

KICKSHAWS

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Readers are encouraged to send their favorite linguistic kickshaws to the Kickshaws editor (David-Morice@uiowa.edu).

SUBLIMINAL CORRESPONDENCE

Martin Gardner sent the following correspondence between a father and his monetarily-challenged son. Martin says, "It's a new version of a joke I recall from childhood. The student sent his father a telegram NO MON, NO FUN, YOUR SON. The father telegraphed back HOW SAD, TOO BAD, YOUR DAD."

Dear Dad,
\$chool i\$ really great. I am making lot\$ of friend\$ and \$tudying very hard. With all my \$tuff, I \$imply can't think of anything I need, \$o if you would like, you can ju\$t \$end me a card, a\$ I would love to hear from you.
Love, Your \$on.

Dear Son,
I kNOW that astroNomy, ecoNomics, and oceaNOgraphy are eNOugh to keep even an hoNOr student busy. Do NOT forget that the pursuit of kNOwledge is a NOble task, and you can never study eNOugh.
Love, Dad.

HOMER'S HOMERS

One of the most incredible baseball records of all time was cited in a recent issue of the Des Moines Register. The sports writer put it this way: "Toronto second baseman Homer Bush is tied with Homer Smoot and Homer Summa for most homers in a season by a Homer--four. Smoot played in 1903 and 1905, Summa in 1926 and 1927."

SAVE THE PUN!

Charles Linnett found an amusing game in a flyer from the Save the Pun group, and he suggests that readers might like to try their hand at it. According to Charles, "The trick is to pick a word and make one change to it by either deleting a letter, inserting a letter, or changing one letter to a different letter. You may then redefine the new word in

terms of the old, using whatever wit you have at hand. Obviously, the original word must be pretty long since you must recognize what the original word was even after the change (changing ATE to LATE is of no interest)." He included the first six examples below. I tried doing it and came up with the last four.

Dognoscenti: someone very knowledgeable about canines
 Risibillities: the inclination of a family of ducks to laugh
 Monstipation: a horrible creature's need for ExLax
 Prognostickation: prediction from a bloodsucker
 Podomy: a group of whales engaging in unnatural sex
 Squid pro quo: giving something in anticipation of some calamari
 Copelation: a policeman's joy when arresting people on lover's lane
 Brickbass: fish that resemble bricks
 Obliterati: vicious literary critics bent on destroying authors' careers
 Purrealist: Salvador Dali's cat

SILENCE IS "..."

Charles also writes: "Something else that caught my fancy was the silent-letter poem by Susan Thorpe. I was wondering about altering the rules a bit to say that when you cross out the letter in question, the remaining word would not change in pronunciation either under 'normal' or phonetic pronunciation. Thus, taLk would fail for a silent L since 'tak' would not be pronounced like 'talk' by most people. Most foreign-inspired words would fail because removal of a key letter would make them unpronounceable. I cannot do most letters but I have a few. Some of these are Ms. Thorpe's original choices (asterisks) that I could not improve upon (nor did they need improving upon)." Others are invited to expand the list, especially by providing examples for the missing letters F,I,L,Q,R,U,V,X and Y which aren't included below.

Aisle, boArd*
 dumB
 Czar, sCion, sCene
 hanDsome*
 Exile (a stretch--a better example?)
 feiGn (maybe), resiGned
 whiTe
 mariJuana*
 Mnemonic*
 hymN, autumN*
 bOurbon
 Psalm
 iSle, viScount*
 misTletoe, ofTen (depending on how you pronounce 'often')
 sWord, Write*
 cheZ (maybe), rendeZvous*

TWO TO TWO

Bill Webster sent the following pairs of words anagrammed into other pairs. Some paired pairs have similar meanings, some have opposite meanings--but all have their own special surprises.

spare nights	spear things
pirates' den	parties end
hot clod	tho cold
teacher's pupils	cheater's slip-up
lithesome Bea	homeliest Abe
editors rephrase	storied reshaper
May's gesturing	Amy's grungiest
study capitol	dusty coalpit
clean fishbowl	lance blowfish
Debra asleep	bread, please
dial May	laid Amy

THE TOY PROBLEM

My son Danny is currently a big fan of the World Wrestling Federation (WWF), which has superstars with colorful names like Mankind, Undertaker, Paul Bearer, Stone Cold Steve Austin, Too Sexy, B.A. Billy Dagg, The Godfather, Chyna, and many others. The WWF's soaring popularity has generated hundreds of spinoff items, from trading cards to key rings to mini-skateboards, all emblazoned with pictures of the wrestlers. The most popular items are small plastic poseable figures. Sometimes the figures come with proportionately small objects used in weapons matches--tables, chairs, television sets, etc.--that the wrestlers bash each other with.

