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For several years I have attempted to bring some order to the logological jungle. One result has been the classification of a group of recreations: words within words.

In the classic form of this wordplay, each letter in the parent word is used exactly once to form daughter words; furthermore, the letters of the daughter words appear in the proper order in the parent. There are several varieties:

1) charades, in which the daughter words appear with letters together, as in STALLION = STALL + ION  
2) snowball words, in which the daughter words are in an increasing sequence, as in TEMPERAMENTALLY = T + EM + PER + AMEN + TALLY  
3) alternades, in which the daughter words are systematically interwoven, as in SPOUTS = SOT + PUS (every other letter), TABULATED = TUT + ALE + BAD (every third letter), etc.  
4) word deletions, in which one daughter word is embedded in a second, as in FEATHER = THE + FEAR  
5) word interlocks, in which the daughter words are interwoven at random, as in RIPOSTE = RISE + POT

A few comments may be in order here. The oldest of these varieties is the charade, which appeared in English puzzles in the 1740s (although the name itself did not appear until the 1770s). Will Shortz gives many fine historical examples in his survey articles on British and American word puzzling (in Word Ways between August 1973 and May 1975). Alternades and word deletions are considerably younger; examples from the 1890s can be found in A Key to Puzzledom (1906). (R. Robinson Rowe calls alternades woven words in the May 1975 Word Ways.) The progressive word deletion, which uses three or more daughter words each embedded in the next (as in PILGRIMAGE = GRIM + LAG + PIE) was invented by James Rambo and first appeared in the National Puzzlers' League publication, The Enigma, in February 1973. Snowball words, proposed by Ralph Beaman, first appeared, as far as I know, in the May 1976 Kickshaws; these are obviously special types of charades. Word interlocks, the most general form possible, were first proposed by "Archimedes" in the June 1945 issue of The Enigma of the National Puzzlers' League, and rediscovered by Murray Pearce and Jeanne E. Roman.

In passing, I note that charades can be phonetic as well as literal, as in QUERIES, in which there are embedded clues such as RESTRAINED. Now let's word need not:

1) linkades: TRIP +  
2) interlaces: TRIP,  
3) synonyr: word er caLum...
order to the

Now let's consider wordplay in which each letter in the parent word need not be used once and only once:

1) Linkades, charades with one-letter overlap, as in TRIPOD = TRIP + POD
2) Interlaced words, in which many (sometimes overlapping) daughter words are taken out of a parent word, as in TRIPE = TRIP, RIP, RIPE, TIE, TIP
3) Synonymic deletions, or kangaroo words, in which a daughter word embedded in a parent word is a synonym of it, as caLumnIES, InDoLEnt

Despite their close resemblance to charades, linkades apparently first were devised in the late nineteenth century; A Key to Puzzledom cites two 1870s examples. Interlaced words were made the basis of puzzles by R. Robinson Rowe in the August 1972 and August 1976 Word Ways, and by Ralph Beaman in the May 1976 Kickshaws and the November 1977 issue. Synonymic deletions appeared in Dmitri Borgmann’s Language on Vacation (page 117) in 1965; does anyone know of earlier examples? (Tom Pulliam lists many kangaroo words in the May 1976 Word Ways.)

If letter-order need not be preserved, interlaced words are generalized to logograms, as in LOGOGRAM = LOG, GO, GRAM, GROG, MAR, RAM, MOOR, ... These are closely related to the early nineteenth-century word puzzles called logographs and numerical enigmas; detailed examples can be found in Will Shortz’s articles in the February and May 1975 Word Ways. Logogram puzzles can nowadays be found in many newspapers along with crossword and cryptograms.

Lastly, I discuss words taken out of groups of words. If the first letters of a group of words spell a word, this is known as an acrostic. If the group of words forms a meaningful phrase, as in WHO for the World Health Organization, the acrostic is known as an acronym; as in SNAFU for Situation Normal, All Fouled Up. Recently, several items in Word Ways have specialized the notion further: a mynorca is an acronym in which the word and the phrase are synonymous, as in STOP = Skid Tires On Pavement. (For other examples, see the November 1970, February 1973, August 1975 and May 1976 issues of Word Ways.)

Buried words, as MOUSE in "Will a dynamo use more power than a generator?", are usually found in special formats. The May 1968
Word Ways has a clever sentence in which the cardinal numbers one through nine are buried, and various issues in 1970 and 1971 contain sentences with state and capital names embedded.

This pretty well summarizes the state of the art. Who will be the first to develop new formats, such as reverse alternades (BRAIDS = SIR + DAB), or a word square whose members are all alternades?

A CONSUMER GUIDE TO DICTIONARIES

Elsewhere in this issue, John Mc Clellan describes tongue-in-cheek how to buy a family dictionary. Too bad he wasn't aware of Kenneth Kister's Invaluable Dictionary Buying Guide (Bowker: New York & London, 1977), a 358-page work that gives much insight into the relative quality of about 340 in-print English-language dictionaries. To aid in comparison, the author developed a list of about 100 words (aesthetic, bunco, burthen, busing, buttress, capable, cell, certiorari, ..., Wankel engine, yesterday -- plus that taboo four-letter word), which he used to check completeness and accuracy of definitions.

Extended reviews (1 to 5 pages) are given for adult dictionaries, categorized as unabridged (over 250000 entries), semi-abridged (130000 to 250000), abridged (55000 to 130000) and pocket. (The Merriam-Webster dictionaries fall in the first three groups.) Summarizing the unabridged recommendations:

"Webster's Third ... stands alone as the most reliable, comprehensive, and up-to-date general dictionary on the market today. The Random House Dictionary, although it lacks the depth and breadth of coverage provided by Webster's Third, is easier to use, contains many useful encyclopedic features, and costs less than half as much. Webster's New Twentieth Century has much the same scope ... but it is not as current or as reliable. The key word ... is "superficial". Although Funk & Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary's coverage of the language historically is far superior to Random House or Webster's New Twentieth Century, the dictionary's lack of currency makes it a questionable purchase."

Brief reviews (half a page average) are given for school and children's dictionaries (Thorndike-Barnhart is rated tops), and for special-purpose dictionaries and wordbooks. This is a gallimaufry, ranging from historical and etymological treatises such as the OED to style manuals and secretarial handbooks! Other dictionary categories are: new words, usage, slang and dialect, synonym and homonym, crossword puzzle and word game, rhyme, spelling and syllabication, pronunciation, abbreviation and acronym, and sign and symbol.