

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 Novel With No Verbs

This just in! News about a novel with no verbs, emailed to me by Mike Keith. A real page-turner by a French guy, writing in French, writing in France, in fact. Not yet translated into English. Not really a page-turner, either. Verbless yet verbose. Strange publicity surrounding it, including a mock funeral proclaiming “death of the verb.” Hardy-har-har. Prose without verbs? Impossible? Or just implausible. Or maybe fairly simple, but not all that exciting in the realm of action. Lots of description instead, according to the article on the web. Curious? Fun reading, free of charge, at <http://chronicle.com/free/2004/06/2004060205n.htm>. Nothing to worry about for non-French readers, either, because of usage of English in writing the article. Well worth checking at your leisure. Much less time necessary than the time for learning French and then reading the novel itself. Good, short article—damn clever!—using no verbs, not a single one hidden in all those non-verb words. In imitation of the novel with no verbs. Probably better, too. Somewhat difficult constraint for sure. However, other constraints, well... Some examples on a scale of one (trivial) to ten (impossible): Novel with no prepositions—eight. No adjectives—six. No conjunctions—one. No pronouns—seven. No nouns—nine point nine nine. No adverbs—three. Another possibility, not involving the words themselves: a novel with no characters. Lots of action instead. A surreal page-turner. But no verbs? Not even one single solitary intransitive verb? Perhaps a novel with no readers.

Small Time, Big Time

Will Nediger writes “I enjoyed Webster’s Third Book of Records in the August issue. Going beyond Web 3, the smallest unit of time seems to be a yoctosecond. The prefix yocto- means $10 \text{ exp } -24$, and yoctosecond (unlike anything below a millibarn) has a good chance of being used. The Guinness Book of World Records (1998) gives a para (a term in Hindu mythology) as 311,040,000,000,000 years. Not accounting for leap years, there are $9.80895744 \times 10 \text{ exp } 45$ yoctoseconds in a para.”

Google Math

Eric Iverson has found another use for Google. “You can type mathematical phrases into Google, and get calculated results. I tried to see which alphabetic phrase without any repeating letters generated the largest and smallest number. Here’s what I have so far: smallest is *nm to parsec* (1 nanometer = $3.24077649 \times 10^{-26}$ parsec), largest is *six e pc to nm* (six * e parsecs = $5.03264913 \times 10^{26}$ nanometers). It is an open question to the reader whether larger or smaller numbers exist. I could do even better if Google allowed *am* as an abbreviation for attometer or *fm* as an abbreviation for femtometer. As well as the largest and smallest numeric values in Darryl Francis’s article, there could be a category for longest phrase with no repeating letters.”

Clarinda on the Nodaway

On the western side of Iowa, the small town of Clarinda rests gently on the pillowy banks of the Nodaway River. I spent a week there long ago, teaching poetry in the schools. It is a friendly, dreamy town with a special bit of wordplay magic in its name. Clarinda, a girl's name, has at least thirty female names embedded within it, spelled by picking letters going from left to right without rearranging them: Clarina, Clara, Clia, Carna, Carina, Cari, Cara, Cinda, Larinda, Lari, Lara, Lana, Linda, Lina, Lida, Lia, Arina, Aria, Arna, Arda, Ara, Aida, Anda, Ana, Ada, Rina, Rida, Ria, Ina, Ida. (Special thanks to the editor for checking sources for less familiar names.)

Rise and Fall of the Fast Food Empire

Recently Hardee's took burger-building to a new level and added a three-quarter-pounder to its menu. That's a lotta meat! At the same time, they announced their immediate end as a fast food joint. Why? Because of bad nutritional value, emphasized recently in the documentary about McDonald's called *Supersize Me*, fast food has become a dirty word. What do clever PR people do? They don't supersize, they don't downsize, they euphemize. Hardee's is no longer a "fast food" restaurant. It's a "quick service" restaurant. Question: when "quick service" becomes a dirty word because of low pay, poor working conditions, and no benefits, what euphemism will they come up with next?

Musical Substitution

Various Word Ways articles have discussed word transmutations in which a symbol (usually one or two letters long) in a word is replaced by the word it represents to generate a different word (for example, going from chemical symbol to chemical name in AGed to SILVERed). Musical letters and symbols work in a similar fashion. Because they are short, it is easy to transmute them in three different ways: syllable-to-letter (SL), letter-to-syllable (LS) and both ways in the same word (SLLS).

