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.

The 2004 Spineless Books Award for Constrained Literature

William Gillespie, editor and publisher of Spineless Books, should be applauded for taking a major step in bringing constrained writing (based on wordplay forms and strategies) to a potentially larger audience. In 2003 Spineless Press announced The Fitzpatrick-O'Dinn Award For Best Book-length Work of Constrained English Literature, the prize being publication of the winning entry.

Congratulations to Joshua Corey for creating the prize-winning book, *Fourier Series*, named after the socialist reformer Charles Fourier (1772-1837). Corey's book is a gathering of pages, each divided into four parts by horizontal and vertical lines. Each page has one, two, or three (but not four) lyrics, one per quadrant. For example, the opening lyric (in the top left quadrant) consists of the seven lines *the nebular desert / birthed suns / was it song or gallop of song / that you chased in the umber hills / under a sky polluted with stars / size grows stranger / inside you stranger.*

As far as I can see, the book's only formal constraint is that each lyric has to be seven lines long. This is a very light constraint—if it were any lighter it would float away! To give guidance, the Spineless Books website has a clear chart showing several different ways of combining wordplay constraints with literary forms. I'd assumed that the contest-winning book would do something incredibly new with language, but it lacks any real constraint pushing it into the strange realm of literacy called The Logology Zone.

On Constrained Writing

Here is what I believe should apply to constrained novels of fifty pages or more:

1. Each novel should have only one major constraint that controls the entire text (but there can be additional minor constraints)
2. The major constraint should be complex enough to make writing a challenge (if the constraint is trivial, then it is unnecessary)
3. The writer should not use incorrect grammar or misspelled words, unless incorrect grammar or misspelled words fit the intention of the constraint
4. One reason for writing a constrained novel is to see what happens when the irresistible force of logology meets the immoveable object of language
5. Another reason is to see if that novel can actually be written!
6. One goal is to write the novel so smoothly that the constraint isn't noticeable (difficult at novel length)
7. If the novel can't be written smoothly, the goal is to write it roughly but with as smooth a roughness as possible (in this case the author succeeds in telling the story by allowing unusual turns of language to become part of the identifying "sound" of its words)
8. In many cases, the literary constraint, not the writer, has the greater influence on the style, words and strategies used

Here are brief discussions of well-known book-length works written under different constraints:

Gadsby, the first E-less novel, stood alone for years as the only lipogrammatic novel in English. It was stiff and didactic, like Horatio Alger applying for a job. With nothing to compare to *Gadsby,* no one could be certain whether Wright or the constraint caused the book to be so uninteresting. But the book did show that writing without E was not difficult. Then came *La Disparation* written in French by Georges Perec and translated by Gilbert Adair into English as *A Void.* Both versions proved that excellent E-less writing was possible in more than one language. (Some reviewers of the French book didn't even realize that E had been omitted!)

Dr. Awkward & Olson in Oslo is the longest-known palindromic novel, appearing only in mimeographed form. It was labor-intensive writing, and required breaking the rules many nows and thens. Lawrence Levine had to use contorted language, odd spelling, difficult sentence structures, abbreviations, and other methods to achieve this monumental labor of love. Although the story is not always clear, smooth or sensical, it reaches its goal—the last word on the last page: *Tacit, I hate gas (aroma of evil), masonry...No, Sam--live foam or a sage Tahiti CAT!*

Richard Brodie and Mike Keith used anagrams to write *The Anagrammed Bible,* which takes as its source text the King James Bible (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon). The King James text appears in the left column, and the anagrammatic paraphrase appears on the right. The third section adds a further constraint: it parodies famous writings of literature. The resulting work, a joy to read, is proof that miracles happen. God was serious, but Brodie and Keith made the Almighty laugh!

Eunoia, by Christian Bök (judge of the Spineless Books contest), is a univocalic in five parts; that is, each part uses the same vowel throughout along with any consonants needed to spell words. The first part uses A, the second E, and so on.

