

KICKSHAWS

DAVE MORICE

Iowa City, Iowa

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.

Word Sites for the Logophile

Don Hauptman sent the following article from the computer section of the New York Times:

A love of words and the connections among them is the thread running through web sites created by Doug Beeferman, a computer scientist. Take Rhyme Zone (www.rhymezone.com). Enter a word, and the site will tell you all the words that rhyme with it. You can also ask for antonyms, synonyms, similar-sounding words, and words with the same prefix or consonant pattern, among other features.

If that's too wordy for you, there's Mr. Beeferman's Cinema FreeNet (www.cinfn.com), a specialized interface with the Internet Movie Database (indb.com) that explores the interrelationships among movies, actors, directors, and producers.

His Shakespeare Search (www.rhymezone.com/shakespeare) allows you to "incrementally browse" lines from the works, revealing which words most commonly follow other words ("lord" is the word that most frequently follows in lines beginning with "my").

Lexical FreeNet (www.lexfn.com) is a "connected thesaurus" that explores the relationship between two words or concepts in often-unexpected ways. Its fans include songwriters, puzzle makers and creators of product names, among others.

Last year Mr. Beeferman bought the meta-dictionary onelook.com, which searches nearly 960 dictionaries when you enter a word. He has added a reverse dictionary and a wild-card search (a superb way to cheat at crossword puzzles, incidentally).

The sites all spring from Mr. Beeferman's graduate work in statistical and natural language processing at Carnegie Mellon University in the late 90's. "To me, a dictionary is any resource that maps a word to the information about that word," he said. "There are thousands of sites on the Web that fit that definition, and my hope is to index them all."

A Month by Any Other Name

To start off 2004, here is a set of month name names provided by Louis Phillips:

JAN Murray	MAE West	Lucius SEPTIMUS Severus
FIBBER McGee	JUNE Allyson	OCTAVIO Paz
Frederic MARCH	JULIE Christie	Ramon NOVARRO
AVERELL Harriman	AUGUST Strindberg	DECIUS

Abbreviary

Louis Phillips points out that some abbreviations—like doc (document) and apt (apartment)—resemble words in their own right. What is the longest abbreviation (and no acronym) listed in any dictionary or reference book that forms a word? Can one write a paragraph of abbreviation-words that make sense both ways? Using Webster's Tenth Collegiate's list of abbreviations, I wrote the following to show how easy it is to make nonsense both ways:

Ill? Dial no doc in bus. Sing in apt cog

Illustrated dialect? Number document, inch business. Singular inch, apartment cognate

Stating the Question

Darryl Francis sent the following lists of words. Of the first, he writes "Here is a list of 27 words and terms, mostly taken from Webster's Third New International. Can you deduce what is special about each of the items here?"

Calabrian manna	sillaginoids	nomina conservanda
Malakostraka	clinodiagonal	cohesion
intraorganizational	kilowatt	congregation
Arkansawyers	kamarinskaias	Rhodesia and Nyasaland
golden pileolated warbler	imagine	transsexuals
fluoridate	mammary gland	chutzpah
geomorphological	combination in restraint of trade	overemployment
half-wave rectifier	ministers without portfolios	viraginian
midrashot	demonstrational	twentysomething

"Here is a different list, of just 7 items this time. The common theme is similar to that of the 27 above, but is more specific. Can you identify the common theme?"

cylindrarthritis	cochleiform	tableaux vivants
pilot-whale	gill-over-the-ground	unteach
impatience		

"Two of these words, impatience and unteach, are related by a common theme which is even more specific than that of the group of 7. What is it? What other word shares a similar property with unteach?"

What Kind of Question is That?