Below are the musical syllables and the corresponding musical notes, followed by examples. When necessary, the abbreviation of the specific type of transmutation is given (no abbreviation means the transmutation is SL). Some transmutations from word A to word B can be reversed, so that word B becomes word A; an asterisk denotes that this is not possible.

DO	RE	MI	FA	SO (or SOL)	LA	TI
C	D	E	F	G	A	B

DOur to Cur, Milk to Elk

bLARE to bAD*, fLARE to fAD*, glaRE to glaD*

FA to FALA (LS), a musical term (usually fa-la-la-la-la)

Tied to Bed, TIMId to BEd, two different words transmute to the same word

REAd to Dad, daRE to daD, two different words transmute to the same palindrome

MID to ERE (SLLS) no letters in common in the two words

pLAY to pAy, FAir to Fir, sLASH to sAsh single-letter deletions

SOLATIon to GABon, SOLAr to GAR, these words use SO

SOLaTion to GaBon, SOLAr to Gar, the same words use SOL

LAB to ATI* (SLLS), no letters remain in the same position

DOLAr to CAr, DOLAREs to CADs, Spanish to English

The words ADS, ARES, LADS and LARES have very unusual relationships. Each of the three longest words generate the short word: aREs to aDs, LAdS to AdS, and LAREs to ADs.; only the third pair is reversible. Using SLLS, AREs to LADs is also reversible. These two pairs can be joined by syllable-to-letter transmutations to form a three-legged ladder that is reversible on each side of the center but one-directional (thus irreversible) from one side to the other. LAdS and aREs on the left can connect syllable-to-letter only with AdS and aDs on the right. The legs can be extended outward indefinitely by repetition of the words in them.

...-ARES – LADS – ARES – LADS	\	
(SLLS)		(SL) – ADS – LARES – ADS – LARES ...
	/	
...-LADS – ARES – LADS – ARES		(LS, SL, LS...)

Vowels and Consonants in Number Names

Most number names are spelled with more consonants than vowels. The highest percentage of consonants is 70, found only in TWO HUNDRED and SIX HUNDRED. The highest percentage of vowels is $66\frac{2}{3}$, found in ONE and only ONE. The shortest number name having two more vowels than consonants is ONE DUODECILLION ONE, and the highest is NINETY-ONE DUODECILLION NINETY-ONE UNDECILLION NINETY-ONE DECILLION NINETY-ONE NONILLION NINETY-ONE OCTILLION NINETY-ONE QUINTILLION NINETY-ONE QUADRILLION NINETY-ONE BILLION NINETY-ONE MILLION NINETY-ONE. There don't seem to be any number names spelled with three more vowels than consonants. However, many number names have *at least* 100 more consonants than vowels! Can you find an example with the greatest difference?

Beheadment Homophones and Curtailment Homophones

Susan Thorpe writes "In the November 2004 Kickshaws, Dave Morice offered Beheadment Homophones for words beginning with the bigrams AA, EE, GN, KN, LL, PS, SC, WH and WR. Here are examples for other bigrams: AI aisle-isle, DJ djinn-jinn, HO hour-our. Similarly, Dave offered Curtailment Homophones for words ending with the bigrams CK, DD, EE, IE, LE, LL, NE, NN, OO, RR and TT. Here are examples ending with other bigrams: AR far-fa, AH pah-pa, BB Cobb-cob, MB plumb-plum, MN damn-dam, OE floe-Flo, OH soh-so, PP Lapp-lap, RE core-cor, SE tease-teas, TE caste-cast, UE flue-flu, YE Skye-sky."

Two-Letter Overlap Sentences

In the November 1995 Word Ways, the editor reported a National Public Radio competition in which people were asked to compose sentences in which each word began with the last two letters of the preceding one. Jeff Grant found a similar wordplay challenge in the New Zealand Scrabble magazine *Forwards* in which many entries had a Scrabble theme:

Scrabble legalizes essential allowable lexicons
 Scrabble lesson one: negate terrible letters
 Scrabble leisure refines essential alphabet etiquette
 Scrabble: lexical alliteration one never eradicates
 Scrabble leaves Esther erudite, Teresa satisfied, Ed edified, Edith thinking, Ngaire rearranged,
 Edwina naggiest, Stan anagrammatical, Alex exultant.

