

# KICKSHAWS

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*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 Three-Ring Circus of the Mind

For Richard Lederer, wordplay is much more than a sideshow. As he writes: "When I was a kid, I used to love to go to the circus. Now that I am a grownup kid, I can create a three-ring circus of the mind whenever I want. The inveterate logologist loves to watch words clowning, words teetering on tightropes, words swinging from tent-tops, words thrusting their heads into the mouths of lions. Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Step right up to one of life's great entertainments. All the fun will be in tents."

## Palindromic Sports Lineups

Out of the BALL LAB, Win Emmons has concocted a list of reversible sports figures with appropriate commentary:

### The Baseball Lineup

Flo Jo, LF (speed in lead-off position)  
S. Sununu, SS (nephew of former NH governor)  
F. Cleon Noel, CF  
Bo Bobo, B  
B. Bremer, BB (his uncle shot Governor Wallace)  
B.B. (Boca) Jaco, BBB (nicknamed for FL hometown)  
Fred A. Dade, RF  
Cal Lev Vella, C (of Jewish-Italian descent)  
Price Mecir, P (cousin of Czech tennis player)

### The Football Lineup

Cleon V. Noel, C (cousin of center fielder)  
Glen A. Lane, LG  
T. Lynn (Ed) Denny, LT  
E.S. Harrah, SE  
Greg A. Page, RG  
Trey A. Kaye, RT  
Eton O. Rono, TE (can't run like uncle Henry)  
B.Q. Otto, QB (Dad played for Oakland Raiders)  
B. Hanna, HB (Dad is master cartoonist)  
B. Fred (L.I.) Wilder, FB (from Long Island)

## A Teacher's Prayer

My students all write chaise lounge  
 Which they rhyme with base scrounge.  
 Let me here iterate and reiterate  
 My yearning for one who's so literate  
 As to rhyme that apparatus with fez wrong  
 And correctly to spell it chaise longue.

## First Person Plural Babytalk

Kay Haugaard, author of the preceding quatrain, discussed third person singular babytalk in the November **Word Ways**. One example: "Mommie is very unhappy with Ashley for spilling her cereal all over the floor." When my son was born, I tried to avoid this form of babytalk, but I slipped into it on occasion. I felt that words YOU and I would be more complicated for him to understand, since those words shift meaning depending on the speaker. Now I realize this is not true: a child can learn either with equal ease.

Instead, I found myself using another, perhaps subtler, form: first person plural babytalk. "Come on, Danny, let's eat your breakfast." Note that, unlike the third person singular structure, the word YOUR doesn't agree with the plural subject. This form is closely related to the spoken editorial "we" that speakers use to address groups. It creates unity and a common identity. With a child, it sometimes reflects the reality of what's going on, e.g., "Let's put your clothes on." But it also draws attention to the child's dependence on the parent.

## Stories in the Present

In the Introduction to Children's Literature class that I teach, each student gives a report on a children's book selected from one of ten categories. The report includes reading a book aloud. One category, Wordless Books, requires the student to make up a story to accompany the sequential pictures. The student invariably places the story in the present tense. Most children's storybooks are written in the past tense, and most personal true-life stories that people tell are in the past tense, too. Why switch to the present when making up a story to accompany pictures? My guess is that the teller is describing the book instead of making up a story to go with it, and descriptions are usually given in the present tense.

## Strained Dialects

Can you identify where these two written dialects of English appear? Dialect 1: In the purest form, the writer uses only imperative verbs and omits A, AN, THE and OF. It's a very common dialect, and books written in it can be found in many homes around the country. However, libraries don't usually carry them. Dialect 2: This is similar to the first dialect, and it has the additional feature that single letters of the alphabet appear in many of the sentences. Fewer books are written in it. Many people become infuriated when reading it.

## Ex-Ray Vision

Charles Linnet has come up with a word game in which old words are given new meanings. As he describes it, "The essence of the game is to take words beginning with EX and split them, using the EX part to mean "used to be" and making any kind of pun/fun with the [sound of the] remainder of the word." Charles sent fifteen EXwords, and I've added eight more. Try it - it's fun!