William Shakespeare wrote "To be, or not to be; that is the question." But he did not say what type of question it was. Bill Brandt wrote the following variations to help resolve this quandary:

- 2B, or not 2B; that is a "which hotel room" question
- Tubby, or not tubby; that is a weighty question
- To bay, or not to bay; that is a dog-gone good question
- Toupee, or not toupee; that is a hairy question
- Da bee, or not da bee; that is a honey of a question
- To pee, or not to pee; that is an urgent question
- Toby, or not Toby; that is a "what to name the baby" question
- To boy, or not to boy; that is Tarzan's last will and testament question

Da poi, or not da poi; that is a food for thought question
 2 pi, or not 2 pi; that is a roundabout question
 To pie, or not two pie; that is a doubly-sweet question
 To buy, or not to buy; that is a pricey question
 Dubai, or not Dubai; that is a sheik location question
 Tippy, or not tippy; that is a spiritual question
 Teepee, or not teepee; that is an intentional question
 Tabby, or not tabby; that is a categorical question
 Tube B, or not Tube B; that is the torpedo launch question
 Tow boy, or not tow boy; that is a water ski question

Attempted Sofa Heist

Bill weaves a tale in name only. As he explains: "There was an attempted sofa heist at the local home furnishings emporium by Robin DeStore and his gang. The gist of what happened can be deduced by reading the list of gang members' names."

"Isadora Open?" "Fred Knot—Theodore S. Locked Titus Kanby."

"Estelle A. Problem? Jimmy D. Lock!" (Doris D. Molished)

"Hugo Enside—Wayne DeBack."

"Seymour Sofas?" "Slim Pickins."

"Carrie DeSofa—Anita Hand."

"Shirley U. Jest!"

"Harriet Up—Sally Forth!"

"Luke, DeKopps! Vera Busted—Althea N. DeSlammer!"

Deprefixers

"There are some words that are only used when they have a prefix," Bill writes. "For example something can be 'inevitable and disconcerting' but never 'evitable and concerting'. Sometimes these words are called 'deprefixers'. In the Apr 11 1999 Magazine Section of the Sunday New York Times, the William Safire column On Language included a section about a group of people called the Deprefixers. This group collects words that are only used with their prefixes, and explores ways to use the words without the prefixes. Although I am not an official member of that group, I have used their approach to describe a recent job interview..."

"I had a job interview at a large multinational company with Mr. Burns at 2 o'clock. I did not drink any alcohol for lunch so that I would be *corrigible* and *toxicated* for the interview. Before going to the office I checked in the mirror to make sure I looked *seemly* and *couth* and that my hair was *kempt*. When I arrived, the secretary told me Mr. Burns was available and *communicado*. Looking *concerted* and *shoveled*, I entered his office in a *gainly* manner and *chalanly* shook his hand. After he looked at my resume he *paraged* my references and told me my job history was the most *combobulated* he had ever seen. He said it would be a real *pediment* to the interview. His questions were all *scrutable*, and he asked them in a most *concerting* way. I *eptly* answered his questions in a *ruly* manner and *advertently* made sure my replies were *petuous* and precise. He appeared to be *plussed* by my *chievous* answers. My initial *givings* turned out to be correct. The interview was *asterous* and I got the job. *Mediatly* he *puted* that I could begin next Monday and *suaded* me to start work in the shipping department. He said the employees there were all *gruntled* and *gusted*. My family was not *mensly poverished* so I was glad the job had a good starting salary."

Shopping for Cars

Bill swears on a stack of car magazines that the following are salespeople he met in a recent search for a new horseless carriage:

Juanita Newkar	Shirley U. Jest	Nadia Beliefme	Sasha Deal
Luke A. Redkarr	Obadiah M. Knot	Ken U. Dobetter	F.U. DeCash
Emma Chisit	U. Wanda Why	Elsie F. Icon	Manny Bucks
Olive Datkar	Carlotta S. Empty	Lois Price	Anita Approval
Megan Offer	Celeste One		

Alphabetical Triplets

Susan Thorpe sends this follow-up to an earlier work of hers: "In 'Numerically Equivalent Letter Replacements' [in the Nov 2001 Word Ways], assigning A=1, B=2 through Z=26, I changed words into other words by replacing a single letter with a group of letters having the same letter total and, similarly, by replacing a group of letters with either a single letter or another group of letters. Here the same method is applied in order to obtain three like letters, alphabetical triplets. I decided to impose the following constraints:

- (1) none of the letters in the word can be retained for use as one of the triplets
- (2) the word must be split into three groups of letters to make the triplets
- (3) solid words only

The triplets aaa and bbb are not possible under these constraints. Otherwise, the only triplet for which a word was not found is fff. When the three letter groups have an equal number of letters, the word is also a numerical tautonym.

