

ULTIMATE HOMOPHONES

RICHARD LEDERER

Concord, New Hampshire

AL GREENGOLD

Verona, New Jersey

WILLIAM WARD

Fort Worth, Texas

MIRIAM ESPINOSA

Fort Worth, Texas

What do these twenty words have in common?

aisle	knead	knit	scent	wretch
hour	knew	knot	whole	wright
knap	knickers	llama	wrap	write
knave	knight	psalter	wrest	wrote

If the first letter of each word is removed (those who play word games call this process a beheadment), what remains is a homophone of the original word.

What do these twenty words have in common?

bear	great	ore	ruse	tale
break	hide	pare	seer	tear
reed	hose	pride	steak	tide
gale	meet	rude	steel	wear

The letters of each word can be rearranged (anagrammed) to make another word that is a homophone of the original word.

Now take a look at another list of twenty words, and decide what the cluster has in common homophonically. This time, the answers reside in Answers and Solutions.

add	borne	caste	inn	please
bee	butt	damn	lamb	sow
belle	bye	flue	lapse	too
block	canvass	fore	ore	wee

Now do the same with this list, again checking Answers and Solutions for the answer.

aunt	cannon	hoarse	mooed	reign
boarder	choral	lead	mourning	seamen
buoy	fined	maize	oar	two
callous	guild	mined	read	waive

One of the brightest and most pyrotechnic delights of our language is its uncommon stockpile of homophones -- words that are pronounced the same but spelled differently and with different meanings. What do you call a naked grizzly? A bare bear. What

do you call a raspy-throated equine? A hoarse horse. Bare-bear and hoarse-horse are among the hundreds of same-sound-different-spelling pairs in the English vocabulary.

Hears a rye peace eye maid up inn my idol thyme. Aye rote it four yew two sea Howe homophones Cannes seam sew whiled from there knows down too they're tows. With pried, eye no it will knot boar ewe. Its meant two bee red allowed:

One night a knight on a hoarse horse
Rode out upon a road.
This male wore mail for war and would
Explore a wood that glowed.

His tale I'll tell from head to tail.
I'll write his rite up right.
A hidden site our hero found,
A sight that I shall cite.

With woe he shouted "Whoa!" as rain
Without a break did reign.
To brake, he pulled the rein, and like
A shattered pane, felt pain.

The poor knight met a witch, which made
Sweat pour from every pore.
He'd never seen a scene like that.
His sore heart couldn't soar.

Then they a game for truffles played,
In which he mined her mind.
To prove who was the better bettor
And find who should be fined.

He won one twice; he won two, too.
To grate on her felt great.
To wrest the rest, he went for four,
And, at the fore, ate eight.

Due to her loss, the mourning witch,
'Midst morning mist and dew,
Her truffles missed. I know no way,
Do I, to weight her rue.

The razed field raised our brave knight's fear
As a swarm of cared fleas flees.
He heard a herd of dear deer pray
The pleas of prey: "Please, please."

A grisly grizzly bear, all bare,
And a hare that had no hair
And a foul fowl bawled that they were bald.
In their pink skins they stood there.

The knight did see a blue whale wail
As it blew out plumes of sea.
"Yoo hoo, you who come riding here,
Please hear and pity me."

Our knight began to reel for real.
 The world whirled, so to speak.
 All the days of the week his sole soul felt
 The dizzy daze of the weak.

Our heir to knighthood gave it up.
 He felt the fare not fair.
 His wholly holy sword soared up
 As he threw it through the air.

The bell has tolled, I'm told. The hour
 To end our tale draws nigh.
 Without ado, I bid adieu,
 So, by your leave, bye-bye.

The foregoing was excerpted from my book The Miracle of Language (Pocket Books, 1991).

How many triple homophones can you think of? It shouldn't be too difficult to capture two or three like the trio lurking in this sentence. Or the one embedded in the joke "Have you heard about the successful perfume manufacturer? His business made a lot of sense (scents, cents)."

