Kickshaws

Readers are encouraged to send their own favorite linguistic kickshaws to the "Kickshaws" Editor.

Edited by DAVID L. SILVERMAN
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Meaning and Origin

For the initial appearance of this feature, it seems appropriate to define its name and disclose its history, which will no doubt elicit some surprise from our non-etymologically minded readers.

A "kickshaw" is defined either in a neutral manner as "a bauble, trifle, or knick-knack" or more flatteringly as "a fancy tidbit; a delicacy." The purpose of this feature is to satisfy both definitions by presenting linguistic items of light weight and vast diversity, designed to appeal to the tastes of all recreational "linguisticians."

The word is of recent origin (from the point of view of the etymologists), having been introduced into American speech in Colonial times as a Yankee corruption of the French phrase "quelque chose" meaning "something." Once kickshaws became part of our language, it was natural to treat it as a plural form and to coin "kickshaw" as the singular form—an example of a "back-formation." Another such example is the word "pea." The plural "peas" (earlier "pease") was originally singular in meaning, though plural in sound. Since sound almost always triumphs over sight in the evolution of language, "pea" was formed from "peas" rather than vice versa.

Two Curiosities

Define the verbs "best" and "worst." Correct: they both mean "to defeat." Now define the verb "cleave." Your dictionary will offer: 1. "to adhere closely" and 2. "to separate into parts." The English language need never be accused of consistency. (Note also two diametrically opposite definitions of the verb "let.")

Word Cycles

It is simple to create a closed chain of words such as GROUND WATER MARK TIME PIECE WORK HORSE PLAY in which each pair of adjacent words (in-

cluding the last and the first) form a familiar two-word formation. Cycles of three such as: SAW HORSE POWER; MEAL TIME PIECE; BACK WATER WING; DOG WATCH FIRE; and SALT WATER TABLE are harder to come by, and cycles of two, e.g., BOAT HOUSE, are downright scarce. I'll welcome hearing of any "bi-cycles" or "tri-cycles" you are able to create.

Anagrams

Though I was bowled over in reading Dmitri Borgmann's LANGUAGE ON VACATION to find that "xylophone" has an anagram ("oxyphenol"), there were a few of my favorites which did not appear. Can you find anagrams for "insatiable," "proselyte," "shattering" and "pepsi-cola"? Answers to this as well as to subsequent questions are found at the end of this issue.

Ghoti Revisited

Most readers will recall George Bernard Shaw's clever example of the hopeless disparity between English spelling and pronunciation. By his lights, "GHOTI" should be pronounced "FISH," using the "f" sound in "lau*gh*," the "i" sound in "w*o*men," and the "sh" sound in "na*ti*on." Using the same principle, how would you pronounce "NOST LIEUT TOLON"? (Hint: the words from which the sounds are extracted are all military.) Answer: using the "o" sound in "prov*ost* marshall," the "lef" sound in "*lieu*tenant" (British version), and the "ur" sound in "*colo*nel," the correct pronunciation is "NO LEFT TURN." Using "gunwale" "boatswain," and "colonel" again, one can derive "Hello, Zen Master" from "Hwaleost, Tswain Mastolo," but for brevity I like "forecast," pronounced "folks" a la "forecastle."

Unnegatives

Many negative forms such as "uncouth" and "unkempt" have lost their positive forms. Others, such as "unwieldy" and "ungainly" have positive forms which, though not quite obsolete, are rarely used and will probably acquire obsolete status within our lifetimes. Still others such as "disdain" probably never had a positive form in English. In order to enrich our language a sample list of "un-negatives" together with their definitions is given below. The alert reader will note that the "negative" form of some of these is so in appearance only, but that minor objection should not be allowed to interfere with this worthwhile project.

Verbs

dulate: to move in a straight line
gruntle: to put in a good humor
oculate: to drain serum or vaccine from the blood
pede: to expedite
poverish: to enrich
turb: to soothe

Nouns

agon: a geometric figure with less than or greater than nine sides
dain: approval
nomer: appelation

Adjectives

ane: sensible
chalant: concerned
ferior: of equal quality
funct: extant

Oolly

"Oolly": a lump or loop of iron when taken as a pasty mass from the crucible. A real crossword puzzle type of word—one which you and I might never have had an inkling of, had it not been for Mr. John Ferguson of Silver Spring, Md., who pointed out to me several years ago that the word appeared in *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* (2nd Ed.) out of alphabetical order! In disbelief I checked and Mr. Ferguson was correct. The positions of "oolly" and the word that preceded it had been transposed at the expense of alphabetical order, a mistake, comparable, I would think, to the Encyclopedia Brittanica inadvertently omitting an entry on the Duke of Wellington. Mr. Ferguson mentioned at the time that he had written the publishers of Webster's about the error and that they had thanked him courteously while pointing out that the word was only "slightly" out of alphabetical order—a response which amused me in the same way as would the description of the Vicar's daughter as "only slightly pregnant."

I anxiously awaited the appearance of the Third Edition to see if the error had been corrected. It had, though in a rather drastic manner; Webster's has dropped the word completely. "Oolly" is no longer a word!

Animal Adjectives

We're all familiar with the more common generic terms from zoology such as "feline," "bovine," "ursine," etc. Readers are challenged to match the ten adjectives given below with the associated animal. (Both the adjective and the animal lists have been given in alphabetical order.)

A score of six correct is "qualifying," and eight entitles you to an "expert" rating. Any reader who scores ten must be a professional biologist, and he is encouraged to send in his own list of ten:

ADJECTIVE	ANIMAL
cervine	civet cat
colubrine	deer
hircine	goat
larine	gull
lutrine	otter
musteline	seal
ovine	sheep
phocine	snake
sciurine	squirrel
viverrine	weasel

Matched Homonyms

Can you find a pair of homonyms (e.g., "way" and weigh"), both of which have anagrams with the further property that the two anagrams are also homonyms? I know of only 2 such sets of "matched homonyms"; perhaps you can find more.

A Subtle Code

Given below are some samples of encoded abbreviations. The coding principle is simple in concept, but difficult to discover, and the poser should in fairness encode 15 or 20 abbreviations suggested by the solver. Since that is impossible in this case, an elongated sample of "cribs" is given. Break the code and encode L.B.J.

