KICKSHAWS

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Readers are encouraged to send their favorite linguistic kickshaws to the Kickshaws editor, at drABC26@aol.com. Answers can be found in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

Top Ten Signs Your Amish Teen is in Trouble

In Iowa, as in Pennsylvania, we have the Amish, a people who are about as self-supporting as any group can get. But the Amish have teenagers, and that means trouble. Jim Denigan sent this list, from the Internet, of advice to Amish parents:

10. Sometimes stays in bed until after 5 am
9. In his sock drawer, you find pictures of women without bonnets
8. Shows up at barn raisings in full "Kiss" makeup
7. When you criticize him, he yells, "Thou sucketh!"
6. His name is Jebediah, but he goes by Jeb Daddy
5. Defiantly says "If I had a radio, I'd listen to rap"
4. You come upon his secret stash of colored socks
3. Uses slang expression "Talk to the hand, 'cause the beard ain't listening"
2. Was recently pulled over for driving under the influence of cottage cheese
1. He's wearing his big black hat backwards

Chemistry Meets Folk Songs

Mike Morton found an item on the Internet that shows even scientists get the blues: "Back when Isaac Asimov was a chemist, he loved to order paradimethylaminobenzaldehyde because he could sing it to the tune of 'The Irish Washerwoman'."

AEIOU(Y)x2 Words

I recently discovered another solid word with just two each of the five major vowels AEIOU to add to the select handful of such words which have appeared in previous Word Ways. As well as being an AEIOUx2 word, IGOUAHGOUAHIENE (an area in Morocco) contains the tautonymic letter sequence GOUAHGOUAH and, were it not for the letter N, would also be a pair isogram. I also found several locational hyphenated examples and phrases with just two AEIOU sets. These include a hyphenated example with just two each of not only AEIOU but also the sixth vowel, Y: DZHIYELLIGESTYAKH-OBURUOSA is a strait in Russia.

Greek English Matches

On eBay, someone is named ILIANA. Partitioned palindromes are words (or any text) that can be divided into palindromic segments. Each segment must be a palindrome of two or more letters. There are different kinds of partitioned palindromes based on three main elements: number of segments, length of segments, and similarities of palindromes within the segments. For instance, the name ILIANA has two segments, each three letters long and the palindromes are different.

AGAMEMNON, the name of a Greek king, could be called a 3-3-3 partitioned palindrome, since it has three segments, each three letters long, forming three different palindromes. It is even more remarkable in that all the vowels are in alphabetic order and all the consonants are in alphabetic order, but this is one of those bonuses that sometimes occur.

Another element of interest in partitioned palindromes is word length. In particular, what are the longest words that break apart into partitioned palindromes? What is the greatest number of partitioned palindromes of the same length in a single word? Of different lengths? What is the longest partitioned palindrome in a single word (which would have to contain at least one additional palindrome)? What is the greatest number of different partitioned palindromes in a single word?

Some words can be divided in such ways that they form sets of two or more partitioned palindromes. What are some examples? Some words, like ILLINI or ALABAMA, form partitioned palindromes when the partition can be used in each segment it divides (ILLI, INI and ALA,ABA,AMA).

Logological Jury Duty

I've recently completed my first jury duty and found the experience an affirmation of our American judicial system. Those jurors who wished to take notes were handed a pad manufactured by National Brand and titled STENO NOTES. What a wordiful coincidence that the letters in STENO NOTES constitute an anagram! At that epiphanous moment, I experienced an ONSET of TONES from STONE ETONS.

Unreal

One of the most unreal definitions in Webster's Tenth Collegiate shows just how much of a wonderland the English language can be while at the same time paying tribute to a storybook character based on a little girl who knew an Oxford don who happened to write a book about an unreal place populated by unreal characters. This Alice-in-Wonderland definition appears under the entry for *Alice-in-Wonderland:* "*adj.* [fr. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) by Lewis Carroll] (1925): suitable to a world of fantasy or illusion: UNREAL." It's interesting to note that no one named "Lewis Carroll" wrote a book called *Alice in Wonderland.* However, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson came mighty close by writing a book called *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.* I used to think that one of the highest tributes paid to a creative artist of any kind was to have his or her name listed in a reputable and regular dictionary, not a biographical dictionary, with a definition not of the person but of something he or she was famous for doing. The best example is the entry for Rube Goldberg, whose cartoons came to be known as Rube Goldberg devices. But to have an abridged title of your most famous book defined as an adjective—now that is something you'd expect to find going through the looking-glass!