In *Alphabetical Africa,* Walter Abish follows an alphabetic constraint: the first chapter uses words beginning with A, the second with A or B, and so on to the 26th with no constraint at all. Then the 27th reverses the process, allowing no words beginning with Z, the 28th with no words beginning with Y or Z, and so on to the 52nd which again allows only words beginning with A. Not only did Abish manage to follow his own imaginative rules but he also wrote a great novel!

In *Ella Minnow Pea* by Mark Dunn, the premise is that the founding father of Ella's country long ago came up with a pangram, which was placed above the courthouse door. Years pass, the founder dies, and one day a letter falls off. The townspeople take that as an omen that they should stop using that letter. The next day another letter falls off, and so it goes, letters dropping like flies until none are left. However, as more letters drop, the author uses made-up words instead of real ones to conquer the constraint

Whales for the Welsh by Lancelot Hogben, a "tale of war and peace with notes for those who teach or preach", is as much an essay as a novel, but is worth mentioning here for the fact that it consists entirely of one-syllable words.

What sort of literary constraints are possible in writing novels? Send or email your ideas to me, and I will place them in the next Kickshaws. Include any helpful information such as title, short synopsis, literary constraint, length of book, main character, etc. Send several ideas. In addition, send any information you have about a published book-length constrained work not mentioned here

Badgers and Otters

Jeff Grant discusses one of the quirks of the Scrabble dictionary: "The OSPD defines many words ending in –er as 'one that…'; for example, RIDDLER is defined as 'one that riddles.' An early edition of OSPD apparently defined BOILER as 'one that boils.' In a similar vein here are 25 words, one for each letter of the alphabet, with definitions that don't seem quite right." Can anyone find a Z?

ARCHER (a gymnast) that arches
BADGER (a boy scout) that badges
CORNER (a chiropodist) that corns
DAGGER (a sheep shearer) that dags
ELVER (a small child) that elves
FAIRER (a dyed blonde) that fairs
GUTTER (a fisherman) that guts
HAMMER (a bad actor) that hams
IMPOSTER (a tax collector) that imposts
JABBER (a prizefighter) that jabs
KILTER (a Scotsman) that kilts
LADDER (a pedophile) that lads
MUTTER (a dog catcher) that mutts

NUMBER (a refrigerator) that numbs
OFFER (a hit man) that offs
PUCKER (an ice hockey player) that pucks
QUARTER (a milkman) that quarts
RUGGER (a toupee wearer) that rugs
SUMMER (an accountant) that sums
TEMPER (an office worker) that temps
UPPER (an auctioneer) that ups
VERGER (a near-success) that verges
WANDER (a magician) that wands
XYSTER (a promenader) that xysts
YOUNGER (a face-lifted actress) that youngs

Letter Names

While preparing for the Scrabble championship, Jeff Grant was "seriously distracted" by the question of letter names (shortened forms that sound like letters of the alphabet). As Jeff explains, "In this part of the world it is common practice for personal names to be shortened to one syllable and very few letters, especially among family and friends. Without using single letters, initials or surnames, here are my best efforts for alphabetical names. The references are *35000+ Baby Names* (BN) by Bruce Lansky, published in 1996, and the extensive Kabalarians (Kab) name database on the Internet. Those without a source are likely diminutives but unattested." Again, one letter, W, is missing.

A   Ay: female name, short for Ayla (Kab)
B   Bea, Bee: short for Beatrice (BN)
C   See: short for Seymour (BN)
D   Dee: "dark", a Welsh name (BN)
E   Ee: male name (Kab); Ea: short for Eadith (Edith)
F   Ef, Eff: female names, short for Effie (Euphemia) (Kab); Eph: short for Ephraim
G   Gi: "brave", a Korean name (BN); Gee, Jee: male name (Kab)
H   Aitch: male name (Kab)
I   Ai: first name of Japanese tennis player; Eye: male name (Kab)
J   Jay, Jaye, Jae: short for James or Jason (BN)
K   Kay, Kaye, Kae, Caye: short for Katherine (BN)
L   Elle: short for Ellen (BN)
M   Em: short for Emily or Emma (BN)
N   Enn: female name (Kab); En: short for Enrietta or Ennis
O   Owe, Eau, Oh: male baby names (Kab); Owe: short for Owen
P   Pea, Pee: female names (Kab); Pe: short for Peony
Q   Cu, Kew: male names (Kab); Cu: short for Cupid or Cuba