ABBREVIATION	ENCODED FORM
F.B.I.	L.U.N.
F.D.R.	N.O.T.
U.S.A.	D.S.A.
G.O.P.	D.D.Y.
D.A.R.	S.N.N.
C.O.D.	H.N.Y.
A.F.L.	N.N.R.
C.B.S.	A.G.M.
D.V.M.	R.Y.E.
R.P.M.	S.R.E.
U.S.S.R.	N.T.T.S.
S.P.C.A.	Y.N.Y.S.
B.P.O.E.	T.E.R.S.

Ghost

In the standard game of GHOST the players sit in a circle. One player selects a letter to start play, and the players in turn cyclicly have the option either of adding another letter or challenging the previous player. In the event of a challenge, the challengee must either produce a word (usually restricted to uncapitalized, unhyphenated words) starting with the given sequence of letters, in which case the challenger loses a point, or else suffer the loss of a point himself. Loss of 5 points puts a player out of the game. (Each player is identified as an incipient "ghost" according to the number of points he has lost; e.g., a player who has lost three points is a "GHO.")

Consider the two-player version of this game. Suppose both you and your opponent are "GHOS's," so that the next point determines the winner. Suppose in addition that you were the last player to lose a point (either by 1. failing to answer a challenge, 2. challenging unsuccessfully, or 3. having been forced to "finish" a word of three or more letters). You now have the dubious advantage of starting the last round. If you and your opponent have agreed to use Webster's Unabridged as authority, he has a decided advantage. For instance, an opening of S could be fatal. An experienced opponent might add another S. The only word in the big Webster's starting with double S is SSU (a Chinese unit of weight) and it ends with *you*. (Pun intended.) Your opponent could also be ghosted. Suppose instead you begin with D. Your opponent sees what he thinks is an unbeatable move, and quickly adds an H. What is your reply?

Without a copy of Webster's Unabridged handy, solution is hopeless, so we'll wait a few minutes for those who do have copies to decide on their reply: All right, time's up. If you say A, he can reply M and win with DHAMNOO. If you pick E,

he'll choose R and win with DHERI. If you pick I, he will challenge you and win. Pick O, and he'll reply L and beat you with DHOLE. You can't pick U, since that completes the word DHU (from Gaelic, meaning "black"). That leaves you only one choice, Y, which wins (DHYANA).

A very tough game, which can be made still tougher by playing it "open-ended" (letters may be added in front as well as at the end) or simpler by using a smaller dictionary, e.g., WEBSTER'S NEW COLLEGIATE, or even one of the smaller paperback dictionaries. Using one of the latter, readers can, with little effort, list the "safe" and "unsafe" openings in two-player ghost. Perhaps such a list even for the open-ended version is not beyond the powers of a patient "exorcisor." (The name is appropriate since such an analysis lays the game of GHOST to rest.)

Words With Two Origins

There are many examples in English of so-called "doublets," words of different appearance such as "regal" and "royal" which are nearly identical in meaning and arise from the same source. Both words derive from Latin "rex, regis," the first directly, the second indirectly through French. However, a more interesting phenomenon is the presence in our language of words with two distinct meanings, identical in spelling and pronunciation, but derived from two different sources. An example of such a word is "tattoo." The noun, signifying a military call on drum, bugle, or other instrument, notifying seamen or soldiers to repair to quarters, is derived from the Dutch word "taptoe," meaning to shut the "taps" or taverns. The verb, meaning "to adorn the skin with patterns," is of Polynesian origin. (Ernest Weekly, THE ROMANCE OF WORDS, Dover Publications, p. 129). Another example is "squash." As a verb, or as the name of a sport akin to handball, it is derived from Old French "esquachier" and ultimately from the Latin "excoacticare" meaning "to drive together." As the name of the vegetable, the origin is the Massachusetts Indian word "asquash" (plural of "asq" meaning "vegetable") (Greenough and Kittredge, WORDS AND THEIR WAYS IN ENGLISH SPEECH, Beacon Press, p. 139). Can the readers supply additional examples?

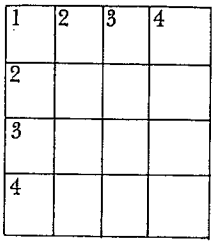
Minipuzzles

For those lovers of crossword puzzles who like to finish them quickly the following two "minipuzzles" plus one "micropuzzle" are offered. Warning: they are not as easy as they look; even some puzzle addicts on whom I've tried these three have failed to solve one. (I won't tell you which.)

Authority on all three is WEBSTER'S NEW COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY.

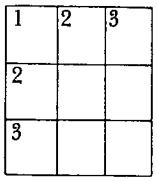
Across
1. fail
2. mature
3. declare
4. confined

Down
1. tighten
2. dwell
3. frank
4. lively



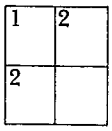
Across
1. disfigure
2. self
3. rent

Down
1. honey
2. period
3. decompose



Across
1. thus
2. whether

Down
1. ti
2. from



Minicryptogram

In the same spirit as in "minipuzzles" here is a very short message which you are challenged to decipher: SHAD FOR DICK. The original message consists of three words with lengths as given. It was encrypted using a "reciprocal" substitution cipher, i.e., one in which for example, if X is enciphered Y, then Y is enciphered X. To make it a bit easier, and to assure a unique decipherment into simple English, you may assume that no letter enciphers into itself. Also you are allowed this crib: PLUM enciphers into WXZQ.

Vocabulary Quiz

No alternative definitions are provided on this quiz. All words can be found in any clothbound desk-size dictionary. Use your own dictionary to determine how many you defined correctly, and in so doing, be a stern judge. A score of 2 out of 10 is passing, 5 correct is excellent, and 7 is incredible!

ambit	imbrication
aulic	meretricious
crapulous	rubric
factitious	squamous
fuscous	tendentious

Unacknowledged Equals

While browsing through a bartender's guide, I once discovered two cocktails, about 100 pages apart, with no recognizable difference in ingredients or mixing procedure: the "Clover Club" and the "Pink Lady." No cross reference was given on either page, and no bartender since has been able to point out the slightest distinction between the two.

The linguistic counterpart of the above oddity is a pair of adjectives with virtually identical meanings and with the same violent history underlying their absorption into the English language, one from the Malay, the other from Old Norse. Yet no dictionary I have ever seen has listed them as synonyms. The first and only time I have seen them associated in a common list of synonyms was in Roget's INTERNATIONAL THESAURUS 3rd Ed. The words: "berserk" and "amuck" (or "amok").

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Except for the very difficult "challenge problems" all answers to questions posed in this feature appear on pages 191-192.

