

VOWEL MATES

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What do Samuel Plimsoll, Titus Oates, Bela Lugosi, Chou En-Lai, Count Basie, Don Quarrie (a sprinter), Arthur Whitten Brown (an aviator) and John Barry Humphries have in common? The answer is that their names include one each of the five vowels a,e,i,o and u--they are aeiou people. So are Rosalind Russell and (gorgeous) Gussie Moran (a tennis player).

The name of the present game is to bring together vowel mates by working within certain parameters. The results throw up some truly esoteric couples but these are interspersed with several credible liaisons including an aristocratic twosome, a team from Pakistan and several show-biz partnerships.

A similarity in appearance can, albeit sometimes unwittingly, attract a member of the opposite sex. And so it is that, in this first set of vowel mates, the names of the partners display the five vowels in the same order.

Francis Poulenc (composer) and Alison Uttley (children's story writer)
Arlo Guthrie (pop entertainer) and Mary of Guise (mother of Mary,
Queen of Scots)

Patrick Ferguson (British soldier and inventor) and Alice Munro
(Canadian short story writer and novelist)

Julian Lennon (singer son of John) and Judith Anderson (actress)

Julian Glover and Julia Foster (two British actors)

Louis Reard (bikini swimsuit designer) and Louise Chady (French poet)
Sequoia (Cherokee Indian leader) and Eudocia (originally Athenais,
Byzantine princess)

By way of contrast, opposites are reputed to attract. In these vowel mates, the order of the vowels in each case is the reverse of that of the partner's.

Ulysses Simpson Grant and Francoise Durr (tennis player)

Victor Mature (actor) and Beulah Bondi (actress)

Younis Ahmed (Pakistani cricketer) and Benazir Bhutto (Prime Minister
of Pakistan)

The final partnerships are created by matching the order of vowels in the last name only, rather than in the whole name.

George Efsthathiou (Oxford astronomer) and Grace Metalious (author)

James Andrew Brown Ramsay, First Marquis of Dalhousie and Catherine de Vivonne, Marquise de Rambouillet (French noblewoman)

The third couple of the last name genre undoubtedly rate as King and Queen of the vowel mates. Ross Eckler quoted the surname of Chrystala Afxentiou of Staten Island, NY as a word incorporating the unusual bigram fx. But this lady's surname also boasts the five vowels in alphabetical order. With vowels in reverse alphabetical order, her vowel mate has to be Duccio di Buoninsegna, and great painter who founded the Sienese School and who is best known for his masterpiece *Manesta* (1311).

In my list of aeiou people, mined chiefly from *The Cambridge Biographical Encyclopedia* by David Crystal and *Chambers Word Lists* by Roger Prebble, the aeiou men outnumber the aeiou women by 4 to 1. Even so, Rosalind Russell and Gussie Moran (despite her frilly knickers) got left on the shelf. Can anyone find vowel mates for these two ladies?

A DICTIONARY OF EUPHEMISMS

Euphemisms can be regarded as the converse of maledictions, a subject extensively examined by Reinhold Aman in his scholarly journal *Maledicta*. *Word Ways* has twice previously reviewed books on euphemisms (February 1990, February 1996). The present work, issued by Oxford University Press (ISBN 0-19-869275-7) in 1995 for \$25, has been compiled by R.W. Holder with the above title. Unlike the others, which consist of short essays, this exhibits brief definitions frequently accompanied by citations. Although such venerable euphemisms as WHITE MEAT (breast of chicken) are found in all three books, there are many unique entries: Neaman's NIGHT BASEBALL (petting or copulation), Rawson's FULLY DRESSED (armed), Holder's POUND SALT (go away!). Holder notes the provisional nature of a work such as this "...it is a poor week when I fail to note two or three new euphemisms." Like Ambrose Bierce in *The Devil's Dictionary*, Holder slips in the occasional pungent definition: COUNSELLOR (one who intrudes on those suffering misfortune), SENSIBLE (ugly or unfashionable), SLEEP OVER (not involving, as you might suppose, the occupation of bunk beds), ETHICAL INVESTMENT (a policy of buying only those stocks which do not offend the prejudices of dogmatists). A considerable number of Holder's euphemisms refer to male-female relationships. He helpfully provides the reader with a topical index.