R   Ar: female name, short for Arleen (Kab)
S   Ess: female name, short for Essie (Esther) (Kab)
T   Te, Tee: female name, short for Teegan (Kab)
U   Yu, Yue: "universe" in Chinese (BN); Ew: short for Ewen
V   Ve, Vee: female name, short for Vera or Venus (Kab)
X   Ex: female name, short for Experience (Kab)
Y   Wye: short for Wylie or Wyatt (BN)
Z   Zee: female name (Kab); Zed: short for Zedekiah (BN)

Ladies and Gentlemen, Start Your Word Engines

Jeff answers a challenge that appeared in the May Kickshaws. Louis Phillips asked readers to find words starting with FIY, GOH, CIA, RIH, CEX, RUW and HIH, none of which appear in Webster's Second. Here are some from Jeff:

FIYSH Middle English for *fish* (Middle English Dictionary)
GOHANNA early form of *goanna*, a monitor lizard (OED)
CIAO a greeting (Chambers)
CIABATTA Italian bread (Chambers)
RIHT early form of *right* (OED)
CEXE 15th-century form of *six* (OED)
RUWYN early form of *ruin* (OED)
HIHI the New Zealand stitchbird (Dictionary of New Zealand English)

Self-Descriptive Words

Jeff sent the following list of self-descriptive words, some of which require altering the original by adding an accent, hyphen, etc.

abbrev., ac'cented, adjectival, apostrophiz'd, **boldface**, Capitalised, English, fonetik, Franglais, f-word, hyperpedantic, hyphen-ated, *italic,* unalphabetical, kiwi-ism, letters, midpoint, mispelt, nonverbal, noun, polysyllabic, preprinting, printing, pseudoterm, readable, roonerspism, self-descriptive, slanguage, thirtieth, two-part, typed, ümlauted, unword, word

Afterism: The Neologism

Concerning the neologism *afterism*, defined as a clever statement that you didn't think of until too late, cited in the May 2004 Word Ways, Don Hauptman notes "The French have a word for it. It's *l'esprit de l'escalier,* literally 'wit of the staircase.'--the remark you should have uttered at the party, but think of only as you are leaving. (Presumably, this expression predates Elisha Otis.)

The Shortest Lipolist?

Mark Isaak writes "I recently came across a remarkably short pangrammatic list, a list of only 288 items that contains words beginning with every letter of the alphabet. According to Ed Wolpow in the February 2003 Word Ways, the previous record was 408 (languages listed in Roget's Thesaurus, 4th edition). This new list is only 70% as long. It is an index included with the paper 'Anatomy and Systematics of the Confuciusornithidae (Theropoda: Aves) from the Late Mesozoic of Northeastern China', authored by L.M. Chiappe, S. Ji, Q. Ji and M.A. Norell, in Volume 242 (pages 1-89) of the Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History (1999). As

a sort of summary, I give here the first entry for each letter, along with the number of entries with that initial."

acetabulum 16	Hamley 17	occipital condyle 14	uncinate processes 2
Balmford 15	Iberomesornis 7	Padian 27	Velociraport 3
Calvo 33	Jeholodens 9	Queiroz 2	Walker 6
Dalinghosaurus 9	kinetic skulls 2	radiometric dates 13	Xu 1
Early Cretaceous 9	Lack 10	Sampson 26	Yixian Formation 1
Falconiformes 13	Madsen	take off 8	Zhang 7
gastralia 10	nasorbital septum 7		

Pungent

Richard Lederer came up with a pun that the Bard of Avon would crack up over: "Two Shakespeares of a Lambs' Tales."

From Russia Without Love

Rich sends the following cyclical transposal: "Given the shutting down of opposition media by Russian president Vladimir PUTIN, it's apparent that he does not seek honest INPUT."

