

EYE SEA EWE

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One thing that I have gotten tired and sick of over the course of several hundred meetings and introductions is spelling my name. It is an uncommon and funnily-pronounced cognomen, and thus often misspelled and confused. My father used to spell our surname, whether asked or not, with “G as in ‘George,’ A, L, E, F as in ‘Frank,’” which caused him to receive correspondence addressed to Jeezin’ George Alef. I sincerely hope that the below verse may finally and unambiguously illustrate how my name is to be spelled. Read aloud for best effect.

A CLARIFICATION: A NARCISSISTIC, SELF-REFERENTIAL VERSE IN TWO STANZAS

D as in Double-U, the first letter of Wye;
A as in Aisle, not starting with I,
or like Aitch or like Ar (now you’re getting it, Eh?);
N as in New, in No, in Nigh, and in Neigh;
I as in Isle (the kind that’s no man);
and E as in Ef, El, Em, Es, Ex, and En,
and L is just L. Need I say it again?

G as in Gerry, pronounced like the ’mander,
A as in Aye, what mate says to commander,
L as in Lei, or in Loo, *L’eau*, or Lye,
and E as in Ewe, or E as in Eye,
and ineffable F as in Phew and in Phi.

Note that, while the vast majority of letter spellings, for obvious reasons, contain (and usually begin with) themselves, the letters F, H (in the common spelling), L, M, N, Q, R, S, W, X, and Y begin with different letters, and the letters Q and W are unique among their brethren, in that their spellings, in any variation, do not contain the letters Q or W at all! The spelling of W (Double-U) harkens back to a time when the symbol would have been interchangeable with the digraphs VV or UU, and thus is plainly descriptive in a way that would contain the appositive letters U, if it were not now considered a distinct character. Q’s spelling (Cue) is curious, however, as the letter is no newcomer to the alphabet, like W, nor is it called by any name other than an illustrative example of the sound it most commonly makes. Why, then, is the sound usually made by the letter Q spelled without a Q in the spelling of the letter Q? Why is the letter’s name not written as “que,” or “quu,” or even “queue” (perhaps “queueue”)? One could argue that the preexistence of a homophonous noun, a cue, might preclude an alternate spelling, but the letters B, C, G, I, O, P, R, T, U, and Y, despite being exactly homophonous to the common English words be, sea, ghee, aye/eye, oh/owe, pea, are, tea, you/ewe/yew, and why (sea, aye/eye, and ewe having the additional distinction of not even containing the letter with which they are homophones), are instead spelled with unrelated nonsense words or other English words. Having such odd connections between letters and words allows the above nonsense.

NOTES (Yay! The notes! The most interesting part of any poem! Huzzah!)

Line 2: I'll tell you that much.

Line 3: (Not "Arr"s, which R pirates' I's [as pirates often lack I's]).

Line 3: "A."

Line 4: "In U, in O, in I, and in A" (but knot in knew, knot in know, and knot in knee).

Line 8: Of course, nowadays one would be hard pressed to find a political theorist who pronounces this correctly.

Line 10: Also, of course, in lay, in lee, in lie, and in low, but these words actually contain the vowels they sound like they contain.

Line 12: "Few," "Fie." ■