

ANA GRAM, THE JUGGLER

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Editor's Note: See how many anagrams you can detect in the story starting on the next page, taken from Richard Lederer's forthcoming book The Word Circus.

Come one! Come all! The unparalleled, incomparable, sensational Word Circus is in town! Hurry! Hurry! Scurry! to the Greatest Show on Earth, where words come out of the wordwork. Laugh at our lexcellent tour de farces! Thrill as letters fly through the air with the greatest of E's. Gasp as you become the Wizard of Ahs and A Lass in Wonderland.

Can you create one word out of the letters in NEW DOOR? The answer (ha ha) is ONE WORD. The letters in NEW DOOR are the same as those in ONE WORD, except in a different order.

When is enough not enough? When you rearrange the letters in ENOUGH, you get ONE HUG. Everybody knows that one hug is never enough!

A very early puzzle of this type appeared in the July 16 1796 issue of *Weekly Museum* under the name "Matilda":

An insect of the smallest kind
If you transpose, you soon will find
That from all mortals I do quickly fly;
When gone, my loss in vain they'll mourn.
In vain will wish for my return,
Tho' now to kill me, ev'ry act they try.

The answer is MITE-TIME.

These riddles all involve anagrams. An anagram is a rearrangement of letters in a familiar word, phrase, or name to form another word, phrase or name.

To introduce you to the more lexcellent examples of alphabetic manipulation, here is the greatest juggler in the world, the very art and soul of the Word Circus--Ana Gram! [See her picture on the back cover of the February 1997 *Word Ways*.] She can twirl balls, clubs, plates, hoops, or flaming torches, but she's best when she's spinning letters. She starts with three letters, and when she really gets them going, she adds another and another and another and another and another and another, until the audience bursts into applause.

Ladies and Gentlemen! Boys and girls! Children of all ages! Don't waddle! Don't dawdle! It's time for Anagramarama! I give you a genuine ingenue, the high priest of esprit and ripest sprite of letter play of the highest stripe.

I enlist you to be silent and listen to the inlets of my tinsel words. As we begin our binge of letter juggling, please don't even think about falling asleep, or your retina will not retain the overt trove of laudatory, adulatory letter wizardry, which has for too long continued unnoticed.

Simple logic impels your positive reactions to Ana Gram's creations. Among robust turbos, she's an absolute dynamo, even on a Monday--a gagster who will stagger you with her latent talent. She's the antagonist of stagnation and patroness of letter shuffling because she knows how to transpose a sword into words, which then float aloft. Each emphatic, empathic seraph phrase, each snatch of her chants, will stanch any trace of mental lament and reclaim the miracle of language.

For various reasons, Ana Gram is a saviour who loves to solve your woes and who repeals any relapse. Her stagery gyrates the grayest spirit. Before you reunite with your retinue, please take this ingress to one of our greatest singers, a singer who reigns and will never resign as our merriest rimester. She's one of those crowd-pleaser leapers whose dances ascend to the highest heights as she performs a toe dance while relating an anecdote.

Ana Gram's persistent prettiness earns her direct credit for regally and largely curing any allergy in the gallery. No dictionary is indicative of the elation you will experience down to your very toenail, a joy that will--from the fringes of your fingers, from your elbow to below the bowel, from your bared beard to your viler liver to your venal navel, from your ears to your arse, from the top of your spine to the tip of your penis--roost in the roots of your torso.

She is the very heart of the earth, a damsel who merits medals. With a lovely volley of letters, she juggles a cheap peach, an Argentine tangerine, and solemn lemons and melons. At the same time she reaps, pares, and then manages to spear pears while twirling pastel plates (a staple of her act) and balancing a maraschino on her nose and playing two harmonicas.

Pleased by what has elapsed and astounded by such climaxes, everyone exclaims that it would be impossible to reproduce her procedure to intoxicate your excitation. She never mutilates, only will stimulate ultimates. She won't enervate, and you will venerate. She'll edify and you'll deify the luster of the result she'll unfailingly rustle up.

Lucky ladies and gentlemen! Cripes! Look at the prices we offer, as advertised in English on the shingle that adorns our booth: DISCOUNTER INTRODUCES REDUCTIONS. Look closely at the poster and presto! boing! bingoo! you'll see an integral alerting, altering, relating triangle. What we have here is a trianagram--a lovely volley of three ten-letter words, each a rearrangement of the other two! Now this Word Circus pitchman will be busy mastering emigrants streaming (a nine-letter trianagram) into the tent.

I, a magnate gateman who patrols these portals with your kind permission, have the impression that you brand me a blabbing, babbling funfair ruffian, a has-been banshee, a tearing ingrate, infield infidel, and an errant ranter. You may wish to compile a polemic lamenting my alignment as one of those nameless salesmen and dishonest hedonists who are full of tangible bleating and impressing simperings. You may claim that I who ratchet up the chatter with supersonic percussion am a rowdy, wordy vice-dean of deviance. You will be eager to agree that I'm a trifling, flirting baritone obtainer of untidy nudity who seldom models his ideals for ladies.

I may madden you and cause you to demand that I be damned, before you depart, convinced that I have prated and should be hoist on my own petard, bombed and mobbed. But the unstirred intruders and any outbred doubter who may obtrude should come to the realization that people tend to rationalize. Irately and tearily, I tell you that to be portrayed as one so predatory causes me mental lament. Anyone who accuses me of being an usurping, pursuing, daemonic comedian is simply being an inconsistent nonscientist.

