

A 2152 – POINT SCRABBLE MOVE

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In the November 1979 issue of *Word Ways* we exhibited a 2064-point single-move Scrabble score using open sources. This was an improvement on an earlier 2037-point effort devised by Josefa Heifetz (*Word Ways*, Feb 1974), better known as Josefa Heifetz Byrne, compiler of the famous *Mrs Byrne's Dictionary of Unusual, Obscure and Preposterous Words* (1974). Both moves are based on the elusive term SESQUIOXIDIZING, which is not specifically indicated in any dictionary. The closest approach is the past participle SESQUIOXIDIZED, which appears in OED.

Until now, the validity of the verb SESQUIOXIDIZE (to convert into a sesquioxide), and its present participle SESQUIOXIDIZING, has been in question. However, with the help of modern computer search programs, the word's existence can finally be confirmed.

SESQUIOXIDIZE appears in various 19th century medical works and is even mentioned in *A Dictionary of Pharmaceutical Science*, Hiram V. Sweringen, 1882 (p227, under 'iron').

Further proof of the legitimacy of SESQUIOXIDIZING is provided by the following citations:

"Both copper and zinc may be discovered by **sesquioxidizing** the iron by boiling the solution of the salt with nitric acid." [*The Dispensatory of the United States of America*, G.B. Wood, F. Bache, 1858, p1073]

"Monsel's solution of persulphate of iron is prepared by **sesquioxidizing** the iron in a definite quantity of protoxide,..." [*Transactions of the Medical Society of the State of New York*, Volume 1860, p19]

For the purposes of high theoretical Scrabble moves, 'open sources' generally refers to any word found in an English reference, including obsolete, dialectic and slang variants and inflected forms, even if they appear only in a citation.

After a break of over thirty years, is it possible to improve on the 2064-point solution? Yes, most emphatically! The key to the new record is the base word SESQUIOXYDIZING, present participle of SESQUIOXYDIZE, a variant of the verb SESQUIOXIDIZE. The OED lists OXYDIZE as a variant of OXIDIZE, so can we infer the extended form SESQUIOXYDIZE? No, but the following citation proves that the word does exist:

"The filtrate after the separation of the zinc was then boiled with the addition of 1KO₂ClO₅ to **sesquioxydize** the iron,..." [*The American Journal of Science and Arts*, 1870, p36]

The theoretical Scrabble game below culminates in a 2152-point move based on the word SESQUIOXYDIZING. Starred letters represent the blank tiles.

Note that there is not only a new base word, but a different strategy as well. Whereas the old 2037- and 2064-point moves rely on beheadments such as S/JAMBOKING, X/ANTHOPHYLLITE and G/ASTRONOMICALLY, the new one uses curtailments like JENNYRICKSHAW/S, FRICANDEAU/X and SAMBU/Q. The letters played on the bottom row in the final move are S, Q, O, X, D, Z, G.

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J
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L
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N

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Moves: 1. can 2. fricandean 3. prof 4. oii, po 5. disc, oi, pis 6. ahold 7. tutele 8. pistolett, ta, on, ee, ta 9. sambu 10. oud 11. koas 12. rickshaw 13. jennyrickshaw 14. es, os 15. ui, du 16. frig 17. perfrigerate 18. ty 19. li 20. table 21. vegetable 22. vane 23. over 24. overwhelmin 25. an, an 26. in 27. sesquioxiding (1755), jennyrickshaws (108), sambuq (29), pistoletto (11), fricandean (72), perfrigerated (20), vegetablez (35), overwhelming (72) + 50-point bonus = 2152 points.

PISTOLETT is an early spelling of ‘pistoleet’, a pistol (OED), UI is an isthmus (EDD), and VEGETABLEZ is an old plural of ‘vegetable’ (MED). OVERWHELMIN appears in *A Dictionary of the Old English Language*, F.H. Stratmann, 1867 (under ‘ovirqwelmin’). The use of -in for -ing is common in Scottish works, for example:

“Naethin but an **overwhelmin** sense of filial duty...” [*Island of the Scottish Soldier*, F. O’Keefe, 2006, p127]

“An **overwhelmin** vote in favour of oor just demands for Reform!” [*Scots Plays of the Seventies*, B. Findlay, 2001, p75]

All other words can be readily found in either the OED or Web2. Here are definitions for some of the more unusual terms:

- AHOLD near the wind (nautical)
- FRICANDEAU thick slice of larded veal (pl. -EAUX)
- JENNYRICKSHAW rickshaw
- OII New Zealand muttonbird
- PERFRIGERATE to chill through

PISTOLETTO small firearm

SAMBU old word for a saddle-cloth

SAMBUQ small Arab sailing vessel

TUTELE tutelage (obsolete)

References

EDD English Dialect Dictionary (1970)

MED Middle English Dictionary (1959-2001)

OED Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd Edition, 1989

Web2 Webster's New International Dictionary, 2nd Edition, 1961

COUNTING

SIR JEREMY MORSE
London, England

Numberless son,
Let me teach you
(Or you teach me)
Your natural lore.
While we're alive
Arithmetic's
One way to heaven –
An infinite, straight
And narrow line
From God to men.