In the list below, we came up with 88 tight triads (two beginning with three different letters) and 14 fabulous foursomes (two beginning with three different letters). Notes on the diatonic scale (do, re, mi, etc.) have been permitted, but no proper nouns, foreign words, regional pronunciations, archaisms, or letters of the alphabet are allowed (we say aloud). Have we missed some?

adds, ads, adz	ewes, use, yews
aisle, I'll, isle	fane, fain, feign
ait, ate, eight	fays, faze, phase
bald, balled, bawled	firs, furs, furze
beau, bo, bow	flew, flue, flue
bight, bite, byte	for, fore, four
bird, burd, burred	fraise, frays, phrase
bole, boll, bowl	frees, freeze, frieze
born, borne, bourn	gild, gilled, guild
braise, brays, braze	gnu, knew, new
burro, barough, burrow	gored, gourd, gourde
bused, bussed, bust	heal, heel, he'll
cay, key, quay	hoard, horde, whored
censer, censor, sensor	holey, holy, wholly
cent, scent, sent	idle, idol, idyll
cinque, sink, sync	knap, nap, nappe
cite, sight, site	knead, kneed, need
chord, cord, cored	knows, no's, nose
clamber, clammer, clamor	lacks, lacs, lax
crews, cruise, cruse	lay, lea, lei
dew, do, due	load, lode, lowed
do, doe, dough	lochs, locks, lox
does, doughs, doze	mean, mesne, mien
earn, erne, urn	meat, meet, mete
ewe, yew, you	lea, lee, li

mussed, must, musth
 nay, nee, neigh
 o, oh, owe
 palate, pallet, palette
 pare, pair, pear
 peas, pease, pees
 poor, pore, pour
 praise, prays, preys
 rain, reign, rein
 raise, rays, raze
 raiser, razer, razor
 rapped, rapt, wrapped
 read, reed, rede
 road, rode, rowed
 rood, rude, rued
 seas, sees, seize
 sac, sack, sacque
 sewn, sone, sown
 sign, sine, syne

slew, slough, slue
 sol, sole, soul
 sold, soled, souled
 stade, staid, stayed
 steal, steel, stele
 stoop, stoup, stupe
 tael, tail, tale
 tea, tee, ti
 teas, tease, tees
 their, there, they're
 to, too, two
 toad, towe, towed
 vane, vain, vein
 wail, wale, whale
 ware, wear, where
 way, weigh, whey
 we, wee, whee
 whined, wind, wined
 wise, whys, wyes

ai, aye, eye, I
 air, ere, err, heir
 bi, buy, by, bye
 birr, brr, bur, burr
 carat, caret, carrot, karat
 cense, cents, scents, sense
 heigh, hi, hie, high

lays, laze, leas, leis
 oar, o'er, or, ore
 peak, peek, pic, pique
 right, rite, wright, write
 sew, so, sol, sow
 weal, we'll, wheal, wheel
 weald, whealed, wheeled, wield

N IS FOR NEWSLETTER

*This is the title of a new logological monthly, containing eight to ten pages of articles relating to alphabetic wordplay, for \$10 per six issues (Nyr Indictor, editor, PO Box 465, Chappaqua NY 10514). The June 1993 issue (Vol. 1, No. 1) contains an article on the alphabetic wordplay of Edward Gorey ("G is for George smothered under a rug, H is for Hector done in by a thug...") and a rundown of ABC books in print (including a taxonomy of the five basic forms they take); the July 1993 issue surveys "The Vexing 'X'" and how this letter is handled by different authors. Reader challenges are also issued: the June challenge was to create an alphabet of words beginning and ending with the same letter, from AbyssiniA to ZizZ (J is the hardest; see JubaraJ in Dan Tilque's November 1992 **Word Ways** article). Can sufficient material be found in this highly-specialized branch of logology to keep a journal afloat? Stay tuned.*