Unused, Unlisted, or Unmentioned Ordinals

Have you ever made a numbered list of things and at some point, say item 34, you remember that you should've included, without removing any other items, a different item 1, because that item should have been FIRST? Instead of renumbering everything, you put 0 before 1—now your list goes from 0 to 34. What is item 0 called, in terms of ordinal numbers? In Webster's Tenth Collegiate, it would be ZEROTH, which is defined as "being numbered zero in a series." Fine. The first item on the list is the zeroth number. That means the second number is the first, and the third is the second. Okay. Suppose you decide to include an item between 0 and 1, and you

number it ½. Now your list begins with items 0, ½, and 1. If 0 is the ZEROTH item, then ONE-HALF must be the ONE-HALFTH item. Omigod! It's not in the dictionary! Well, neither is ONE-THIRDTH or ONE-FOURTHTH, so let's be liberal and allow them to exist, at least until the end of this paragraph. Now you decide to add something before 0, and you call that item –1. It is the MINUS FIRST on the list. You put another item between 3 and 4, and call this new item 3.14159... Checking the dictionary, you'll find that mercifully this ordinal has already been covered under PITH. But some dictionary editor must've accidentally given it the wrong pronunciation and the wrong definition. Still, the word is there, and maybe it will be corrected in the next edition. GOOGOOLTH, "being numbered googol in a series," isn't listed at all, but we can forgive that omission. There will probably never be a list of googol items.

Invariant Word Sets

Invariant alphabetical letters are those that appear in the same position in a word as in the alphabet—A, eBb, baCk, etc. In *Making the Alphabet Dance,* longer invariant words are listed—ApoDEictIcaL, ArChEtypIcaL, nonDEFinItiveNess and a few more, along with a sentence containing 16 invariant letters: A BaD EgG HIt KLM wiPeRS Two WaYs. Another way that invariant alphabetic letters can be used is to take a specific list of related words that usually occur in a predetermined order and arrange the alphabet from A to Z over and over, matching them with the letters in the words. The results can be surprising. For the Greek letter names, the only matches from ALPHA to OMEGA are the letters AMAN, which can be spaced to spell A MAN. If, instead of beginning with ABC, the invariant test sequence begins ZAB (ALPHA has ZABCD under it), then the matching letters are ZHIS, respaced to Z HIS. Greek is a man's alphabet!

The English number names raise some questions about invariancy. The basic question is, for the number names ONE to ONE THOUSAND VIGINTILLION, how many are invariant with the alphabet arranged in order over and over and over? The second basic question is, which invariant letter appears most often? For the number names ONE to TWENTY-SIX, there are ten invariants: HTEWEEOHWE. Note that, after the first three letters, which transpose to THE, the next seven spell three words in a row, WEE, OH, WE. Do most of the invariant letters in the remaining number names spell so many words? Is the number system also a word system?

The months of the year, from JANUARY to DECEMBER, express the concept that they represent. Months indicate the rate at which time passes according to the rate of the moon's passage around the earth, and the only invariant letters are RATE (appearing in MARCH, MAY, SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER).

Speaking of the moon, let's go completely solar systemic and turn our telescopes on the nine planets. There must be many, many incredible invariant messages in the orbits of the orbs and music of the spheres. After all, there are 52 letters, one for each uppercase and lowercase letter of the alphabet, one for each card in a deck, one for each week in a year. Such wonderful eclipses of numbers must cast many shadows of letters on the planets' names. It's easy to find out how many planetary invariants there are, and you don't even have to arrange the letters of the alphabet under them. Simply print the names of the nine planets in their order of distance from the sun, closest to farthest. Now count the letters that are underlined. There are none! There are more populated planets in the solar system than there are invariant letters in their names! E.T., go home!

The Invariant Shakespeare Game

Another way to use invariants is to play The Invariant Shakespeare, which can be a solitaire or a competitive game. The rules are simple: (1) pick a line from one of Shakespeare's sonnets and

print it on a sheet of paper in all capitals in a single line; (2) start with the first letter and recite the alphabet, one letter for each sonnet line letter (as if you'd printed the letters of the alphabet beneath the sonnet line); (3) when you reach a match by speaking the same letter as that in the line (an invariant letter), cross it off and continue; (4) when you reach the end of the line, make a mark to note that you've completed one pass; (5) continue at the beginning of the line again, using the next letter of the alphabet, and repeat finding matches, but skip over letters that you've crossed off; (6) at the end of the line, continue at the beginning again, and keep doing this until you have either crossed off all letters or can't cross off any more. Score is based on how many letters you've crossed off divided by how many times you've gone through the line. In a competitive game, the winner is the person with the highest score.