EXAMPLE someone who used to be fat  
 EXCALIBUR a transmogrified bullet  
 EXCITATION residue of tearing up a traffic ticket  
 EXCUSE when long lines are fully serviced  
 EXHALE someone who used to be healthy  
 EXAM someone who just died  
 EXILE Atlantis  
 EXPENSIVE someone who used to think a lot  
 EXPIRED when all the church steeples collapse  
 EXPORTER someone who used to work on the railroad  
 EXPUNGE a former sea creature used to wash a car  
 EXTENDED when the shepherd abandoned his flock  
 EXTENSION yoga  
 EXTERMINATOR if Arnold Schwarzenegger stops making movies  
 EXTORTED if you drop your lawsuit  
 EXACT a large part of a play deleted  
 EXALT to remove sodium by shaking a potato chip vigorously  
 EXCEED a grown-up plant  
 EXCEL to return merchandise for a full refund  
 EXECUTE obtuse  
 EXIT to stand  
 EXTREME a river in the Midwest, summer of 1993  
 EXXON off

## Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes

Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes (a cappella books, 1993, \$16.95), edited by Richard Kostelanetz, is a fascinating catalog of people, organizations, movements, and other aspects of innovative writing, music, dance, television, and the other arts. It lists the well-known movers and shakers, such as Picasso, Duchamp, William Carlos Williams, and James Joyce, as well as many lesser-known individuals. There are some surprising entries - Walt Disney and Ogden Nash, for example - that fit into the scheme of things. The book also includes, as a tribute to his ubiquitous influence, author Martin Gardner, well-known to **Word Ways** readers. Most of the hundreds of entries are fairly short, from 50 to 200 words, and they're written in a fast-paced, entertaining, and opinionated style. Author Kostelanetz speaks well of those he likes, and lambastes a few he doesn't like.

Wordplay people would enjoy reading about the different ways that artists have played with words. The use of wordplay-influenced language appears in numerous entries, such as Concrete Poetry, Robert Indiana (for painting words, like his famous LOVE on the postage stamp), Walter Abish (for Alphabetical Africa), Ogden

Nash (for unusual rhymes), Hypertext (for "multipath fiction"), Aram Saroyan (for one-word poems), and Zaum. What is Zaum? It's a language made up of invented words that have no meaning. In the language of Zaum, this book is beevprpg ththav wxzitzl!! (Read it to find out why.)

### World War Two Wordplay

Peter Newby tells two harrowing tales of wartime wordplay, one with a pun, the other with a palindrome.

During the Second World War, a lexicographer was drafted into the U.S. Navy and served aboard a destroyer that was torpedoed during the Battle of Midway. At the time that his ship was struck the young man was revising that part of the dictionary concerned with the letter S. He had got as far as SIN when he suddenly found himself in the Pacific clinging to a piece of wreckage and within yards of safety aboard a raft manned by some of his colleagues. As he contemplated his next move, an apt definition of the troublesome word came to him. Hence, the phrase you'll find in your pocket edition of Webster's International: SIN, COARSE WHIM.

When Lord Greystoke abandoned his baby son in the jungle, the babe was adopted by gigantic vegetables and raised as the Lord of the Peas. Adolf Hitler heard of this magnificent man, clad only in a lioncloth, so he despatched an expedition to capture the mythical Tarizan and have him displayed to the world as a model of Aryan manhood. The headline of a 1937 despatch from Berlin by a reporter of the Village Vice, when Tarizan was first put on public display at a Nuremburg rally, read TARIZAN, NAZI RAT!

### Letter Maze

The object of the maze is to go down the rows, selecting one word from each row. Successive words are selected based on how many letters they have in common; each word must have at least one letter in common with the next one. Can you find that sequence of ten words which has the fewest common letters? the most common letters? (Hint: the first sequence has only one common letter at each step, totalling nine; the second sequence has a total of 25.)

time	dog	bank	play
goal	mink	yawned	it
trust	limber	does	night
sweet	rode	history	borrow
donors	<b>whittle</b>	cwm	believe
awry	shunt	more	chicken
hungry	yearn	preen	lusty
asking	gnu	steel	card
ideas	pestle	gains	shock
hard	cats	sandy	list

### Local and National Poets of America

In a musty antique shop a few years ago, I discovered a won-

drous treasury of poetry, Local and National Poets of America, edited in 1890 by Thomas W. Herringshaw. More than a thousand men, women and children who had published one or more poems in newspapers or books achieved fleeting immortality in its pages. A few old masters, like Walt Whitman, are represented, but most are primitives, whose muse was as rugged as the Wild West itself. The Civil War, the Gold Rush, pioneer life, racial equality, white supremacy, the woman's role, gambling, thievery - all are facets of this panoramic vision of two thousand verse-inflamed eyes. The poems range the spectrum from Whitman's "Leaves of Grass" to Mrs. Eura Brooke Bisant-Delaney's "Petals of Poetic Passion". Biographies accompany all the bards, and half of them are shown in photographs or etchings. Here is a sampling of lines and titles from some of the unsung unknowns:

Near yon willow sand I heave up (John Jordan)

Where the golden balls of nature | Hang on branches bending low (Carrie Smith)

Its rider is Caucasian - | Its name, United States (Robert Sinnickson)  
That incubator beats the dickens | For hatching little downy chickens  
(Jeremiah Long)

Be tender and affectionate | In all thy intercourse with men (Thomas J. MacMurray)

The best way to git edicated | Is - take 'er slow (Samuel A. Burner)  
How beautiful is life! When mystic night | Disrobes her starry breast  
(Maria B. Lindesay)

Little clouds scud by in fear (May J. Dilley)

It touched so many heartstrings it made me both laugh and weep (Daisy M. Harris)

Phyllis and Phoebe love the milking pail; | I love a beauty rather  
pale than hale (Zitella Cocke)

I from my bed two pistols drew, | Then slowly whispered to my wife, |  
"Wake up and try to save your life" (Charles Cargile)

All he's got is sure my money (Josiah Giberton English)

Before his love he speaks, | Your restless tongue outslips, |  
In its long accustomed way (Traverse Eugene Stout)

Ioline, Ioline, | Will you be no more my queen (Eugene Fitch Ware)

Now my pillow, tear-drenched nightly, | Is my throbbing temple's  
bath (Jacob G. Grossberg)

Methinks a moss from the land of Utopia, | Soft as a damsel's eye-  
lash, | Has in some mysterious way come forth | To mold thy moustache  
(Ella Chandler)

"Unclad Thoughts" (Florence N. Bowen)

"The Elms of Elmo" (John William Boxell)

"A Mr.'s Not Always a Man" (Phil Hoffmann)

"Dot Baby" (Henry H. Johnson)

"Heart Pictures" (William H. Bushnell)

"The Dead Violinist" (Simeon Tucker Clark)

"Loud Praying" (Charles Cargile)

"Compliment Your Wife" (Irving J.A. Miller)

### **Klavenism**

Cliff Klaven, the oddball mailman on "Cheers", can speak

loquaciously on any subject. Each monolog, however, is a nonsensical interpretation of the topic that exceeds in its detail the verbal gaffes of Sheridan's Mrs. Malaprop or "Love and Marriage"'s Kelly Bundy. A Klavenism is a whacked-out scientific, political, sociological, economic, religious or other theory that usually relies on some form of wordplay for its logic and humor.

In this classic example employing an acronym, Cliff jumps easily from one topic to another. Standing next to a blackboard on an easel, he sketches a chalk diagram that is supposed to represent DNA. After discussing it a little, he concludes "DNA is an acronym for Dames are Not Aggressive."

He sees that his audience doesn't believe him, so he turns the blackboard on its side, points to the sideways diagram, and says "Let's talk about the gas turbine engine for awhile."

Cliff is the consummate mama's boy. In this Klavenism, powered by a Malapropism, he makes a self-referential blooper:

Cliff: That's a Freudian slip, Woody.

Woody: What's a Freudian slip?

Cliff: That's when you say one thing and mean a mother.

### Transaddition Names

GARY GRAY and EDNA DEAN are transposal names. LEON NOEL and ROBERT TREBOR are palindrome names. GENE GREEN, Democratic representative from Texas, has a transaddition name. Can you come up with other examples of this last type from well-known or unknown people?

### England Swings Like a Pendulum Do

The November issue of the University of Iowa's International Highlights newspaper had a front page story about MacArthur Fellowship recipient Nora England, who lives in America and works in Guatemala. This is an automatic set-up for how's-that-again international wordplay:

New York-born England has become a much loved and familiar face in Guatemala...

England has two distinct wardrobes and diets...

Antigua...is the headquarters for most of the research done by England...

Being an American in Guatemala has been fairly trouble-free for England...