Susan's Saga

In this poem by Will Nediger, the S's lead the way most of the time, but the text takes a tempestuous twist at the end.

> Susan's Saga
>
> Simple Susan, staying spouseless,
> Sported simple satin sundress.
> Said Sam, " Shall Susan spouseless stay?"
> Sue showed shyness straightaway.
>
> Sam sought Susie sordidly.
> Sue stood strong, stout-heartedly.
> Steadfast Sammy staunchly stayed;
> Stalwart Sammy's seldom swayed.
>
> Susan suitor stalked Sue soon.
> She stood, sans sundress. Sammy swooned.
> Sue stabbed Sammy shamelessly.
> Sammy, suff'ring, said, "I see,
> You never really wanted me."
>
> His dying speech was devoid of s's,
> As the author of this speech confesses.
> (He couldn't finish his complaint
> While still obeying my constraint.)

Sammy's swan song should say "Such shenanigans show Sue's splenetic side."

Anthropomorphic (Body-Part) Maps

The May Kickshaws introduced Ellsworth Mason's book, *Gazetteer of Gynecological Geography.* It contains place names such as Brest, Wookey Hole, Peterhof, and Runnymede. Apparently there is more to this type of mapping than meets the eye, ear, nose, throat, etc. Israel "Izzy" Cohen explains this fascinatingly unusual field and offers suggestions to interested readers on how to find out more about it.

Anthropomorphic (body-part) maps are generated by configuring the virtual body of a god or goddess over the area to be mapped. Areas under each part of that body receive the name of that part. These maps equate geography with anatomy to produce place names that indicate where they are located relative to other places on the same map. Examples of these maps include 'Old Man' Napi (creator of the Blackfoot Indians) and his 'Old Woman' wife in Alberta, Canada, Hermes centered at Mount Hermon (now on the Israeli-Syrian cease-fire line, and Aphrodite in North Africa. Place names on the Hermes and Aphrodite maps seem Hebraic but probably are Phoenician. They do provide a coherent explanation for the origin of names such as MiTZRaiM/MiSR, GoSHeN, eGyPT, SiNai, etc., and why the Red Sea (Latin *Mare Rubrum*) is red.

He invites the reader to join the BPMaps discussion group (which currently has more than 100 members) by visiting http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BPMaps. First view the databases and then read "Attributes of Body Part Maps" in the message archive. Help us find more maps of this type.

The Millennium Naming Project

In the November 2002 Word Ways, I put in a Kickshaw item about thousand-year words, which mean "a period of 1000 years." There are two words listed in dictionaries, MILLENNIUM and CHILIAD, that mean a 1000-year period and that refer to the Biblical book of Revelation. The Millennium Naming Project has the goal of gathering 1000 words that mean 1000 years, one assigned to each year in the millennium. MILLENNIUM is assigned to the year 2000, and CHILIAD the year 2001. For the third year, 2002, my contribution was DECADECADECADE, meaning 10 sets (DECA) of ten sets (DECA) of a period of 10 years (DECADE). After that, progress in the Millennium Naming Project came to a standstill. So, let's get those 1000-year words out of the attic, dust them off, and give the millennium a different name for each year. By the year 2999, the people of that future era will have a time capsule of 1000 words having the same meaning—more or less. Here are five more, along with the three from the Kickshaw.

    2000 Millennium
    2001 Chiliad
    2002 Decadecadecade
    2003 Grand Year (Grand = 1000)
    2004 Kiloyear (Kilo = 1000)
    2005 T Time (T = 1000)
    2006 Thou Age of Sand (Thou + Sand = Thousand)
    2007 One Triple Zero Period (1000 Period)

Name Tag Table

"During a recent excursion with my wife at the local shopping mall," says Bill Brandt, "we encountered a number of sales clerks at the various stores who had name tags pinned to their

shirts. After writing down some of their names we noticed they repeated a conversation that we heard in the department selling evening dresses."

