KICKSHAWS

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Kickshaws is currently being assembled by a series of guest editors. All contributions should be sent to the editor in Morristown, New Jersey.

Below The Line

One of my pet peeves is that in referring to words appearing "below the line" in Web 2 some Word Ways authors imply these are somehow inferior to those "above the line" -- they are used as last-resort examples for want of a better reference. There is an old, often-quoted but seldom-followed maxim: when in doubt or if all else fails, read the instructions. The Explanatory Notes, section XVII, item 76 says:

"In the Lower Section of each page, in smaller type and narrow columns, are entries of several kinds. These entries have exactly the same status as words in the upper section: they are standard English words except as indicated by usage labels (Obs., Slang, Ref. Sp., etc.), bars (to show foreign-language status), etc."

I trust this is now perfectly clear. Below-the-line words have exactly the same status except for exceptions. I am particularly impressed by the fine distinction drawn between exception item (d) "A few rare obsolete words" and (e) "A very few extremely rare words".

Kemo Sabe

Two words, used in combination, are known to untold millions, yet they do not appear together in any dictionary: KEMO SABE. As every follower of the Lone Ranger knows, these are Indian talk for "faithful friend". KEMO as a separate word is not in any of my dictionaries; and while SABE appears as a variant of "savvy", it's undoubtedly a look-alike coincidence.

Dr. Martha Kendall, University of Indiana, has attempted to place Tonto's tribe by researching this expression, as published in Smithsonian Magazine. It appears the author of the Lone Ranger, Francis Striker, probably just invented the expression. The nearest she could find was in a 1916 glossary on the Tewa of New Mexico: close entries are "Kema" (friend) and "Sabe" (Apache). Next best was "kinmasabeh" which in Yavapai of Arizona means "the one which is white"; however, it refers to white clothing, not white people.
Two and only two words, both in Web 3, have the pattern 1234125643. As you read Kickshaws, further hints will appear to aid your identification.

Logobiology

Three parts of the body are evidently recognized in the fifth grade in Seattle, Oregon. According to the Associated Press, one pupil described them as follows in a homework paper:

"The human body is composed of three parts: the Brainium, the Borax, and the Abominable Cavity. The Brainium contains the brain. The Borax contains the lungs, the liver, and the living things. The Abominable Cavity contains the bowels, of which there are five: A, E, I, O and U."

Webster's Revisited

Four imaginary lines on the Earth divide it into five zones. Years ago, in May 1970 in Word Ways, I noted that every edition and printing of Webster's Collegiate since at least 1936 has failed to place the Circles and the Tropics all at 23° 27' from the Poles and the Equator, respectively. As of the latest Eighth Edition and printing (1976) they are unchanged from the 1963 revision with the Circles at 23° 27' and the Tropics at 23 1/2°.

Four-letter words have a special meaning to the general public. The world was shocked in 1961 when Webster's Third Unabridged was published, for it contained most of these unprintable words. The editors, however, could not bring themselves to include the most famous of all four-letter words. Didja know that they finally broke down -- would you believe it? -- and included it in the 1976 Eighth Collegiate? As one prominent man said, they are now teaching words in our schools that should be learned, as we learned them, in the gutters and back alleys.

Four letters are repeated in each of our 1234125643 pair. Two of these are repeaters in both words.

Permutations

Five-letter words still have unexplored logological aspects. For example, can you write down 130 common words of 5 letters each such that each of the 26 alphabetical letters appears in each of the 5 positions? No fair repeating the desired letter elsewhere in the word: e.g., BoBBy is a no-no for a B in positions 1, 3 or 4. Avoid inflectional forms, which are not needed to solve the problem.

By "common" let's start with the Pocket Dictionary (mine is a May 1977 printing). You can devise variants as a parlor game, perhaps with time limits, as you wish.

I claim you can find 127, with final J, Q and V missing. For a
starter: Above, pArty, shArk, cheAt, and deltA will get you through the A's. Beware of words you might think are included but aren't; for the final A, yuccA will also serve, but not omegA, sigmA or thetA.

The hardest are the letters from the middle to the end, especially if rare. Consider J. You immediately come up with Juice or any of several others. Test yourself for -J--, --J--, and ---J-. Now try Q---, -Q--., --Q--, and ---Q-. The V is far easier: Vague, aVast, reVel, and chiVe will do.

Not doing so well? Try ---I, for which there are at least 18. You must find 3 or more before reading further. (Sorry, alibI, with an extra I, won't count, and caprI pants, if in the 1970 edition, didn't make it in the 1974 edition and later printings.)

I quickly found 3 for ---Y--, 5 for ----U, 2 for ---X- (did you start with Xenon?), and 4 for ----Z-. The full Pocket Webster lists are given in Answers and Solutions.

