

ACROSTIC VARIATIONS

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Much has been written on the history of the acrostic as a form of wordplay, both in Word Ways and elsewhere, and I do not intend to dwell upon that aspect of the genre. Suffice to say that the acrostic seems to have first appeared in the 1850s, had its Victorian heyday, and then disappeared from mainstream wordplay as it gave way to the crossword puzzle in 1913.

What is an acrostic? To answer this question succinctly, I quote from Ross Eckler's article 'The First Double and Triple Acrostics?' (WW 86228).... *"Double and triple acrostics occupy an important niche in the history of word puzzles, for it is generally recognised that they were the predecessors to the crossword puzzle. For those unfamiliar with the genre, a double acrostic consists of clues for a sequence of words (the cross-lights) to be written in a list, plus two clues to the words spelled out by the first and last letters of the cross-lights (the uprights). In a triple acrostic a third upright is formed out of interior letters in the cross-lights. The cross-lights may consist of words of varying lengths, but the uprights are obviously constrained to have exactly as many letters as there are cross-lights."*

Here are two old-style acrostics in which the cross-lights are of varying lengths, so making the puzzles somewhat offensive to the eye! The first is basically a single acrostic but, in addition, I have used cross-lights which make a sentence. The upright makes an apposite 2-word phrase. The second is one which Queen Victoria is said to have constructed 'for her children'. Her Majesty was a devotee of the double acrostic. Note that the two uprights are related and that the first reads downwards (NEWCASTLE) whilst the second reads upwards (COALMINES).

	N a p l e S	a city in Italy
	E l b E	a river in Germany
	W a s h i n g t o N	a town in the United States
O n c e	C i n c i n n a t I	a town in North America
H a p p y	A m s t e r d a M	a town in Holland
D a y s	S t a m b o u L	the Turkish name of Constantinople
E n d e d	T o r n e A	a town in Bothnia
A c h e	L e p a n t O	a city in Greece
R u l e d	E c l i p t i C	a circle on the globe

In the acrostic puzzles which follow I have used cross-lights of the same length. The answers to the puzzles can be found in Answers and Solutions at the end of the issue.

DOUBLE ACROSTICS

In these particular double acrostic puzzles, the words which form the uprights are linked in some way. In one puzzle, the two uprights are synonyms. In the remaining puzzles, the two uprights form a phrase. The two uprights forming one of these phrases are transposals. In another puzzle, one of the uprights reads downwards and the other upwards. In another, the uprights each consist of more than one word. No help with the remaining puzzle and, in any event, I leave you to discover which is which!

A

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. + -- -- -- -- + | 1. relating to life we do behold |
| 2. + -- -- -- -- + | 2. a size of pages, some eightfold |
| 3. + -- -- -- -- + | 3. descriptive of noses, both sharp and blunt |
| 4. + -- -- -- -- + | 4. it pertains to the back and not the front |
| 5. + -- -- -- -- + | 5. though our circulation these can impede |
| 6. + -- -- -- -- + | 6. we may do this if the doctors succeed |

It's on the edge or in between.

This canine's sense of smell is keen.

B

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. + -- -- -- -- + | 1. it's chilly, not very warm today |
| 2. + -- -- -- -- + | 2. this means 'heard' but it's not <i>anglais</i> |
| 3. + -- -- -- -- + | 3. a nasty bomb which we all fear |
| 4. + -- -- -- -- + | 4. a vessel used for drinking beer |
| 5. + -- -- -- -- + | 5. after several beers you may be this |
| 6. + -- -- -- -- + | 6. something involving more than one kiss |
| 7. + -- -- -- -- + | 7. finally, when you wanted something badly
you did this for it, often quite madly |

It seems a very long time in years.

Some of this age are doddery old dears.

C

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1. + -- -- -- -- + | 1. between the hills where the rivers run |
| 2. + -- -- -- -- + | 2. he's a babe in arms, so young this one |
| 3. + -- -- -- -- + | 3. to this Italian resort we go for leisure |
| 4. + -- -- -- -- + | 4. a body tingling from fear or pleasure |
| 5. + -- -- -- -- + | 5. this girl's name means 'little bear' |
| 6. + -- -- -- -- + | 6. and we all give this, no matter where |
| 7. + -- -- -- -- + | 7. we have to do this to earn our pay
and it's a UK party, by the way |

It's the same in effect but not in being.

What it actually is, is what you're seeing.

D

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1. + -- -- -- -- + | 1. in the US, she's the lady of the vine |
| 2. + -- -- -- -- + | 2. always near, but never a straight line |
| 3. + -- -- -- -- + | 3. a change for the better when all's said and done |
| 4. + -- -- -- -- + | 4. equilateral parallelograms, more than just one |
| 5. + -- -- -- -- + | 5. with similar pressure it's a connecting line |
| 6. + -- -- -- -- + | 6. a clapping of hands, time after time |
| 7. + -- -- -- -- + | 7. such comparative weather often involves a mist
while in a flue it controls the draught |

She's tied the knot, wedded at last

To someone for whom she's a 'bit of a feast'.