ccc	Addis Ab ba ba , in Ethiopia
ddd	Ca ac ac , a Chumashan village (Hodge's Handbook of American Indians)
eee	Ad da da , a populated place in Morocco; Ad da bba , a stream in Djibouti
ggg	Fa fa be , a populated place in Senegal
hhh	Dac ag ag , a wadi in Somalia
iii	de ed ed
jjj	bec cacc ia , a woodchuck
kkk	ch ef fe , chief
lll	dec ka ge
mmm	he ald ed
nnn	Ma gg ie
ooo	je na na , OED zenana
ppp	gi mba ld , OED gimbal
qqq	pa cka ble
rrr	co me nd , OED common
sss	do ra do , a fish
ttt	br eo sa , OED breeze
uuu	Il li pe , a genus of East Indian trees of the saponilla family
vvv	mi mi cs
www	va in er
xxx	Cu lic es , plural of Culex, a gnat
yyy	te chn ical
zzz	vac cin ate

Letter Names

Some first names (or nicknames) sound like a single letter. BEA, DEE, JAY, KAY and EM sound like B, D, J, K and M. Without the diminutive -Y or -IE ending, EFFIE, ELLIE, EMMY and ESSIE sound like F, L, M and S. (ESSIE, less familiar, is the first name of Essie Mae Washington-Williams, the daughter of the late Senator Strom Thurmond and his black maid, Carrie Butler.) DIDI, CECI and GIGI sound like a single letter—D, C and G—doubled. That is a total of ten letter names of one type or another—BCDFGJKLMS. Ideally (IDLE) there should be 26, but 16 are missing. Are there any others (is there any ENNY)?

Shakespearean Remixes

Here are some lines from Shakespeare's plays with the words presented differently to form different dialogs. With a little persistence, one could rewrite all of ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL to make ALL'S WELL? *THAT* END'S WELL. Meanwhile, some mini-plays from a few years or days ago.

"Put out the light."

"And then?"

"Put out."

"The light?"

"To be,

Or not."

"To be!!!"

"That is the question?"

"Tomorrow."

"And...?"

"Tomorrow!"

"And...?"

"Tomorrow!!!"

"All the world's...?"

"A stage."

"And all the men?"

"And..."

"Women?"

"Merely players."

"Double."

"Double?!"

"Toil."

"And trouble fire."

"Burn."

"And cauldron."

"Bubble, fillet of fenny."

"Snake in the cauldron!"

"Boil."

"And bake eye of newt."

"And toe of frog wool."

"Of bat and tongue."

"Of dog adder's fork."

"And blind worms sting lizards."

"Leg and howlets?"

"Wing for a charm—"

"Of pow'rful trouble."

"Like a hell-broth boil?"

"And bubble double."

"Double toil---"

"And trouble fire..."

"...Burn."

"And cauldron..."

"...Bubble."

Ordinal Letter Words

"Nth is considered to be a word," Anil writes, "but none of the other ordinal letters is. Why not? I've tried to rectify this slight, using the four suffixes -st, -nd, -rd, -th at will."

Ast (aced)

Hnd (ancient)

Oth (oath)

Uth (youth)

Bth (type of oven)

Ist (iced)

Pst (pieced)

Vrd (veered)

Cst (ceased)

Jst (chased)

Qrd (cured)

Wth (two Uths)

Dnd (the end)

Krd (cared)

Rth (hearth)

Xst (exist)

End (end)	Lth (health)	Snd (ascend)	Yrd (wired)
Frd (effort)	Mnd (emend)	Tth (teeth)	Znd (send)
Grd (jeered)			

G, That's Big!

Anil has a grand theory about G-words: "A 'G' used to be a lot of money. It's still linked to magnitude—most words meaning 'large' contain the letter G. Consider these (plus many derivatives like grand, grandise, aggrandized): BIG, Brobdingnagian, extravagant, galactic, gaping, Gargantuan, gazillionth, general, generous, geo-, global, GIANT, giga-, good-sized, god-sized, good-god-sized, goliath, googleplexic, GRAND, grave (weighty), GREAT, GROSS, grown, heightened, HUGE, humongous, king-sized, LARGE, lengthy, magna-, magni-, mega-, mighty, mind-boggling, prodigious, regal, strong. Add these gerundives: abounding, awe-inspiring, blooming, booming, exceeding, imposing, resounding, slashing, smacking, strapping, surpassing, sweeping, swinging, thumping, thundering, towering, walloping, whacking, whopping.

