

LAMPROTINE

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We like the word **trampoline** – it's only one letter different from **palindrome** - and palindromes are long-established as being of great interest to logologists. That makes **palindrome** a substitute-letter transposal of **trampoline** – remove a letter (the T in this case), replace it with another letter (the D), and rearrange the new set of letters to form a new word. For years, we had thought that **trampoline** had just a single transposal, the word **intemporal**. This word appears in W2, W3 and the OED, all of which define it as 'timeless'. The word is sufficiently rare for it not to be listed in current desktop dictionaries such as *the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, *Chambers Dictionary*, *Collins English Dictionary* and the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*. Neither does it appear in the bibles of allowable Scrabble words – *Collins Scrabble Words*, the *Official Tournament and Club Word List*, and the *Official Scrabble Players Dictionary*.

However, while searching for some other word, now forgotten, in *Funk & Wagnall's New Standard Dictionary of the English Language* (our edition is dated 1945), we stumbled on the word **lamprotine**. We immediately realised this was an anagram of **trampoline**, an even rarer anagram than **intemporal**. It turns out that **lamprotine** is also listed in an earlier edition of *Funk & Wagnall's Standard Dictionary of the English Language* (our edition is dated 1895). The actual entry in both of our *Funk & Wagnall's* is **lamprotin(e)^s**. This means that the word has two spellings, one with the final letter e, and one without the e. The superscript ^s indicates the **lamprotin** spelling is approved by the long defunct Simplified Spelling Board (the Simplified Spelling Board existed during the years 1906-1920). Surprisingly, **lamprotine** isn't listed in any of W2, W3 and the OED.

So, what does **lamprotine** mean? *Funk & Wagnall's* doesn't give a definition for **lamprotine**, although it does mark it as both a noun and an adjective. The dictionary lists the word following the two entries **Lamprotinæ** and **Lamprotres**. The former is defined as "noun plural, ornithology; a subfamily of tanagroid birds having the bill straight, stout, and hooked, and the feet with strong claws", while the latter is simply marked "noun (t.g.)", meaning "type genus". From these, we deduce that **lamprotine** is a type of tanagroid bird, or tanager. For an up-to-date definition of **tanager**, we turned to the online *Unabridged Merriam-Webster* which defines it thus: "any of numerous American passerine birds (family Thraupidae) having brightly colored males, being mainly unmusical, and chiefly inhabiting woodlands."

We checked the Wikipedia entry for **tanager**, and it tells us that there are numerous genera (ie plural of genus) of tanagers, and lists many of them, but none of the genus names is remotely similar to **Lamprotinæ**, **Lamprotres** or **lamprotine**. What's going on?

We decided to Google the term **lamprotine**. We got just four hits, all of them referring to an entry in "A Dictionary of Simplified Spelling, based on the publications of the United States Bureau of Education and the rules of the American Philological Association and the

Simplified Spelling Board”, which appears to be a 1915 publication. The entries in this dictionary are compiled from simplified spellings in *Funk & Wagnall’s* dictionaries. Each simplified spelling is shown with its corresponding unsimplified spelling. Thus, **lamprotin** is an entry, with its unsimplified spelling alongside, **lamprotine**. So we appear to be back full circle to *Funk & Wagnall’s*! Why does **lamprotine** only seem to exist in the 1895 and 1945 *Funk & Wagnall’s*? Why is there no independent definition or description of **lamprotine**? Why nothing else on the internet?

We wondered if Googling the related terms **Lamprotinæ** and **Lamprotes** would provide any leads for **lamprotine**. First off, we were surprised to find that, in addition to being a genus of tanagers, **Lamprotes** is a genus of moths (according to Wikipedia). We found **Lamprotinæ** listed in the 1911 edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica* in the article on tanagers, as well as in several books on the taxonomy of bird names. However, none of these turned up the elusive **lamprotine**. We suspect that the subfamily name **Lamprotinæ** and the genus name **Lamprotes** have both been overtaken by newer ornithological names, but we are still surprised that it’s difficult to confirm that through Google searches. As a result, that’s probably why our new transposal **lamprotine** has faded away to near invisibility.

If any Word Ways readers can shed any light on **lamprotine** and why it seems to have disappeared from view, on the internet, at least, do please get in touch.

It’s interesting to note that dictionaries do include quite a few other words beginning **lampro-**. According to the OED, the combining form **lampro-** means “bright, shining”. Between them, the OED, W2, W3, the online *Unabridged Merriam-Webster*, *Funk & Wagnall’s*, and the *Century Dictionary* offer these words beginning with **lampro-**
**Lamprocolius lampron Lamprophane lamprophanite lamprophoner
lamprophonia lamprophony lamprophyllite lamprophyre lamprophyric
lampropid Lampropidæ lampropoid Lamprops Lampropsidæ Lamprosoma
Lamprotes Lamprotinæ Lamprotornis Lamprotornithinæ lamprotype**

And just to show that the unabridged dictionaries don’t contain all the words, here are another five **lampro-** words from *An Illustrated Medical Dictionary* (Foster, 1892):

lamprocarpous lamprophyllus lampropus lamprospermous lamprotometer