FOUR OUT OF FIVE

JEFF GRANT
Hastings, New Zealand

Keen Scrabble-player and wordsmith Michael Vnuk of Annerley in Queensland, Australia wrote to me recently:

The most interesting word I've come across lately is GRANDDADDY with its high concentration of Ds. After a quick search I found a few other letters which appear as four out of five consecutive letters in a word, e.g. PEEWEE, VOODOO, ASSESS, MUUMUU and PIZZAZZ. Most other words I can think of involve either E or O. Repeated consonants seem much rarer.

How many different letters is it possible to find example for? Firstly, a few rules:

- The odd letter out in the group must be in the middle, so that an internal 5-letter palindrome is formed. This disqualifies terms with three or more consecutive identical letters, like BRRRR, a variation of BRRR, expressing cold (OED)
- Hyphenated words such as TERROR-RIDDEN (Web 2) and WHHI-HHEE, a horse's neigh (OED), are not allowed
- Neither are coinages like HEHHEHHEH and BOWWOWWOW

Additions may be possible by including place-names and surnames. If you find an example for any of the missing letters, or can improve an existing entry, please let us know.

A RAABAABA a coarse, rough-spoken person, in the Caribbean (DJE)
B HUBBUBBED mingled into a confused noise (OED)
C BOCCACCIO a rockfish of the California coast (F&W)
D GRANDDADDY a grandfather (Web 2)
E SLEEVEEN a smooth-tongued schemer (Web 2)
F CUFFUFFLE to toss straw, in northern Ireland (EDD)
G
H I PIIPII West Indian term for a turkey chick (DJE)
J K
L PARALLELLESS without a parallel, unparalleled (OED)
M COMMEMMORATION early form of 'commemoration' (OED, ferial, 1563–87 quot.)
N UNUNNUNNG removing from nunhood (Web 2)
O BOOBOOK a small Australian owl (Web 2)
P UPPPOPPED popped up, poetically (Web 2)
A Hokan language spoken by less than 1000 people on the NW coast of California (CIWL)

one who owns or holds (Web 2)

a sharp knocking sound (Web 2)

a long and loose-hanging colourful dress worn by Hawaiian women (RHD)

zest, vim, vitality (OED)

The next step is to look for words with letters appearing at six out of eight consecutive letters in a word, which may or may not produce an internal 8-letter palindrome, for example

a confused crying or yelling (OED)

Scots expression for a lullaby (EDD)

a spiny New Zealand shrub (OED)

CIWL Classification and Index of the World's Languages, C.F. & F.M. Voegelin, 1977


F&W Funk & Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of the English Language, 1924


Web 2 Webster's New International Dictionary, 2nd ed., 1934