In fact, not too many large words lack a G. And I won't undermine my argument by naming them! Instead I challenge you to produce a list of words meaning large and lacking a G that's anywhere near as big as this. Adjectives only and large only—no largeness, enlarged, enlargement, enlarging or large things (like humdinger). [Or] can you enlarge my G-word list? Can you name other concepts so closely tied to a single letter? I can only think of two, N for negatives and M for mother, and they both entail far fewer total words."

Seymour Butts

In the last Kickshaws, William Brandt listed medical consultants Seymour Butts and Ben Dover as proctologists. Rex Gooch notes that "Ben Dover is a British actor/director/producer of porn videos, mainly for the German market. Seymour Butts is something similar." The website www.adultfilmdatabase.com lists a movie "Big Boobs in Buttsville" –Seymour Butts, Cortknee, Devon Deray, Kelly Jean, Kimberly Kummings, Letha Weapons, Marc Davis, Ron Jeremy, Tatiana, Tom Byron... In Iowa city (and elsewhere), Seymour Butts is the name of a toy character sold at Spencer's Gifts. When you press a squeegee, Butts pulls down his pants, bends over, and farts. Regarding Ben Dover, is there an Eileen Dover in the house?

Speaking for the Little People

A reader who wishes to remain anonymous sends this message about the state of the bookstores:

"I have mixed thoughts about small bookstores vs. the giants. As anyone with a conscience, I do not approve of the bullying tactics of the superchains which put the quaint neighborhood stores out of commission—but as a local author (with a New York publisher and global distribution), the small 'neighborly' stores have shown no interest in my current book, with the exception of Cody's Books in Berkeley. Thanks to the unethical and unfair advantage of Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, Walmart, and other conglomerates, I, a midlist author, am earning at least *some* royalties for my writings. Had I relied on the supposed code of ethics claimed by the local small stores, I would have starved for my years of work, literally and professionally. In financial despair, I made the rounds of many small bookstores, pitching signed copies of my current book, but was offered at most a dollar and change for each by some of them. The book was rejected outright by others. They considered the copies 'used'. Two stores that bought the book from me later advertised it on their websites as 'signed by the author' at ten times the price they paid me.

There are at least two sides of the large chain stores vs. the 'victimized' small operations issue, and when Silva Books in Alameda folded recently, I can't say I shed a tear."

The Sotadic Definitive Article

Peter Newby suggests the following challenge: "THE is a long-overlooked constituent of palindromes, yet it is possible! Consider the following:

HEHTE	obsolete past tense of HIGHT, to order
KEHTE	obsolete past tense of CATCH
LEHTER	obsolete form of LAUGHTER
MEHTAR	originally an important French official, now a mere stable boy

"True, one needs the artifice of a New Bybwen comment to justify the obsolete, but ...RA THE M... is available for the dedicated follower of Sotades. Who will be the first to entertain the readers of this column with the adventures of such as SARA THE MAID?"

Fisherman to Stable Boy

Inspired by Peter's gathering of EHT-words, I wrote the following quatrains that, I hope, illustrate one of humanity's basic conflicts. The scenario is enacted over and over every day at restaurants around the world. You're probably familiar with it: the hungry fisherman, still smelling of fish, arrogantly makes fun of the poor stable boy, still smelling of stables. But there are two sides to every conflict, and here they are:

FISHERMAN ADDRESSES STABLE BOY

And now I just hehte
The fish that I kehte!
I'll eat them with lehter
And mock you, mere mehtar.

STABLE BOY'S RESPONSE

The fish that you hehte
Shall fill me with lehter,
For those, sir, I kehte!
Yes, I, the mocked mehtar.

Father and Mother Art

DADA is the name of an early 20th century art movement. The word comes from French baby-talk for *hobby-horse*. POP is the name of a late 20th century art movement. The word comes from a shortening of POPULAR. In English, DADA and POP can also mean FATHER. The Museum of Modern Art in New York is often referred to as MOMA, which reverses to A MOM.