One afternoon Danny and I were at the mall looking at WWF figures, and he decided that he wanted one that included a table that was supposed to break apart. It came in two jagged halves that fit together. The store's policy is to allow customers to return a broken toy for the same toy that isn't broken. I said to Danny "Now here's a problem. The table comes broken in two. If it wasn't broken, then it would be broken. In either case, 'it's broken.'" He said "Yeah! That means we can take it back any time for a brand-new one." I said "That's another problem. They couldn't replace it with one that wasn't broken."

SIDEWALK CLOSED

One day at work, I decided to go get a bagel from the nearby bagel bakery. I left the building and headed down the sidewalk. As I came to the intersection and started to cross the street, I noticed a sign at the sidewalk's edge that made me feel as if I'd stepped into the Twilight Zone. The sign said SIDEWALK CLOSED--PLEASE USE OTHER SIDE. I looked at the sidewalk I was on, and it wasn't closed, but the sidewalk

across the street was closed. I'd always thought that I was on the side, and that when I crossed a street to the other side, the other side became the side, and the side I'd started from became the other side.

PARKING METER COVERED

Another day, while hurrying from the parking ramp to the lab, I noticed that several parking meters were covered with slightly-wrinkled red plastic bags at the top. As I approached the nearest bag at an angle, I saw four words in a vertical column, and the words made a true historical statement: NO KING SERVED ALL. I was baffled at first, but when I walked closer to the bag, I read the real message. The wrinkles and my angle of vision had blocked out a few letters. Can you figure out what was on the bag?

CONVERSATION CONFUSED

Another day, on the way back from the bagel bakery, I heard strange remarks coming from somewhere nearby in the rows of parked cars. The voice seemed to be that of a woman in her twenties. As well as I can remember, she said, with a few pauses, something like this: "Oh, not, it's up too high. Can't you get it down?...Stick it in right there...A little lower...No, that's too low. Could you pull it out and try again?...Yes! That's it! You did it! I was afraid it would break."

Well, what would you think? I looked in the direction of the voice to find out if my imagination matched reality. There was the woman standing with two policemen next to a Jeep Cherokee. The woman had locked her keys inside, and the cops were using a long thin tool to try opening the door through a crack in the window. The woman and the cops saw me laughing to myself, and they began laughing, too.

SLIDING WORD LADDERS

In a sliding word ladder, introduced in the May 1999 Kickshaws. the trick is to take a four-letter word, clip off the outer letters, slide the middle letters apart, and insert two other letters between them to form a new four-letter word. Susan Thorpe constructed a 16-word thematic sliding word ladder from boys' and girls' names: BraD RosA OtiS TonI OreN RenE EdeN DanE AlaN LorA OmaR MinA IvaN VerA EmyR MarY (Oren and Emyr are Welsh).

THE TEN COMANAGRAMS

Mike Morton notes that the U.S. House of Representatives voted to allow The Ten Commandments in schools, adding that "I don't under-

stand all the fuss over an old Charlton Heston flick, but if it's news-worthy, it's anagram-worthy..."

Cannot mend them Mets.
 Condemn them. Test man.
 Damn, men contest them!
 Ed McMahon sent me TNT.
 Madmen, not TNT scheme.
 Men condemn math test.
 Men! Men! That'd cost men!
 Most men needn't match.
 Needn't scent mammoth.
 Sent the damn comment.
 Test them? Condemn man!

INCREDIBILITY

Richard Lederer has discovered an amazing cinemanagram: "The movie 'October Sky' was about a bunch of boys playing with rockets (October was the month Sputnik was launched, which whetted their interest). The book and original title of the movie was 'Rocket Boys'--an anagram of 'October Sky'.

IRREGULAR ORDINAL NUMBERS

Ordinal numbers are the adjectival forms of the cardinal numbers. Most ordinals are formed by either of two rules: (1) add -TH to cardinals not ending in Y, or (2) drop the final Y and add -IETH. Of course, one basic rule of English is to not always follow the rules. In fact, seven numbers have their own rules, each different from all other numbers (except, of course, higher numbers that end in one of the irregular seven). Their unruly behavior makes them stand out from the numerical crowd. In the list that follows, each irregular pair is accompanied by one or more unique properties that results from the interaction of the two number forms. At least one property in each case is self-referential--that is, it refers to the pair's numeric value.