Autantonyms

In the previous issue I cited the words "cleave" and "let" as self-contradictory words, capable of being applied with opposite meanings. Joseph T. Shipley has obviously explored this curious feature in much greater depth than I have and presents a formidable list of what he calls "autantonyms" in his delightful book *Playing With Words,* Cornerstone Library, 1966:

fast: a fast horse runs; a fast color doesn't.
dust: remove same from a suit; add same to a field of crops.
trim: embellish a Christmas tree; disembellish a fat cut of meat.
trip: move nimbly; stumble.
mortal: death-dealing; death-prone.
weather: wear well; wear out.
overlook: inspect; neglect.
cavalier: gallant and gentlemanly; haughty and ungentlemanly.

Shipley has other examples, among which I particularly like "to think better of." Applied to your neighbor it means to admire him more; applied to the plan he proposed it means to like it less.

A College of Interesting Cardinals

The words NI, SAN, TP , FOUR, VIER, and CINCO, meaning respectively: 2 and 3 in Japanese, 3 in Russian, 4 in English and German, and 5 in Spanish, have the interesting property that they denote the number of letters in their word-forms. Since the Chinese alphabet is ideographic, rather than phonetic, the Chinese character denoting "one" is also of this type. Thus our list extends from one to five. However, it can also be shown that no larger (or should I say longer?) cardinals

of this type exist in any of the languages mentioned. Therefore any polyglots among our readers are encouraged to extend the list. Dead languages are permitted, though Latin will be found of no help. It does come close, however, with "quattuordecim"—14. All this reminds me for some reason of a really unrelated topic, known as

The Printer's Paradox

A printer has a block of 100 spaces, each of which can be filled with any of 27 different type symbols: the 26 letters of the alphabet (upper case) and a null for spacing purposes. The number of intelligible messages that can be printed under these restrictions is staggeringly large, but obviously finite, since the number of ways of filling 100 spaces with any of 27 symbols is the 100th power of 27.

Among these messages there are some which characterize or define positive integers, sometimes in any of several ways. For instance 7 is characterized by SEVEN, FIVE PLUS TWO, THE SQUARE ROOT OF FORTY NINE, THE NUMBER OF DAYS IN A WEEK, and many other ways the reader can think of. Most of the possible "messages" are nonsense. Most of those that are not do not refer to integers. It follows, of course, that the number of integers that can be characterized in no more than 100 spaces is also finite, and that being true, there must be a largest one. Think about that largest integer for a moment. It will be very large, indeed, certainly larger than the 100th power of 27, since there will be many integers *less* than that number which are incapable of characterization. Call the largest characterizable integer M. Now consider the message:

ONE MORE THAN THE LARGEST NUMBER THAT CAN BE CHARACTERIZED IN ONE HUNDRED SPACES OR FEWER

That message characterizes M+1, requiring only 89 spaces. We are left with the contradiction that M is the largest characterizable integer, but that M+1 is also characterizable. I have never seen a resolution of this paradox.

Syllability

Noel Longmore of London, England, advises me that it is an old wive's tale that STRENGTHS is the longest one-syllable word in our language. There are other words, equally long, and not even plural forms. Can you find some of them?

Looking in the opposite direction, Mr. Longmore and I have compiled a list of 4 letter words with 3 syllables. Readers are challenged to extend it: AERO, AERY, AIDA, AREA, ARIA, IDEA, IOTA, IOWA, OHIO, OLEO, OLIO, and UREA.

There'll Always Be an Albion? Anglia? Brittania?

The latter two names, at least, are the Latin equivalents of England. Most readers know also that Gallia denoted France—Hibernia, Ireland—Caledonia, Scotland—

Hispania, Spain, etc. See how many you can match correctly from the list below, in which both Latin and English country names are listed alphabetically:

BATAVIA	HOLLAND
CAMBRIA	MOROCCO
DACIA	PORTUGAL
HELVETIA	RUMANIA
LUSITANIA	SWITZERLAND
MAURETANIA	WALES

Geographic Coincidences

Caledonia was the old Latin word for Scotland. The medieval Latin word was Scotia. Thus Nova Scotia (SE Canada) and New Caledonia (SW Pacific) are *synonyms*. The "geographile" should have little trouble finding other examples such as New England-New Britain or Newport-New Haven.

Vocabulary Quiz

Most of us have had the experience of reading, hearing and even using a word for years and finding out one day that we never really knew its meaning. The following list of ten is offered as an example of familiar words found in practically all pocket-size dictionaries, more than half of which the majority of readers will find difficulty defining correctly. Take a good stab at each one, check with your dictionary, and rate yourself as follows (counting "close" or partial definitions as *wrong*): 3 right—passing; 5 right—excellent; 7 right—either your vocabulary is incredible or your scoring is too lenient.

akimbo	impeach
askance	gravid
captious	oakum
cogent	quizzical
fulsome	turgid

Mathematicalimerick

I forget exactly how Lewis Carroll's poem goes in which he rhymed "1⅔" with "quadratic surds," but he may well have been the first *poetician*. Martin Gardner has printed in his amusing *Scientific American* column, "Mathematical Games," a number (rather large, of course) whose designation in plain English is a limerick. This limerick was composed by Leigh Mercer. Inspired by the muses of mathematics and doggerel (shaggy) I have composed an equation. Your job is to impart to it the meter and rhyme scheme of a limerick. If you give up, consult the answer section.

$$\frac{12 + 144 + 20 + 3\sqrt{4}}{7} + 5\,(11) = 9^2 + 0$$

Anagrams

Generally speaking, the longer the word, the more difficult it is to find the anagram. However, here are three 5-letter words for which common but elusive anagrams exist. Time yourself on these. If you find all three anagrams within five minutes, you are in the expert category: FLOAT, GAMMA, MANGO.

Double Duty

The word "deduction" serves as the noun form for two different verbs. When associated with "deduct," it means "subtraction"; with "deduce" it means "logical inference." I can think of only one other such example (see solutions.)

There are also plurals which have two different singular forms. One of the two that I know of is "axes," the plural of both "ax" and "axis." Try to think of another.

A Plurality of Plurals

Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary* provides an example of the reverse phenomenon—a common word with *three* acceptable plurals. The word is "octopus" and the plurals, listed in order of acceptability, are "octopuses," "octopodes," and "octopi." The latter form, which seems to be heard most frequently, is probably frowned upon by the lexicographers because of the grafting of a Latin plural form on a Greek root.

