"A" Is For Acrostic

Depicted at the left is a set of seven English words and/or names. All have been taken from the Second and Third Editions of the unabridged Merriam-Webster. All are complete with the exception of the first letter, which has been left open. Can you supply the seven missing letters needed to complete the diagram? Of course you can!

The problem posed here is that the seven letters you provide, read vertically and in order, must form an initial acrostic, spelling some well-known word or name. Again, it should be easy for you to satisfy this requirement.

After you have succeeded, do so a second time, and then a third time, forming a total of three different words or names, each one well-known, each one an initial acrostic. Is the plot beginning to thicken a little?

There's a catch to this requirement. The three words or names you select as acrostics must belong to one general category, such as "kinds of quadrilaterals" or "names of planets in the solar system." Is the problem finally beginning to seem like a logological challenge?

It's not quite that simple. The category you use must meet each of the following requirements:

1. It must be a sharply-defined category. Categories such as "foods" or "countries of the world" have indefinite boundaries. Their membership is a matter of opinion or interpretation.

2. It must be a category with fewer than 100 members. Categories such as "mammals" or "American authors" have far too many members to make this problem a logological challenge.

3. The three members you select from the category of your choice must place three different letters of the alphabet in any given letter position. For example, your three selections must begin with three different letters; similarly, they must end with three different letters; and so on, for each of the seven letter positions.
Now that you understand the full dimensions of this problem, tackle it and have fun. Despite the various limitations enumerated above, several (or even many) different solutions to the acrostic may exist. Mine is given in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue. What's yours?

"B" Is For Bible

A German proverb admonishes us that "Wer 'A' sagt muss auch 'B' sagen" ("He who says 'A' must also say 'B'"). I therefore dutifully proceed from A to B - but no further.

Printed in large type on the title pages of most Bibles is the word BIBLE itself (some Bibles, however, use an alternate wording such as the HOLY SCRIPTURES or the SACRED SCRIPTURES). Curiously, this all-important word appears nowhere in the text of the Bible - not in the Old Testament, not in the Apocrypha, not in the New Testament, not even in the Pseudepigrapha. Logologically, the word is remarkable for featuring B as the only alphabetic letter appearing in it more than once.

How does the Bible compensate for the heinous offense of omitting its most important single word? By using numerous other words and names spelled with two B's. Examples, taken from the Douay and King James Versions, include such words as BARBARIAN, BRAMBLY, BUSYBODIES, and SUBURBS, as well as such exotic names as ABENBOEN, BABUKIAH, JOBAB, and NABUSEZBAN (look these up to reacquaint yourself with Holy Writ).

For the dyed-in-the-wool logologist, such atonement is not enough - he insists on repayment in spades, in the form of words and names featuring three B's each. To the surprise of many earnest students of religion, he has succeeded in forcing nineteen such terms of ten or fewer letters out of a reluctant Bible. Longer words and names do not constitute sufficient penance, simply because the ratio of the B's in them to the total number of letters composing them falls to an unacceptably low level. Here is the list of known sacrificial offerings:

6 letters: babble, bebber, bibber
7 letters: babbler, babbler, bibbers, bybbers
8 letters: babbling, Barabbas, bubbled
9 letters: Baalzebub, babblings, Barsabbas, Beelzebub
10 letters: Bath-rabbim, lshbi-benob, jesbibenob, winebibber, Zerubbabel

Fourteen of the nineteen terms are culled from three popular versions of the Bible: the Douay or Douai Version (1609-1610), the King James or Authorized Version (1611), and the Revised Standard Version (1946, 1952). Five of the six- and seven-letter terms, on the other hand, are offshoots of the words WINEBIBBER (Matthew 11:19, Luke 7:34) and WINEBIBBERS (Proverbs 23:20). In old printings of the Bible, the term appeared as two separate words - WINE BIBBER(S). Very old English-language Bibles, including Tyndale's (1525-1535) Version, Coverdale's (1535) Version, and Taverner's (1539) Bible, spelled the second of the two separate words in inter-
This problem, as enumerated, is the acrostic at the end of

...it must also therefore dutifully be the ultimate wording (S). Curious.

...t of the Biblical names as these up to now, not enough, and yet even more. Can you slake his insatiable thirst by adding to the list of three-B terms?

Metamorphoses (But Not Those of Apuleius or Ovid)

Do you get bored with using words, particularly names, in their usual form? If so, split them into two parts, interchanging these. The fact may come as a surprise to you, but the switcheroos are in the dictionary, too. Let's consider some innocent but astonishing examples.