Using linguistic license, one contestant devised the acronym Stretch Chatterly Rylean Anywhich-zebu Buncombe, Befuddle Lettered Educators. A few of the best general ones:

While leeches escape, petty tyrannies escalate
 After erstwhile lenience, celibate tension ongoing
 The head administrator organized educational almanacs
 French children endure regular arithmetic
 Some medical allergies escape penicillin
 Large geisha hairdos oscillate terribly
 Only lytic icicles escape peripheral alteration once cellular arrest starts

One about Antarctic explorer Ernest Shackleton is a bit Joycean: Beneath the hellish shipcrush, Shackleton once celebrated Edwardian antiquation on one nevergreen endworldian Antarctic icefield.

I tried writing a line about Scrabble with three letters overlapping: Scrabble blended dedication's onset, settled ledger, germless essentially. I also wrote a Scrabble acronym and found out how difficult that is. It is about a British cook working at a Chinese restaurant whose supervisor gives him the secret recipe for a popular soup: "Spiced, Cedric! Riceball Allowable. Bleachable Blendables Less Essential."

Azerty Versus Qwerty

If, like me, you thought QWERTY was King of the Keyboards, here's a surprising piece of information from Darryl Francis: "Most keyboards have qwertyuiop as the top row of letters. But there are some keyboards that have the A and Z replacing the Q and W on the top row as azertyuiop. Collins English Dictionary includes both the entries 'qwerty keyboard' and 'azerty keyboard'. There is a famous racehorse called Azertyuiop. So, the next time someone asks you whether there is a word or name using all the letters of the top row of the keyboard, tell them yes, as long as it's an azerty keyboard!"

Artistic License

Ove Michelsen tells a story of art, greed, and poor spelling which he heard on "This Is True" by Randy Cassingham: "Florida artist Maria Alquilar initially refused to return to Livermore, California to fix spelling errors on a mural she created at the city's new library. She admits the tile mural includes 11 spelling 'oversights' including the names of historical figures such as Eistein, Shakespere, Van Gough, and Michaelangelo. Alquilar says the library should have caught them before she fixed them in with cement, and was upset by the criticism of her spelling prowess, but changed her mind and agreed to fix the errors after the city agreed to pay her \$6000 plus travel expenses. She was paid \$40,000 to create the piece. Alquilar says the work is meant to be 'a testament to The Enlightenment' and said the controversy over her spelling errors was 'idiocy'...But can she spell that?"

A Fairy Tale in Names

Bill Brandt has connected another group of names created to tell a story. This one is a fairy tale in the grand tradition of Mother Goose:

Juan Zappta Tyme, Anna Linda Faraway, Dee Wasa Natalie Dressed Mary L. King
 Anne DeQueen. Alice Knotwell; Stella Single—Noah Suiters—Sasha Shame!

Bud Holdon! Luke Dare! Ginger Lee Ryden Anna Horse Ike N. Sea
 Daisy Prints, Justin Time. Willy Propose? Betty Does! Sheila Accept
 Olive Bendaras Abby Ending.

Roman Numeral Words

Dan Tilque has found numerous other Roman numeral words, that is, words that contain Roman numeral letters that correctly form Roman numerals. A string of RNLs can be used to form only one RN, the longest RN possible. For instance, BUMCLOCK has MCL for 1150; the string can't be shortened to MC, CL, M, C or L to represent other RNLs. The word may contain additional RNLs, though. BUMCLOCK has a second C. In the list below, the Roman numeral words are preceded by their Arabic values. As Dan explains, "Words and names are from the same file I used for Purple Turtles—a combination of Web 2, enable.txt and US place names. Those with internal hyphens and spaces are where I couldn't find anything better. On your November Kickshaws list, you have 1005 duumvir, which actually is 1006 (substitute 1005 circumvent).

3 Tsintaa Yiti li AZ	1150 bumclock
16 poxvirus	1151 Drumcliff MD
106 Zincville OK, lilac-violet	1200 McCabe MT
109 cixiid	1250 McClung VA
202 Merlucciidae	1251 McClintocksburg OH
400 anecdote	1400 McDuff VA
401 mosaic disease	1504 interim dividend
554 midlives	1550 fremdly
601 Midcity TX, closed-circuit	1900 McMorran OH
604 world-civilizing	1901 McMinnville OR
909 chemic mixer	2002 Lummi Island WA
1101 circumsise	2006 Hammville DE
1104 McIvor MI MS	2100 Lamm Crossroads NC
1105 McVan WA	2101 Flamm City MO
1106 McVitty OH	

Consecutive Roman Numerals in Names

Says Dan: "Referring to your original query about names with five or more different consecutive Roman numerals, McDivitt is a reasonably common name (35000 googlits); McLiverty has about 300 and seems to be a valid name; McDixon has only 56, some of which look like someone's actual name (not part of an email address). McDix gets several hundred googlits [but] many are for the Roman numeral [and] most of the others seem to be a slang reference to McDonald's."