Autologs and Heterologs

Bertrand Russell's famous paradox: "Is the class whose members are those classes which are not members of themselves a member of itself?" has an equivalent linguistic form. Call any adjective which correctly describes itself "autological." Examples: polysyllabic, sesquipedalian, pentasyllabic, terse, inflected, enunciable, inanimate, sybillant. The reader can think of arbitrarily many additional examples such as non-bovine, unradioactive, etc. However, I would like to see how many autologs can be added to the list if negative forms, including "inanimate" and "intangible" are barred. Readers are solicited for contributions. Now back to the paradox. Any adjective which is not autological is, by definition, "heterological." Examples: red, bovine, sympathetic, etc. Every adjective is either self-descriptive or non-self-descriptive (but not both), i.e., belongs to one of the two mutually exclusive classes of autologs and heterologs. To which class does the adjective "heterological" belong? If it is autological, it is heterological, just as the autolog "terse" is terse. On the other hand, if it is heterological, then by definition it is autological. Logicians have performed a very *ad hoc* and unsatisfying revision of the basic laws of logic in order to patch up this vexing contradiction. To back up this dogmatic assertion let me suggest two different classes: the class of intangibles and the class of concepts. It seems to me intuitively obvious and locigally sound to consider each of these classes to be a member of the other. But one consequence of the standard "resolution" of Russell's Paradox is to deny that possibility.

Howard Bergerson has advised me that nouns and verbs can be autologs too. Autological nouns are easy to think of: word, concept, noun, invention, tool, etc. Autological verbs are harder to come by, and I would welcome any that you can supply. The best one that comes to mind is "abstains." (Who ever heard of a verb drinking a highball?)

Point of View

Russell is credited also with inventing the game, "Conjugating Irregular Verbs." His original example is: I am firm. You are obstinate. He is a pig-headed fool. This game offers almost unlimited scope for creativity. How about:

I am thrifty. You're a bit of a tightwad. He's a real skinflint.
I'm an idealist. You're a Utopian. He's a fuzzy-thinking radical.
I'm cautious. You're timid. He's chicken-hearted.
I'm glib. You're garrulous. He can't keep his mouth shut.
He's a blundering idiot. You're prone to err. I'm human.
He's an alcoholic. You drink too much. I have hepatitis.
He's lecherous. You've got an eye for the girls, haven't you? I'm human.
I'm clever. You're crafty. He's insidious.
I'm diplomatic. You take a pragmatic approach to the truth. He's a hypocrite.

The game lends itself to any form involving shifting perspectives. For example:

RICH MAN	POOR MAN
tired	lazy
lavish	extravagant
eccentric	crazy
self-educated	unschooled
chic	garish
blunt	crude
democratic	plebeian
candid	vulgar

Readers are invited both to furnish additional examples in the 1st-2nd-3rd person and the rich man-poor man versions and to invent new versions of their own.

Too Many Definitions

The English language is rich in alternative ways of saying the same thing with slightly varying emotional nuances. Thus it is no surprise to find a multitude of synonyms for certain words such as "brave": bold, valiant, valorous, courageous, doughty, intrepid, plucky, gallant, stout, heroic, dauntless, fearless, and a few others that escape me. Or "nonsense": eyewash, poppycock, claptrap, drivel, gibberish, gobbledegook, rot, hogwash, flapdoodle, bosh, bunkum, hokum, bilge, balderdash, twaddle, tommyrot, rubbish, garbage, pishtosh, humbug, and fiddle-faddle.

The opposite phenomenon is the word that means many things. There are many such words which take up nearly half a page of the big Webster's. There are two words which come to mind, both of them with noun and verb denotations. However, to keep the list of definitions within limits, I will define the first word in its noun form only and the second in its verb form. Ten *different* meanings are given for each word, and the reader's task is to discover the word defined.

First word: a chief, a lump, a male swan, a stocky horse, an old Spanish coin, a string of lactose crystals, a sea-gull, a blow, a spider, a pier

Second word: to plant, erect, transfix, hurl, pave with rubble, arrange, expose for sale, start fermentation (in brewing process) by adding years, mesh, plunge

One right entitles you to gloat (see answers). This kickshaw suggests a somewhat different sort of exercise in wordplay based on the concept of

Homophones

Although there is disagreement on the proper definition, we will say that "homophones" are homonyms which differ both in meaning and spelling. Thus "sow" (to plant) and "sow" (female pig) are homonyms but not homophones, as are "suite" and "sweet."

The game consists in choosing homophones with at least three different forms and defining each form briefly. The object of the contestant is to discover the homophones. Example: a fruit, a couple, to cut. Answer: pear, pair, pare. Try this group of triphones with one tetraphone thrown in:

summit, glance, resentment
food, proper, to measure
before, successor, to ventilate
to rule, to check, to bestow abundantly
boundary, carried, brought into existence
dale, to be of worth, to obscure
incense burner, device which responds to physical stimuli, official critic
hidden supply, throng, consorted with prostitutes
withered, prophet, to scorch, to wrap (a corpse)

Swifties

To be swift is to be quick, which is to be alive; hence the Swifties are not dead yet. Here are a couple:

"That's a mighty big whale" said Captain Ahab superficially.

"Thanks anyway, daughter-in-law, but I can make it back to my homeland and live comfortably without your help" Naomi shouted over her shoulder ruthlessly.

Isomorphs

Words with identical repeated letter patterns are called "isomorphic." A good example of a pair of isomorphs are the words SWEETHEART and BLOODHOUND. (Readers are challenged to find the two other English words which

share the same 1233453674 pattern.) Some words are immediately recognizable from their letter patterns, e.g., 1223344546 uniquely characterizes BOOKKEEPER. Around 1914 the simple cipher FIESTA ALFALFA could admit only one decipherment: TRIPLE ENTENTE. Come to think of it, there are no other isomorphs of ALFALFA and ENTENTE, regardless of date. Here are some increasingly difficult patterns for which you are asked to supply the words:

Two *synonyms,* both with the pattern 12123
123232
1221314
1213143152
12134134
1234235631131

Solutions to the above appear in the Answers Section. The following is posed as a challenge problem. Its solution will require a combination of diligence, insight, and deduction. It will be open to solvers until December 31, 1969:

Find three *synonyms* with respective word patterns 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8; 9 10 5 2 3 4 5 3 1 5 10 11 8 12; and 6 13 14 4 5 3 1 7 15.