The Sign Store

I went to the sign store to check out the signs of the times. It's called SIGN OFF during the day and SIGN ON at night, when they turn the sign on. A sign in the window advertised Door Prize signs. A sign on the door advertised Window Shopping signs. I went in and asked the owner how the business was doing. He said it wasn't doing well at all, and he gave a litany of his frustrations:

We didn't sell any Grand Opening signs at our grand opening
We left our No Parking signs outside, and people parked on them
We gave some Garage Sale signs to a guy who sold them at a garage sale
Our Wet Paint signs are still wet
We had a sale on For Sale signs, but they didn't sell
We couldn't sell our Free With Purchase signs at no discount until we included No Discount signs free with purchase
We caught a guy shoplifting our Shoplifters Will Be Prosecuted to the Fullest Extent of the Law signs and prosecuted him to the fullest extent of the law
Another shoplifter walked right out the exit with our No Exit signs
A dog carried off all our Beware of Dog signs
Our Yield signs didn't yield any profit
Someone tried to feed our Don't Feed the Bears sign to some bears
The last guy to buy a Dead End sign died
One of our salesmen set fire to our Fire Sale signs, so we fired him
Our Fine for Littering signs are fine for littering
Most of our Beware of Falling Rocks signs were destroyed by falling rocks
Our Slippery When Wet signs slid down the hill into the river
We couldn't sell our One-Way Street signs because they were pointing the other way
We're selling our Half Price Sale signs at two for the price of one, and we're selling our Two-for-The-Price-of-One signs at half price
If we can't sell our Going Out of Business signs, we're going out of business

Ultrabridged Dictionary

Unabridged dictionaries aren't unabridged. They're just really big—400,000 to 500,000 main entries, but who's counting? Unabridged dictionaries contain definitions of a cornucopia of words, but this raises several problems. The most glaring problem is the fact that people usually go to the dictionary to look up only one word. The other 499,999 or so are just barriers to finding that one important word. Buying an unabridged dictionary is like buying a gumball machine full of a half million all-different gumballs when the only gumball you want is the watermelon-flavored one that might or might not be in there.

The solution is to drastically downsize dictionaries by creating an Ultrabridged Dictionary Series, composed of very short dictionaries which define one and only one word apiece. An Ultrabridged

Dictionary would be much cheaper—anywhere from 10 cents for paperback, $1 for cardboard-back, and $20 for the Franklin Mint platinum-flecked, gold-edged, leather-bound limited collector's edition with certificate of authenticity. Instead of shelling out big bucks for Webster's Unabridged or bigger pounds for the Oxford English Dictionary, you simply buy the Ultrabridged Dictionary that has the word you want to look up. After that, you can look it up again and again by just opening the dictionary to the page following the title page. Words with lots of definitions would have an abridged entry that would fit on both sides of a single page. Thus, there is only a first page and a last page, but no middle pages that you might turn to by accident. The first page is number 1 and the last page number 2. With only one entry to consider, you don't have to be distracted by other entries you come across along the way.

You might argue that an Ultrabridged Dictionary wouldn't help if you wanted to look up a word that isn't in it, but this can happen with any dictionary, no matter how big it is. In an Ultrabridged Dictionary, you know just by looking at the title on the cover whether the word is in it or not. For instance, if you want to look up "no" but all you have is the Ultrabridged Dictionary Volume 499,024: YES, then you don't have to open the book to know that "no" isn't in it. Instead, you can go to the bookstore and buy the volume you need. How many words on the average to Americans look up in a year? Two or three? Maybe four? And people who can't read look up fewer than one.

If each dictionary user would buy only those Ultrabridged Dictionaries that he or she needs, the money left over from the family unabridged dictionary nest-egg could be donated to a long-overdue project: building, supplying and staffing the Logological Institute of Technology (LIT) that would specialize in wordplay, letterplay, and related matters, and would receive government funding for research in order to increase the body of logological knowledge up to the level of such less-important fields of study as microbiology or lawn-gnome craftsmanship. The LIT library, of course, would have a complete run of all 500,000+ Ultrabridged Dictionaries to meet the individual needs of every student. After all, words are like snowflakes; no two people, with the possible exception of Siamese twins, look up the same ones.