Leapfrog™

Leapfrog™ is a word puzzle game devised by Louis Phillips. The rules follow: "To play Leapfrog™, you must find a word whose every other letter (starting with the second letter) spells a word. The two words together (with the main word first) form a phrase to satisfy the Phrase

Clue. There are three clues given: (1) Phrase Clue, (2) Main Word, and (3) Leapfrog (i.e., that word formed by every other letter of the main word). Some of the clues are given in the form of puns, jokes, anagrams, transposals, etc. For example,

Phrase Clue: What Arabs would like to get from King Kong

Main Word (7 letters): Of the animal kingdom

Leapfrog (3 letters): What a scholar burns at midnight

Answer: Gorilla oil”

1. Phrase Clue: Don't do this to a member of Olympus; Main Word (8 letters): Bring a blush to someone's cheeks; Leapfrog (4 letters): Planet
2. Phrase Clue: A kind who doesn't know nothing; Main Word (8 letters): Without knowledge; Leapfrog (4 letters): Mascot for a Navy man
3. Phrase Clue: A very unpeaceful attempt; Main Word (6 letters): A songwriter's kind of weather; Leapfrog (3 letters): What a Cockney might carry drinks on
4. Phrase Clue: What a rude person might do to a zany; Main Word (6 letters): Not exactly praise to one's face; Leapfrog (3 letters): KSAC
5. Phrase Clue: What a gardener might do on the way to work; Main Word (6 letters): What a selector does with gum; Leapfrog (3 letters): What Santa said in the cabbage patch

Famous Last Conversation

Louis asks “In what 20th century American novel does a man die while trying to question the possibilities of the infinitive?” Here is the text:

“Don't say a word,” Levin begged. “I've called an ambulance. You'll surely get better.”

He's dying, he thought. Where's everybody?

“All are—archi-tects—of—fate.”

The old man smiled with wet eyes. His face was smaller now. His lips twitched as he tried to speak.

Levin leaned very close.

“Try to rest.”

“The mys—mystery—of the in—fin—in—fin—in—fin--”

“Infinite?”

“In—fin—i—tive. Have—you con-sidered—its possi-bil-i-ties? To be—”

He paused, gazed intently at Levin, and muttered, “Poor papa.” His mouth shut sternly. He died.

Ukulele Song

UKULELE has a unique structure. Vowels and consonants alternate positions in the word. In lowercase they also alternate between small letters (uuee) and tall letters (kll). The consonants go forward in the alphabet, and the vowels go in reverse. There are three 3-letter palindromes: UKU, LEL, and ELE. The consonants K and L are next to each other in the alphabet. The vowels U and E have alphabetic values that add to 26, the number of letter in the alphabet. There are two of each letter—UU, LL, EE—except K. However, K has an alphabetic value (11) that uses the same digit twice.

Turn About Is Word Play

A dimple is an indentation in the skin. In lowercase, it becomes its opposite by rotating the first letter 180 degrees. Then the dimple becomes a pimple, which is a protuberance of the skin.

What They Look Like (To Me)

Jay Ames sent a list of personal names with a brief description of what they look like to his onomastic imagination:

FERN never blossoms
FRANK closed, secretive
FELIX a black cat
FELICIA, FELICE his twin sisters
GAIL, GALE the "windy" ones

GERMAINE from a Ger-maiden
GEORGETTE "smooth as silk"
HENNA, HENNIE dyed red, no spring chicken
JOHN client, or common as a loo or toilet
KEW "Thanks a bunch" in Britain at least

Schlock

A kissin' cousin of kitsch, SCHLOCK is "something of cheap or inferior quality." It begins with four consonants in a row. Each consonant used along with OCK produces a word, and each of three sets of two consonants produces a word. SCHLOCK contains seven words in it:

SCHLOCK

S OCK

C OCK

H OCK

LOCK

S H OCK

CH OCK

C LOCK

"Christ!" as a Verb

Janek, the detective in William Bayer's novel *Mirror Maze*, exclaims Christ! a couple of times in response to questions by another character, Timmy. Timmy gets tired of the repetition and replies in this exact way: Don't "Christ!" me, partner! This is a verb made of Christ's name followed by an exclamation point, all of which is enclosed in quotation marks (perhaps a first, even for the Son of God). Are there any other unusual nouns, verbs, etc., that incorporate unusual punctuation in their spelling?