Moving up to the Collegiate as reference helps some, but does not fill in the missing three words. That nasty (but very common) ---J- is augmented by OuiJa, hadJi, and shoJi. I had to go to Web 3 for the final J, samaJ; a non-capitalized ---Q-, burQa, and lulaV or luloV for final V. To complete the list, Web 2 gives trinQ for final Q.

Strings

Six-letter strings in words are also a neglected subject. By a "string" I mean adjacent alphabetical letters which are included (shuffled) in a word. One of the best, but only in Web 2, a niner, is BrIGHt- FACED with A through I; for other long strings, see the February 1978 Kickshaws and the February 1972 Word Ways. Even the best of the lot in the latter, the eighter PROpiNQUiTieS (N through U), is only inferred/implied to be common. I have heard and seen the singular many times -- but can anyone furnish a citation for the plural?

Even common fivers are rare: only BackED, DEFaceD, HI-JackKinG and SOURT are well-known. Imagine my surprise, when crying in my beer about coming up with clever items for this column at my local bar-and-grill, I looked up and saw they offered lVeR-WUrST sandwiches. As Meyer said, DELIGHTful!

Six E's in a row, EEEEE, seems to be the widest shoe size, as sold by Hitchcock Shoes of Hingham, Mass. Random House stops at EEE.

Six letters involved in repeats in our 1234125643 duo are (not necessarily in proper order) E, F, I, R, S, and T.

Sevenses

Seven is not only logologically interesting in itself (the reversal, névés, is a word) but also conjures up many items of interest.
dom House lists seven A’s, AAAAAAAA, as the narrowest shoe size. On the other hand they give DD as the largest bra cup size -- I have seen and closely examined a DDD. You guys who are dreaming of a DDDDDDD are dreaming. Last year, on TV during prime time, the movie SSSSSSSS was shown; its only redeeming feature was the title.

Seven-syllable words are legion in an unabridged dictionary, but almost nonexistent in ordinary speech and popular print. I claim that the most common is "disintermediation", the transfer of funds to places of higher yield. This is a fairly new word, first appearing in the Addenda of Web 3. Strangely, it was in the 1970 Pocket Dictionary (when it wasn't well-known), but is not in the current edition (now that it is common).

Elevenses is a word meaning "light lunch". Is sevens a word? Web 3 tells us sevens is plural in construction but singular in meaning as a name for fan-tan. Since this is pluralized by -s, is the plural of sevens then sevens? I'll go with sevens.

Magical Surprise

Eight is an easy word to enter in a dictionary as to spelling and pronunciation. Ate is harder; as past of "eat" pronounce it at or possibly variants of et; as blind impulse from the Greek pronounce it in any of four combinations of two syllables.

But I wonder about the simple two-syllable word used by magicians and those wishing to show a magical surprise. I don't know how to spell it (it's not in any of my dictionaries), but there must be many variants. You'll recognize it as TA-DA, DA-DA, etc., with emphasis on the second syllable, perhaps with extra A's or maybe an H or two. I see it from time to time (mainly in cartoons) but no standard spelling seems to exist.

Suppose one decides on the spelling(s). Then the pronunciation causes problems, for like Chinese it not only has sounds but also has tones. No wonder dictionaries avoid it! The derivation is probably related to tantara (or tarantara, tarantara, tantarara), a blare of trumpets.

Eight may be spelled from among the letters in our 1234125643 duplication.

Letter Changes

Nine years ago in this issue of Word Ways, editor Eckler listed the most common examples of word-pairs differing in a single letter for all 325 possible changes. The most difficult letter, Q, was helped considerably by the Web 3 word COQ since CO followed by any letter except A, C, H, I, J, K and V is a word in Web 2 or Web 3. These were solved with AUE-QUE, CUIT-QUIT, HUA-QUA, WAIF-WAQF, JUEY-QUEY, TRINK-TRINQ (that word again!), and VAT-QAT. Better examples not using COQ such as BUILT-QUILT were often
found. Ross did not allow variant spellings, which will be followed here.

An elaboration on the theme was presented by Dave Silverman in the August 1971 Kickshaw, when he unearthed the seven-letter word CLINKER which yields words by a single replacement at six positions: BLINKER, CLANKER, CLICKER, CLINGER, CHinker and CHINKED. (The OED gives the missing word, CLINKAR, as a variant of CLINKER.)

I seek here some of the longest words which differ by a single letter. Strangely, the longest dictionary word, that 45-letter lung disease, ended in -koniosis when it first appeared in the Addenda to Web 2, but in Web 3 and all recent Collegiates it is -coniosis. (The OED gives the missing word, CLINKAR, as a variant of CLINKER.) A fine point: since neither reference gives the other spelling the two can't be variants -- one superseded the other.

