

## SAME NAME GAME

DON HAUPTMAN

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Have you ever observed that certain celebrities, historical figures, and other famous individuals happen to share identical—or very similar—first and last names? For example, PAUL SIMON is the pop singer-composer, while another PAUL SIMON is the bow-tied former Illinois Senator. (Appearing with the Senator on CNN in 1995, comic Richard Belzer joked: “I have all his albums.”)

It’s hardly surprising that such onomastic doppelgängers can generate confusion, mixups, and mistaken identities. VANESSA WILLIAMS, perhaps best-known for her role in the TV series *Melrose Place*, is often mistaken for VANESSA L. WILLIAMS, the 1983 Miss America, whose title was yanked in the wake of a nude-photo scandal, and who subsequently recorded a bunch of chart-topping songs. Among other problems, their college applications were scrambled and their paychecks misdirected! Because both Vanessas are pursuing acting and singing careers, future chaos is assured.

Some identically yclept “twins” make rather incongruous bedfellows. GEORGE WALLACE, the deceased Alabama governor and Presidential aspirant, should not be confused with GEORGE WALLACE, the stand-up comedian. The black comic notes the irony of sharing the name of the notorious segregationist. Yet most of the performer’s audience members have never even heard of the “other” George Wallace!

Inspired by this phenomenon, I have created a brain-teasing diversion called “The Same Name Game.” A challenge of knowledge and skill, it is suitable for competitive play at fraternities, pajama parties, and family car trips, or as a solitary entertainment.

All names in the following lists are legitimately renowned persons, and at least potentially familiar to a reasonably intelligent and culturally literate American. I have *excluded* strictly local luminaries, people known only in narrow or specialized fields, and otherwise obscure figures. Also barred are too obvious—and hence uninteresting—candidates, such as identically named fathers and sons. Precisely homonymous names are admissible, but those that are merely assonant (Tim Robbins/Tom Robbins, Nicolas Cage/Nicholas Gage, Michael Lerner/Michael Learned, William Wyler/Billy Wilder) are rejected in strict observance of the “CLOSE BUT NO CIGAR” rule. Finally, acceptable candidates may be living or dead—or even fictional. For instance, JAMES BOND, imaginary superspy, can be elegantly paired with JAMES BOND, a prominent ornithologist known to every birdwatcher. (Novelist Ian Fleming reportedly appropriated the name when he spotted a birding guide on his shelf.)

Any number can play. Use pads and pencils, or the outcry method. For each pair (trio, quartet), the player scores one point for identifying each individual’s profession or other claim to fame.

*Warning:* Early examples in each list are drawn from popular culture and hence are relatively easy; the challenges become progressively tougher as personages from literary and other cerebral disciplines are introduced. To settle all bar bets, or when contestants are ready to give up, definitive IDs may be found in Answers and Solutions.

**CATEGORY A: EXACT MATCHES**

These famous folks are identically named.

1. DAVE THOMAS; DAVE THOMAS
2. VICTORIA JACKSON; VICTORIA JACKSON
3. LES BROWN; LES BROWN
4. LINDA HUNT; LINDA HUNT
5. HENRY MORGAN; HENRY MORGAN
6. CHUCK JONES; CHUCK JONES
7. JOHN MADDEN; JOHN MADDEN
8. MICHAEL GARTNER; MICHAEL GARTNER
9. JOHN DALY; JOHN DALY
10. ELIZABETH TAYLOR; ELIZABETH TAYLOR
11. RICHARD BURTON; RICHARD BURTON
12. ROBERT WAGNER; ROBERT WAGNER
13. GEORGE MICHAEL; GEORGE MICHAEL
14. CASSIUS CLAY; CASSIUS CLAY
15. ROBERT SHAW; ROBERT SHAW
16. GEORGE SEGAL; GEORGE SEGAL
17. GRAHAM GREENE; GRAHAM GREENE
18. ROBERT E. LEE; ROBERT E. LEE
19. FRANCIS BACON; FRANCIS BACON
20. JAMES WATT; JAMES WATT
21. STEVE ROSS; STEVE ROSS
22. CHARLES SCHWAB; CHARLES SCHWAB
23. JOHN ADAMS; JOHN ADAMS
24. LIZZIE BORDEN; LIZZIE BORDEN
25. SEBASTIAN CABOT; SEBASTIAN CABOT
26. WINSTON CHURCHILL; WINSTON CHURCHILL
27. DAVID HOROWITZ; DAVID HOROWITZ
28. PETER MARSHALL; PETER MARSHALL
29. JANE SEYMOUR; JANE SEYMOUR
30. ROBERT WRIGHT; ROBERT WRIGHT
31. ROGER SMITH; ROGER SMITH
32. JOHN FORD; JOHN FORD

**Trios:**

1. MICHAEL JACKSON; MICHAEL JACKSON; MICHAEL JACKSON
2. JOHN WILLIAMS; JOHN WILLIAMS; JOHN WILLIAMS

**CATEGORY B: MINOR VARIATIONS**

In this cluster, the members of each pair possess *similar* names, varying only by a nickname, middle name, initial, or an alternative spelling that is pronounced identically.