Mae I. Eeelpu? Connie C. DeGowens?

V.F. Minnie Tieps. Eve Ninggowns?

Elsie Watsonstock. Harriet Up!

Chester Minute. Olive DeSwan.

Slim DeSign. Wilma Buttfit?

Ken U. Diet? Norma Lee Icon.

Wanda Triton? Fitz Matush.

Luke N. Good! Irma Goonaticket.

Anita DePosit. Ken I Chargeit?

Noah Problem.

Sonnet In Praise of Gun Conrol

The following is a concrete poem by Louis Phillips.

Bangbangbangbangbangbangbangbangbangbang
Bangbangbangbangbangbangbangbangbangban
Bangbangbangbangbangbangbangbangbangbang
Bangbangbangbangbangbangbangbangbangban
BangBANgbangbangbangbangbangbangbangbang
BangbangBANgbangbangbangbangbangbangban
BangbangbangBANgbangbangbangbangbangbang
BangbangbangbangBANgbangbangbangbangban
BangbangbangBANgbangbangbangbangbangbang
BangbangBANgbangbangbangbangbangbangban
BangBANgbangbangbangbangbangbangbangbang
BANgbangbangbangbangbangbangbangbangban
BangBANgbangbangbangbangbangbangbangbang
BangbangBANgbangbangbangbangbangbangban

From the Tropic of Applesauce

A sequence of snapshots by Louis Phillips, currently on vacation in the Tropic of Applesauce just north of the Bermuda Triangle:

What is the difference between bread dough and a broken light bulb?
One is needed, the other not needed
What is the difference between a man who causes an accident and a tar road?
One is his fault, the other asphalt
What is the difference between a doorbell pushed by pitcher David Wells and an Australian throwing club?
One Boomer rang, the other boomerang

ENUTROF: Reversal of fortune
H o u r s Extended hours

Marg, I pen epigram…Sit, I tape hepatitis…Rod, a tame matador…Nor tame matron…
A repossess opera…Red damn madder…O, lost solo

In this sentence, *korrect* is spelled incorrectly, but *incorrectly* is spelled correctly

What are the favorite vegetables of snakes?
ASParagus and corn on the COBRA

I love the capital of North Carolina. Really? No, Raleigh

a scandal of sexes…a jilt of old loves…a skulk of villains…a brood of worry-warts…
a ravel of riddles…a wait of servants

Chaucerian Sonnet: A Tale of the Clark of Kent

A few years ago I wrote a sequence of poems by members of the Superman family—Jimmy Olsen, Lois Lane, Perry White. Each was giving eulogies on the death of Superman due to a prolonged exposure to green kryptonite. The murderer, of course, was Brainiac (wouldn't you have known?). Anyway, I was pleased to see that Louis Phillips uncovered this much earlier poem about the Man of Steel memorialized in great bouqhets of antique poesie. Here's Louis's Chaucerian Superman:

> A Clark there was of Kent also
> That unto comic scripts longe ygo
> Made a byggen splash, tho lene were his readers' brains
> As if they didn't knowen to come out of rain.
> This Clark was a reporter, mild and just,
> Who for Lois Lane hungered with great lust
> But this meek carl—and this is God's own truth—
> Could change himself in any payphone booth
> Into a hero faster than a speeding duck
> (Some folks haven all the luck!)
> & flew villains toward Lawe's iron reche
> For gladly would he learn and gladly teche
> That Crime payeth not & is not too sound
> When Superman leapeth over buildings with a single bound.

Awl Wrong's Anagram

Anil has been perusing *The New Anagrammasia* (Word Ways Monograph 2), and "I wish to pay tribute to the anagram IMPREGNATE = PERMEATING by Awl Wrong (The Enigma, September 1937). Although imperfect because of grammatical disagreement, it is, insofar as I can recall, the only sizeable one-word anagram that actually appears in dictionary definitions of the target word. Can you think of others? Even the perfect and famous ANGERED = ENRAGED doesn't do so."