If You Knew Sushi

One morning I woke up with the first stanza of this song going through my head. I grabbed a piece of paper and wrote a longer version. Then I called a friend of mine who was busy at work. Knowing she was a fan of Chinese food and poetry, I sang it to her. She liked it and said it made her hungry. The words appear below. The tune should be familiar.

If you knew Sushi
Like I know Sushi,
Oh, oh, oh what a dish!

You don't need flour
Or sweet and sour,
And it makes a big squish!

It's such a knock out
You'll throw your wok out,
'Cause it's some kind of fish!

It beats Chop Suey
And all such hooley;
Eat as much as you wish!

Prose and Contronyms

A contronym is a word that has opposite meanings. In Merriam-Webster's 7th Collegiate Dictionary, RUBBER is a contronym with these definitions: (1) an instrument or object (as a rubber eraser) used in rubbing, polishing, or cleaning (2) something that prevents rubbing or chafing. Two non-dictionary definitions of RUBBER are (1) masseur (2) hit man. A masseur rubs lotion in people; a hit man rubs people out. Or is that stretching the meaning of RUBBER too far?

Mullet Musings

The mullet is known as the haircut of choice for the trailer park crowd. It's usually short on the front and the sides but long in the back. Those parameters are just the beginning, for the venerable mullet is the topnotch of a thousand forms. A t-shirt with the visage of Matt Groening's Homer Simpson on it lists a fair number of mullet names (in first column). Other sources record other names for this folly of the follicles (in second column). Curiously enough, no other haircut has achieved such onomastic honors. To explore the field more thoroughly, I did a Google search. There are several websites devoted to the cut, and some even have pictures of the most unusual mullets in the history of America, showing another side of our country's diversity, a side not often seen, a side not often wanted to be seen.

Kentucky waterfall	ape drape
Missouri compromise	beaver paddle
mudflap	bi-level
neckwarmer	camaro cut
ranchero	business in front
schlong (e.g., short & long)	party in back
achy-breaky-bad-mistakey	Canadian passport
soccer rocker	coupe longueuil
squirrel pelt	el-camino
Tennessee tophat	hockey hair
the yep-nope	

Do You Wanna Dance?

Have you ever danced the MAXIXE? It is a ballroom dance of Brazilian origin that resembles the two-step. The letters in MAXIXE can be interpreted as dance steps: M—bow down, touch the floor, stand up, and move forward; A—clap your hands together over your head and spread your legs; X—raise your arms to the ceiling; I—pull your arms and legs together and twirl around; X—raise your arms to the ceiling again; E—watch your partner rushing toward you, her hair blowing in the air, her arms slightly behind her, and her knees sliding across the floor. Catch her and continue the dance.

Mayday! Mayday!

MAY DAY, the springtime festival, is the only day composed of two words that rhyme. It is also called Labor Day, which also rhymes (LAYbor DAY). Ironically, many people celebrate Labor Day by not doing any labor—but they may the next day.

Dot Dash

MORSE CODE represents letters, numbers, and other symbols with dots and dashes. When MORSE is encoded, it has equal numbers of dots and dashes (-- --- o-o ooo o). A 5-letter word, it begins with a string of 5 dashes and ends with a string of 5 dots. CODE, on the other hand, uses 6 dots and 5 dashes to represent 4 letters (-o-o --- -oo o). The middle letter of MORSE (o-o) contains the letter A (o-), and the middle two letters of CODE (--- -oo) contain the letter Z (--oo). That's MORSE CODE from A to Z!

Game of Mage

GAME is a magical word. Printing its letters clockwise in a circular pattern turns it into a circular reversal: it reads GAME clockwise starting with the top letter and MAGE counterclockwise starting with the bottom letter. GAME (but not MAGE) has two special numeric relationships with the 26 letters of the alphabet. First, the alphabetic values of its four letters (7, 1, 13, 5) add to 26. Second, the *differences* between successive alphabetic values (7-1, 13-1, 13-5) also add to 26.