England believes her work will help rebuild people's self-esteem

### Alphabetical Word Title

Ted Clarke saw a film about an African people, and the title included the phrase EFIK MOVY, two words whose letters are in alphabetical order. In Language on Vacation, Dmitri Borgmann lists BILLOWY, ADELOPS and AEGILOPS as the longest single alphabetical words. Are there any other phrases or names whose letters occur in alphabetical (or reverse-alphabeti-

cal) order? Ted also coined a triple-L alphabetical word, which he explains thus: "I have seen HEATLESS spelled as a single word; what about HEATLOSS? And hence, by corollary, its opposite when the fridge door is opened, i.e., CHILLOSS."

### Alphabetical Sentences

Can you make up a plausible sentence with the letters in alphabetical order? Short ones are easy: ABEL LOST. Perhaps they should have at least 14 letters, one more than half the alphabet. I'll start with a line about a man cleaning a pigpen: ABE HILL MOPS STY. Reverse alphabetical order is harder, so the 14-letter limit must be waived. This could be the title of a story about the Post Officer discussing how it delivers a well-known magazine: USPO ON LIFE. It's your turn. BEGIN NOW!

### Sign Off, Sign On

Sometimes a letter in a sign can be removed to make a naughty word. For instance, in Iowa City many years ago a prankster removed the G from a sign announcing a reading by fiction writer ANGUS WILSON. Now, thanks to CNN, the reverse can be done - a letter insertion prank. A recent news story about the plot to blow up US national monuments showed a building with a large sign that begged to have a letter added: FU KING FOOD STORE.

### Self-Love Song

Batley, the bat on the children's program Eureka's Castle, sang "I Love Me," the greatest parody of a love song that I've ever heard. It included such logical wordplay as "If I left myself, I'd die" and "I couldn't live without me". This suggests changing the words of songs with YOU in it to achieve a similar effect, like the Beatles' "I Wanna Hold My Hand", with the lines "Oh, yeah, I tell me something, I think I'll understand, when I say that something, I wanna hold my hand...And when I touch me I feel happy inside." Fight co-dependency! Rewrite a song and send it to Kickshaws.

### The Rotten Egg Dilemma

"Last one to touch the door is a rotten egg!" My son likes to call out the "rotten egg" challenge at the drop of a hat. Then he and I race to beat the other to the goal (the door, the car, the couch, etc.). One day I caught him by saying "First one to touch the door is a rotten egg." He touched it first, and I said "You're the rotten egg!" Since then, he shouts that out when he sees that I'm going to win. The other day I tricked him by saying "Last one to say 'First one to say this is a rotten egg' is a rotten egg." He said quickly "First one to say this is a rotten egg." And I replied "You're the rotten egg!" But, on reflection, I was really the first one to say it, and he was the last one. Ergo, we both were the rotten egg.

## Lettershifting the World

Lettershift words still have some steam in them. The other evening, I cranked up the word calculator to see what could be found in the names of countries. I looked for partial shifts. In full shifts, the letters in one word are the same number of alphabetic steps away from the corresponding letters in another word, as in CHEER to JOLLY (C is seven steps from J, H is seven from O, etc.). In partial shifts, only part of the letters travel a common number of steps. Two apt examples are DAY to LIght and TO to NIght, in which the capitalized letters are partial shifts of 8 and 20, respectively. With the extra freedom allowed by partial shifts, the results can be more meaningful. In fact, some of the sets create poetic pictures worthy of the Imagists or the Surrealists. The last set, a quote by Saint Patrick about the snakes, is the first shift triangle of its kind. A lettershift challenge: what is the longest sentence that can be formed by partial shifts from a single word? Disallowing repetition of words formed by the same shift values, the maximum would be a base word plus 25 shifts.

	A H	I		O H
	M E	A M	L A X	
	I	A	F U R	
A M		F R E N C H		P E W
A		V E T		A S
S E R B I A N		I	I F	
B O Y		R A P	S H E	
		M Y		L E T
A		T I N	S E X	
D I M		B O X	B Y	
L O T				A
I N		H A L F	C R O A T I A N	
N O R W A Y		M E X I C A N	D A M	
				B R I T A I N
A M E R I C A		I	U K	
U S		T A P		
		V I P E R		
		I R E L A N D		

## The English Language

Martin Gardner ran across a poem with the above title in a pre-1900 scrapbook. Its author was, as you'll see, a homophonomaniac.

