THE LETTER REBUS (PART 2)

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Editor's Note: This article continues the survey of the letter rebus begun in the February 1984 Word Ways; readers should refer to that issue for a general discussion including taxonomy.

Characteristics of Individual Letters (Continued)

Letters can be distorted in ways other than by mutilation - by squeezing or stretching in one dimension, by rotation (including inversion), or by reflection. In the first group below, underlined rebus letters are taller and thinner than the others; in the second, wider (or even traced in outline); in the third, distorted in more complex ways.

the thinG they have in common 73, Breadth iDEx 83, great Minds thinK Along similar LinEs 79, one thinG after another 73
black muslim 75
as the nicEST 82
BeNthic 84, thick of thinGS 81
broad twelveS [X2] 81
the GODfather [symbol for Venus] 74, gibStaff 76, Timon of at-HeNs 83.
flattEN, double-d1G1t inflation 83; flatten [X] 80
flaTterY 78
Open wide the Pearly Gates 79, wide Open spaceS 83
great Minds thinK Along similar LinEs 79, ElongatE 79
Smashed 82
round About 79
jutLand peniSuLAv 73
twISTo [pen name of NPL member] 83
natural bent [musical notation] 84

The verticality of a letter is described by rebuses like plumb-isM 72 or Malignity 79. In contrast, consider rotation and reflection of individual letters. In the groups below, the underlined letters are respectively rotated 90 degrees, rotated 180 degrees, tilted, mirrored right-to-left, and mirrored up-down.

Flying 23, DandElion 88, you 78 are 78 lying down on a beeS 73.
Flying winDMills 81
SupPlies 54, anaLYze 60, phillies 81
double Play 22, MandAlay 75, PlayMateS 83
dead seaS 2, Scrolls 73, one-Idea'd 86
Vanilla ConES 74, when there's a Will... 79, Carillon 78
puLPiEs 72, ANtiparticles 74, tiptOE 59
ANtipoverTY67, tiPover FIRE extinguishER 82

Pitfalls
LazyBone for'En's word IN RedsTTl MatRllat
C-thetac 71 Pallor 88 pronate
countY 72 overYat
SandPall sleepY 3

two side from the HIS SOX model T over Eas:
Eleven 7, piedMond spinach

Dangle 8 to make a Cl

great Bl

to fly fast
tumblewe
d a VaCant
Stilted 7
tip: abD
DistincIN
philateal
big round
skewER 6
BOLD- autogenerated
crazyweek
out of the

goodYEAH
counterP

Pawk 30,
Prelexion
aBreaction
backBone
color
SELF-EEF
Ec hose

that is upside

Two rebus:
SupPlies 54
Pitfalls 79, Crestfallen 27
LazyBoneS 74
for*El*sic* 37
word "in" edgewise 66
RediStIllation 72, ConsideR 68, Misplaced ConsideRation 73
MatRLaterally 74
theta*c*tturn one 75
Pallor 81, ready to* roll 82
pron*ate* 80, aproneD 83
countY down 74
over*ate* 74
SandPaiT 83
sleepY hollow 83
two sides to EVERYTHING 57
from the bottom UP 57
HIS SOX ON upside down 58
model T Convertible 63
over EasY* 83, spot ReMover 82
Elevon 75
piedMonT 77
spinACh 82
Dangle a carrot* in front 80, Bangles 79, star-sPangled 73
make a Clean BREast of it 81, the SPRing Cleaning is over 81
great Black cockAtoo 84
to fly far away 73
tumbleweEd 75, Stumbling 75
a VAcant apartNeNT upstairs 79, can't you* 77
StillEd 73
Tip; add it to the check 81, tipsY 79, ConStipaTion 82
DisincTined 42
philatelist 81, anNalist 80
big round Of apPLause 81
skewER 62, as kewpie dOLLs 80
BOLD outLawy 66, DOwry 63
crazyweEd 75
out of the CRADLE, endlessLY rocking 76
goodYEaR Blumps 84
counterPlead 30
Pawk 30, Hawkish 31
Preflection 57
aBreaction 71
backBone 71, HandsPRinG and a backBend 71, Fatback, wardeN74
power of aTorn*Ey* 84, noCturnE 82, SandWicH tern* 83, turn
back the Clocks* 83, turned six 82
SELF-EFfacing 72
Ec*hose reverBEaTE 77, FreE verse [F, E in reverse] 80
that is bunco; it is upside down 55, SWIMs right side up or upside down and backwards 71, upside down c*alE on top 72
Two rebus es specifically contrast turned and upright characters:
SupPlies 54, StipLup 72.
Most rebuses are printed with capital letters, although there is no reason (other than historical precedent) why this need be so. However, it becomes important to pay attention to the letters in a small subcategory of rebuses: those in which capital or lowercase letters are specified in the rebus description.