Bumper Stickers

"Having discovered a bumper crop of b.s. in an early Kickshaws (February 1974)," says Anil, "I thought a few more might be tolerated by Word Ways readers. Most of these I actually printed up ages ago to sell. Since I didn't get rich doing it maybe I should have learned my lesson. But nooo, as John (**Hi Blues**) **Belushi** used to say. Anyway, Kickshavian David Silverman called for more. I hope that other illustrious Kickshavian David concurs. Here's a profiteer's dozen."

SPERM DONORS LOVE LIFE
SAVE THE DODO
TODAY PERTH, TOMORROW…PERTH
ERRTH?
AMNESIA *NOW!*

THE DODO DIED FOR OUR SINS
I DON'T WORK (FIX ME!)
HONK IF YOU LOVE GEESE'S
STICK URANIUM MINING UP IN URANUS

Boarding at Boring Airports

On a recent trip to the United States, Anil recalls that he stopped at two airports, Dulles International (Washington D.C.) and Dallas International. He found neither to be very inspiriting, and summarized his impressions in the word ladder DULLES: DULL AS DALLAS.

Sentential Ladder Using Substitute-Letter Transposals

Ethics: Ethnic, thence recent. Recant banter, banner! Manner namer's manor's normal **morals!**

Anil offers an explanation of the ladder: "If you had trouble reading it, here's a rough translation: Ethics, since culturally determined, are not timeless. So quit banning such manners, behavior dictators, and stick to the earthwide 'manor's' everyday morals! With a generous dose of indulgence, this summarizes the difference between ethics and morals, and turns the one into the other."

"Ethics and morals have also been turned one into the other in relation to their etymology. They've undergone a crossover or reversal in meaning, analogous to the genesis of as single-root contronym whereby a word becomes its own opposite. Morals and ethics aren't opposites but occupy different positions on the spectrum of acceptable behavior and seem to have reversed positions. Ethics is from the Greek *ethikos*, meaning morals, while morals is from the Latin *moralis*, meaning manners or customs. The latter is not a definition of ethics, more of etiquette or mores, but is closer to ethics than to morals, more culture-limited, less universal."

Dizzy Quiz

Anil has concocted the following series of quizzes. What is the logologic behind each of the following arrays? Each line is a different question, the letters merely setting off different classes of answers. Since these are tricky, a clue appears in italics in Answers and Solutions (if you look for the clue, don't peek at the answers which follow).

A. 1 5 9 8 6 3 2 4 0 7   C. 5 9
B. 11 0 7 50   7 15
    20 100 17 70   12 90
    32 26 34   22 37
D. 16 0   25 38
E. 1 2 4 16   28 33

The Big Story

Now for the news from British correspondent Peter Newby. A 6-foot 7-inch Hungarian gypsy with a totally unpronounceable name adopted the description Ted (Big) Gibbet when he was appointed the whipper and public hangman of New Bybwen during the reign of William IV (1830-1837). His renown as an instrument of justice was exceeded only by his famed capacity to consume the local brew. Big Teb's most notorious 'client' was Dirty Trid, a failed pickpocket who tended to grope his victims when too much in his cups. Hanged for stealing a pig, the event was noted in an 1836 issue of the Semi Times under the headline TOSSPOT TOPS SOT!

Small Talk

Peter sends this smaller item on two American cowboys: Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, touring with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, were among the first visitors to New Bybwen's Ooze Zoo in the days before signs were placed on the enclosures. Baffled by the identity of one particular ruminant, Sundance suggested that it might be the young of a goat, to which Cassidy retorted "KID, KID? O, NO—DIK-DIK."

