

NEW LIGHTWEIGHTS AND HEAVYWEIGHTS

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In the November 1972 issue of *Word Ways*, Darryl Francis listed the lightest and heaviest words (assigning A = 1, B = 2, etc.) of lengths up to, and including, 15 letters. Some 23 years later, in the August 1995 issue, Leonard Gordon responded to Darryl's suggestion of 1972 that "Perhaps some enterprising *Word Ways* reader would like to extend our work, investigating words with more than fifteen letters" by repeating the exercise for words of 16 to 24 letters. He also improved two of Darryl's original examples.

This prompted me to complete an ongoing article which seeks to update both Darryl's 1972 article and Leonard's 1995 one. I widened the search to include the names of animal genera found in the various volumes of *Nomenclatur Zoologicus* (NZ) and the names of two plant families from the seventh edition of *The Dictionary of Flowering Plants and Ferns* (FPF) by J.C. Willis, Cambridge University Press, 1966.

I have not included abbreviations, phrases, people's names or hyphenated words. This rules out, for example, the lightweight 12-letter BIBBLE-BABBLE (56) as well as Darryl's 12-letter BABA-ABDALLAH (47). Two words fall into a grey area regarding inclusion and I have omitted them. They are the featherweight AAAA, a Tahitian interjection of laughter or ridicule (also a Hawaiian sweet potato) and the super-heavyweight ZZZZ.. indicative of snoring!

In the two lists below, asterisked words indicate my improvements. The bracketed numbers are the total weight of the word followed by its average letter weight (total weight divided by the number of letters) correct to two decimal places.

The Lightweights

- 1 A (1;1.00)
- 2 AA (2; 1.00)
- 3 AAA (3; 1.00)*
- 4 AABA (5; 1.25)*
- 5 ABABA (7; 1.40)*
- 6 BACABA (10; 1.67)
- 7 ABEBAEA (17; 2.43)*
- 8 FABACEAE (24; 3.00)
- 9 BECCACCIA (30; 3.33)*
- 10 GALACACEAE (39; 3.90)
- 11 CABBAGEHEAD (39; 3.55)
- 12 ELAEAGNACEAE (60; 5.00)*
- 13 CABBAGEHEADED (48; 3.69)

- 14 GAIADENDRACEAE (78; 5.57)*
- 15 ECDEIOCOLEACEAE (91; 6.07)*
- 16 LACTOBACILLACEAE (105; 6.56)
- 17 BRACHIOCEPHALICAE (119; 7.00)*
- 18 ACHROMOBACTERACEAE (137; 7.61)*
- 19 PALAEACANTHOCEPHALA (143; 7.53)*
- 20 CHLAMYDOBACTERIACEAE (154; 7.70)*
- 21 CHEMICOPHARMACEUTICAL (187; 8.90)
- 22 HISTORICOCABBALISTICAL (210; 9.55)
- 23 SCIENTIFICOGEOGRAPHICAL (214; 9.30)*
- 24 PSEUDOSACCHAROMYCETACEAE (229; 9.54)

AAA the head signet-bearer of the Egyptian king Aspalut AABA a sponge (NZ) ABABA a beetle (NZ) ABEBAEA a lepidopteran (NZ) BECCACCIA a woodcock (OED) ELAEAGNACEAE a plant family (Web3) GAIADENDRACEAE a plant family (FPF) ECDEIOCOLEACEAE a plant family (FPF)

The Heavyweights

- 1 Z (26; 26.00)
- 2 ZY (51; 25.50)*
- 3 ZYX (75; 25.00)*
- 4 ZYXT (95; 23.75)*
- 5 ZZYX (127; 25.40)*
- 6 ZZZYX (152; 25.33)*
- 7 ZZZYVA (151; 22.57)*
- 8 ZZZYZUS (194; 24.25)*
- 9 ZOROTYPUS (175; 19.44)
- 10 TOPSYTURVY (201; 20.10)*
- 11 TRUSTWORTHY (207; 18.82)
- 12 TOPSYTURVILY (222; 18.50)*
- 13 UNTRUSTWORTHY (242; 18.62)
- 14 UNTUMULTUOUSLY (255; 18.21)*
- 15 UNTRUSTWORTHILY (263; 17.53)
- 16 UNPRESUMPTUOUSLY (276; 17.25)*
- 17 HYDROXYISOBUTYRYL (285; 16.77)*
- 18 TYPHLOURETEROSTOMY (290; 16.11)
- 19 HYPOPHYSEOPRIVOUSLY (309; 16.26)
- 20 URETERONEOCYSTOSTOMY (310; 15.50)
- 21 COUNTERREVOLUTIONISTS (314; 14.95)
- 22 DACRYOCYSTOSYRINGOTOMY (328; 14.91)
- 23 URETEROPYELONEPHROSTOMY (343; 14.91)
- 24 TRANSURETEROURETEROSTOMY (368; 15.33)

ZY (OED) ZYX a flea (NZ) ZYXT (OED) ZZYX a small community in California (US Board on Geographic Names, 1984) ZZZYX a hymenopteran (NZ) ZZZYVA a beetle (NZ) ZZZYZUS a coelenterate (NZ) TOPSYTURVY (Chambers) TOPSYTURVILY (Chambers) UNTUMULTUOUSLY inferred from untumultuous and tumultuously, both in OED

Thanks to Rex Gooch for aiding my word search. Does UPSY-TURVY, TWISTY-WISTY or TUZZY-MUZZY lurk unhyphenated somewhere? Can anyone find TOPSYTURVYIST?