E

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. + -- -- -- -- -- + | 1. the corresponding possessive is <i>one's own</i> |
| 2. + -- -- -- -- -- + | 2. for <i>King's Rhapsody</i> etc. this man is known |
| 3. + -- -- -- -- -- + | 3. this means 'heard' but it's not <i>anglais</i> (again!) |
| 4. + -- -- -- -- -- + | 4. children listen to what he has to say |
| 5. + -- -- -- -- -- + | 5. a salad and a New York hotel |
| 6. + -- -- -- -- -- + | 6. it's folding paper, sometimes quite well |
| 7. + -- -- -- -- -- + | 7. the first supersonic passenger plane |
| 8. + -- -- -- -- -- + | 8. a high one gave the mini-skirt its name |
| 9. + -- -- -- -- -- + | 9. in order to cook, these we collect |
| 10. + -- -- -- -- -- + | 10. it's a Turkish title of respect |
| 11. + -- -- -- -- -- + | 11. it has both vernal and spring variations
when day equals night over all the nations |

This is often followed by Go!

Sequential numbers, still quite low.

TRIPLE ACROSTICS

A triple acrostic has a third upright somewhere in between the two end uprights found in the double acrostic.

F

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. + -- -- -- -- + -- + | 1. some like to be this for their health's sake |
| 2. + -- -- -- -- + -- + | 2. an aromatic plant used for decorating a cake |
| 3. + -- -- -- -- + -- + | 3. a red like vermilion and the name of a moth |
| 4. + -- -- -- -- + -- + | 4. one type of these is used detergent, a froth |
| 5. + -- -- -- -- + -- + | 5. this circular shade wards off rain and hail |
| 6. + -- -- -- -- + -- + | 6. and on a ship it's the principal sail |

In the spinal column it's a composite bone.

With the tibia in the leg, so it's not alone.

The part of the foot to which it pertains

has seven bones with different names.

CROSS ACROSTICS

Pertaining to acrostics, these may be a new genre. Basically, the uprights take a diagonal course through the cross-lights instead of a vertical one. The shape of certain letters, such as V and X, lends itself to this type of acrostic, as does the zig-zag. Here are three cross acrostics for you to solve. **G** is a single word which starts at the top left and ends at the top right; **H** is a 2-word phrase, both words starting at the top and running diagonally downwards; in **I** both words zig-zag downwards on parallel courses.

G

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 1. + -- -- -- -- -- + | 1. the university is somewhat depleted |
| 2. -- + -- -- -- + -- | 2. such competition can be quite heated |
| 3. -- -- + -- + -- -- | 3. describes the cruellest and wickedest of natures |
| 4. -- -- -- + -- -- -- | 4. water in front will give us pond creatures |

*We celebrate this when we achieve our goal
Though often in battle it takes its toll.*

H

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. + -- -- -- -- -- + | 1. it's a pulmonate description of very slow |
| 2. -- + -- -- -- -- + -- | 2. a term meaning snake-like, for those who know |
| 3. -- -- + -- -- + -- -- | 3. equally tense, often in a muscular way |
| 4. -- -- -- + + -- -- -- | 4. these are the kennels where cats and dogs stay |
| 5. -- -- -- + + -- -- -- | 5. aiming for a goal is sometimes called this |
| 6. -- -- + -- -- + -- -- | 6. traffic we approach head on but miss |
| 7. -- + -- -- -- -- + -- | 7. rushing forward as did the biblical hog |
| 8. + -- -- -- -- -- + | 8. an alternative name for a very young frog |

*It's being fair by nature, as a friendly chum
In spite of this having to be overcome.*

I

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1. + -- -- + -- -- | 1. this tropical fruit is a triangle word (<i>Geometrical Words 97193</i>) |
| 2. -- + -- -- + -- | 2. in churches their wedding vows are heard |
| 3. -- -- + -- -- + | 3. this over troubled waters - a song was written |
| 4. -- + -- -- + -- | 4. your eyes may look like this when you're smitten |
| 5. + -- -- + -- -- | 5. doing this usually results in more |
| 6. -- + -- -- + -- | 6. buy this way and you'll avoid the store |
| 7. -- -- + -- -- + | 7. a hat made from the leaves of the jipijapa plant
and the basis of a palindrome you can chant |

*Part of the UK when preceded by 'Great'.
The 50th, Hawaii, is its most recent State.*

Readers might like to try other diagonal patterns, or even mix vertical and diagonal ones.