A Perfect Pangrammatic Challenge

Peter suggests the following challenge: "It is possible to write out the complete alphabet in words and recognized abbreviations, even if the ideal of strict alphabetical order is overlooked in the process: CAB, FED, GHI, J, KLM, NMOP, Q, RUST, VW, ZYX. True, pedants might prefer ABC (as in ABC book) and DEF (obsolete spelling of *deaf*), both found in the complete OED. Thus, GHI (clarified buffalo butter) no longer features as the first 'ideal' word. Only J (joule), KLM (Royal Dutch Airlines), and VW (the German car) are abbreviations. All the rest are genuine words. These include such rarities as NOP (a bed stuffed with nap), Q (the half-farthing, a Victorian coin), and ZYX (a species of flea). If GHI is retained, a dramatic introduction is possible with BACED (an obsolete form of *based*), followed by F (the musical abbreviation for loud), providing BACED, F, GHI, … The challenge is this: what is the perfect assembly of words to form a pangram (not necessarily a pangrammatic sentence) in which each word consists of adjacent alphabetic letters? To my mind, words are preferable to abbreviations, common words to obscurities, and alphabetically-true words to scrambled units."

Love Triangle In Eden

Lilith was the mythical first wife (or paramour) of Adam. In lower case, her name is spelled with above-the-line-letters. Eve was Adam's official first wife. In lower case, her name is also spelled with above-the-line letters. In upper case, LILITH and EVE are both spelled with all-line letters. This, the first love triangle, was formed by three people in a single place whose names begin with three-letter palindromes: ADAm, LILith, EVE, EDEn. The names of the two women begin LI and EV, which transpose to LIVE. The names of the garden and the man begin ED and AD, which transpose to DEAD. The names ADAM, EVE and LILITH have no letters in common. ADAM and EVE do have letters in common with EDEN, but LILITH doesn't. LILITH begins with two three-letter palindromes—LIL and ILI. Of course, BIBle begins with a three-letter palindrome, too. GENESIS begins with G for God and ends in two three-letter palindromes—ENE and SIS. Good things come in threes!

Happy Lunar Car Rollover Car

Last Christmas my son received a Happy Lunar Car Rollover Car as a stocking-stuffer. It was more fun to read the direction pamphlet, HANDLE NARRATE, than to assemble the car. The author of the pamphlet obviously knew English well enough to transmit warnings about electricity, but a few times he or she went beyond language just enough to breath a little life into the boring toy directions that usually make you, the purchaser, just another worker on the assembly line. Here are a few highlights of HANDLE NARRATE:

    FETURES
    Gar
    CAUTIONS

Do not wet the cat.
Do not play with it outdoors in a rainy day.
Do not play with it on the sands.
Avoid bumping into any other articles, such as other people or glass, when playing.

Magic of the Game

The word GAME 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 up to 26. Second, the *differences* between the alphabetic values (subtracting the smaller from the larger) of each of the three pairs of adjacent letters (7-1= 6, 13-1=12, 13-5=8) also add up to 26.

The only other four-letter words having this relationship are COCE (obsolete variant of *cose*, to barter) and FOAD (obsolete variant of *fode*, to beguile), both in the OED. The editor presents below a set of four-letter groups (and their reversals) that qualify. Are there any others?

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aaqg daof game jakd maic pagb saea
     cbpe fbnd iblc lbjb obha
          ecoc hcmb kcka
          ddfb gdna
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Outquestions

On page 169 of *Language on Vacation*, Dmitri Borgmann noted that OUTQUESTIONS alternates vowel pairs and consonant pairs: OU,TQ,UE,ST,IO,NS. That's unquestionable. However, UNQUESTIONABLE divides into letter pairs that have one vowel and one consonant apiece: UN,QU,ES,TI,ON,AB,LE.

Wonderland Versus Oz

According to Webster's Tenth Collegiate, WONDERLAND (1790) is "I : an imaginary place of delicate beauty or magical charm" or "2 : a place that excites admiration or wonder." However, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is as mad as it is magical and its charm could excite harm. In uppercase, the word WONDERLAND is the longest place name in children's literature whose letters alternate between open letters like C,E,F and closed letters like A,B,D. The shortest place name that does this is OZ, in L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*. WONDER-LAND and WIZARD OF OZ are each ten letters long. WONDERLAND anagrams to AN END WORLD, a message that has an opposite meaning from its dictionary meaning. Either Wonderland is a conclusion or a goal to achieve. It makes you wonder, doesn't it?