The Inscrutient Orable

Recently I opened a Chinese fortune cookie and read the following perplexing message: "Avoid laughing friends in business and visa versa." Never mind the unusual spelling. What does it mean? (It's my belief that there's less to it than meets the eye.)

Crash

In the game of "crash" two players each covertly writes down a five-letter word. (Some sophisticates who don't mind dragging the game out interminably use six or even seven-letter words.) The players then fire simultaneous "salvos" at each other. A salvo is a group of 5 five-letter words selected in an attempt to deduce your opponent's word. He must write after each word in the salvo the number of "crashes" it makes with his secret word. A crash is the occurrence of the same letter in the *same* position. Thus if the secret word is REGAL, then LARGE makes no crashes with it, while BEGIN scores two crashes (in 2nd and 3rd positions.)

Suppose in a game of crash your first salvo of STRAW, HOLLY, TEPID, MINUS, and COURT draws five zeroes. On your second salvo, each of your five words draws one crash: BRING, GLOVE, SHEIK, TRUCE, and FLIES. The winner of the game is the first player whose salvo contains his opponent's word. Can you guarantee you will have his word in your next salvo?

For Mathemagicians

In Volume 1, No. 4, p. 216, of WORD WAYS, Dr. A. Ross Eckler posed a challenge, based on an old card trick in which a group of code words is used to produce

a mystifying effect. The group consists of N words of N+1 letters each with the two features: 1) each word contains one pair of repeated letters, and 2) each pair of words contains one common letter. For the twenty-card version, Dr. Eckler quotes the standard group: THIGH ATLAS BIBLE GOOSE. An older Latin version is: MUTUS NOMEN DEDIT COCIS. For the thirty-card version of the trick, he suggests the words LIVELY RHYTHM MUFFIN SUPPER SAVANT, a remarkable coincidence, since I have been using a group for many years in performing the thirty-card version which uses two of his words: PILLAR RHYTHM MUFFIN CACTUS SNOOPY.

The challenge to produce a mnemonic group for the 42-card version (six 7-letter words with the two above properties) seems within the grasp of diligent logophiles. Only 21 of the 26 letters would be used, permitting the solver to neglect J,K,Q,X, and Z. I expect the problem will have been solved by the time this KICKSHAW appears, in which case, no doubt, a note by Editor Bergerson will follow.

Minicryptogram

If 12, 23, 34, and 45 are all common words, what is a 43125?

The Last Shall Be First Department

Many words such as LYRICALLY exhibit the same combination of letters (in this case, LY) at their beginning and end. Find three geographical names of this type with respective patterns: - HI - , - - A - - , - - RON - - . Right you are: OHIO, MIAMI, and TORONTO. Here are some tougher ones: - - - - - GRO - - - - - , - - - AU - - - , - - RE - - , - - - ORI - - - , and - - G - - . None of these are proper names, and the last has three solutions. If you become discouraged, see the Answer Section.

Twelves

Many groups come in the convenient dozen size. Readers are invited to add to the list: THE MONTHS ,THE DISCIPLES, THE APOSTLES, THE CAESARS (of Suetonius), THE TITANS, THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL, THE LABORS OF HERCULES, THE MAJOR OLYMPIAN DEITIES, THE MINOR PROPHETS, THE SIGNS OF THE ZODIAC, THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE, THE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS, THE ATTRIBUTES OF A BOY SCOUT, etc.

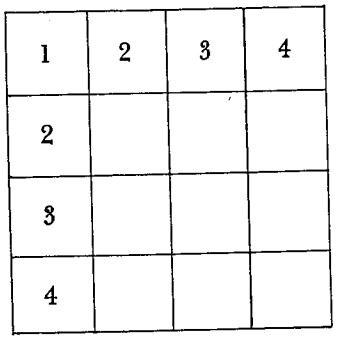
If you were asked to list all twelve members of each of these groups, how many groups could you list successfully?

A Challenge

Readers are hereby challenged to concoct a logical, intelligible and *grammatical* sentence beginning with the words: "If I was the President . . ."

Two Crossword Puzzles

We close the current KICKSHAWS with two small crossword puzzles: a mini-puzzle, exhibiting the maximum in "keying" (each letter doing double duty) and another resembling in pattern a type previously introduced in this Journal by Temple G. Porter, in which only 9 of the 33 letters are keyed. The decision as to which is harder is left to the solver.

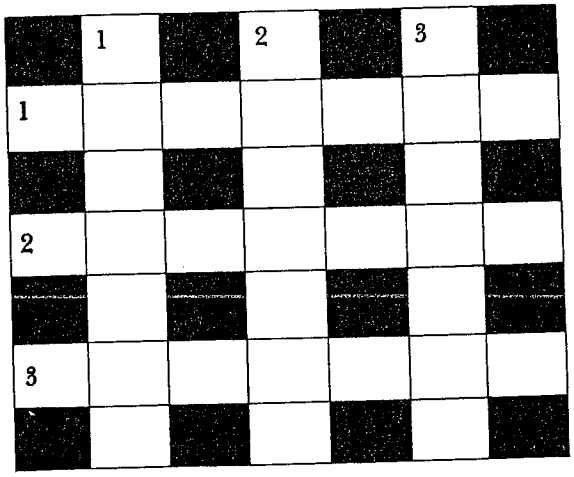


Across

1. which
2. European country
3. notion
4. score of quires

Down

1. dam
2. skin
3. region
4. harnessed draft animals



Across

1. a cereal grass
2. novice
3. undivided

Down

1. vent in the earth's crust
2. nimbleness
3. a pungent herb

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KICKSHAWS

DAVID L. SILVERMAN
Beverly Hills, California

Readers are encouraged to send their own favorite linguistic kickshaws to the Kickshaws Editor. All answers known to the editor appear in the Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

Mad British Ship Names

The English have shown magnificent taste in naming their men-of-war. Some of the names have been so dramatic that had they been displayed on ensigns in the language of their naval enemies, I have no doubt one lone Britisher could have kept an entire task force at bay. Examples: INDOMITABLE, INTREPID, INDEFATIGABLE, VICTORIOUS, VALIANT, INVINCIBLE, REDOUBTABLE, FORMIDABLE, DAUNTLESS, REPULSE, EXCALIBUR, VIGILANT, RELENTLESS, AVENGER, ADAMANT and RESOLUTE. Some of these fine names must have been worth twenty extra guns at least.