...t, a scansorial bird with zygodactylous feet, would just as soon have you call it the PECKERWOOD. Astronomers love to measure interstellar space using the PARSEC as their unit — but you can get away with calling it the SECPAR. Legal documents are full of the symbol-phrase AND/OR, a function word that H.W. Fowler has called an ugly device, and which Eric Partridge cautions us to avoid in self-respecting speech or writing. Follow that injunction — by using its twin, OR/AND; either way, all you really have is a contorted version of DRANO!

...FORETE — or as a FORTEPIANO. The leaping insect of the family Acridiidae, endowed with stridulating physical organs, is usually referred to as a GRASSHOPPER. Be different — talk about the HOPPGRASS!

...riend, Zer-...
initials of the four directions North, East, South, and West. More interestingly, however, there is at least one physical location in the United States where the four cardinal points of the compass also meet. That location is in Chicago, Illinois.

Running in a north-south direction for a distance of about 27 miles, all the way from Chicago's northern boundary with Evanston along Howard Street, through its southern suburb of Blue Island, at 2400 West by Chicago's numbering system, is Western Avenue. The street is the city's longest single thoroughfare. The street continues into Evanston as that suburb's Asbury Avenue, and emerges from Blue Island as the dividing line between the more remote suburbs of Posen and Dixmoor. At its intersection with Interstate Highway 57, along the Posen-Dixmoor boundary, Western Avenue changes into Dixie Highway.

Running in an east-west direction for a distance of more than 30 miles, starting at Chicago's Lake Shore Drive, along the edge of Lake Michigan, at what Chicago calls 1600 North, all the way through Chicago and through (or along the borders of) a series of the city's western suburbs - Oak Park, River Forest, Melrose Park, Stone Park, North Lake, Elmhurst, Villa Park, Lombard, Glendale Heights, and Carol Stream - is Chicago's North Avenue. Some five miles east of Saint Charles, Illinois, North Avenue turns into Saint Charles Road.

On the comparatively "near" northwest side of Chicago, Western Avenue and North Avenue cross each other. You have the privilege of standing on the SOUTHEAST corner of NORTH and WESTERN Avenues, uniting the four cardinal points of the compass within yourself.

Is there any other, similar or somehow analogous, location in the United States? If you know of such a one, won't you write and inform the editor of it?

Jazzing Up English Letter Frequency Counts

Numerous counts of the relative frequencies with which the letters of the alphabet appear in English words agree that the four least frequently used letters are J, Q, X, and Z. I have never liked the finality of this verdict – the ineradicable stigma that it imposes on four otherwise respectable alphabetic letters. Something should, I believe, be done to help them gain their rightful place in the sun.

The obvious solution to the present plight of J, Q, X, and Z is for all of us to cooperate in using more words containing those letters. Obviously, it is difficult to introduce terms such as [HAI]-JAR, QARAQLPAQ, XYLANTHRAX, and ZYZZOGETON into your speech and writing – unless you are a most unusual character. The route to take is to use the most common English words including the four stigmatized letters more frequently than you have been accustomed to using them.

According to The Teacher's Word Book of 30,000 Words, by E.L.
Thorndike and I. Lorge (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1944), the thousand most commonly used words in literary texts include 24 words using one or another of the four letters J, Q, X, and Z:

J: enjoy, job, John, join, judge, just, object, subject
Q: quarter, queen, question, quickly, quiet, require
X: box, except, expect, experience, explain, express, next, six
Z: realize, size

Here, then, is the material with which you must work, molding it to suit your individual tastes and needs. You can, for instance, resolve to use twelve examples of each of the four letters on each page of writing, typing, or printing. Three of the letters - J, Q, and X - pose no problem: an ample word selection is available for you. In the case of X, note that two of the available words, EXCEPT and EXPECT, are mutual transposals, which means that you can use them interchangeably, making your writing more flavorful. The case of Z is a little more difficult, with only two words available. Your writing will, accordingly, need to reflect the constant realizations dawning upon you, and you will have to display an inordinate interest in the sizes of things about which you write.

With some practice, you will, I feel certain, soon acquire the knack of writing skilfully and gracefully about J-Q-X-Z phenomena.

May I count on your support in this timely, worthwhile, and futuristic project?

The Bookshelf Problem

Standing on my bookshelf is a two-volume dictionary. The first volume covers the letters A-L; the second volume, the letters M-Z. What bothers me is that, inside the covers of the two volumes, the letters of the alphabet run from L to A, then from Z to M. As any fool can plainly see, that isn't right; the letters should be arranged in alphabetical order.

Because I am deficient in an aptitude known as "structural visualization" (I was very poor in solid geometry), I can't figure out how to place the books so that the letters inside them will assume proper alphabetical order. Can anyone out there help me? You may switch the books, place them one on top of the other, turn them so that their spines face the side or the back of the shelf, or do anything else that occurs to you. Is there a solution to my problem? Be ingenious - think multidimensionally!