The next longest is apparently the Web 3 pair of 21-letter words (U, I) NDISTINGUISHABLENESS. Natch, the plurals add two letters each. A cycle with the change in the middle and at the start are the Web 2 words UNCONTROVERTABLENESS-UNCONTROVERTIBLENESS-INCONTROVERTIBLENESS. Unfortunately, no dictionary completes the cycle with the obvious fourth word.

Although these are technically not variants, perhaps you would feel better about Web 3's PINHEADEDNESS-PIGHEADEDNESS of 13 letters each. Between seven-letter and thirteen-letter words, a host of challenges await you.

Onward and Upward

Ten o'clock tonight, the monarch went up to the monastery to atone and cry. So he will get onion soup and loon, but no honour. Then soon go with his goon crony on a march. The queen upon the noon hour ate lunch. Anon, as an ion from the sun shone, she in her tight getup said, 'Lo, I have mastery and will hone the tenon'.

There is a reason for this madness, and it is up to you to find it out. A hint: "reason" does not appear in the text, and could not even if Web 3 were the allowable reference instead of Pocket Webster. On the other hand, the title words might well have been incorporated.

Ten different letters are involved in our 1234125643 couple. The ones not yet given are D and N.

Ten years after the New Pocket, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (called herein simply Pocket) was published in 1974. This requires some changes in Ross Eckler's Pocket Ghost strategy, discussed in the February 1973 Word Ways. JUV does not guarantee a win with "juvenile" since the opponent could go on to JUVENO and win with "juvenocrae" play for maximum Brainium's.
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"juvenocracy" or "juvenocracies"; therefore play for judgment with JUD. Similarly, MAH can entrap you with "maharishi", so play for maxi (also a new word) with MAX.

Brainium's Opiates

Eleven words you probably have never seen before and which are not yet recorded in dictionaries are OPIOID, NEUROPHYSIOLOGISTS, ENKEPHALINS, ENDORPHINS, MUSCARINIC, PERIAQUEDUCTAL, OPIATELIKE, AGONIST-ANTAGONIST, STIMULATION-INDUCED, LOCUS COERULEUS, and AXO-AXONIC. All the above were used in a popular article in Chemical & Engineering News entitled "The Brain's Own Opiates" on November 28, 1977. Others, not listed, are in Web 2 and Dorland's Medical but not in Web 3. Good thing the article wasn't technical!

New Words

Twelve thousand dollars a year will get you a subscription to Quarrel, a quarterly of 350-400 pages per issue to keep you up-to-date on citations in English around the world that will show new words, new meanings for old words, and syntax changes.

While, in fact, they claim you will be informed of such non-dictionary words as gas guzzling, Maoism, Legionnaires' disease, mini-computer, point of sale, and prime time (used in an earlier Kickshaw), I am skeptical of its value to anyone but Merriam-Webster and the OED. This because I have surveyed various New Words sections of standard dictionaries. It seems that words both come and go; what seems fine at the time of inclusion is often obsolete by the time it's in print. For example, the 1971 Web 3 Addenda has a surfeit of surfing terms, mainly because America was on a surfing kick at the time it was compiled. (The surfing noun and verb HOTDOG, as well as the nouns HOTDOGGED and HOTDOGGING, have recently been taken over by the snow skiers, and I presume will be adopted by the skateboarders.) My 1970 Pocket Dictionary chose to include under "New Words For a New Decade" a host of words that were (1) older than the hills, but recently more common, e.g. CARBON TETRACHLORIDE, (2) at least 20 years old at the time, but inadvertently omitted from Web 3, e.g. BLACK BOX, and (3) such temporary words as HINGLISH, not in the latest edition.

In this last category is INTERABANG or INTERROBANG, a punctuation mark composed of a question mark and an exclamation point superposed, "used at the end of an exclamatory rhetorical question". Have you ever seen one? If your answer was "no", you haven't been paying close attention; go back and find two in an earlier Kickshaw. Has anyone ever seen one elsewhere?

Has any dictionary gotten around to listing "ex-wife" or "ex-husband" yet? Merriam-Webster fails to include "uncashed" or "production number" but these are in Random House. A complete list of these old words would be more valuable than the new ones. More than
35 years ago I knew that the container used to make milk shakes was/is a "frappe can" and that the casket over a grave is on and let down by a "lowering device". Will one get these for his $12,000?

Twelve is the start of 1234125643. The proper letters to start are FI.

Hidden Sins

Thirteen words in the Pocket Dictionary with SIN hidden within them are required of you. By hidden, I mean the three letters SIN must be together, but may not start (as in SINK) or end (as in raisin) a word. To avoid trivialities, do not use words ending in -sing (as in crossin) or simple derivatives including inflectional forms of SIN words, e.g. unSinkable. Answers and Solutions lists all the Pocket Webster main entries which caught my eye; did I miss any?