By comparison, the telephone companies can offer no ultrabridged telephone book. The phone book of a city has to be unabridged (omitting only those people who don't want to be listed or who use stolen cell phones) because people rely on phone books many times a day so they can find the phone number of a friend, business associate, waitress, etc. The names are listed in alphabetic order, followed by the telephonic definition, which usually includes the phone number and the address. As the saying goes, if it weren't for phone books, people wouldn't know how to read dictionaries. The current trend among new parents to read sections of the telephone book to their children as a means of teaching dictionary usage would no longer be necessary—they could instead return to children's alphabet books.

Some Ultrabridged Dictionaries could serve as greeting cards for special occasions. A person could send Volume 24,529: LOVE on Valentine's Day. A collection agency could send Volume 81,244: DEBTOR to the person that owes money but doesn't know the definition of "debtor". Volume 285,311 would be the most Ultrabridged Dictionary of all, defining NOTHING with its two pages completely blank except for the page numbers and the headword on page 1. The collectors' edition would appeal to the rich; however, children could just as easily collect the cardboardback edition, just like they collect baseball cards today. The advantage here is that instead of a small set of 500, there would be more than 500,000 in a set. If a child started to collect in kindergarten at age 5 and acquired 25 different volumes a day, he or she would complete the collection around age 60. At the same rate, a set of 500 baseball cards could be completed in just 20 days. Where is the challenge? In the same vein, bibliomaniacs could increase

their holdings by 500,000 without needing much more than three or four modestly-wide shelves. Not many people can boast 500,000 books in their personal library. The Ultrabridged Dictionary has many other advantages over all other dictionaries, but space permits listing only a small fraction of them. Certainly more advantages will turn up after the volumes are issued. The shift from Unabridged to Ultrabridged Dictionaries is the wave of the word that would be in Volume 128,381: FUTURE.

David

I rented the movie Artificial Intelligence on a Digital Video Disc. It was a self-referential rental. The consonants of my name are DVD, and the vowels are AI. I liked the movie, too.

A Jesuit's Tale of Divine Wordplay

In the last Word Ways, Jim Puder pointed out something special about St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Roman Catholic Jesuit order—namely, the last four letters of IGNATIUS are the reverse of the last four letters of JESUIT. Such a coincidence seems almost like a revelation, as if a guardian angel had singled those words out to spend an eternity in esidarap paradise. However, as Jim showed, it can be a lleh in reverse trying to fulfill that beatific destiny. As an alumnus of an all-boys' Jesuit prep school (St. Louis U. High), I feel that I owe it to my Jebbie taskmasters, I mean teachers, to attempt the supernaturally difficult task of using IGNATIUS and JESUIT. In addition, as penance for all my sins from the upside-down year of 1961 through the palindromic year of 2002, I'll include LOYOLA in the palindrome to give hope to the souls in purgatory. How to do this? Hmm…Ah!

When I was in high school, my music teacher began each choir practice with a story that illustrated St. Ignatius's great love of music. At the start of one practice, Father Fasolati told us that long ago the Jesuits wanted to exclude one of the two vowel notes, A or E, from the octave, but they couldn't decide which. They wrote the two notes on paper and took it to wise Ignatius. After meditating on the question for a short while, he silently pointed to the E and shook his head "no." Most of the Jesuits interpreted this to man "no, don't keep E." However, a very pious member of the order, whom everyone called Angie the Angel, fervently believed that Ignatius shook his head "no" to mean "no, don't *remove* E." Brother Angie was torn between the two letters since his name began with one and ended with the other. Another Jesuit, the fanatical Brother Otto, known both for his unwavering devotion to Ignatius and for his talent as a holy palindromist, told Brother Angie, whom he now considered a musical heretic, what Ignatius *really* meant. He naturally put it in a palindrome:

E, not A! Atone! Ignatius ejected on a Loyola nod, etc., E, Jesuit Angie, not A, a tone.

Brother Angie was a blessed charadist who wrote poems that used the same letters with different spacing and meaning in each line. Although he didn't believe Brother Otto, he appreciated the charade embedded in Brother Otto's palindrome (ATONE, A TONE), and so he replied with a simple, pure, and beatific charade showing both his doubt that E was excluded and his concern that "Te Deum," the hymn of praise to God, couldn't be sung without it. Out of respect for Brother Otto, Brother Angie included his fellow Jesuit's nickname to indicate that it wasn't Ignatius but Otto who wanted to exclude E:

A note: A, not E? A? No 'Te'! An Ot E?