Pollyanna

About the word Pollyanna as a millennium name (in the November Kickshaws), Rex Gooch writes "This should be multianni! The Latin for year is annus (masculine), with anni as a plural. The Latin for many is multi (poly is Greek, and that would make a hybrid word)."

Genealogy With an Unusual Twist

My last name, Morice, is French, but it used to be spelled Maurice. My great-grandfather changed it because people always misspelled it (ironically, Maurice Chevalier became popular a generation later). My son Danny wondered if there was anyone named Maurice Morice. I googled

several listed in French websites, including one with Maurice-Morice as an alias. I tried googling Morris-Morice, and one of the results blew me away. I found a genealogical website that states the family name Maurice made this transition in the mid-nineteenth century: Maurice-Morice-Morris-Murray. My mother's maiden name is Murray; is that a case of onomastic inbreeding or what?

Pig-Latin Bible

A gentleman on the web claims he is going to be the first person to translate the Bible into Pig Latin, calling it the Iblebay. I don't think he has any competition in his race. To get an idea as to what it would be like to convert well-known literature to Pig Latin, I translated Shakespeare's Sonnet 55 ("Nor marble nor the gilded monuments"). I plan on translating a few more of my favorites to make a chapbook of Pig-Latin Shakespearean sonnets. Some Pig-Latin scholars promote the use of hyphens separating the two parts of a pig-Latinized word, but others don't. I'm not kidding—there are more than 99,000 websites responding to the Google search for "Pig Latin". MIT is doing a survey giving a starting word and its translation in different ways. After the survey-taker picks one or more correct translations, he or she can type comments about the question and the answers in a box after each question. Regarding the use of hyphens, I don't use them unless they're in the original word. Otherwise, they're like training wheels on a bicycle, and they distract from the beauty of pure Pig Latin.

Otnay arblemay ornay ethay ildedgay onumentsmay
 Ofay incespray allshay outliveay isthay ow'rfulpay ymerhay;
 Utbay ouyay allshay ineshay oremay ightbray inay esethay ontentscay
 Anthay unsweptay onestay esmear'dbay ithway uttishlay imetay.
 Enwhay astefulway arway allshay atuesstay overturnay,
 Anday oilsbray ootray outay ethay orkway ofay asonrymay,
 Ornay Arsmay ishay ordsway ornay ar'sway ickquay irefay allshay urnbay
 Ethay ivinglay ecordray ofay ouryay emorymay.
 Ainst'gay eathday anday all-obliviousay enmityay
 Allshay ouyay acepay orthfay; ouryay aisepray allshay illstay indfay oomray
 Evenay inay ethay eyesay ofay allay osteritypay
 Atthay earway isthay orldway outay otay ethay endingay oomday
 Osay, illtay ethay Udgmentjay atthay ourelfyay ariseay,
 Ouyay ivelay inay isthay, anday elldway inay overs'lay eyesay.

The Business World of Pig Latin

How many businesses have names that look like words translated into Pig Latin? In Cedar Rapids there is a company called Arcay (=car), but it doesn't sell cars. On the web there is the ever-present electronic auction house named eBay (=be). These are the only two I know of. Any others gracing the malls of America (or England, Australia, New Zealand, Canada)?

Truthful Number, A

Anil found the ultimate truthful number in the place where you'd least expect it. As he describes it, "Since you were kind enough in the November 2003 Kickshaw to allow NINETEEN AND TWO HALVES as a second number after FOUR to be truthful in number of letters, dare I offer yet a third? 'A' isn't usually thought of as a number, but it is! It *always and only* means just ONE, and it has just one letter. (And may we not also count the deliberately truthful Romans I, II and III?)" Since Anil brought up truthful Romans, how about truthful jail-cell numbers I, II, III?

