

LETTER-PERFECT WORD GAMES

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They're ba-a-a-ck...the readers or listeners who write or e-mail or call or stop me on the street to ask "There are three words in the English language that end in g-r-y. Two of them are angry and hungry. What is the third?"

Nowadays, the poser often continues with a swatch of doggerel:

You say it every day.

You know what it stands for.

If you've been listening carefully,

You'll see I've already given you the answer.

The greatest service I can perform for the American people is to announce here that the -gry question is one of the most outrageous and time-wasting linguistic hoaxes in our nation's history. The poser slithered onto the American scene in 1975 on the Bob Grant radio talk show on WMCA in New York City. I've tried to bury -gry before, but it keeps rising, like some monstrosity from *Tales From the Crypt*.

The answer to the infernal question is that there is no answer, at least no satisfactory answer. I advise anybody who happens on the poser to stop burning time and to move on to a more productive activity, like counting the number of angels on the head of a pin or the decreases in our property taxes.

There are at least 50 -gry words in addition to angry and hungry, and every one of them is either a variant spelling, as in augry for augury, begry for beggary, and bewgry for buggery, or ridiculously obscure, as in anhungry (an obsolete synonym for hungry), aggry (a kind of variegated glass bead much in use in the Gold Coast of West Africa), puggry (a Hindu scarf wrapped around the helmet or hat and trailing down the back to keep the hot sun off one's neck), or gry itself (a medieval unit of measurement equaling one-tenth of a line).

A much better puzzle of this type is "Name a common word, besides tremendous, stupendous and horrendous, that ends in dous."

At least 32 additional -dous words repose in various dictionaries: apodous, antropodous, blizzardous, cogitabundous, decapodous, frondous, gasteropodous, heteropodous, hybridous, iodous, isopodous, jeopardous, lagopodous, lignipodous, molybdous, mucidous, multifidous, nodous, octapodous, palladous, paludous, pudendous, repandous, rhodous, sauro-po-

dous, staganopodous, tetrapodous, thamphipodous, timidous, tylopodous, vanadous and voudous. To offer any more would be nefandous.

But these are arcane examples. The fourth common word is hazardous.

Here's an array of letter-perfect puzzlers that are all superior to the -gry ridiculousness. All answers are common English words and repose in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

- 1 Nervous, grievous and mischievous are three common English words that end in vous. Identify a fourth.
- 2 Two common words that contain the letter sequence shion are fashion and cushion. Identify a third.
- 3 Suspicion and coercion are two common words ending in cion. Identify a third.
- 4 Identify a word that ends with chion.
- 5 Identify a word that contains the letter-string chsi.
- 6 Manse is not a very common word these days, but two common, uncapitalized words also end in anse. Name them.
- 7 Identify the only common word that ends with the letters inse.
- 8 Identify the only common word that ends with onse.
- 9 Identify the only common word that ends with sede.
- 10 Identify the only common word that ends with mt.
- 11 Identify the only common word that ends with gnty.
- 12 Identify the only common word that contains the letter sequence uia.
- 13 Identify the only common word that contains a silent p and a silent s.