If Mad Magazine decided to lampoon the Royal Navy, it would probably start with the names of the ships. HMS UNFATHOMABLE would, of course, be a ship of shallow draught. The Mad Flotilla would surely include REPULSIVE, INSUFFERABLE, ABOMINABLE, INDUBITABLE, UNMENTIONABLE (and her sister ships UNSPEAKABLE and INEFFABLE), IMPECCABLE, INSENSIBLE, INNOCUOUS, INCORRIGIBLE, INTEMPERATE and INEBRIATED.

The Flavor of Words

WONDERFUL is good and AWFUL is bad, and yet AWE and WONDER are synonyms. This is not startling; language follows its own laws of inertia, and if a word is used frequently enough in a positive or negative context, it will absorb the flavor of that context into its meaning. PREDICAMENT originally meant nothing more than hypothesis, and EMERGENCY meant circumstance. But because of their primary usage in negative contexts, they have become negative words, denoting unpleasant situations. Words behave that way, and it's amusing to trace the history of their rise or fall on the value scale, though generally such history is obscure.

The history of olfactory verbs in English is fascinating. Originally, the word STINK was completely neutral. It meant simply to emit a smell, so that as late as the 15th century an English poet could write "The rose doth stynk full swetely." But by Elizabethan times the word had degenerated and meant only to smell offensively. So, SMELL took the place of STINK as the neutral word. But not for long. To smell very quickly came to be understood (when used intransitively) as to stink. To have an odor may have plugged the gap for a time, but only a short time. Today it, too, means to stink. Even if we bend over backward, we are stymied. If there is an odor emanating from your neighbor's car, neither pleasant nor unpleasant, and you mention that the interior of his car is FRAGRANT, he'll rush for the Airwick. Any woman will do the same if you blandly remark that her kitchen impinges on the olfactory nerves. There is no use in attempting to coin a neutral word. It will degenerate quickly. It appears to be characteristic of our race that no smell at all is good, while any smell, however fragrant, is bad.

Minipuzzles

As is evident, this puzzle can be solved with E's:

Across	Down
1. solemn	1. fret
2. furies	2. bird
3. prevent	3. cause
4. stiff	4. poem
5. penetrate	5. compound

	1	2	3	4	5
1	_	_	_	_	E
2	_	_	_	E	_
3	_	_	E	_	_
4	_	E	_	_	_
5	E	_	_	_	_

As anyone who has composed them will bear out, minipuzzles are simple to create. After typing the last sentence, I required about two minutes to come up with the four-by-four: SAME ORAL MESS EASE. Challenge: compose a four-by-four with sixteen different letters!

Lewisites and Lewisisms

Frank Lewis, the Nation's crossword puzzle-maker, adapted the so-called British crossword to American standards and in so doing came up with a style that has probably never been duplicated on either side of the Atlantic. The puzzles are difficult but unbelievably entertaining, combining with straight definitons, puns, anagrams, and other forms of trickery. For instance, he once filled 20 empty squares with a certain well-known phrase and gave as clue: AXMASM (5,3,2,3,7). The numbers give the word lengths of the five-word phrase. Answer: GREAT DAY IN THE MORNING. Another Lewisism, perhaps borrowed from Dudeney's 300 Best Word Puzzles: KINI (1,6,4,4,3,3,4,4,4).

Answer: A LITTLE MORE THAN KIN AND LESS THAN KIND. One more example: First Boston, then Milwaukee, now Atlanta (3,4,2, 3,5). Answer: THE HOME OF THE BRAVE. Now you're ready for the Lewisism quiz:

1. Blind, insane (3,2,5,3,2,4)
2. Horse doctor's remedy? (4,7)
3. Route of the cornborer (2,3,3,3,3,3,5)
4. Crossing the Rubicon (9,9)
5. Infantry? (5,2,4)
6. They can be rearranged to spell direct (7,2,6)
7. Penguin (3,2,6)
8. A Votre Sante (6,5)
9. The early morning air of Berlin (2,3,1,4,2,3,2,2,3,7)
10. Og is about all you can get (4,3,4,2)

What's the Question?

Readers are asked to supply the most plausible questions that might have elicited the following answers, and then to compare their solutions with those of the Kickshaws editor. None of these is original with the latter:

1. 9 W.
2. Dr. Livingstone, I presume.
3. Oh, about 20 drachmas a week.
4. No strings attached.
5. Crick.
6. February 29th, for example.
7. Chromatic scales.

Irish Bulls

An Irish Bull is an apparently logical expression with a built-in inconsistency. Some of the classics are truly hilarious; new ones are created every day and not only by the Irish. Just to get an idea of the lexicographical sense of humor, I spent a half hour in the library the other day, checking to see what clever examples the dictionary-makers provide us. I was disappointed to find even most of the big dictionaries sufficiently lacking in a sense of humor to provide no example at all. Only four in the library's stock, which included the new American Heritage Dictionary and the big Random House, enhanced their definitions with examples:

Oxford English Dictionary: dumb speaker!
Webster's Second and Third New International Dictionaries:
it was hereditary in his family to have no children.

Funk & Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary: I make my own imported cigars.

Until one of our readers finds a better dictionary example, I'm inclined to give the laurels to Webster's.

The Last Word

This game requires a list of two-letter words. The list need not be comprehensive; it is required only that the two players agree on it. Alternately they select a word with the restrictions that the first word selected must start with an A, and thereafter each word must occur later in the dictionary than the opponent's previous word and must have exactly one crash (occurrence of the same letter in the same position) with the previous word. The winner is the player who picks the last word. If you play the game with the words in Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, the list is: AD, AI, AM, AN, AS, AT, AX, BE, BY, DO, EM, EN, FA, GO, HE, ID, IF, IN, IS, IT, LA, LO, MA, ME, MI, MY, NO, OF, OH, ON, OR, OS, OX, PA, PI, RE, SI, SO, TI, TO, UP, US, WE. Would you prefer to play first or second?

The game is not hard to analyze. WE is obviously a dead-end, as are US and TO. They are safe words, and every word having a single crash with any of them is unsafe. We mark all the unsafe words generated by them and continue to work backwards. The first unmarked word we come to, SI, is safe; the only replies to it, SO and TI, can each be converted to the safe word TO. In this way we extend the list of safe words, which continues: PA, OX, MY, IT, EN, and AM. Thus the first player has the advantage and will win against any defense, provided he starts with AM and responds to his opponent's choices by always sticking to the safe track. If he starts with any of the other six options, he allows his opponent to enter the safe track. AD and AI can be converted to AM; AN, AS, AT or AX can be converted to EN, US, IT or OX, respectively.