Truth be told, I'm an Einstein of the nineties--a gentleman, an elegant man who gets blamed because I have ambled into bedlam. It's one of the noisier ironies. However, whoever enters needs no caveat to vacate this auction with caution. I certify that I will rectify the situation and deposit the dopiest rowdies and weirdos in the closest closets.

The charisma of Ana's performance is a charm, a charm that will march before your eyes. In her, you will observe the obverse of the very verbose. After the mite of an item that follows, I guarantee that at no time will you emit groans from your organs.

Arty Idol

Watch Ana Gram, and you will see
Her act inspires idolatry.
Please do not come o tardily,
And dilatory please don't be.

Adroitly Ana Gram will start
To alter daily rot. She's smart:
A dirty lot, an oily dart
She'll change into the doily art.

In the Word Circus, an affinity of meaning often generates an infinity of pleasure. Our arty idol Ana Gram can whirl the word Episcopal, and create both a popsicle and Pepsi-Cola. She can toss up a raptor and down will swoop a parrot. She can even transform dyslexia into daily sex (is that a cause or a cure?) and antidisestablishmentarianism into "I am an artist, and I bless this in me"!

But it is even more fascinating when Ana reconfigures words and expressions into aptagrams, words or statements that bear a meaningful relationship to the base. Thus, Ana Gram becomes an acrobat--act on a bar--as she juggles letters alphabetically while laughing "I play all the ABC." So full of endearments is her magic that we bestow tender names upon her.

You, dear patron, may want no part of me. Your animosity is no amity, I know. You may call me a blatherskite and think "This be a talker." Ridiculous? I ludicrous? That's asinine; it is inane. So don't be mean-spirited and in a distemper. Remember that villainousness is an evil soul's sin. So bury the hatchet and butcher thy hate.

The converse of the aptagram is the antigram, in which a word or phrase gets rejuggled into another word or phrase that bears a meaning opposite to that of the base. When astronomers are moon starers, it is an aptagram, but when astronomers see no more stars, it is an antigram.

I'm a spellbinder, not a bland spieler, and I'm high on lemonade, not demon ale, when I tell you that near the end of Ana Gram's juggling act, she is joined by a rather contrary lady, Anti Gram, Ana's favorite among her versatile relatives.

Anti Gram's specialty is changing each idea into its anagrammatical opposite. She converts a teacher into a cheater, mentors into a monster, and an evangelist into evil's agent. Then she transforms violence into nice love, a funeral into real fun, an anarchist into an arch saint, Satan into Santa, and Satan's infernos into non-fires.

When your bedroom becomes a place of boredom, when your marriage becomes a grim era, Anti Gram reshapes your marital life into your martial life. What was united is untied, what was praised now causes despair, what was sunlit is now an insult, what was medicated is now decimated, and what was ruthless is now hurtful. What was once filled is now ill-fed, what was come by honestly is now on the sly, and what was worthy of commendation the world will now aim to condemn, not with a vote but with a veto. While you were once defiant, you have now fainted. That to which you once aspired now causes you despair.

Now that Ana Gram is enshrined in your memory, we'll send her in for a grand finale--a flaring end. After the eyes they see and this ear it hears her nimble executions, she exits on cue and we exclaim in unanimity "Am in unity! Mirabile dictu: I dub it a miracle!"

You clearly possess the sense of humor and think "Oh, there's more fun!" So for your entertainment we present a parade of meaningful phrase anagrams, the athletics of which are lithe acts. Because they are so appropriate, they are absolutely A-I, apt, proper.

No wonder that an acronym of anagram is A New, Appropriate, Grandly Rearranged Alphabetic Message. No wonder that those who believe in the magical potency of words have hailed the anagram as "Ah, an art gem" and anagrams as Ars Magna "the great art."

LABELS FOR LOCALS: WHAT TO CALL PEOPLE FROM ABILENE TO ZIMBABWE

This is the title of Paul Dickson's most recent book, published in 1997 as part of Merriam-Webster's new series entitled *The Lighter Side of Language* (ISBN 0-87779-616-5; \$14.95 in paperback). This book is an almost word-for-word reprint of his 1990 book *What Do You Call A Person From?*, reviewed in *Word Ways* in May 1990; the principal change is the inclusion of a large number of droll cartoon illustrations (for example, a Long Beacher is a girl in a topless bikini with legs stretching to the horizon).

Dickson's book contains several thousand demonyms, obtained from published sources, unpublished corpuses such as the Tamony Collection at the University of Missouri, and correspondence with hundreds of people. Some of the entries take the form of short essays: read the discussions on Hoosier (don't call one an Indianian!), Dutch (for pejorative names), and Bunnies (for gag names). A few people have attempted to codify rules for such nomenclature (if the placename ends in Y, change it to an I and add AN, etc.), but such rules are riddled with exceptions (one rule would label Parisians Parisites). Dickson takes the sensible view that the correct demonym is the one actually used by the inhabitants, not the one adhering to a rule.

Longtime *Word Ways* readers will recall a number of articles on demonyms in 1986-88 by Don Laycock, The Word Wurcker, Mary Christie Craig and Vernon MacLaren. Those who want a full account of this fascinating onomastic byway are well-advised to get a copy of Dickson's book!