ONE, FIRST No letters in common. ONE's letters go in reverse alpha order, but FIRST's go in regular order. ONE has one consonant, but FIRST has one vowel.

TWO, SECOND One letter in common. Greatest difference in word lengths. TWO has two consonants, and SECOND has two vowels. SECOND has twice the number of letters, twice the number of vowels, and twice the number of consonants that TWO does.

THREE, THIRD Equal word lengths. Both words have three letters in common (THR) and three not in common (EID). Together they have three vowels (EEI).

FIVE, FIFTH The ordinal has five letters. FIVE drops E in forming FIFTH, and E is the fifth letter of the alphabet.

EIGHT, EIGHTH The cardinal plus H form the ordinal, and H is the eighth letter of the alphabet.

NINE, NINTH The cardinal plus the ordinal have a total of nine letters.

TWELVE, TWELFTH Letters in common (TWEL) times letters not in common (VFH) equals twelve.

MICROBIOLOGY AUTHORS

I've run across several microbiology authors with outstanding names. I. KISS and A. COKE are two of my favorites, but today I saw a paper whose first author bore the unforgettable name A. BITSCH. Does his initial stand for ARIEL?

ONE MORE FOR MONICA

Richard Lederer sent the following lucid (lurid?) anagram that came from Israel: PRESIDENT CLINTON OF THE USA becomes TO COPULATE, HE FINDS INTERNS.

He also came up with the following spoonerism that sounds like a cross between the Reverend Spooner and Mark Twain: "I'm trying to grow old gracefully, but instead I'm graying old grossfully".

HIGH-CONTRAST SPELLING REVISITED

Max Maven sent several additions to the word pairs described in the May 1999 Kickshaws. Each word of the pair begins with a different consonant sound spelled in the same way, and ends with the same vowel sound spelled in a different way (for example, Howard Bergerson's THY-THIGH).

cheek-chic
 chair-Cher
 cherry-cheri
 gene-Gein (famous mass murderer, pronounced 'Geen' with a hard G)
 geld-gelled
 gaol-gale (or Gail)
 chord-chored
 gee-Guy (French pronunciation)

ELEMENTAL PERIOD

Mike Keith asks: "What's the longest word that can be formed by concatenating symbols from the Periodic Table of the Elements? The longest ones I found were 19 letters, and there were only two of them, one related to chemistry: SUPERCoNDUCTiViTiEs. (The other one is the British spelling OVerCaPiTaLiSATiONS.) You can also require that no

chemical element be used more than once. In that case, there is a word that is just one letter less, the 18-letter IrReSPONSiBILiTiES.

While Mike can reach the higher word lengths with surprisingly-common words, there are only two number names that can be spelled with element symbols: ONe and NINe (or NiNe).

ALPHABETIC MONOLITHS

An alphabetic monolith is a letter string of any kind (word, acronym, Roman numeral, etc.) composed solely of two or more occurrences of the same letter. A few words in Webster's Third are monolithic, including AA, EE and ZZZ. Monolithic acronyms, such as AAA (American Automobile Association) and KKK (Ku Klux Klan), are more common. Eight Roman numerals are also monoliths: II, III, XX, XXX, CC, CCC, MM, MMM. In general, alphabetic monoliths are scarce, but in the field of science they grow like dandelions.

MEDLINE, a database with bibliographic information and abstracts of more than a million scientific papers published in journals since 1966, contains a cornucopia of alphabetic monoliths for each letter of the alphabet. The longest for each letter appears in the list below, followed by the total number of papers that have letter strings with 2 or more occurrences. These numbers are somewhat misleading, since MEDLINE counts papers with false monoliths such as AB-IIIIII-YZ or I.II.III. On the other hand, it doesn't count MM, a two-letter monolith because this almost always is the abbreviation for millimeter. The longest single-letter string is the ten-letter false monolith I.II.III.IIII. The longest true monolith has nine letters:

Eight of the 9 animal isolates and 3 human isolates displayed the recognition sequence TATATTT, whereas 7/10 human isolates exhibited the recognition sequence TTTTTTTTTT.

