PHONETIC PALINDROMES

SUSAN THORPE
Great Missendden, Buckinghamshire, England
thorpeds@hotmail.com

Words which are palindromes may, or may not, sound like palindromes. NOON (n u: n), PEEP (p i: p) and KINNIKINNIK (k i n i k i n i k) sound like palindromes. However, most palindromes with more than 4 letters do not sound like palindromes, an exception being the 5-letter MINIM (m i n i m). The palindromically-inconsistent sounds, sometimes subtle, are, nevertheless, real: MADAM (m æ d æ m), LEVEL (l e v e l), TENET (t e n e t), CIVIC (s i v i k), SOLOS (s æ u l æ 2), DEIFIED (d i: f a i d) and ROTATOR (r æ u t e i t æ r).

On the other hand, there exist words which are not palindromes but which sound like palindromes. These are phonetic palindromes. MAIM (m eI m) is a phonetic palindrome. Most of the phonetic palindromes considered here consist of 3 phonetic symbols of which the 1st and 3rd are identical. The 1st and 3rd phonetic symbols may represent:

1. **the same 2 single letters** in the word. In this case, the middle phonetic symbol must represent at least 2 letters, and these must not be the same letter otherwise the word itself would be a palindrome.

   (b) the **same 2 groups of letters** in the word. In this case, the middle phonetic symbol may represent either a single letter or more than one letter. tf 3: tf (church)

2. **different letters/letter groups** in the word. Again, the middle phonetic symbol may represent either a single letter or more than one letter.

The same phonetic structure may represent more than one word, in which case the words are homophones. 

Phonetic symbols used:

**Long vowels:**

- i: (as in bean)
- a: (as in barn)
- ɔ: (as in born)
- u: (as in boon)
- ɔː (as in burn)
- eː (as in schnee)
- jː (as in use)

**Short vowels:**

- ɪ (as in pɪt)
- ɛ (as in pet)
- ə (as in pat)
- Λ (as in cull)
- ɔ (as in pot)
- u (as in put)

**Nasal vowel:**

- d (as in frmc)
- ɹ (as in bɹFr.)
- \...e (as in bɛbɛ)
- a (as in mæ – Fr.)

**Diphthongs:**

- eɪ (as in aɪ)
- aɪ (as in bɪte)
- aʊ (as in now)
- ə (as in boar)
- əʊ (as in so)

**Triphthongs:**

- aɪə (as in fire)
- əɪə (as in royal)
- əʊə (as in lower)

**Consonants:**

- f (as in shoe)
- tʃ (as in chop)
- ʒ (as in vision)
- dʒ (as in jive and edge)
- θ (as in thin)

1. **FIRST AND THIRD PHONETIC SYMBOLS REPRESENT THE SAME LETTER(S)**

**LONG VOWEL CENTRAL SYMBOL**

- f i: f (fief – land held in return for feudal service)
- ɹ i: l (leal – loyal)
- t i: t (teat)

- b ɒ: b (barb)
- d ɒ: d (dard – in Botany, a fruit spur)
- m ɒ: m (marm)
- p ɒ: p (parp – a honking noise, esp. a car horn)
- t ɑ: t (tart)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short Vowel Central Symbol</th>
<th>Diphthong Central Symbol</th>
<th>Triphthong Central Symbol</th>
<th>Consonantal Central Symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tʃ i tʃ i (chich - an old name for chick-pea)</td>
<td>d ǝ d (dead)</td>
<td>ǝ i ǝ l (loyal)</td>
<td>ǝiks ǝ eks (exlex - beyond the law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k æ k (cack - to void excrement)</td>
<td>f æ f (shash - sash window frame)</td>
<td>ǝ i t (tait - the honey possum)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j æ j (shash - sash window frame)</td>
<td>f ǝ j (shish - a prolonged hissing sound)</td>
<td>ǝ a d (daud - to knock, beat)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d ǝ d (daud - to knock, beat)</td>
<td>ǝ o ǝ (Thoth - an Egyptian God)</td>
<td>ǝ u ǝ (rower)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k e: k (keak - to cackle)</td>
<td>t ǝ u t (Teut - coll. abbrev. 'teuton')</td>
<td>s ǝ e s (scious - having knowledge)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n e: n (nawn - the beard of barley)</td>
<td>k ǝ k (cork) (calk - to rough-shoe) (cauk - chalk) (cawk - a bird cry) (caulk - Nautical: a drop of liquor)</td>
<td>k ǝ k (kirk - a church)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p e: p (pape - the stone of a cherry)</td>
<td>s ǝ z: s (searce - a sieve or strainer)</td>
<td>v ǝ z: v (veuve - a widow) (verve - energy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s u: s (Suess - surname of Hans E. Suess, an Austrian chemist associated with radio-carbon dating)</td>
<td>t u: t (tote - a look-out hill)</td>
<td>s u: s (sauce)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t u: t (tute - colloquial abbrev. for tutor)</td>
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<td>z u: z (zoos)</td>
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<td>k ǝ k (kirk - a church)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**SHORT VOWEL CENTRAL SYMBOL**