1. MICHAEL J. FOX; MICHAEL FOX
2. WILLIAM BALDWIN; BILLY BALDWIN
3. RICKY MARTIN; DICK MARTIN
4. WILLIAM H. MACY; BILL MACY
5. JAMES DEAN; JIMMY DEAN
6. MICHAEL DOUGLAS; MIKE DOUGLAS
7. JAMES BROWN; JIM BROWN
8. WILLIAM J. PERRY; WILLIAM "REFRIGERATOR" PERRY
9. JAMES TAYLOR; JIM TAYLOR
10. TOM WOLFE; THOMAS WOLFE
11. PETER SELLERS; PETER SELLARS
12. BERNARD SHAW; (GEORGE) BERNARD SHAW
13. JIM BAKKER; JAMES BAKER
14. LOUIS JOURDAN; LOUIS JORDAN
15. ARTHUR MILLER; ARTHUR R. MILLER
16. SAUL STEINBERG; SAUL P. STEINBERG
17. CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS; CHRIS COLUMBUS
18. SAM SHEPARD; SAM SHEPPARD
19. BIL BAIRD; BILL BAIRD
20. BOBBY JONES; BOB JONES
21. JAMES S. BRADY; JAMES BRADY
22. KENNETH CLARK; KENNETH B. CLARK
23. THOMAS HARRIS; THOMAS A. HARRIS
24. LARRY KING; LARRY L. KING
25. CHARLES KEATING; CHARLES KEATING
26. ROBERT PARKER; ROBERT B. PARKER
27. JIMMY STEWART; JAMES B. STEWART
28. CLAY SHAW; E. CLAY SHAW JR.
29. BILLY GRAHAM; BILL GRAHAM
30. ROBERT MERRILL; BOB MERRILL
31. BILLY CRYSTAL; WILLIAM KRISTOL
32. SAMUEL RAMEY; SAM RAIMI
33. BEN JOHNSON; BEN JONSON

**Trios:**

1. JIMMIE WALKER; JIMMY WALKER; JAMES J. WALKER
2. JAMES JONES; JAMES EARL JONES; JIM JONES
3. PAT O'BRIAN; PAT O'BRIEN; PATRICK O'BRIAN
4. JERRY LEWIS; JERRY LEWIS; JERRY LEE LEWIS
5. JOHN GARDNER; JOHN GARDNER; JOHN W. GARDNER
6. WILLIAM MORRIS; WILLIAM MORRIS; WILLIE MORRIS

## CATEGORY C: TRICK QUESTIONS

This final crafty group comprises fictional characters, people who borrowed their pseudonyms and stage names from those of earlier famous persons, and gender-switching duos. Pun and wordplay aficionados will be especially entranced by the homonym and translation examples.

1. MIKE MYERS; MICHAEL MYERS
2. DAVID COPPERFIELD; DAVID COPPERFIELD
3. MATT DILLON; MATT DILLON
4. TIMY TIM; TINY TIM
5. ENGLEBERT HUMPERDINCK; ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK
6. ADAM SMITH; ADAM SMITH
7. ALFRED NEWMAN; ALFRED E. NEUMAN
8. DAVY JONES; DAVY JONES
9. TOM JONES; TOM JONES; TOM JONES; TOMMY LEE JONES
  
10. JEAN SIMMONS; GENE SIMMONS
11. J.P. MORGAN; JAYE P. MORGAN
12. BRETT BUTLER; BRETT BUTLER
13. SAMMY DAVIS, JR.; SAMMI DAVIS
  
14. HENRY GIBSON; HENRIK IBSEN
15. (MEAN) JOE GREEN; GUISEPPE VERDI

How did you score? Perhaps you can add to the fun by coming up with pairs I've overlooked. Be my guest. After all, the game of the name is the name of the game!

### Questique

This is the name of a clever Scrabble-like board game by David English, played by 2 to 4 people on a 22x22 crossword grid. Each person constructs his own crossword on the grid, adding one word each turn from a rack of seven letter tiles drawn from a 150-tile stockpile, and replenishing his rack after the word is played. The object is to cover any 4 of 16 red stars, symmetrically placed on the grid. (Further, one can block an opponent from covering a star with his crossword if one places a word covering a position adjacent to that star.) There are several possible variations, including handicapping and speed play. It can be ordered for 49 pounds sterling (39 pounds in the UK) from Questique Internationale, 37 Queensway, Lincoln L2 4AJ. For more details, consult his website at [www.questique.co.uk](http://www.questique.co.uk).