smallly 22, smallish 25, ABsmallly 26, Dsmallly 29, Dsmaller 66, aBandoneD smaller 80
wee! 24, overwee!ING 39, Pee wee 48, Plow under Sweet Clover 51 aPetite 24, Man’s aPetite 65
little GO and great GO 25, BElittle 33, Bill tile 38
minute Hands and second Hands 29, minuteS 56
gloWingS 31, SOlo® 34, lower caseY inTO 49, Slower case 79,
chooSeS a crew ofD 82, capital Flower case 81
shortHorNs 40, Stop in FOR a short Visit 72, His undershortS 74
microBe 41
minorTE 58, geronimo 73, majorCA and minorCA are not close 83
see Amer’ic’a first 60
them pianoforteS 75, theSpian is simO 77
shrunken headS 75
mutiny 75, DEStiny 50, the CAinE mutiny 81
Grunt 82
netHinim 82
SPend CAsh if there 82

Lower case letters have sometimes been characterized as different or strange when compared with capital ones.

INin: INdifferent 39, i IE: differentl atE 69, ie IE: differentl atE 71
Mmmm: Mothers 38, Y yy: why® otherwise® 65
parRed: e: a strangeR in PARaDisE 72
st: queer street 76

In the same vein, the 1930 rebus hon®eSTy® is pol POL Pol
the best POLicy® was clued by this rebus:

Capitals are specified not only when lower case letters are present, but also when they stand alone or with other capital letters.

capitalS 22, capitalizaTion 27, capital ManSE 29, the capSTone 73
little GO and great GO 25, great DanE 31, BElittle greatNeSS 49,
DisinTEgrate’-S 43, HE lowerED HER down with the greatest of Ease® 47
largeNeSS 72, largeSe® 37
majorCA and minorCA are not close 83
PREdominant 54
HIS small following WAS enlarged 58
the superB CUisine 65, superSonIC 72
night shiftS 82
RedisTillation 72
them pianoforteS 75
Distress 36

Note that the word shift has been used to indicate both capital and lowercase letters. Occasionally the alphabet has been used to emphasize capitalization: mnpqxrStuvwx: featureS 41, jklMnop:
though there is no need be capitalised. In 1973 T was capitalized in the words of the accompanying verse, the answer being the predominant characteristic.

In recent years, the practice of physically enlarging or shrinking letters to indicate size has become quite common.

tallOWtopped 25, FonD Of aRabian StallionS 73, frontStallS 53, tolerat*ate 27
a big broadWay HIT in 1922 63, abig EUS 80, A: gibbonella 79
titanOther 71
immenseE 76
elephantlasis 76
long1CorN 83
superE 77, superVisE 79
mark*u*s wel*By 77
INTegrate 78, eNTargeD appendIX 80
great Minds 79, great UnWashed 80, great circle 83
calliPYgian too 80, giganticDe 83
megaloRNis 81
babyLon 80
shortHand note BOOk 83
period in every weeK 84