b ː b (bibb – Nautical: a bracket under the trestle-tree of a mast, resembling in position a child’s bib)
k ː k (kick)
l ː l (lill – a very small pin)
s ː s (siss – to hiss)
z ː z (zizz – whizzing noises)

f ː f (feoff, feff – to grant possession of a property in land)
g ː g (gegg – a hoax) (Gheg – a people of Northern Albania)
k ː k (keck)
s ː s (cess – amount of tax) (sess – a section of a soap-cooling frame)
t ː t (tête)

dʒ ː dʒ (judge)
ʃ ː f (fuff – a puff of wind)
l ː l (lull)
ʃ ː s (suss – a slattern, a slut)

f ː f (faff – to fuss)
l ː l (lall – to speak childishly)
s ː s (sass – sauce)

k ː k (cake)
m ː m (momme – mom)
s ː s (soss – a heavy, awkward fall)

Nasal Vowel Central Symbol

ʃ ː t (tante – an aunt)

Diphthong Central Symbol

b ː aɪ b (babe)
d ː ai d (dade – to move with uncertain steps)
k ː ei k (cake)
p ː ei p (Pape – Pope)
t ː ei t (Tate – a surname)

k ː əʊ k (coke)
in ː aʊ n (none – the third quarter of the day beginning at noon and lasting till the sun is half way set)
p ː əʊ p (Pope)
t ː əʊ t (tote – the total amount)

So far, the 1st and 3rd phonetic symbols have represented consonantal sounds. Examples in which the 1st and 3rd symbols represent vocalic sounds are a lot less common:
The word uh-huh is unusual in having the 1st and 3rd phonetic symbols representing the same letter combination: ʌ h ʌ . The 1st and 3rd symbols below represent different letters/letter combinations:

**LONG VOWEL 1st and 3rd SYMBOLS**

aː ː f aː (Afar – a member of a Cushitic-speaking people of Jibuti and NE Ethiopia)
aː ː v aː (Avar – a member of a Turkic people prominent in SE Europe from the 6th to the 9th c. A.D.
eː ː ə p eː (épée)
**SHORT VOWELS 1st and 3rd SYMBOLS**

- i /i/ (iffy – doubtful)
- i /i/ (icky, ikky – sentimental)
- i /i/ (illy – in an ill manner)
- e /e/ (ainé – the elder)
- t /t/ (itty – little)

**NASAL VOWELS 1st and 3rd SYMBOLS**

- ñ /ñ/ (enfant – child)

**DIPHTHONGS 1st and 3rd SYMBOLS**

- æ /æ/ (Eyetie)
- œ /œ/ (ernia – a type of silkworm)
- œ /œ/ (ofo – slang for a lout or hooligan)
- œ /œ/ (oh-so – extremely)

**3. PHONETIC PALINDROMES WITH 5 PHONETIC SYMBOLS**

In these examples, it is either the middle phonetic symbol, or the 2nd and 4th symbols, which represent the vowel sounds.

**LONG VOWEL MIDDLE SYMBOL**

- s t o: t s (starts)
- s t ɔ: t s (sturts – startles)

**DIPHTHONG MIDDLE SYMBOL**

- s t eι t s (states)
- s t aυ t s (stouts)
- s t eι t s (stoats)
- s t ɔι t s (stoits – rebounds, bounces)

**SHORT VOWEL 2nd and 4th SYMBOLS**

- s ɪ l ɪ s (cilice – hair cloth)
- k ɪ l ɪ k (kellick – a heavy stone used as a substitute anchor on small vessels)
- k ɪ n ɪ k (quinic – a vegetable acid found in chinchona barks)
- m ɪ d ɪ m (medimn – an ancient Greek measure of capacity, approx. 12 gallons)

- k ɑ z a k (casaque – a woman’s jumper)
- ʃ a b a ʃ (shabash)

In this example, the 1st and 5th phonetic symbols represent the same short vowel sound; the 3rd (middle) symbol represents a different short vowel sound.

- ə s ɛ s ə (assessor)