Tautonym Tango

Susan A. Jones of Words' Worth writes "Susan Thorpe sees the word 'tautonym' and conjures up special vowel-consonant patterns (May 2003). I see the word, and am inspired to write the following verse."

Said Lulu to Papa, "Would you think it proppa
For me to go cha-cha tonight?
I'm feeling just so-so, and disco, and go-go
Might turn my hum-drum into bright.

Said Papa to Lulu, "For nice girl, big boo-boo;
No no can can do do. Sit tight!
Just kiss your plans ta-ta. Stay home like you oughta.
Some day you'll tse tse that I'm right.

So Lulu, good daughta, stayed put put. Tra la la.
She donned frilly tutu and tights—
(For frou-frou Lu's ga-ga)—with pom-poms, and all o'
Her ruffles and flounces bedight.

Shakespeare the Number Theorist?

Mike Keith has made a startling discovery about Shakespeare's 97th sonnet:

How like a winter hath my absence been
From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!
What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen!
What old December's bareness everywhere!
And yet this time removed was summer's time,
The teeming autumn big with rich increase,
Bearing the wanton burden of the prime,
Like widowed wombs after their lords' decease:
Yet this abundant issue seemed to me
But hope of orphans, and unfathered fruit,
For summer and his pleasures wait on thee,
And thou away, the very birds are mute.
Or if they sing, 'tis with so dull a cheer,
That leaves look pale, dreading the winter's near.

This has three simultaneous properties related to prime numbers: (1) 97 is a prime, (2) line 7 (a prime) contains the word PRIME, (3) the sum of the letter values in the sonnet is 5501, a prime.

Krakatau's Linguistic Beheadment

In *The Song of the Dodo* (1996), David Quammen comments on the volcanic eruption of Krakatau in 1883. One of the results of that gigantic event was the near-disappearance of that particular island between Java and Sumatra. In fact, so little was left of the original island that its name was reduced like the island, resulting in the terminal deletion Rakata. Ed Wolpow's *Times Atlas* does show both names for the island, so at least the words themselves are confirmed. Ed asks: is this a well-known linguistic story? If so, who carried out the letter-dropping, with such authority that the truncated name took hold?

The Dyspeptic Lover

Mike Morton sends along the following anagram:

I LOVE YOU FOR SENTIMENTAL REASONS
YOU LOVE ME FOR INTESTINAL REASONS

How To Fool the Devil?

Darryl Francis sent a clipping from the July 23, 2002 London Times, exhibiting the tombstone of John Rennie in the graveyard of St. Mary's Church in Monmouth, Wales:

```

E I N E R N H O J S J O H N R E N I E
I N E R N H O J S E S J O H N R E N I
N E R N H O J S E I E S J O H N R E N
E R N H O J S E I L I E S J O H N R E
R N H O J S E I L E L I E S J O H N R
N H O J S E I L E R E L I E S J O H N
H O J S E I L E R E R E L I E S J O H
O J S E I L E R E H E R E L I E S J O
H O J S E I L E R E R E L I E S J O H
N H O J S E I L E R E L I E S J O H N
R N H O J S E I L E L I E S J O H N R
E R N H O J S E I L I E S J O H N R E
N E R N H O J S E I E S J O H N R E N
I N E R N H O J S E S J O H N R E N I
E I N E R N H O J S J O H N R E N I E
      WHO DIED MAY 31, 1832
      AGED 33 YEARS.

```

Starting with the H in the center, the message **HERE LIES JOHN RENIE** can be traced out (by king's moves) in some 45,760 ways. Lionel Fanthorpe, a Church of Wales priest, claimed that this was written to outsmart the Devil. Old Nick would take one look at his gravestone, be overwhelmed by a form of diabolical attention deficit disorder, and move on elsewhere. Renie would fast-track it past St Peter and hotfoot it through the Pearly Gates, safe from the cloven-footed one's malignant grasp. Ross Eckler notes that Màrius Serra on page 193 of his Catalan book on wordplay, *Verbalia* (Barcelona, 2000), describes the 1975 discovery of a fragment of an identical 19x15 pattern containing the message **SILO PRINCEPS FECIT** (constructed by Prince Silo), originally inscribed in an Asturian (Spanish) temple of 975 AD!