Follow-up on the Big G

Anil writes “Glad to see Max Maven (in the May Kickshaws) taking up my ‘Big G’ challenge with a vengeance. I must now eat crow and confess to two sins. First, the misspelling. No excuse. (He in turn turned my pet gerundives into gerunds! Aren’t gerundives adjectives and gerunds nouns? Or are they both types of rodent?) My second sin is of boasting, or rather of losing sight of my original point and being lured by the devil into padding my list with jokes and less basic words (thus just begging Max to do the same). ‘Basic’ means words like the all-cap words in my list (BIG, GIANT, GRAND, GREAT, GROSS, HUGE, LARGE).

“If I may now move the goalpost back to my starting point, I can use the criterion of etymology (in *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology*, 1988) to show that my ‘basic’ list is much larger than Max’s. Six or seven of mine have ‘large’ or ‘very large’ as their root meanings, while only one of his do. Mine include all the above except, ironically, LARGE itself! And BIG perhaps, but its origin is obscure. LARGE is from L. *largus*, abundant, copious, generous. The four others above are joined by MAGNA- and MEGA- as my six ‘golden oldies’. Max’s only possible hit is VAST (<L. *vastus*, immense—but also desolate, empty related to waste[land]). A few others of his (IMMENSE, ENORMOUS and COLOSSAL) derive from special contexts or models of largeness analogous to LARGE and HIGH, which I don’t count.

“So all, or all but one, of the root words for LARGE do contain a G. The G effect then is very old but it’s not necessarily an ongoing strange attractor that G-izes other words that come to mean large, except maybe coinages like GARGANTUAN and BROBDIGNAGIAN.”

Ahaha! (A Funny Discovery)

Anil tells of a hellishly humorous word. “‘Aha’ and ‘ha-ha’ have the same etymology, meaning discovery is funny! In a good joke the hearer discovers another way of looking at a situation, saying or word. Then I discovered that Jeff Grant’s *Palindromicon* defines ‘ahaha’ as a Buddhist hell! That doesn’t sound very funny. (Or likely—I thought Buddhism didn’t believe in hell. Hell on earth?)”

Letter Abuse

Inspired by Fraser Simpson’s “Letter-Deletion Acrostics” in the Nov 1990 *Word Ways*, Anil has devised a new variety of wordplay. Take a letter from a word, and discover that the remaining letters spell out a word or phrase that negates or otherwise abuses the letter being omitted. For example, remove A from ‘annual’ to create ‘annul’ A. Here is an alphabetic collection:

annual A annul, abashing A bashing
 blurb B blur, outbrave B ‘out’ rave
 exciting C exiting, changed C hanged
 noddies D no D—dies, disillusion D is illusion
 quiets E quits
 finagle G finale
 thrashing H trashing, abashing H abasing
 ruins I runs
 debark K debar
 salvaging L savaging, blotching L botching
 unkempt M unkept, comma M coma, armrest M
 arrest

line N lie, snap N sap
 quoits O quits
 spent P sent, expended ex-P ended
 Norway R no way!, varnishing R vanishing
 ruin S runs, exist S exit, quiets S quiet
 closets T closes
 vending V ending
 swift W sift, shred W shed
 maxim X maim
 honey Y hone
 bozos Z boos

F, J, Q and U are missing, but the first three can be taken care of by expiatory A-to-R expiry!

Flipograms

Anil adds another style of lipogram to the list. As he describes it, "It combines lateral and vertical symmetry, allowing any cut-out letters or tile which can be flipped over and retain its shape, perhaps after a 180-degree rotation within the new plane. It allows 16-18 letters: ABCDEHIKMO TUVWXY and arguably LQ. We fare more poorly with lower case, which in Times New Roman allows only six letters: clovw. With certain other fonts gklmntuy can be added for 14. The six-lower-case case poses a real challenge. I can see several two and three letter words, at least 6 four letter words (coco, cool, cowl, loco, loll, wool) and one five letter word (ovolo). Can readers find longer ones? On the other hand, the upper-case case includes all six vowels and should be rich enough to allow sentences or longer prose production. With no L, N, R or S, the going for long words should still be rather tough. I spotted BACKCHATTED (11 letters) and MOTIVATED and ACTIVATED (both 9). I challenge readers with search engines to find the longest flipogram.