When Ignatius heard of Brother Otto's devotional palindrome and of Brother Angie's humble charade, he was almost moved to tears. However, since Ignatius was not only a saint but also a master anagrammatist, he mused on the musical dilemma by anagramming TEARS instead of weeping them. The result was his little-known prayer to St. Ear, patron saint of sound:

St. Ear, tears stare... Rats! E rates rest! A rates star! E? E's art tears A! Rest, St. Ear.

At that point he decided to allow both of the vowel notes to continue coexisting in harmony. Instead of dropping A or E, he decided to rid the octave of Z, the last note of all. Nobody protested—except for old Father Zeke. With the wisdom of Solomon, Ignatius dealt fairly with Father Zeke's complaint by admitting Z back into the octave on the condition that it be sung only when the singer or singers were sleeping. Father Zeke accepted this with the fervor of a religious zealot: he wrote hymns that followed Ignatius's rule and published them in a legendary songbook titled "Hymns in the Key of Z." He published only two copies and gave one to Ignatius, who, some believe, showed it to other saints, who had a merry time looking at it. The other copy wound up in the Vatican Library. No one knows how it got there. Some say it was a humorous form of miracle. All of the hymns are composed of the only note Father Zeke ever used for the rest of his life, Z, in a dazzling variety of ways, and all the lyrics are written with words spelled with one or more Z's. The only place that other letters appear is in the title of each hymn: "Swing Low, Sweet Pillow," "Amazing Cover, How Warm It Is," "Bed of Ages," and many others. However, below the imprimatur on the title page, the potential singer finds this stern warning: "By Jesuit decree, these hymns are not to be practiced or sung aloud, under pain of mortal sin, until the singer has fallen asleep." Today, Z is known among Jesuits by several other names. In tribute to Father Zeke, some call it "The Sound of MuZeke." Others refer to it as "the note dreams are made of," "the humming of angel wings," "the melancholy melody of midnight," "St. Uvula's ululation," "the Gregorian chant of the soft palate," "Lazarus laughter," and "the sacred snore."

A final note: the assistant music teacher at St. Louis University, Brother D. O'Remi, claims that Father Fasolati made up some of this story, but I tend to believe the good Father. It's just too detailed and realistic to be a fabrication. But for some, it may still be a matter of faith to accept such a miraculous tale of heavenly wordplay. Amen.

America, Love It Or Leave It

Last Christmas, on a visit to friends in Evansville, Indiana, I spotted a patriotic sign in front of a motel. At first I though it said AMERICAN, LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT, but I had to do a double-take. The sign used those removable letters such as the ones well above the ground at theater marquees, but this sign was sitting at ground level. Some prankster had taken the first two letters from STAY on the back side and used them to spell a much different patriotic message: AMERICA, LOVE TITS OR LEAVE IT.

Spelunking Palindromes

In the last Word Ways, Bill O'Connor created palindromic chaos in a cave by asking Eva what he could do in it. What he didn't realize was that Tau Cave had to be evacuated:

Evacuate Tau Cave!
Did I evacuate Tau Cave? I did.
Now it is evacuated, I hide. Tau Cave's it! I won!
Was I evacuated? I hide! Tau Cave I saw.
E.g., never evacuate Tau Cave! Revenge!

Tops, lad! It's evacuated! I hide Tau Cave's tidal spot.
No elf? Far side? Tau Cave's evacuated! Is raffle on?
One car, no ride! Tau Cave's evacuated! Iron race? No.
No! Derided Nobel bonafide! Tau Cave's evacuated if a noble bonded ire, Don.
Tip 'til no omen ode? Tau Cave's evacuated one moonlit pit.
To plan, Eva, evacuate Tau Cave, a venal pot.

From Cyberspace

As mentioned before, OSAMA BIN LADEN anagrams to IS A LONE BAD MAN, which was independently discovered by many people. Unfortunately, the anagram is flawed: Bin Laden isn't a lone terrorist, he isn't simply bad, and he isn't necessarily alive. Mike Morton writes that a new, more accurate anagram of the name has been making the Internet rounds. Recently the US has been looking for genetic signs of OSAMA BIN LADEN by examining SOME DNA IN A LAB.

