SENESCENT SENTENCES: TEN SCENES

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Staring at my tube of toothpaste the other morning, I noticed the word GINGIVITIS. It occurred to me that this was an anagram of IS IT GIVING. Having nothing better to do while brushing my teeth, I started pondering the significance of sentences that may be broken down into components which are anagrams of each other, like "Is it giving; gingivitis?" and "The potato's shot at poet; past the too-hot-to-paste toothpaste." By the time I had finished brushing, the basics of the game of Senescent Sentences had been formulated.

Number of players: two or more
Object: to score the most points
Equipment: paper and a pencil for each player; a decent dictionary

A Senescent Sentence is a grammatical English sentence comprised of consecutive anagram phrases, as in "Is it giving; gingivitis?" (a two-part, ten-letter sentence) or "Swine; sinew; is new" (a three-part, five-letter one).

Rules:
1. At the beginning of each round (or scene - see title), an eight to twelve letter word is selected at random (players take turns)
2. Each player has two minutes to construct a Senescent Sentence using the letters of the word chosen for that round
3. When the time is up, players compare and score sentences (see below)
4. The game ends when one player has reached a pre-agreed number of points (say 500) or when a pre-agreed number of rounds (say 10) have been played

Scoring:
For each sentence, one point is awarded for each letter in the repeat. The score is doubled for each part in the sentence. Thus, a two-part, ten-letter sentence scores 10x2 or 20 points, and a three-part ten-letter sentence scores 10x2x2 or 40 points. A ten-point bonus is awarded for using all letters in the selected word.

Sample Game (three players, ten rounds):
Round 1 selected word YESTERDAY
Player A: Aster; rates; a rest 5x2x2 = 20
Player B: Daters; stared; at red's treads 6x2x2 = 48
Player C: Yesterday; ye rest day; Yeat's dyer; eyes tardy; steady rye (disqualified for not being a meaningful sentence; had it been accepted, C's score would have been 9x2x2x2x2x2x10 = 82)

Final Score: Player A: 20; Player B: 48; Player C: 0
Round 2 selected word TOMORROW
Player A: 0, Mr. T., 0: motor; Tom, or: motor; Mort 0. (disqualified after players vote to disallow initials)
Player B: (can't think of anything)
Player C: Moor, tow; room two; worm, too 7x2x2 = 23

Round 3 selected word ESPERANTO
Player A: 0, repent as: a son, Peter; opens rate 9x2x2x2 = 46
Player B: Person ate; pear stone 9x2+10 = 28
Player C: 0, Peter's an; opera nest; notes reap; ten operas (C's play is challenged; it is decided that "opera nest" is meaningless)

Round 4 selected word INTERLINGUA
Player A: 0, repent as: a son, Peter; opens rate 8x2x2x2 = 64
Player B: I tear in; retina, I; I tie rain, I; I retain; inertia 7x2x2x2x2 = 56
Player C: I gain rent; retaining; anger in it 9x2x2 = 36

Round 5 selected word ANAGRAMS
Player A: Mars; arms; rams 4x2x2 = 16
Player B: Granna; rang Ma 6x2 = 12
Player C: A nag rams, a grammar's; a man rags; a grammar's; anagrams 8x2x2x2x2x2x2 = 266 (but see Comments, below)

Round 6 selected word ALPHABET
Player A: Tape; a pet; pate 4x2x2 = 16
Player B: Abet; a bet 4x2 = 8
Player C: Help a bat; bathe, pal 8x2+10 = 26 (an apt score!)

Round 7 selected word PARANOMASIA
Player A: 0, Pam ran "Asia"; a Romania spa 11x2+10 = 32
Player B: Romania's a Pa 11+10 = 21
Player C: Norma's; Romans; ransom; Norma's; manors 6x2x2x2x2x2 = 96

Round 8 selected word PALINDROME
Player A: Redo lamp in; red lion map 10x2+10 = 30
Player B: 0, red pal; paroled; leopard; ole pard 7x2x2x2 = 56
Player C: Dame; made; mead 4x2x2 = 16

Round 9 selected word SPAGHETTI
Player A: Hag pet its; pigs at the; tag pit, she; pats eight 9x2x2x2x2+10 = 82
Player B: Pate's; paste, tape's; paste, tape's; paste 5x2x2x2x2x2 = 160
Player C: Pat's; spat; taps; Pat's; spat 4x2x2x2x2 = 64

Round 10 selected word LINGUINE
Player A: Nigel,; ingle; leg in; gel in; Elgin 5x2x2x2x2+2x2 = 80
Player B: Neil,; line; Nile 4x2x2 = 16
Player C: Glue; luge 4x2 = 8

Final Score: Player A 384, Player B 425, Player C 540
From the above game it is clear that certain issues need to be agreed upon by the players in advance. The most important ones are:

1. Should elements be allowed to repeat, as in "Pat’s spat taps Pat’s spat"? My feeling is that this should be acceptable, but that repeated vocatives, as in "Neil Neil line Nile", and repeated adjectives, as in "User sure sure sure ruse" should be disallowed.

2. Should words be allowed to span a repeat, as in "Stall’s tall"? I am opposed to this.

3. 4B and 9B each show examples of three sentences conjoined by commas. Players may wish to limit senescent sentences to one subject and one predicate.

Nothing Risque, Nothing Gained

Most adults enjoy sex and humor, so a book featuring dirty jokes ought to be a best seller (much like the apocryphal one about Lincoln’s doctor’s dog). In this $12 paperback published by Chicago Review Press, Richard Lederer has restricted himself to "sexual humor that depends on wordplay", a limitation that is hard to define but easy to recognize. (My attempt: humor that is based on two different meanings of the same word, or of two different words that sound the same. For example, Lederer omits humor relating to rape, AIDS, or homosexuality: jokes should be obscene but not hurt.)

There’s a wealth of obscene material in this 292-page book, from old chestnuts like the Young Maid From Madras and the mythical The Yellow Stream by I.P. Daly, to witticisms you’ve never heard before. There are many formula jokes: updated classics (The Mooning and Sex Pants, From Here to Maternity), what’s the difference (... between a rooster and a lawyer? the rooster clucks defiance), a spoonerized dictionary (frigid female golf pro: an unpliant lay), have you heard (... about the cow that jumped over the barbed-wire fence? udder disaster), she was only (... a clergyman’s daughter, but she loved to catch him by the organ), Tom Swifties ("You get on top now," said Tom flippantly), and National Condom Week slogans (before you bag her, sheathe your dagger). These should be read in small doses to avoid literary indigestion. The book is enhanced by approximately 50 illustrations by Word Way’s Dave Morice.