Certainly the safe track will vary with the dictionary used. Using the above list, readers are invited to determine who has the advantage and his winning strategy in several variants of the game that come to mind. First, consider the misere version as applied to the original game and the variants discussed below. A misere version of a game is one in which the winning objective is reversed; in the game above, the loser in the misere version is the last player having a legal play available. Other variants:

1. Require not crashes but jostles (repetition of letters in any position). For example, AM can be converted to AX, EM, MA or MY, among others.

2. Require non-crashing jostles. For example, AM can be converted only to FA, LA, MA, ME, MI, MY or PA.

3. Extend the game to three-letter words, requiring either 1 crash, 2 crashes, or some combination of crashes and jostles.

In all variants, the paramount rule that the words must progress in dictionary order is necessary to ensure a terminating game.

The Last Word II

Like the previous games, the following is deterministic, i.e., reducible to a winning strategy which will make all game sequences virtual carbon copies of each other, provided both players know the strategy. But like chess, checkers, go, hex, and possibly even the third variant of the two-letter word game described above, determination of the winning strategy is probably beyond the capability even of the most advanced existing digital computer. In fact it is not short-sighted to assert that no computer, now or in the future, can ever relegate these games to the status of tic-tac-toe, for even if a computer solution were obtained, what would we do with the enormous game "trees" representing the winning strategy?

The game is played on a five-by-five grid. The two opponents move alternately, each move consisting of introducing at least one new five-letter word by completing one of the ten lines (five rows, five columns). Such completion involves the placement of from one to five letters on some previously uncompleted line. All letters placed on a given turn must be on the same line, and all lines completed on a turn must be words. Determination of what is or is not a word is left to a dictionary of the players' choice, which is used at most once per game (in the event of a challenge -- the winner of a challenge, if one is made, wins the game). The players agree also on the restrictions, if any, imposed, e.g., against capitalized, inflected, obsolete, foreign and/or slang words. Finally, to prevent what can be an exciting game from degenerating into boredom, a time limit of one or two minutes between moves should be imposed.

To avoid confusing this "last word" game with the previously-described two-letter word game, call it sinko. Clearly, the first move must involve placing five letters on one of the ten lines, forming a word. The second play will involve either the placement of five letters on a line parallel to the first play or four letters on an intersecting line. Third play involves placing either five or three letters in the first case and four in the second. As in standard crossword puzzles, column words read downwards and row words, left to right. Winner, of course, is the last player making a legal move.

The rules of sinko are much simpler than they sound, though the winning strategy may remain forever a mystery. Try the game a few times; you'll find it challenging and stimulating. You'll probably find that the second player wins considerably more than half the games at the outset, but that as two players become more experienced, the frequency of wins by first and second player (regardless of the respective abilities of the two players) tends to equalize. Putting it differently, if you select an opponent good enough to beat you two times out of three playing first in a large sample of games, he'll probably beat you two games out of three playing second also.

Heads 'n Tails Words

In the February 1970 issue, I invited readers to compile a list of 26 words such as edged in which the letter groups preceding and following the middle letter are the same, with each letter of the alphabet serving as "core". Josefa Byrne of Mill Valley, California has obliged, possibly with as complete a list as can be obtained (unless some reader can find a valid word in any English-language dictionary with a core Q). Most of these words can be found in the Second or Third Editions of Webster's; the Q and Z cores are taken from the Life Atlas (Baquba is a city in Iraq, and Azzaz a cape in Libya).

MIAMI, ABA, COCCO, ADA, PEP, KAFKA, MAGMA, OUTSHOUTS, ONION, ANJAN, EKE, ALA, PAMPA, SENSE, BOB, APA, BAQUBA, VERVE, HOTSHOT, ESTES, DUD, EVE, EWE, OXO, EYE, AZZAZ

Mrs. Byrne characterizes the obverse and reverse sides of the Golden State with anagrams that read like book titles:

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA - hot sun, or life in a car
THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA - chance stay, or safe in a bar

These rhyme and scan well if read as a quatrain (if you "rush" the third line a little); too bad the following "poem" made up of mutually anagrammatic sentences lacks rhyme and meter. Notwithstanding, it is still quite a production. It was relayed by Mrs. Byrne from the English magic magazine Pentagram:

Washington crossing the Delaware.
He saw his ragged continentals row.
A wet crew gain Hessian stronghold.
And so this general watches rowing.
A hard howling, tossing water scene,
The cold waters swashing on in rage.

Isolanos

In the February 1969 issue, Rudolph Castown conjectured that there are no isolanos (n-letter words with which no words have exactly n - 1 crashes) for n less than five. This would imply that in the word ladder game every pair of four-letter words can be transmuted, one to the other, e.g., LEAD to GOLD via READ, ROAD, GOAD. I thought the conjecture unlikely and was confident that I even had some three-letter isolanos in GNU, OVA, EBB and EMU, but Webster's Third listed GAU, AVA, EBO and EME as garbles. IMP fared even worse, so I sent some four-letter candidates to the editor: INCH, JINN, OYEZ, UGLY, TAXI, ONCE, HYMN and ENVY. He disposed of them with ITCH; JINX; OYER; AGLY; TAXT, TALI, TARI; ONCA, ONDE, ANCE; HYEN; INVY. I decided to spare the editor more spadework and attacked the big Webster's myself. I failed with KIWI and LYNX, but found my isolano in LLYN (a lake). It has been pointed out that Webster's Second lists LOYN as an obsolete word, but I feel that the absence of this word in the Third is conclusive, unless one is prepared to add dictionaries of Old and Middle English to the list of authorities (in which case, I suspect, we'll really have a rich new source of isolanos!). If Webster's Fourth should drop LLYN, I'll withdraw it from the isolano list.

After all that research, I feel it's my turn to conjecture: 1. No three-letter isolanos exist. 2. There are at least 100 four-letter isolanos. I would welcome seeing the first conjecture proved false.

The reverse phenomenon, the onalosi, is a word with garbles in every position, such as SHORES (CHORES, STORES, SHARES, SHOVES, SHORTS, SHORED). Can anybody find a longer onalosi?