Finally, rebuses can be either printed or written in longhand. There are a few references specifically to printing.
aUtotype 21, sLeepy tiMe 82, typesetTER 24, DaInty peRson 78,
Tintype 79, STereOtyped 80, a tautotype 76
Sprinted 23, UNprinted 25, IMprinted 30, printemPS 78, FinGERprint 70, Tireprint5 53
Kinked 26
picaRoon 80
it a lick and A 74
romanCE 22, romanY 26, oneromanCY 28

Written letters were much slower to be exploited, flourishing only since 1970.

noNDscript 68, noBoth in the scriptURES 77
scribbleMANIAC [pen name of NPL member] 75, AN undivided inteRest in the Land DEScribed above 81
COwardLY Lion 73, CDoward 77, REwarDeD 80, ANdrew JackSon 79
Onward 72, Knees TURN inward 77
penTalpha 78, penCIL 73, penPlain 78, jurLand peninSULA 73,
penthoUSE 73, penultimate LinE5 75, penNy wisE and ... 74
indit*ED 74
sketchY 75
great Britain* 62
Discursive 80
sign OF fall 82, spRing is Here 82
thoroughWort 25

Absolute Position of Rebus Letter

Many rebuses attempt to describe where a letter (or letter group) is located in an absolute sense, without respect to other letters in the rebus. For right-left positioning, dummy letters were used...
in the rebus a handful of times, as BETH: aBoriginally 27, OOOOD: eXtermination 61. However, it was early recognized that more economical cluing was achieved by moving the rebus toward the appropriate margin.

right side: Flanking 48, Yeast 77, consider 48, Converge 47, thither 56, far 75, Bright 64, faraway places 79, philatelist 81, see the Bright side 49, starboard 49, subsequently 79, margin 77, unjustified 77, Safaris 77, postulate 77, Yonder 57. : quarterback 64, #: outer 81, one-sided 58, far-fetched 75

left side: Yearly 48, tropics 79, left-handed 78, LEFT 27, SHE is left alone 79, XXX: tench 79, export 77, west Atlantic 78, edgewise 81, black sea port 83, Bear left 81, punagram 83

One rebus used dummy letters to indicate the center instead of the extremes, RUMMAGE SALES: in the middle AGES 35.

For up-down positioning, similar techniques have been used. Only one rebus, the letter Z placed above a string of Os clueing topaz in 1935, used dummy letters. It was soon recognized that the rebus could instead be moved up toward the title, or instead down toward the accompanying verse.

high: height tens 82, leave it up to you 83, atticism 76, overruled 82 [D above top line on page], upupa 82, Braised 82, O: that's potato soup 83, Supposition 79, the high five 83, cross the border 84 [X on border], sight's high 78

low: on a flat Car 82, humble pie 82

Rebus letters can be specified with respect to the location of the verse, as in Converse 27, overall is 31, and O: discover 81. In the latter, the verse is implied rather than specified.

It is only a small step to let the rebus letters move between the lines of the verse, or below the verse.

inside verse: netherland 35, center of a flat pencil 80, Winter posed 81, inflat ed 74, read between the lines 75, reads between the lines 83

underneath verse: HEREafter 45, underived 45, fur below 45, lowell 51, THunder on the left 57, Slowdown 58, Glower 62, mink seal ermine: fur below 59, Blow down 72, ehtails 79, Sunder 79, aGlow 73, IN conclusion 74, aRse 77 [R southeast]. DETERMINATION 81, deep six 83

combinations: WEL [above] OOK [below]: WE LOOK before and after, NE [above] EN [inside]: NE ver see EN 80, G9 [above] G [inside]: Game-opening 83

Twice, letters have been written on top of the verse text - X: oversexed 81, OFC: taken out OF Context 82. In 1964, a rebus was presented in which the spaces between words in the text (not a verse) formed the shape CS, which was the rebus for Cats. In similar vein, a verse in 1983 had alternating long and short lines tracing the letter W on its side; this formed the clue for Wangled.
In 1982, the verse Eau! was written entirely inside the letter E, with an RI above it: River seinE. In contrast, in 1984 a rebus consisting of the letters LT was completely encircled by the verse: Linen closeT.

