

MEAN SIDEWALKS

ANIL

Perth, Australia

• This 'congratulatory' headline appeared in the Henderson (KY) *Gleaner and Journal*, 28 Sep.'56: WRESTLERS, REFEREE FIND \$38 EACH

• A UNIQUE TRIO?

metal mettle medal

These three homophones have three different meanings yet are related etymologically. Are there other examples of such triple resonances within a word family?

• CONVERGENT EVOLUTION MIMICRY

The word **RACK** has 8 different listings in Eric Partridge's *Origins* (1958 Macmillan, 1983 Greenwich House) (EPO) with 6-7 different meanings from 5-6 different origins, converging on the one spelling. That's a record for EPO, more than any other word therein. Runners up @ 4 origins each were: **bound, pink, pip, rake, rape, roach, stale. Bay**, pink and rake have 5 listings but only 3-4 origins. Dozens more have 3 origins, hundreds have 2. Thus convergent evolution mimicry is not unique to rack, the extreme case, but is somewhat common.

This study, based almost entirely of old EPO, isn't complete. I happened upon another 4, **till**, which has 4 in Chambers and Macquarie Dicts., but only 3 in EPO. There may be others, perhaps even other fives. Meanwhile rack remains tops.

Here are rack's 8 EPO listings. Separate origins for #1, 3, 5, 7, 8 and possibly 6; #2 & 4 akin to 3.

rack 1. carcass neck and spine <OE *hreacca*, neck

rack 2. rush, shock, mass of wind-driven clouds <ON *rek* < *reka*, drive or thrust; akin to #4 wrack

rack 3. bars; framework <MLG *recken*, stretch, wrack <wreck <wreak <reach <rex

(This is the most common rack: shelves, 'rack up', 'the rack'.)

rack 4. var. of wrack, akin to #3

rack 5. a path <rake (a track) <double origin: ON *rak* (stripe, track) + OE *racu* (dry stream bed)

rack 6. a horse's gait <unknown; 'possibly' = rack 1.; the verb 'probably' borrowed from rack 2.

rack 7. spirits, rack-punch <arrack <Arab. *araq*

rack 8. draw pressed wine <Prov. *raca* (the lees thereof) <raisin

Is rack a 'strange attractor' because it has an easy yet strong sound? Natural selection of fittest (easiest) phonemes? The same might be said of most of the 4-origin words above, and probably a majority of the 2-3s.

I tried to make a sentence with all six original racks (1 3 5 6 7 8) in the order listed in EPO and above. I got this far: **Rack's rack racks rack (rack + rack?)**.

"The carcass backbone's cage moves along a track at a horse's gait—because its driver is spirits and wine filled?" I was about to add a comment when my Muse blurted out,

"Rack-rack! Rack? Rack-rack. Rack!!"

I'm only quoting her. She's okay with that, but very bossy—and obscure. I assume her translation will be but one of the 720 possible meanings. She won't say, except that it's not the same as mine.

I asked her, if she won't say, then why did she blurt it out. She said, "It's to object to your pitiful attempt and to *riddle* you with doubt. It's probably too simple for you to understand. A film soundtrack with no film." I'd be grateful if a reader can tell me what she meant.

• GEMATRIA and SHENANAGRAMS

These are special classes of Definitive Anagrams. Gematria are numerical ‘charades’ made entirely of the alphanumeric values (AVs), or alphabet numbers, of the letters of the target word, in order. Shenanagrams are not charades but mix AVs of selected letters into ordinary (poly)anagrams.

GEMATRIA:

sesquicentenary $([S-E-S-Q+U+I+C-E-N+T] \div [E+N+A-R])Y$
 $([19-5-19-17+21+9+3-5-14+20] \div [5+14+1-18]) (25) = (12 \div 2) \times 25 = 150$
sixteen = S - $\sqrt{I} + X - T + E + E - N$ $(19 - \sqrt{9} + 24 - 20 + 5 + 5 - 14) = 16$

