

## NEW RECORD PANGRAMMATIC WINDOWS

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Most readers of *Word Ways* are familiar with the “accidental pangram” problem, which is to find a short ‘window’ (block of contiguous text) in published text that, by accident rather than deliberation, contains each letter of the alphabet at least once. The record for the shortest known accidental pangram in English has stood for 95 years, as it was reported in print by A. Cyril Pearson in *The Twentieth Century Standard Puzzle Book*, published in 1907. It is from *The Beth Book*, a popular 1897 novel by Sarah Grand (republished as recently as 1980 by The Dial Press). On page 200 of the Dial Press edition we read

**It was an exquisite deep blue just then, with filmy white clouds drawn up over it like gauze to veil its brightness.**

The pangrammatic window, shown in bold, is 65 letters long. Accidental pangrams this short are exceedingly rare – so rare, in fact, that no example shorter than this one has ever been found. Until now. The two new record windows reported here are both 64 letters long. Only one letter saved, ‘tis true, but in the quest for shorter accidental pangrams every reduction is a hard-won victory.

The first passage is from the romance novel *A French Encounter* by Cathy Williams, published by Mills & Boon (Surrey, U.K.) in 1992. In the middle of chapter nine is the following paragraph:

Alyssia’s heart was beating ferociously, and there was a throbbing in her temples that was **making her feel quite dizzy. Or maybe it was just his proximity having that effect** on her.

This window, like the one in *The Beth Book*, has no proper names – a pleasing feature, as inclusion of one or more proper names probably makes it easier to snag some of the harder letters like J, Q, X and Z. The window spans a sentence boundary, rather than being contained in a single sentence like the *Beth Book*.

The second one we found comes from an article entitled *The Prat who Calls Himself the Hitman* in the April 1989 issue of *Sky*, a U.K.-based pop-culture magazine. The article is about music impresario Pete Waterman, whose words are quoted in the first paragraph. The “Ritzy” is a club in Nottingham.

“Ten years from now I’m gonna be 52, and I’m not going to be able to go down the Hacienda without looking a complete prat. I’d like to be able to spend **some time in Japan, which I find very beautiful and relaxing.**”

**Back at the Ritzy** queues are forming around the block...

The entire article containing this pangrammatic window can be read on-line at

<http://www.cafe80s.freeseerve.co.uk/saw/interv/pw11.htm>

A scan of the article is also available there, allowing one to view the pangram in its original magazine format as well as in text form. This window contains two proper names (one of them quite common, the other a well-defined place) and is split across a *paragraph* boundary. If only Mr. Waterman had said “...spend time in Japan, which I find so very beautiful and relaxing...”, the window would have been 60 letters long. But enough *post facto* wishful thinking. The new standard to beat is 64. Back to the search!