Prisons of Wordplay

Within the bars of prison names, wordplay has been caged. SAN QUENTIN PRISON has perhaps the most incredible collection of incarcerated letters of all. First, it uses eight consecutive letters of the alphabet (NOPQRSTU); second, it uses all five major vowels; and third, N (the first of the consecutive letters) is the first consonant to follow the first occurrence of each vowel. Rival prison ALCATRAZ, although no logological San Quentin, is a univocalic (using A's only) whose letters go from A to Z. It also has a CAT with a RAT on its tail. (The RAT is TRA, the reverse of ART.) Finally, the third of these famous temples of criminal justice, SING-SING, fits into a sentence that uses the same syllable/word 13 times, a sentence so normal-sounding that—who knows?—it might have been a musical direction given by the leader of the maximum security glee club. Here it is: when you sing "Sing, Sing-Sing, sing 'Sing-Sing,'" Sing-Sing, sing "Sing-Sing" sing-song!

Iowa, Ohio, And…

In Nebraska there is a fabled city unlike any other in the United States. Its name spells the names of two states in an overlapping sequence of letters, OHIOWA. As icing on the cake, the two overlapping letters are IO, the initials of the two connected state names. If any other cities have overlapping state names, let them come forth and share the limelight.

A Palindrome Sings Opera

Art Small wrote the poem below, whose title appears above. Art explains its inspiration as follows: "While looking out the window from my study I saw a slip of white against a tree. I went out to investigate and found this note. I read it backwards and forwards but it made little sense to me. I thought you might better understand it, so I send it on to you."

A Palindrome struggled to extricate itself
from the bounds that held its voice so tightly.
It wanted to be able to sing.
It paced forwards and backwards,
twisting against the restrictions the alphabet imposed.

Vowels and consonants stood around
Wanting to be of help

But there was little they could do.
For one brief moment he thought he had freed his voice.
It was a sound like opera.
But then it faded, retreated within itself.

He asked again the question that had plagued him:
Are poets a waste? Opera!

Nicknamania

My son Danny brought up the question: which name has the most nicknames, including plausible spelling variants? For commonly-known nicknames, we decided that Richard may score highest with 13. We didn't use any official source, so the list is speculative: Rich, Richie, Richy, Rick, Ricky, Rickie, Ricki, Rik, Riki, Rikki, Dick, Dickie, Dicky. Can you find more? Which girl's name has the most nicknames? Richard (Rich? Richie?) Lederer suggests Elizabeth. Which other names for either gender have ten or more nicknames? Dawkins is the nickname for what name?

Number Packing

In the last Kickshaws Jim Puder suggested finding transadditions for every pair of neighboring numbers. In the same issue, David Robinson packed the names of the months, presidents, and states in single chains of letters. Combining both ideas, I fiddled with a packing problem that involves combining neighboring numbers. The challenge is to start at any number and try packing the next two or more so that the optimum packing uses the same number of letters as the sum of the numbers. Any ordered number series can be used. In the examples that follow, the first two are counting numbers and the last two are numbers from the Fibonacci series. For each of the two series, those are the only chains that work. I tried other series in which the difference between each number was constant. Numbers with differences of two, three, and four produced a total of four pairs but no chains of three or more numbers. What other series could be successfully used?

FTWOUHRENE (1+2+3+4 = 10)
FTWOUHREE (2+3+4 = 9)
FIVTWHREONE (Fibonacci 1+2+3+5 = 11)
FIVTWOHREE (Fibonacci 2+3+5 = 10)

Great Scott! Comic Book Poetry!

When I was a kid, I collected comic books with the fervor of a superhero bent on ridding the world of evildoers hiding in their underground lairs. My parents let me have an entire large closet with six long shelves for storing my comics in stacks. When I got into high school, I thought of comics as kid stuff and of girls as grown-up stuff. I sold them (the comics, that is) to a hobby shop for two cents apiece. Most of them were DC superhero comics in mint condition from the late 1950s to 1964. I got $12 for the 600 or so that I had; today they'd be worth $50,000 to $100,000. Anyway, all regrets aside, I was an expert on the comics of that period. Two comic books used a poem as part of their main character's stock shtick. In one child's comic (before I got into superheros), the main characters were Mary Jane (a character like Alice in Wonderland) and Sniffles (a mouse). Each episode began with Mary Jane reciting a two-line poem that enabled her to shrink down in size and join her mouse pal on an adventure. In the superhero comic, Green Lantern had an incredible power ring that could do just about anything he willed it to do, but every day he had to renew its power by reciting a poem and holding his power ring in front of the special green lantern at his home. Green Lantern is still alive and kicking, but Mary Jane joined