Sometimes, the letters of the rebus are part of the verse text. For example, in 1982 the letter L above the following verse

The song of the warbler
Reechoes, replays.
Its greenness displays

clued the phrase Linden tREE. Even cleverer was the 1984 rebus

They asked me, "When you go, by chance,"
(I'd thought on it a lot)
"Will you see the sights in France?"
Then I responded, "Not 1"
which clued the answer Versailles [verse I].

Rebus letters can also be positioned with respect to the rebus title. In the examples below, REBUS is merely regarded as a letter-sequence with respect to which rebus letters can be positioned; no use is made of the actual letters in REBUS.

REBUS: uprightNeSS 53, REBUS: This above all 74, REBUS: cap­arison 81, REBUS: topaz 80, REBUS C : Cover up 79, REBUS G : Genesee [Ge n.e. see] 83, REBUS: THunderhead 70, BREBUS: a Bad­don 78, TH

Letters can be placed in the REBUS sequence.

REJBUS: popinjay 82, REBuss: stuffiness 83, SUGIBER: nGard 80, SUGIBER: iGnites 82

Finally, the letters of REBUS can themselves be used.

SREBU: prepositionS 83, REBU S: nothing comes between US 83, EN IGMA TlC REBUS: parts unknown 83, REBUS: hand-me-downS

The alphabet (or fragments thereof) has been used to indicate absolute position of letters since earliest days.


Very brief alphabetic fragments are evident in AB: after the Ball is over 40, AB: a Blast 28, S: night letter 37, SU: night letters 45, Q: postpone 70, CZ: by the BY 81, U: after tea 34, and S:
just pastRami 84.

A final strategy for the absolute positioning of rebus letters is a pattern of compass directions.

N  N
W  D Disoriented 63  W  LE Least 24
S  S

ER  ER northernER, westernER, southernER, easternER 48
ER

H  H His newest [n.e., west] Hit is at the top of the chart 81

N  X
W  S  E  chinese [chi n.e., s.e.] DinnerS 73
S  D

RA  R AnswerR [A n,s; w,e,R] 82  A  sPan 82

Note how the cardinal directions have been gradually suppressed, until in 1982 one must infer their existence from the pattern alone.

Relative Position of Rebus Letters to Each Other

The description of how one letter is positioned with respect to another is a venerable rebus device; the vast majority of the rebus in the puzzle columns of the weekly magazine Golden Days in the early 1880s were of this type. Undoubtedly, these are the commonest rebuses in the Enigma — over, under, in and on have each been used hundreds of times. As elsewhere in this article, the earliest-known Enigma examples are presented.

The first set denotes how a rebus letter can follow on the right:

RafterS 22, GRafterS 22, afterWisE 22, afterTHought 26
AthenS 22, HEAthenisM 27, aUthenTic 28
behindHAND 24, 10:30 pm S: behind the timeS 29, One arM behind
His back 54, hind PART before 52
ABAft 24, aBandoneD, 34, D&DRS: Dampers and DRaftS 52
rightS and leftS 25, Cannon to the right of theM.. 41, WainWright
46, BE on the right side of the Law 67
EpipastlC 27, REpastS 27, pastIME 39, pastERN joint 47
Apriori, Aposteriori 27, anteROposterior 72
An extRA Share of fish 32, UnextERMinaTED 67
Manipulate 43, spec*ulator* 28, eSCalator* 29, 1DOlator* 67
dexterOUS 29
repeating FIrearM 47, DrearineSS 72, HE is found .. in aRRears
CatTails 29, Cat O'nine tails 71
..Day follows night.. 39, a left jab on the jaw followed by a
right hook 51, THE following letterS 60
bus letters
suppressed, on the