Letter Words

Anil writes "the February 2004 Kickshaws introduced 'Letter Names', first names or nicknames that sound like single letters (Bea = B), with additional examples in May and August. It's probably already been done but I'd like to add that all single letters except S, V and Z sound like words other than proper names and in addition to their spelled-out versions or shapes: eh, be/bee, sea/see, dee (die, Br. Dial), ee (eye, Scot)/'e (he), ef (Dial if), gee, age, eye, jay, kay (left), el/ell, em, en/in/inn, owe/oh, pea/pee, cue/queue, are, tea/tee, you/ewe, double you/ewe, ex-/eggs, why.

"What about their plurals? Here all 26 are pronounceable as words. Eleven (in quotes) use dialect, nicknames or slightly altered pronunciations, and two (V,W) are otherwise inferior: Ais (Fla. Indian group), "Beeze" (dimin. of Beasley), seize, dix (pinochle term), ease, efts, jeez, "aegis", "Ise" (I am), "chaise", "case"/Kay's, "else", ems, ens, "'ose" (those), pease, "cuse" (accuse), "arse", esses (plural of esse)"/"assess", tease, use, vis(-a-vis), double use, "excess", wise, "zease" (disease)."

Wedded Letters

"Similarly," Anil says, "'Wedded Words' by Tom Bernard in the Aug 1994 Word Ways inspired this variation based on wedded letters: A&P, B&B (bed and breakfast), C&D/F/I, D&C/H/M/P, E&R (Evangelical and Reformed Church), F&D/F, G&S (Gilbert and Sullivan) or G&T (gin and tonic), H&C/D, I&E/P/R/S, J&W/O, L&M (Liggett and Myers) or L&N (railway), M&M (Candy)/B/D/S, N&Q (Notes and Queries), O&R, P&C/D/I/L, Q&A (Question and Answer), R&C/L/O/R/W, S&M (sadism and masochism)/C/H/T, T&A/G/O, U&O, V&M/T, W&F/I/R/S, X&Y (Cartesian axes), Y&D (Yards and Docks, USN) or Y&R (Young and Rubicam). All are defined in Web 3 or as indicated; many of the non-Web 3 ones are in *Cassell Dictionary of Abbreviations*, D. Pickering, 1996.)"

Regarding the missing K and Z, I searched Google for K&B and found it is a manufacturing company, the first of 149,000 K&B listings. Z&A (Zhang & Associates) are attorneys. It's possible that all (and certain that most) combinations of two wedded letters can be Googleized.

Oui!

A quick trick from Anil: The plural of u is us.

Words With Repeated Bigrams and Trigrams

Jeremy Morse sent two lists involving repetition of letters. The first is a list of words containing repeated bigrams, each beginning with different letters of the alphabet. Only Z and X are missing. The second is a similar list for trigrams. Curiously, only X is missing. Can anyone provide the missing links?

Repeated Bigrams: ACACIA, IMBIBING, CUCUMBER, DODO, CEDED, FIFING, MEGAGAUSS, BROUHAHA, ICICLE, JUJUBE, KAKAPO, SLYLY, MIMIC, ONENESS, SORORITY, PIPIT, PROROGUE, EMPHASISING, STATAL, QUEUE, VIVID, STOWAWAY, POLYCYCLIC, ZOOZOO

Repeated Trigrams: ASSASSIN, BARBARIC, CINCINNATE, DUMDUM, ENTENTE, FURFUR, GARGARISE, CHIHUAHUA, RINGING, JIGJIG, KINKING, LOGLOG, MURMUR, NONSENSE, ONIONING, PURPURIN, QUAQUAVERSAL, VERATRATE, ASSESSED, TINTING, HUBBUBBED, VALVAL, WOWWOW, PYOMYOMA, ZOOZOO

Angara...What does This Mean?

To the geographer, ANGAR is the name of a Siberian river which runs for 1,300 miles as a tributary of the mighty Yeniseu, a great Russian river of 3,300 miles. To the cruciverbalist, ANA is a collection of table talk or literary anecdotes about the GAR, a species of pike. To the Mercian wordsmith Peter Newby, it is simply—a fish out of water!

A Letter From Over There

Darby Belshire, a friend of Peter Newby, has penne the verse below. He suggests that thoughts of Burns will assist your understanding of this unique geographical name. Can you figure it out?

Fra Ben Monadhliah to Loch Mhor
Tha canna gae by horse,
Yet, one can send a letter
Along this very course!