Assorted Contributions

Walter Penney of Greenbelt, Maryland introduces the category of "Literal Words", e.g. DFI (deify), FND (effendi), XLNC, XPDNC, MNNC. In attempting to add to his list, I find the only passable items to be RST (arrestee) and SNE (essene -- old pronunciation). My other attempts vary from very poor to completely unacceptable: BUT, HNC, SNC, NRG and XCB (ex-Seabee). Ross Eckler adds NME (and with some diffidence, PNE, MRE and NTT). Can the readers augment our modest list?

Editor Eckler advises that the January 1970 Tel-news issued by New Jersey Bell Telephone reports that the longest surname in a U.S. telephone directory belongs to a Dallas resident named Herbert Wolfeschlaegelsteinhausenbergerhaupfstedt. I wonder how many times the gentleman has said "Just call me Herb". Page 151 of

Dmitri Borgmann's Language on Vacation (Scribner's, 1965) describes a man in Philadelphia with a suspiciously similar surname. The February 1970 Colloquy reported a counterexample to the F.X. O'B. conjecture, the combination of initials almost certainly implying the name Francis (or Frank) Xavier O'Brien. There is an F.X. O'Byrne living in Queens, N.Y. according to the latest telephone directory. Well, that's close enough to be called the exception that proves the rule. But what about the short card I received from Chicago, signed Frederick Xerxes O'Bannon? I checked the greater Chicago directory, but evidently the writer has an unlisted phone.

Howard Bergerson collects "pyramid words" such as A, DID and BANANA, in which the letter frequencies are 1; 1,2; 1,2,3; etc. He has a long list of 1-2-3 words, including ACACIA, HORROR, NEEDED, COCOON, PEPPER, BEDDED, WEDDED, POWWOW, BOWWOW and HUBBUB. From the 1969 Britannica Yearbook he has plucked the 1-2-3-4 word PEPPERETTE (a girl who does a dance routine during an intermission at an athletic event); a newspaper story on one of these girls might well be headlined: TENNESSEE'S SLEEVELESS PEPPERETTE. Ross Eckler augments the list with RESTRESSES and REMEMBERER. When asked if any 1-2-3-4-5 words existed, Dmitri Borgmann commented that it would be a frightfully difficult task to find such a word; nevertheless, he came up with the coinage of KNELLLESSNESSES (referring to the respective conditions of those church bells that have ceased to sound because of mechanical defects or other reasons). Anyone for a 1-2-3-4-5-6?

Howard also adds another nine-letter, one-syllable word, SPLOTCHED, to the previous list: STRENGTHS, SCREECHED, SQUELCHED, SCROUNGED, STRETCHED and SCRATCHED. Any reader who extends the list will receive the following rewards: for another niner starting with S, an encomium; kudos for a niner not starting with S; and for a tenner, a full-fledged triumph.

Deferential Adjectives and Persistent Adjectives

Most adjectives precede the noun they modify. However, Marvin Epstein of Montclair, New Jersey points out that there exist a number of phrases (many relating to the Middle Ages) in which the adjective deferentially follows the noun:

durance vile	mother superior	parts unknown
fee simple	heir apparent	bend sinister
court martial	heir presumptive	letters patent
sergeant major	knight errant	prince charming
lady fair	attorney general	battle royal

It is not difficult to discover words ending in -LY which are adjectives as well as adverbs. However, Marvin Epstein has identified a handful of adjectives which can still be adjectives when -LY is added: DEAD, GOOD, LONE, LIVE, KIND, PORT, SICK and GAIN. Of these, the adjectives LONE and PORT deserve the title of persistent because when -LY is added they are solely adjectives; there is no adverbial usage.

The Riddler of Richmond

Last December I received a letter postmarked Staten Island, N. Y. There was no return address, and it was signed simply, The Riddler. From the riddles themselves, the short accompanying paragraph, and the spidery handwriting, I surmise that the Riddler is a retired man in his late seventies, enamored of the sonnet form and of the old-fashioned English riddle-poem (such as "Little Nancy Netticoat"), and quite unconcerned whether or not anyone solves his blasted riddles. (Need I add that he failed to include the answers to his three riddles?)

I was better able to deduce the character of the Riddler than to solve his riddles. I believe I've unraveled one and have a tenuous fix on another, but one of them is a complete mystery to me. I hopefully pass them on to the readers for solution.

I

A drop translucent, shimmering and pale
Distilled a dozen times with patient care
And once again distilled. It cannot fail
To sweeten, calm, and purify the air.
Though less than this were folly to prepare,
And further distillation no avail,
The efficacious power was always there,
Imperfect though in form and in detail.

Yet brewer, chemist, Nature, all in league
Could never duplicate the childlike art.
Nor could a thousand artisans intrigue
To halt the process once it had its start.
Were there no eyes to view it and no nose
To smell it, still the heart would it disclose.

II

A murderess they style her, and yet
Her victims know her character full well.

She makes wives widows, true, but they forget
Her bounties when they toll the mournful bell.
Each swain who courts her hopes by her to gain
But when she yields her favors, thanks her not.
The owner of a world desired twain
And felt her aid was but his rightful lot.

He sought to bend her to his will, but she
Cared nothing for his purposes and checked
His lofty enterprise. He raged to see
His hopes by female whim thus sorely wrecked.
He lashed her violently with whips of steel
In vain. His feeble blows she did not feel.

III

She noticed something missing. One short line --
A trifle, but they added it next day.
And then it was complete. She could not say
That more was lacking, whether hers or mine.
But falsely balanced scales will falsely weigh
Their burdens. When I spoke of this to her,
She begged me to forbear, nor to deter
Her in her purpose or her trust betray.

That left me on the sharp horns of a D.
Her purposes run counter to mine and yours.
And well I know that you would take it I.
For what her sister likes, Emma deplores.
Since I can't please you both, I'll wait and see.
And both of you will know the reason why.

Ambiguity

In response to Art Seidenbaum's article "The Trouble With Students" in West Magazine, Rich Goren of Hollywood wrote the following letter to the editor: "...Mr. Seidenbaum says about Santa Cruz University, 'I counted girls going barefoot to classes; about one in every four.' Does he mean that one out of every four girls goes barefoot to class, or that barefoot girls go to one out of every four classes, or that girls choose to go to one out of every four classes barefoot, or that one of every four students at Santa Cruz is a barefoot girl, or that the girls at Santa Cruz have four legs?"

I can think of two more plausible interpretations and have no doubt that our readers will find many more.