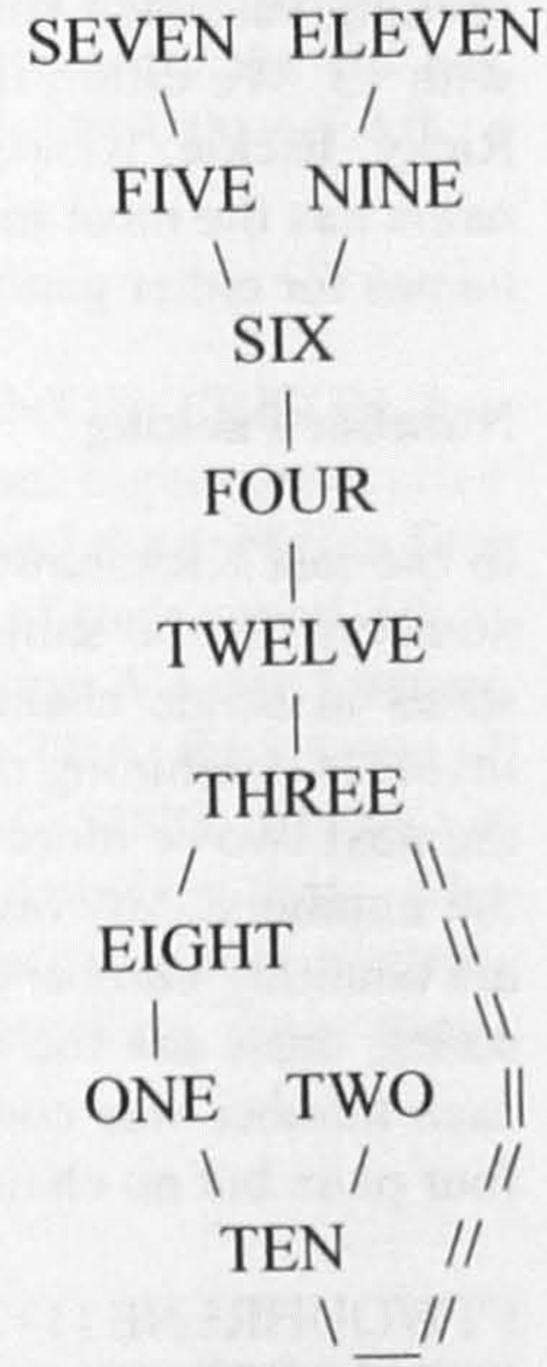
Alice and Dorothy in Neverneverland. Both poems appear below (from memory, so they might not be totally correct). Are there any other comics in which the characters gained powers or accomplished something by repeating a special poem? If not, here is the entire canon of Comic Book Poems:

MARY JANE'S POEM
O, magic words of poof poof piffles,
Make me just as small as Sniffles.

GREEN LANTERN'S POEM
In brightest day, in darkest night,
No evil shall escape my sight.
Let those who worship evil's might
Beware my power—green lantern's light.

Clock Numbers

Number name convergence series have been discussed in numerous articles. In such a series, the alphabetic values (A=1 to Z=26) of the letters of the name of any positive number add up to produce another number. The alphabetic values of that number name are added up to produce another, and so on, till they converge to a single name or a cycle of numbers (-216-228-288-255-240- in English). The numbers on a clock work differently—they go from 1 to 12 and then back to 1, over and over. This closed circular system makes it easy to trace all the convergence paths. For instance, ONE = 15+14+5 = 34. Since there is no 34 on a clock, this is divided by 12 and the remainder is the next number in the series. ONE = 34/12 = 2 remainder 10; thus, ONE = 10. (If the remainder is 0, then the number is equal to 12.) At the right is a diagram showing how the 12 numbers converge; single lines mean that the convergence pattern goes downward. Thus, SEVEN goes to FIVE goes to SIX, etc. Double lines mean that the pattern goes back up; TEN goes to THREE is the only one. All numbers converge to the –THREE-EIGHT-ONE-TEN- cycle.