A Superlative Word Square

Peter sends the following word square with clues beneath it. He says "A clue to its superlative quality lies in the fact that I've placed my construction immediately after Belshire's doggerel!"

1	2	3	4
5			
6			
7			

ACROSS: 1 pita bread 5 girl's name 6 former Indian coin 7 same as 1 Across

DOWN: 1 same as 1 Across 2 historic king of the East Angles (635-654) 3 anagram of 1 Across 4 same as 1 Across

Ned Rag's Garden

"Ned Rag's Garden is New Bybwen's main horticultural outlet," Peter reports, "stocking both native plants and such exotics as epacris, an Australian heath-like plant. One of Ned's most regular customers is the celebrated Selima Miles, the Iowan Nightingale, now resident in Mercia following her marriage to local schoolteacher Marc Cram. Highly temperamental, the soprano usually has her floral purchases protectively wrapped in her discarded clothing. A cactus, for example, often ends up in her knickers—the teacher having told her that it was once named a dildo! Not knowing in what to parcel Selima's new Australian plant, Cram's choice of outerwear evoked an onlooker's comment: SIR CAPES AVID DIVA'S EPACRIS."

The Great American/English Language Quiz Book

Louis Phillips has published a fun and funny book of quizzes, most of which begin with an anecdote that leads to the question. The questions range from simple to difficult. The introductory quote provides a quick example of the spirit of the writing: "What's another word for 'Thesaurus'?" But you should read this very enjoyable book with your own eyes. Very available from Prologue Press, 375 Riverside Drive, Apt 14-C, New York NY 10025. To start off your reading, read on...

Radio Signature In the 1940s, the radio signature of this noted world-class performer (comedian, singer, movie and radio star) was a scat phrase that went something like "Git gat gittle, giddle-di-ap, giddle-de-tommy, riddle de biddle de roop, da-reep, fa-san, skeedle de wooda, fiddle de wada, reep!". Can you identify the performer?

What's in a Name? Mxyztplk is certainly not a common name, but Mr. Myxztplk was an imp who plagued what noted comic book hero?

New Onomatopoeic Heights The January 8 2000 New York Times obituary for this popular cartoonist for Mad Magazine stated that he "elevated comic book sound effect to new onomatopoeic heights. In his wacky world, a squirting flower went 'shklitza' and recalcitrant meals of spaghetti or pizza made inimitably meaty sounds. Each form of physical torture had its own exquisite sound; getting slapped in the face with a wet mackerel went 'spladap' while getting conked with a frying pan went 'pwang'. His vanity license plate read SHTOINK. Identify the artist.

A Quiz Not Quite Off-Color The English language has eleven (count 'em, 11) basic color terms. They are: Black, White, Red, Pink, Purple, Blue, Orange, Yellow, Brown, Green and ...?

On the Dangers of Hyphens During the 1950s and early 1960s, a future Hall-of-Fame baseball player advertised and invested in Yoo-Hoo soft drink. At a Yoo-Hoo convention, the player was asked "Is Yoo-Hoo hyphenated?" The player responded "No, ma'am, it isn't even carbonated." This noted speaker also added the phrase "It ain't over 'til it's over" to the English language. Who is this person, one of the most-loved baseball players of all time?

Language Play in American Novels The following bit of wordplay is from an important American novel published in 1950 and made into a motion picture starring Frank Sinatra. "I think you're a moron," the captain decided at last. "He ain't no moron," the veteran confided to Record Head, "he's a moroff. You know—more off than on." Can you identify the novel and its author?

A Variety of Puzzlements How many times does the word democracy appear in The Declaration of Independence?

Ames Names

Jay Ames, undoubtedly the oldest Word Ways contributor (he recently turned 94), provides this “non-academic slant on some Can-Amer-Eng names.” What better description of Barbie could there possibly be? It should become the company’s ad campaign slogan!

BARBIE the ever-lovin’ never-leavin’ living doll

CHUCK pro bouncer (dance halls, discos, bars)

DENNIS the everlastin’ menace

DOT Dash’s mate

ERIN Irish tru’ an’ tru’

FANNY badly overweight

MIKE natural born emcee

NORM everything but—

SAM disenchanting evening date (no repeats)

SYD Spanish Don pretender

TOM male cat / goat, lobster

TOMMY a gungel, plain and simple

VIC a ‘cough drop’

VINNIE seldom loses, even more—never at a loss
for words, ideas

Follow-Ups

The first four items are from Jeremy Morse (August Kickshaws) and the rest from Anil (November).

