Word Association Crossword Puzzle

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The solution to this puzzle rests not in your ability to divine synonyms, but in your ability to respond spontaneously and accurately with words that you associate with the clues. Although this is the first puzzle of the crossword type in the “association” genre we know of, the genre itself is replete with practitioners. There is the “Password” game on TV, played by millions daily; we can all recall the post-Freudian B-movie notion of psychiatric sessions in which the goateed doctor instructs the reclining patient to “tell me, when I say some words, the first thing that comes into your mind.” Our puzzle is but another step in a long tradition.

As further preparation for this unique puzzle, let’s run through a typical clue-solution item. If a clue were to read “Blackboard,” the traditional synonymic puzzle would demand something like “slate” for an answer. But in a word-association puzzle, “Blackboard” suggests “chalk” or “eraser” since these are the most commonly associated words with “Blackboard.” If you have the idea, forge ahead—ASSOCIATE!

The Diagram
What, do you suppose, is the one most melodious word in all of English? And what is the single strangest word in the language? These are not questions to which absolute answers are possible, for different persons react differently to the same words. Yet, many years of thinking about the first problem have convinced us that the most melodious of all words is REALM. For the post of the strangest word, we advance as the likeliest candidate a medical term, DYSMORPHOSTEOPALINKLASY, defined as the operation of refracturing a bone that has healed with deformity after a fracture.

Your sentiments on these matters?

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