As the above example suggests, few logologists may be willing to subject these linguistic artifacts to serious study. Here are two more:

If parenchyma were constructed only from free-standing entrance rings and septal junctions, only JJJJ and EEEJ would be anticipated.

Corynebacterium species cells were used to isolate a new supercoarse hissing restrictase CsiBl that recognizes the 8-nucleotide site GGGGGGGG (the isoschizomer NotI) and a fine tool for obtaining enlarged fragments of pro- and eukaryotic genome.

AAAAAAAA 15776,BBBBBB 6733,CCCCCC 7133,DDDDDD 4108,EEEEEE 1825,FFFF 1854,GGGGGGGG 1340,HHHHHH 1057,IIIII 428098,JJJJ 368,KKKKKK 712,LLLL 1998,MMMM 151,NNNNN 1394,OOO 253,PPPP 28517,QQQ 44,RRRRR 7505,SSSSS 10248,TTTTTTTTT 2709,UUUUU 261,VVV 1062,WWW 775,XXXXXX 4607,YYYYY 964,ZZZZZ 348

THREE IS EVEN MORE INTERESTING

In "All Numbers Less Than 100 Are Interesting?" in the November 1998 Word Ways, I listed one or more properties for each of the numbers 1 through 99. On my master list, there are many other entries, especially for the numbers less than 10. One property of 3 was particularly surprising: the letters in THREE shift four steps down the alphabet to XLVII, the Roman numeral for 47. It's the only number that does this kind of shift, but that's only half the story. Daniel McGrath discovered the other half: "If you write 3 as a two-digit number (03), then 47 is a number-shift of that, and, more than that, it's the exact same number of steps away (four) as it is from THREE to XLVII. Thus, 'XLVII = 47' is an alphanumeric shift of 'THREE = 03'."

IN MEMORY OF HARRY PARTRIDGE

Long-time Word Ways writer Harry Partridge has passed away. His sister Phyllis wrote to tell me the sad news. While I never met Harry, I was always fascinated by his articles in Word Ways and his correspondence with me. I was especially delighted when he wrote an article titled "Unsherlocking Unsherlock" in which he defended my use of the word UnSherlock in a Kickshaws entry. That article, as well as others he wrote, brought to the wordplay stage the unique Wombat, a character whose sly combativeness gave Harry a second voice to speak on topics of the world and its words. His letters to me were just as spirited as his articles, and they had the added charm of his calligraphic handwriting. He sent a variety of items for Kickshaws, including several clerihews. A friend of mine in Iowa City, Joe (not his real name), saw some of Harry's clerihews and asked for his address. This led to a brief correspondence between the two. Joe sent Harry a large collection of his own clerihews for Harry's comments. Harry replied with an honest and detailed evaluation. I didn't know what had transpired until I received a letter from Harry in which he expressed great distress over the angry response that he'd gotten from Joe. Harry seemed concerned that Joe would speak ill of him to me. Ironically, Joe and I didn't cross paths till after I'd heard from Harry. I wrote back and assured him that Joe wasn't a close friend and that their correspondence had nothing to do with our friendship. On the contrary, Harry's letter showed me that he was a genuinely sensitive soul. I am truly sorry that he's no longer with us. I'll miss him and his friend, the Wombat.

THE CHEATERS OF MARS

Peter Newby reveals to the world a little-known cinematic adventure: "Ed Wood, Hollywood's infamous pedlar of celluloid crap, directed Bella Lugosi in a sci-fi epic filmed in New Bybwen. Called 'The Cheaters of Mars', it was his solitary overseas production and contained such gems

of Martian dialogue as 'is Ogul all ebb?' and 'Do owd ee?'. Can you translate these Martian lines?

WWW

Peter tells this telltale tale: "The sherry Xeres lends its name to a New Bybwen website, Xeres Opera, which specializes in rare medical conditions. The first customer was a Miss Hannah Stewart who suffered from a weak bladder when attempting to solve supplementary riddles. Dr. A. "Reg" Gerard, the genius behind this computerized health service, replied to the unfortunate lady as follows: "BEWARE POSER. EXTRA WETS HANNAH STEWART (XERES OPERA WEB)."

CONUNDRUM

Here's a conundrum from Peter: "Being cruel to be kind was the only clue that Holmes had to assist him in understanding the mysterious word CREULE. Can you decipher it?"

AN OLD SEA SHANTY

Jay Ames writes "For no good reason, this old sea shanty came to mind."