In contrast, a rebus letter can precede another on the left:

beforeHand 24, hereINbefore 31, spots before the eyes* 33
A foregone ConClusIon 30, aBandoned the Craft theREfore 34, primeVAI, foreSt 41, PInafore 72
PleadingS 31, Aa: A leading article 29, PleadingLy 35
conCeAled 39, thisTledOWN 56, AM: Misled by an article 67
CereMonY 24, night-Blooming CereUS 32, BE bothereD 39
leftHandED 24, rightS and leftS 25, left without a DIME 63
a presUposition 83

backwards and ahead of ME 61

Note that one word, astern, appears in both the follow-right and
precede-left lists!

A somewhat different vocabulary is used if the letter is at the
left or right end of a sequence:

His first Blast 41, aT last 1'M first 66
THE beginning 29, FROM beginning TO end 62
AstartE 82
heads or tails 59

Hind ENd foremost 83

MitrailLEuse 80
subsequentLy 79
middle Platter Of ormers 83
iamBic* penTAMeter* [iter] 80
BackwardS and forwardS 48
Grandaddy 23, highland LaddiEs 23, addUClor 29
PaddingS 29, Paddington 80

TO gainsaY 67
TaTtoo 24, SaWtotheD 40, Boot TREes 43, c°oC*KaTtoo 47
SalsoDA 27, a topIcal soNG 36, KalsoMinER 46, Gal so Sweet 56
night aTtaCk on the russiaNS 74
c°onStipaTlon 80, DandELion 82, hy*perlon 82 [on = to right]
shorter 72
PI: postPone 70, postDisSEisin 72, post MorTeM 74
LYE: EasternLY 59, great Pasiern Bone 73
a presUposition 83

beyond the FringE 82
star board an Oc*Ean LinER 82, star boardER 49
B =5: BeastlinesS 80, make a Clean BrEast of it 81, at Least Be 81

A foreGone ConCLUSIon 30, aBandoneD the CRaft theREfore 34, primeVAI, foreSt 41, PInafore 72
PleadingS 31, Aa: A leading article 29, PleadingLy 35
conCeAled 39, thisTledOWN 56, AM: Misled by an article 67
CereMonY 24, night-Blooming CereUS 32, BE bothereD 39
leftHandED 24, rightS and leftS 25, left without a DIME 63
a presUposition 83
In general, rebus letters are positioned adjacent to each other; however, spaces can appear, particularly when words such as left or right, front or rear, port or starboard, or early or late are used. A few words guarantee the existence of an intervening space:

- Land office 29, An extra Share of fish 32, Standofffish 38
down on the farm 48, far from the Madison crowd 54
- Safari 45, Niagara falls 72
- Land beyond the seas* 46, 
foregone conclusion* 72

In the vertical vocabulary, as is rich as the horizontal one. To indicate above, one has:

- Bonbons 22, Nonplus 22, Prisoner 23, Sand Monitor 23
- Catopeter 23, Thanatos 23, onomatopoeia 26
- tall-topped 25
tops and bottoms 25, Stop 26, to put two and two together 29
- Manstepping 26
- CAKE with icing on top 57, upside-down cake on top 72
- Person to person 61, won't operate 55, on the top of His head 70
- Clover blossoms 22, Dover sands 23, over eat 24, cover points 25
- hyperborean 30, can devour 23 [o'er]
on one's upper 24, breakfast, dinner and supper 31
- up and down 25, upside down 26, hand up 28
- high flow 26, hyperborean 30, highlands and lowlands 33
- above board 26, thoughts above distinctions*, 40
- a peal of thunder 28, a great deal of tension 66
- once upon a time 30, coupon 47, coupon bonds 53
- Spondyloisthesis 81 [i'pon]
- escapeade 30, escapades 31, handicap 32
- Handicapping 76
- superdreadnought 43, superannuated 28
- recover 45, discovered by colon 41, discovered by me 48
- Salt rising bread 31