Lipogrammatic books go back to the ancient Greeks, e.g. Tryphiodorous’ *Odyssey* with no alpha in the first book, no beta in the second, and so on to no omega in the twenty-fourth. Chapter 13 of Augarde’s *Oxford Guide to Word Games* gives a good historical survey.

The “Badgers and Otters” list can be completed with ZANIER (a jester) that zanies or ZESTER (an enthusiast) that zests.

Chambers offers a predecessor of AFTERISM with the same meaning: LATTERWIT, describes as old US, but he cannot find it in Web 2 or the OED.

Fowler’s *English Usage* (1965) says “The two words [ethics and morals], once fully synonymous, and existing together only because English scholars knew both Greek and Latin, have now so divided their functions that neither is superfluous. They are not rivals for one job, but holders of complementary jobs; ethics is the science of morals, and morals are the practice of ethics.” However, since 1965, as Anil says, the two terms have largely changed places, led by their adjectives: ethical is now more associated with practice, and moral with theory. The three stages form a fascinating history in changing word usage.

I couldn’t find a single word to mix water and oil but here’s a couple of mixes that explain why they don’t mix: *o’ wet lair* (water) or *wet ail* (oil).

Your astute observation that the name Mimi is one in a million can be further substantiated by noting that the first I isn’t necessary to the product of a million (MMI). It’s in fact an intruder, an I in a MMI—a one in a million!

Your fourth curtailment homophone (hie, hi) is a virtual beheadment homophone as well. You have to listen closely to tell “hie” from “i.e.” Ditto “hi”/“I”. Can you think of others? While not noted as a leaper, a llama leaped into my mind.

Here are several WHO-HOW pairs, all in Web 3 or inferred: CAB-ABC, SEN-ENS, TAS-AST.

A Valentine Kickshaw

Webster's Second has the following three consecutive main entries: (1) **kicksey-winsey**, (2) **kickshaw(s)**, (3) **kicksy-wicksy, kicky-wicky**. KICKSHAW has three definitions: (1) something fantastical; a toy, (2) a fancy dish; a tidbit; a delicacy, (3) a fantastic person. KICKSEY-WINSEY is "a fantastical device; whim" (a kickshaw of the first definition). KICKSY-WICKSY is "a wife. *Contemptuous*" (a kickshaw of the third definition, when the negative definitions of 'fantastic' are considered). In Word Ways, KICKSHAWS has meant "a fancy dish; a tidbit; a delicacy" (a kickshaw of the second definition).

Now for a Valentine message to the married male readers of Word Ways: on February 14, when you and your kicksy-wicksy are riding around in your kicksey-winsey, don't forget that your kicky-wicky was once your kickshaw.

Spelling Dearest

Niall Waldman is appalled by English spelling. He starts off with the blunt assertion that "The English language has by far the worst and most irrational and inconsistent alphabetical spelling system in the entire world...There's heavy-duty bad and there's industrial-strength bad. Well, this system is big-bang bad." In this 151-page paperback, he irreverently describes how it got that way, starting with the Anglo-Saxon invasion of England in the 5th century and ending with the publication of the OED in the 20th. He identifies many villains: Saint Augustine, King Edgar, William Caxton, Edmund Coote, Samuel Johnson, Noah Webster, and James Murray. (He takes comfort in the fact that they are all now dead—"eaten by worms, decomposed by maggots and microbes, and possibly even halved in two by a construction backhoe.")

His disdain for Johnson is typical: "He contracted a disease called scrofula...This swelled his neck and face, making him extremely hard to buy pullover sweaters for, prompting his mother to either purchase them too large or knit them on him...He seemed to hate everyone who wasn't him—I'm not even sure he wasn't on the list... In the preface to his dictionary he wrote that he had 'written it with little assistance of the learned'—so it's obvious that the only reason he liked having Scotsmen around was to tick them off by writing things like that." (Waldman was born in Glasgow.) He sums it up by saying Johnson was a "cantankerous old so-and-so whose terrorization was so great that it has now become a sign of stupidity not to spell his stupid way."

The book is illustrated by a large collection of clever cartoons by the author. The introduction to the book says "To order copies of *Spelling Dearest*, visit www.Authorhouse.com or phone 1-888-280-7715." No price is given.