Should old acquaintance be forgot
And never brought to mind?
The cabin boy fell overboard
And is forty knots behind.

JUST ASKIN' FOLKS

Names are games for Jay Ames, and here are some of his latest. "Jennifer Schwartzbach Smith and her husband (USA) chose the names Harley Quean for their newborn baby girl--unrelated probably to Harlie Queen of Toronto or the harlequin (from the Italian stage or Comedie Francaise I've always wondered about). En passant, if JoAnne Ryce wed Jean Philip Boudin, would their kids be 'Rice Puddens', and would the kids of Trudi Milch and Alan Shaikes be partial to milkshakes? And if Maralyn Rouber wed and had kids by Jackie Drake, could you refer to their toddlers as real 'rubber duckies'?"

SUPERNUMBERS

A supernumber is a number whose name is spelled with 100 or more letters. The smallest supernumber is 11,777,777,777, and the largest is one thousand vigintillion minus one (a string of 22 nines, usually considered the highest nameable number in numeric logology). Some

supernumbers have special wordplay properties based on their names, but a basic question remains to be answered: how many supernumbers are there in all? Here are four supernumbers with special properties:

teN VigINtILlion seven HuNDred quattuORDEcillioN Eight Nonillion one oCTillion one tRillion tHirteen Million twO Hundred (106 letters: lowest number with 15 different state postal abbreviations)

seventy-seven septendecillion seventy-seven sexdecillion sevent-seven septillion seventy-seven sextillion seventy seven (106 letters: longest with each numeric unit beginning with the same letter)

seven hundred ninety-seven trillion seven hundred ninety-seven billion seven hundred ninety-seven million seven hundred ninety-seven thousand seven hundred ninety-seven (135 letters: largest number with the most two-syllable numeric units)

one vigintillion two novemdecillion three octodecillion four septendecillion ten sexdecillion eleven quindecillion twelve quattuordecillion thirteen tredecillion fourteen duodecillion fifteen undecillion sixteen decillion seventeen nonillion eighteen octillion nineteen septillion twenty sextillion thirty quintillion forty quadrillion fifty trillion sixty-five billion seventy-six million eighty-seven thousand eight hundred ninety-nine (300 letters: smallest number with all 49 different units appearing once apiece)

TO THE NINES

In this last year of the twentieth century, a child was born of nines: according to the Des Moines Register, a baby boy arrived at 9:09 on 9-9-99 and weighted 9 lbs 9 oz. I predict that he'll live to be 99 years old, get married 9 times, have 9 children, be fired from 9 jobs, buy 9 cars, and own a cat.

FROM NINE TO FIVE

FIVE and NINE share a unique relationship involving the alphabetic values (A=1, B=2, etc.) of their letters:

F	I	V	E		
6	9	22	5	$6+9+22+5=42$	$6+9+2+2+5=24$
N	I	N	E		
14	9	14	5	$14+9+14+5=42$	$1+4+9+1+4+5=24$

The relationship has several facets:

- The sum of each set is 42, and the sum of the digits in each set is 24, a numerical reversal

- FIVE and NINE have two letters in common, I and E, whose alphabetical values are 9 and 5
- The difference between 9 and 5 is 4, the number of letters in each number name
- The alphabetic values of N and F are 14 and 6, respectively; subtract the smaller from the larger to obtain 8, the total number of letters in FIVE and NINE

THE CONTRARY HOLIDAY

At the end of summer, we celebrate Labor Day--but how? Do we hang ornaments on a Labor Day tree? Do we sing Labor Day carols? Do we wish each other a Merry Labor Day? Of course not. Labor Day is a holiday because that's what the calendar says it is. Many of us, especially government workers, simply get the day off. In other words, we celebrate Labor Day by not doing any labor. It's like celebrating D-Day by not using the letter D.

SPELL CHECKER RUNS AMOK

The editor passes along the following poem from Jack Sweiter:

Eye halve a spelling chequer
 It came with my pea sea
 It plainly marques four my revue
 Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.
 Eye strike a key and type a word
 And weight four it two say
 Weather eye am wrong oar write
 It shows me strait a weigh.
 As soon as a mist ache is maid
 It nose bee fore two long
 And eye can put the error rite
 Its rarely ever wrong.
 Eye have run this poem threw it
 I am shore your pleased two no
 Its letter perfect in it's weigh
 My chequer tolled me sew.