SHENANAGRAMS:

sexagenarian As earn an (E·X)/(I - G),/ I near E x N saga. $5 \times 24 / (9 - 7) = 60$; $5 \times 14 = 70$
septuagenarian Past E(N), “a ruin-age!” $5(14) = 70$
octogenarian E(O+A), not caring. $5(15+1) = 80$
nonagenarian Go {R/(N/N + A/A)·(nine + A)}. $(18/1+1)(9+1) = 90$
seventeen Net (V - E) seen. $(22 - 5 = 17)$
sextuple (S-L-[E/E]) ‘puts’ [puts (n.) = goes, times] $(19 - 12 - 1)$
silver wedding anniversary View lands nr. G+R divine years. $(7+18 = 25\text{th anniversary})$
height “H, 8.” [military roll call, answer with initial and serial number]
 A shenanagram for people eight feet tall, otherwise just a neat charade redundancy, H being letter 8.

And an antigram:

sextain *Isn't* (X/[E-A]),/ i.e., as x(T-N) $(20/[5-1] = 6) \times (20-14 = 6) = 6 \times 6$
 Sextain = sestina, a 6 stanzas x 6 lines verse form.

• QUIZ (answers below)

1. How can you see infinity?
2. What is airtight but not leakproof?
3. What word goes from noun to verb by changing a C into an S?

• POLCOR CHALLENGED

I’ve believed in the correctness of political correctness since before it was invented. Until it got subverted by points-scoring “more sensitive than thou” neologists, who seriously undermine its original spirit and hurt its cause, piling up terms that instantly, ridiculously become taboo.

When the Tasmanian Zoo quit calling the Fairy Penguin by that name for fear of offending gays, it convinced me these coiners never research their declarations. I bet, if they had bothered to ask, that they couldn’t find a single gay person anywhere who objects to the little penguin’s common name. They just throw out terms wantonly justified only by their own imagined cluey insights. Well I’ve decided to throw some back, extremer than thou.

For a start, I am **Fairy Tale challenged**. Should we ban all those kids’ stories? Or merely force them to change names. Like? Elf Tales lacks Fairy’s appeal—and might offend actual elves, if any.

<u>Neo-polcor term</u>	<u>meaning</u>		<u>term</u>	<u>meaning</u>
weight challenged	anorexic		hearing challenged	close-minded
height challenged	vertigo		intelligence challenged	being spied on

life challenged	dead		spiritually challenged	alcoholic
reading challenged	close-minded		digitally challenged	not good at cyphers
numbers challenged	can't get stoned		racially challenged	can't run very fast
tennis challenged	call for Hawkeye		logic challenged	close-minded
gender challenged	afraid of girls (or boys)			
beauty challenged	can't leave the girls (or boys) alone			
climate change challenged	can't convince deniers of the harm they're defending			
memory challenged	traumatised by one's past ("Forget it!" I'd say. "Snort ribonuclease!")			

(I apologise for my insensitivity to the feelings of polcor neologists. I also must apologise to the Zoo if I've remembered wrong and it was some other Tassie organisation, or a fake story.)

• DAFFYNITIONS

- all the tea in China** how it's served in England
- asteroid belt** the blow that wiped out the dinosaurs
- Caesarean section** a labour-saving device
- Give the devil his due.** Sin at least a little bit.
- hard up** Mt. Everest
- Joan of Arc** an early victim of death from smoking
- jog your memory** chase it around in your head
- know something inside out** have it all backwards
- liability** skill at lying (Okay, I lied. Skill at lying is *not* a liability.)
- peacetime** This is an obsolete word that might not be known to younger readers. It means absence of war, if you can imagine such an uninteresting situation.
- rabies** rabbit babies
- semiotic** one-eared
- the devil's own job** stoking coal "It ain't easy being Satan." (Not cool, either!)
- thick as a brick** a dangerously thin person (a thick joke)
- up shitless creek without a paddle** incurably constipated

• Another COINCIDENTAL SELFISH SYNONYMY (Web3, Chambers)

- lea** 1) meadow, arable land [<OE *leah*, light (open sunlit area)]
- 2) fallow arable grassland (adj.>n.) [<OE *laege*, lie (unused, fallow)]

• QUIZ ANSWERS (see above)

1. Stand between parallel mirrors and you can see forever.
2. a drunk airline passenger
3. prophecy (That's my answer. Can you think of others?)