A pretty deer is dear to me,  
 A hare with downy hair;  
 I love a hart with all my heart  
 But barely bear a bear.  
 'Tis plain that no one takes a plane  
 To halve a pair of pears.  
 A rake, though, often takes a rake  
 To tear away the tares.  
 All rays raise thyme, time razes all;

And, through the whole, hole wears.  
 A write, in writing "right," may write  
 It "wright," and still be wrong--  
 For "write" and "rite" are neither "right,"  
 And don't to write belong.  
 Beer often brings a bier to man,  
 Coughing a coffin brings,  
 And too much ale will make us ail,  
 As well as other things.  
 The person lies who says he lies  
 When he is but reclining;  
 And, when consumptive folks decline,  
 They all decline declining.  
 A quail don't quail before a storm--  
 A bough will bow before it;  
 We cannot rein the rain at all--  
 No earthly powers rein o'er it.  
 The dyer dyes awhile, then dies;  
 To dye he's always trying,  
 Until upon his dying bed  
 He thinks no more of dyeing.  
 A son of Mars mars many a sun;  
 All days must have their days,  
 And every knight should pray each night  
 To Him who weighs his ways.  
 'Tis meet that man should mete out meat  
 To feed misfortune's son;  
 The fair should fare on love alone,  
 Else one cannot be won.  
 A lass, alas, is something false:  
 Of faults a maid is made;  
 Her waist is but a barren waste--  
 Though stayed she is not staid.  
 The springs spring forth in spring, and shoots  
 Shoot forward one and all;  
 Though summer kills the flowers, it leaves  
 The leaves to fall in fall.  
 I would a story here commence,  
 But you might find it stale;  
 So let's suppose that we have reached  
 The tail end of our tale.

### **Namely, A Love Story**

How many different names and nicknames appear in one form or another in this short short story? All names are listed as regular words in most standard dictionaries; some are disguised as nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. What's so special about the names that appear more than once?

Bob rocks Carol merrily. Jenny frankly hopes John chucks Shelly in April. Red daisies, ferns, and herbs grace the carmine heather in Dixie, as Earl grants Sandy an olive for her sherry. Holly and laurel dot the lane between the brooks. "Hi, Bud," Lily blanches

at Rosemary's charity in the flora, while Jay hectors Jimmy over felicity in the dale. And Bill pats Sue.

In June, Barb marks the hazel, but in August, Iris nicks a penny with prudence. Will Mike sally from the berries, where Jack rose at dawn with ruth? Violet rays of joy on the clay of art's bliss! Norm wards off the kitty with cherry candy, for the robin is victor. Bunny skips over Hank's opals, because Homer, an urban guy at her beck, has bucks. So Sue bills Pat.

When merry reeds trace eve's melody, Roger has faith in the forest. "Chastity is a jewel," the randy dean stews, "but Timothy may lance Myrtle's ruby." Polly dons a pearl in Basil's van before a gale carries it miles away. Gene and Dolly harry the gray porter for ginger. Dawn peters out. Rod marches curtly to Bonny and chips her sapphire! Then Pat sues Bill.

### Good Knight, Everyone

"After mentioning serious knighthoods such as the British orders of chivalry," Peter Newby writes, "the OED gives self-appointed 'orders' such as the American Knights of Labour (certain trade unionists) and a secret society called the Knights of Pythias founded in Washington in 1864. It then goes on to list what it terms 'formerly various jocular phrases' such as Knight of the Blade (a hector or bully), Knight of the Brush (painter, artist), Knight of the Cleaver (butcher), and Knight of the Collar (one who has been hanged). It continues through a host of others including these gems: Knight of Industry (swindler), Knight of the Vapour (smoker), and Knight of the Whipping Post (disreputable person). The OED concludes by saying 'and the number of such phrases may be increased indefinitely'. It sets out the rules of creativity, and you might care to produce your own 'awards'." For a famous person, Peter gives Knight of the Jelly Bean (who could that be?), and for a computer buff Knight of the Byte. I have jotted down some below. I could add many more if I wanted to continue writing knight after knight, but I'm afraid I'd have knightmares. It's your turn to joust.

Knight of the Diamond (baseball umpire, jeweler, suitor)

Knight of the Ring (wrestler, person who has just taken a bath, jeweler, suitor)

Knight of the Living Dead (zombie)

Knight of the Night (pimp, who works with Ladies of the Night)

Knight of the Naught (zero)

Knight of the Neat (obsessive-compulsive type of person)

Knight of the Knot (ship's captain, boy scout)

Knight of the Nut (squirrel, Jerry Lewis, psychiatrist)

Knight of the Note (composer)