Future Titles: Books in Preparation

As far as sales go, the most important part of a book is its title. The title names the book, and it also gives the cover artist the theme for the cover. And, since the title first appears on the cover, that's what really determines whether a person is going to even pick the book off the shelf. I've worked at four bookstores, and I know from experience that people always judge a book by its cover. I love making up titles and imagining what the cover should be. There's the Book of the Month Club, but why not a Title of the Month Club? I'm currently not working on two books that I have titles for: *Ventriloquism for Dummies* and *Secrets of a Tic-Tac-Toe Grandmaster*. Recently a fellow title maker sent a list of titles that are so clever they are guaranteed to win the National Book Award or the Pulitzer, but there's one problem: when a person has created the ultimate title, writing the book is like being helicoptered to the peak of Mt. McKinley and then having to climb down. Will Anil come through on these gems of the title maker's art? Only time will tell.

Einstein and His Relatives
The Nuclear Family as Nuclear Breeder
A Textbook of Pornographic Genetics, or "Let's Get into Each Other's Genes"
Electron Microscopy of the Yin-Yang Interface
Lost in the Bewilderness
It's All an Optional Illusion
Beyond Nietzsche and Skinner [both of whom wrote well-known *Beyond…* books]

Pro Con: The Lawyer as Legal Sophist
Asinine Tales, or Polycaudal Donkeys at Sea

Letteral Words

The May and August 1970 Kickshaws, according to Anil, featured alphonetics called "Literal Words"—pronouncing a 'word' letter by letter. They cited 26 examples from Walter Penney, David Silverman, Ross Eckler, Murray Pearce and Josefa Byrne. Best examples were DFI, XLNC, XPDNC, MNNC, RST, NRG, NTT, RABN, OPM, DVS, NVS and TDS. I missed any follow-up, so I brazenly offer a further list 32 years later. And I recommend a misspelling of the title to the more revealing pun name of Letteral Words, a nonce homophone that stresses the "letter" etymology of "literal" rather than its modern connotations of not figurative, not exaggerated, or verbatim. I also include many bigrams, which the earlier article seemed to find unworthy of mention, and I extend the concept to letter-numeral and a couple of letter-symbol words—and to phrases. Some letteral bigrams are in wide use: EZ, FX, MT, 4X, K9.

The following 'words' are so obvious I'll mostly dispense with translations unless there are multiple answers. But, as an aid, they are alphabetized by true spelling.

IL (aisle, isle, I'll, I yell), AL, LRG, NLG6, NIL8, RA, RT, SN9, SQ, SSS, AVN, OA, B10, B4, B9, KG, DK, D9'(denyin'), XTC, LMN8, MN8, NV, SKP, SA, XX (execs, exacts), 4A, 4M (forerim, forum), 4C, 'AZ (hazy), 'R10 (hearten), '110 (heighten), LO, IC, MNCT, NDN, N8, NO¢, N10CT, N2, IR (ire, eyer), IV, JL, OBDNC (obediency), ODS, PN (paean, paeon, peon, peein'), 6S, TNMN□ (Tianamen Square), 110 (wantin', wanton, want in), YL (while, wile), Y10, YR (whyer, wire), EN

To extend the game, here are some semi-letteral alphonetici-orthographic hybrids: GODsick, I4E tower, log-LOG (poor homophone, but apt double logging for logology), CD character (BD eyes, XS hair, Xetra). And three easy letteral phrases: NE1410S?, 4Q (a rude comment), and CNIK9.

The following Letteral Phrases are real crowd teasers, a good puzzle if unpunctuated and unaccented. They're again alphabetical by true spelling. One trickster depends on the British pronunciation of Z (zed); another uses a common British first name and pronounces 0 as "owe".

1. AGNC
2. NRDRR2U
3. FSSFZZ
4. P708717XP87128HSNHS1284FRNFRR7
5. CUNW
6. CZA
7. UN10Q

British Alphabetization

The British do things differently from the rest of us. Sir Jeremy Morse writes of a unique alphabetization scheme used at Child's Bank where he started working in 1953, which "operated normally for the first letter, but thereafter according to the first vowel, with all cases where that vowel was A coming, again in conventional order, before all with E,I,O,U, etc. Thus BLAND came before BENNETT, BRISTOW before BOND, STANLEY before SPENCER before SMITH before SLOANE before SCHULZ. It made no difference if the first letter was itself a vowel (ASTAIRE before ALLEN before AIRD), but where there was no following vowel (ASH or ORR), these names came before the A..A..'s and O..A..'s. The rationale given for this extraordinary practice was that when the clerk was checking handwritten signatures on cheques, the vowels were supposed to stand out more clearly than the consonants. When you had been sorting cheques all day on this system, it became difficult to look up names in the telephone directory!"