock TICK gw TICK TOCK g TIC i TIC-TOK-TOC t turn off alarm DONk g
push button BOINK c button on console CLICK f
clocklight switch CLICK gk CLICK d light pull-chain CLICK k
typewriter keyboard TIC m TICKA-TICK t PLK e CLICKETY e PLICK e
type slowly PECK e calculator keyboard TAP k computer keyboard TAP d
CLICK CLICKETY i CLICKETY c CLICKETY d terminal response BEEP s
toaster TIKKA z TIC l bread pops out ZOOB p BLUT g WHAM l SWOING c
shut padlock SNAP r set belts on door KLIX SKLLAK KLLATX x door latch
CLICK g jt lock door CLICK d key turned in lock CLICK LOCK c CLICK e
doorknob jiggled RATTLE t
unsnap ski bindings SNAP b unsnap restraining harness SNAP s
voting booth lever CLICK e cigarette lighter CLICK d electric blanket
switch CLICK t slide-changer CLICK l camera shutter CLICK cicklos
SNAP gk KLIX t KLIX c set stopwatch CLICK g lawn sprinkler KLIX t
knitting needles CLICK g swing-ball "reaction" game CLICK g compo-
tion of microwave cycle BING k turn-signal indicator CLICK i rewound
cassette stops POINK s CLICK e car seat back adjustment CLICK CHUNK g
pull out pin to start balloon inflator POINK s trigger on gun CLICK g
CLICK g jt CLICK e
"walk" signal turns CLICK e traffic light KLIX t checkewriter printer
TIK a electronic cash register CLICK-K t hospital bed control CLICK g
shake out blanket WHIP g close drapes SHOINK g window shade runs up
too fast FWSIP g remove suction-cup arrow POF b operate salad shooter
PHOOT PHUT j fishing reel WHIRRERERRRY y beanie propeller TABBPTHFPTH
TABBPTHBDD TABBPTBIMP c
RADIOS, MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

objectionable radio music TA-RAH-H TA-TAH-H-H DUM-DE-DUM t POP ROCK
BADDOOLA BLAM l hard rock music THUNKA i
trumpet MONK g xylophone PLINK s guitar DOING SPROING i PLINK m
electric guitar ZOOM ZOO0000M SLAP 0WUE TUNK d
drums RAP RAPPA DAP DAPFA RAT-TAT-T-T TAT-T RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT WHAM-M
BRRUMM-TUM TUM TICKA-TICKA t THUMFA s

BODILY NOISES

eating CHOMP egbike GULP gho SLURP gho SNORT g CRUNCH jk MUNCH gj
GOBBLE g SNARF g SMUNCH h eat fast BRCHINMPHFFP g
eat cream puff MOOSH MUMMPH MOOMPH h soup SLURP bm BLUB MUMPF GLUB j
paper MUNCH CHOKe b rock CRUNCH g lunch-counter top KARRUNCH b
candy CRUNCH g sugar CRUNCH c apple CHOMP y bottle CRUNCH h cereal
CRUNCH l carrot MUNCH CRUNCH g piano leg CRUNCH c wood CHOMP GMW
MUNCH s potato chips CRUNCH r mashed potatoes CRUNCH g pizza
CRUNCH f
animal eating dog CHOMP kn MUNCH st CRUNCH htu GOLDBE h SMUNCH c
GULP g SLURP uiu SNAP t CHOMP p fish bites CHOMP c
eat food off spoon GMBK k
stomach rumbles RUMBLE e SLOSH m GROWLL g CRUMBLE k CURGLE h
creaking joints CREAK nly CRACK gy SNAP POP g
heart (through stethoscope) PUM PUM BAM BAM e
laugh HEE HEE HEO MAR SNORK NO b
drink SLURP bdg GLUG bc GULP b LAF pb
animal drink (dog) LAP b
sucking frosting off cake SLURP g noodles SLURP l theese off lasagn
SLUULK g crumbs off floor SUCK g through straw SLOOK g SLURP k
SIP g SLURRP g SZIPP g last juice through straw SLOR-SLOR-SLOR-SLOR
SLORKREZERK RK-K g baby bottle GLUG hi 2000k c
salivating animal dog SHLUP SMACK u dog licks cat SLUVURRP SLURP SLURK
SLOORP LICK g man licks cake box SLURP e
kiss PECK jl SMACK eIl KISS chIm SMOK ep SWOOG h
spit (clear throat) THPT I PTUI b MNNGGOKK HOCCHHHH YTOOK y PITTUWE g
spit out coffee PFFFEF g SPOOF g PTUI h spit out pacifier THOO s
Bronx cheer PLLLLL-T 1 PFBFPBRFBPT q THBPTB PETE c vibrate lips with
finger EABLE l
snap finger SNAP ot
shortness of breath PUFF P-PUFF R-PUFF PUFF-F PUFF t PANT k
strain to lift weights HUPUNNNWGG g
belch BURRRRRRRRERFRF g URP h BURP e BU-URREP c BURRRBRRR g dog BURP h
blow air FWOOSH s FOOF g POOF p WHEEZE s WHOOOF WHOOOOF WOOOSH m
blow bubbles in water B-B-B-B-B-B g candles on cake FOOF gq feather
FOOF g through bean shooter PHOOT g
blow nose SNERK SNORK b MONK blw PHONK q SNIFFLE MONK SNIFF s
snore (in addition to ZZZ..) SKNA-X l Z-NORE e BZZZZZZ SHORT e SNERK m
ZZZZZMORK g ZRONNKEMLARK q sleep noises ZZZGA ZZZZZZCOK u Z2 MHP
BZ2 GNZ HEE HEE ZZZ NUK NUK WOO NK c dog snore SNORE k YOWLE GRIND
SNORT e
breathe through nose SNORTPH SNOTPHG SNOTPH j
cry SNIFF lns SOB u
sneeze HASHOOIE b KEYHCK c cough BORK-K BORK-A KOFF gt COFF e COUCH l
HAAACK g general coughs and sneezes SNIFFLE SNORFLE SNIFF UG KOFF ACK
HACK GLIG BLECK s
hiccough MCCCCUP u
yawn YAAAAAAAAAAWNN g
garble YAKAKAKAKAKAKAKAKAKAKAKA l
chocking THPPT j PBTBT c nausea AAAK UK-X ERR t BARRRF c RAALLPH s
tremble with cold B-R-R m chattering teeth CHATTER h
false teeth CHARA y grind teeth GRINNDD e brush teeth BRUSH g snap
ejaws like a shark SNAP c
make noise with armpit FERK b
hangover headache THUMP n
bag of waters ruptures SPLOSH s
dog's tail swats ground SSSSHHLUP THLUP m

