

INTERNAL PALINDROMES AND REGULAR INFLECTION

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An internal palindrome can be observed in a word like DAWNWARD, in which the five letter palindromic sequence AWNWA is embedded within an occurring word. Articles in this journal that have concerned themselves with internal palindromes appeared in February 1974 (by Leslie Card and A. Ross Eckler) and August 1988 (by Bruce Pyne).

Two additional examples of internal palindromes are BANANA and AEGEAN. In these items the palindrome is preceded or followed by a single letter at the word edge. In BANANA, that leftover letter is situated at the left edge of the word and in AEGEAN it is at the right edge. I refer henceforth to items like these as Type A and Type B respectively. Some additional tokens are listed here:

TYPE A: ADD, AGOG, BELLE, BANANA, GRAMMAR, IGNITING, DYSPEPSY

TYPE B: EEK, AJAR, ARRAY, AEGEAN, NIMMING, SELFLESS, SINONISM, SENSUOUSNESS

It is not difficult to expand the Type B examples with palindromic nouns in the plural (with -S) or palindromic verbs with -S in the third person singular. A few examples are listed here:

TYPE B: AAS, DUDS, PEEPS, KAYAKS, ROTATORS, MALAYALAMS

Many readers of this journal will be unimpressed with this type of example, since similar tokens are very easy to find.

An interesting point with respect to internal palindromes and regular inflection is that Type A examples are quite rare. Here is a list of the eight words I have found so far:

TYPE A: ASKS, ASPS, ISMS, ISTS, PSIS, USES, TSKS, USEES

One might be able to expand this list with examples like ASANAS, OSAKAS and OSAMAS, although none of these items appear in the dictionaries I have consulted.

Clearly, Type A palindromes for inflected English nouns and verbs are elusive because the base word without the inflectional ending is not a palindrome. And since the first letter and the last letter of the palindromic sequence must be S, the range of occurring words like the ones listed above is greatly restricted. Whether or not the list of Type A words ending in -S can be expanded is a question I leave open for readers of this journal.

A final observation concerns internal palindromes ending in the regular past tense ending -(E)D. I provide six Type B examples:

TYPE B: EKED, EXED, EYED, EBBED, EGGED, ERRED

A question I leave open is whether or not additional items can be added to this puny list. A question I consider to be more interesting is whether or not there are any Type A examples at all. To date, I have found none.