Headlines

Fourteen Aged Seniors is not anything like Four Teen-Aged Seniors. To compress the meaning of an article in a headline, editors and writers often use word combinations that end up being ambiguous. Suppose you saw HOUSE ARRESTS MARK CHRISTMAS DAY SENTENCE POSTPONED. How many meanings can you find in it? I’ve thought about it but keep getting lost. Which are adjectives, nouns, verbs or names leads to massive confusion. Does any reader have some especially apt real-life examples?

FOURTEEN is too late in the dictionary for our 1234125643 two-some. If you don’t have them now, see Answers and Solutions.

Quickies

1. FIFTEEN is easily recognized even if written F-F-EE-. Here’s a ten-letter word with three I’s and three L’s: -ILLILI-... You should recognize it in less than ten seconds.

2. Little-known is that ARSIS is defined as (a) the lighter or shorter part of a poetic foot, and (b) the accented or longer part of a poetic foot.

3. NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, has come up with another compressed acronym: NEEDS. This stands for NASA End-to-End Data Systems, a project to reduce the size of its files.

4. I used to beware of verbs. This was before I realized one may form them from nouns (He floored the challenger), adjectives (She whitened her face), prepositions (They upped the price), and exclamations (We oh’d and ah’d). Didja know "used" (as used above) is a verb only found in the past tense, and "beware" (above and in Permutations) is used only as the infinitive or imperative 99.44 per cent of the time? I’ll kill myself unless some reader can come up with the verb used to beware.

5. Claim HA- is pronounced "Hay", as being manufactured by the people commonly known as Hayman.

6. MIRACLE is pronounced as being manufactured as being made so you may assume a wonder.

7. We will use only dictionary words (H.W. Webster) is guarded.

8. A problem at all times.

9. Answer this, and some answers are formed by Web 3.

10. How many words can you think of that can be found in the dictionary or not? (H. W. Webster)
5. Certain words do not require translation among languages. I claim HALLELUJAH MAMA JEANS would be understood by nearly all the people on Earth. Perhaps some linguist can find words more commonly understood by sound alone, regardless of the local language.

6. Most women know the word MAILLOT. This, from the French, is pronounced mi-5, and means a one-piece bathing suit. Clearly if spelled MIO it would be simpler to recognize and pronounce as well as being a new three-letter word. It so happens that nearly every manufacturer of women's swimwear in their trade catalogs uses MIO, so you may add it to your list of little-known three-letterers.

7. Wouldja believe K-9 is not obsolete but alive and well? The only dictionary I know that lists it is The Language of World War II (H.W. Wilson, 1948). My local nursery has a sign warning that it is guarded by K-9 patrol dogs.

8. A friend, who kindly proofread these items, challenged me to find a word with the letters NKST buried within it. This was no problem at all, since I immediately assumed the tetragram must be preceded by a vowel. A few mental tests gave INKSTAND in the Pocket. The Collegiate also lists STINKSTONE. Web 3 adds (inter alia) INKSTANDISH, CLINKSTONE, SINKSTONE, and TANKSTONE. I was flabbergasted to note two words in the Pocket with the closely related NKSH. One is not extremely common, but the other surely must be known to almost everyone. Can you think of one or both?

9. An unusual letter sequence is 12332145. I was challenged on this, and first coined TALLATED from the OED word TALLAT, a loft formed by placing boards over rafters. I finally found CARRACKS in Web 3. From Levine's Pattern Word List I learned Web 3 also has DIFFIDES, MITTIMUS, NARRANTE, NIPPINGS, PINNIPED, TALLATES, TANNATES, and TILLITES. All this is a long introduction to prove it is far easier to ask questions (as I have done here) than to answer them. I now know the Pocket gives SUFFUSED in boldface. Wonder why no palindromist has ever proposed the obvious DESUFFUSED, which looks more logical and comfortable than the longer DETARTRATED, of dubious validity?

10. A hip hip hooray (didja know this hip in Web 3 is an interjection, origin unknown, "usu. used to begin a cheer", as in hip hip hooray?) for Jeff Grant's rhopalic solution to a long-standing problem: T/EM/PER/AMEN/TALLY. Following the editor's suggestion, Boris Randolph generated the reverse rhopalisms YE/A, BAN/AN/A, ALTO/GET/HE/R and INTER/GENE/RAT/IN/G, the last in Random House. To follow Jeff's standards, I offer HOUSE/WIFE/LIN/E/S and PLAIN/CLOT/HES/MA/N; LIN is a word in Web 3, and HES can be found there as the plural of HE.