FAST-MOVING OBJECTS
car VA ROOM e ZIP Z-ZOOMM Z-ZIP ZI-I-I-PT ZIP-Z ZOOMM t VOOM j ZOOM nt
pitched ball WHOOSH b
fast cat ZINNNNG g SHOOM g ZIP g WHOOSH g dog PHOOM o breaking sound
barrier BOOM u spinning like a top WHIRRRR g
fast fish ZIP b flying fish SMTSN c fast wolf ZIP g
person ZOOM shoy VARRRRRRRROOOOOOMMMM b ZIP gt WHOOSH lg WHOOSH o
bullet ZINC j pine cone ZINGGG c stone ZING s mudball WHIZZZZ ZOOM h tennis
ball ZOOM y snowball WHIFF WHIFFFFFF c food WIZZEEW ZWOOD WISH yalling airplane FOOM j dodge ball SHOOM s
body chomred through air THWASSK n SWOOOOP WHOOSH s arm throwing hard
WWHIPPPPP c
file folder whipped out of file Z-ZIP t toiler paper spin off reel
WHIZZZZ c

UNLIKELY SOUNDS
loose shirt falls around one's ears while standing on head SHOOF c
paper bag placed over one's head SHWOOP c
bullet hits flea FING g
muscle in cat's tail pops up BWOIK g
wall of guilt falls SHOOM s
muscle spasm while dozing SPLANG g
eyes bug out in surprise or terror BWOING j
pushed-in bulge of fat on midrift springs out again BOINK k
cat drops his pot belly on a mouse WHUMP g
transmogrifier changes boy into something else ZAP c UFO HMMMMMMM
prehistoric beast breaks through ground RRRRRRRRRRRRRRIPPPP b
person vanishes in puff of smoke POOF s FFTT c
bug's footsteps (to person with hangover) THUD j
dusting furniture FLICK FLICKA FLAP WIPE m
plant wilts from bad air BROOP b
flower petals trap unwary bee SLAM b
leaves all fall simultaneously off a tree FOOM y
snowflake strikes bird's tongue BONK p
clam sprouts legs ZZIP b clam gargles OGGLE OGGLE b clam shuts CLOMP b
hermit crab suddenly shuts SNAP g
flower emerges from ground SPOING b
stretched anteater tongue vibrates TWANG b anteater tongue shoots out,
catches fly ZOT b anteater tongue slices ant hill ZZZZIPP b antearer
snout taps ground like blind man's cane TAP b
shove baby bottle into baby's mouth THPT k
pick Christmas light off of tree POINK s pick a fern PLICK g
woodchuck pushes up through layer of dirt POOK b
extract olive from jar POOK l
"trouble" spots on globe explode POW b
one's shadow falls from the wall to the ground FLUMP b
penis on anatomically-correct doll springs up SPROING THWAT d
Spiderman deploys webbing THWIPP x

APPENDIX

a Agatha Krumm  b B.C.  c Calvin and Hobbes  d Doonesbury  e Beetle Bailey  f The Far Side  g Garfield  h Hagar  i Hi and Lois  j Bloom Country  k Cathy  l Blondie  m Momma  n Andy Capp  o Moose  p Peanuts  q Pogo  r Tiger  s Safe Havens  t They'll Do It Every Time  u Marmaduke  v Gasoline Alley  w Toles (editorial cartoons)  x Spiderman  y Grammy  z Ziggy

OBoy!

IT'S ABOUT TIME
YOU AND I HAD A
LETTER TO LETTER TALK!

OKAY, DAD,
BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO SPELL IT OUT!