At first glance, it seems possible to solve the problem by laying the books sideways, the first volume on top of the second one, with the spines facing frontward. Now, however, the letters on the spines, reading from the top down, are L, A, Z, M. That is just as objectionable as a disarrangement of the text inside the covers. Is there a solution to the problem that arranges both the outside and the inside letters in correct (alphabetical) order?
Transposarial Mania

I recently started thinking about lion tamers, members of a profession recognized by only one dictionary — and then, in lightfaced, italicized print rather than in boldface type: The Oxford English Dictionary (Volume VI, Page 324, Column 1, Line 1). When I start thinking, I start transposing — and can’t seem to stop. Into what words, names, and concepts could LION TAMER (and its plural, LION TAMERS) be transposed, I asked myself.

Leaping to mind in a flash, for LION TAMER, were the words MELIORANT, MENTORIAL, TAILORMEN (another Oxonian contribution, one designating male tailors), TORMALINE (a third Oxonian offering, an alternate spelling of "tourmaline"), and NORMALITE (French for "normality"). Rather than exhausting the transposarial possibilities latent in LION TAMER, these examples merely whetted my appetite for more, and I continued revolving the nine letters of the term in my mind, with the following results.

The comparative form of the adjective "Latin" is MORE LATIN. To orient abnormally or inadequately is to MALORIENT. Names that individuals somewhere in the English-speaking world must have borne in the past, or must have today, include LEO MARTIN, TOM LANIER, and IRA MELTON. Waiting for some American community to honor the author Norman Mailer is the city name MAILERTON. There are various kinds of metal — and one of them is IRON METAL. Works of art produced by residents of Lima, Peru are examples of LIMENO ART. After incorporating that part of central Italy known as Latium, in the fourth century BC, the simple Rome of earlier days became LATIN ROME. An ecclesiastical headdress resembling a new type of miter is best described as NEOMITRAL. Most intriguing of all, however, is a revolutionary concept in chemistry and physics — that of MOLTEN AIR.

Turning to LION TAMERS — why settle for just one of them, when you can have many performing for you? — derivations ... of my singular list included MELIORANTS, TORMALINES, NORMALITES, MALORIENTS, LEO MARTIN'S, TOM LANIER'S, IRA MELTON'S, MAILERTONS (there could be several such towns in America), IRON METALS (different varieties of iron metal), and LIMENO ARTS (the arts, and crafts, of Peruvians in the capital of Lima) — as well as the possessive LATIN ROME'S. Could that be all? Surely, there had to be more. The letters continued dancing around in my head, with further discoveries.

The superlative forms of the adjectives "linear," "larine" (gull-like), and "Romanly" are, respectively, MOST LINEAR, MOST LARINE and ROMANLIEST. By the same token, the superlative form of the inverse comparison of the adjective "minor" is LEAST MINOR. Male tailors, besides being tailormen, may also be described as MEN TAILORS. The past and present population of the English-speaking world must include more than one LOIS TERMAN, and more than one LISA MERTON. To learn something incorrectly is TO MISLEARN it. I have recently read much about Hugh de MONTREALIS, French cardinal, 1315?-1384. To describe a reciprocal relationship between biological body weather chart L. TRASIMENO moving to L. TRASIMENO as compact, to L. TRASIMENO lake both in certain natural areas as Tormina, lime is the term Ekalaka in the National Forest where is the lake.

Any reader is urged to contact me.

Thinking Time

Here is a preview of the Avarian, axon, roan, sots.

1. What do the EYES do the EYES look straight or askew of Eka laka in the National Forest where is the lake?
2. What obvious thing to ARCADIA is the A Preview of O?

For answers, see the next page.

A Preview of O:

I have it on good authority remaining and include the following:

1. Using the irregular past tense form of the verb, "to be," make a sentence starting with "I was not able...
2. How to Solve...
When I start, I go into what I want its plural, re the words contribution,xon ian offer­
JlTf (French al possibili­
et my appe­
etters of the
MORE LATIN.
Names that must have
MARTIN, TOM
n community
MAILERTON.
IRON METAL.
ere examples
Italy known
as the pos­
had to be
sh-speaking
more than
MISLEARN

A Preview of Coming Attractions
I have it on good authority (from an informant who insists on remaining anonymous) that forthcoming issues of Word Ways will include the following items:
1. Using the Integral Calculus to Determine the Area of an Irregularly-Shaped Word Square
2. How to Solve Cryptic-Clue Crosswords While Undergoing an biological bodies, you need the adjective INTERSOMAL. A national weather chart appearing on your TV screen might show A STORM LINE moving toward your area. Some maps of central Italy identify L. TRASIMENO - short for Lake Trasimeno, a historically eventful lake both in ancient and in modern times. Botanical genera such as Torminalis, a genus of plants of the rose family (in J.C. Wil­lis's A Dictionary of the Flowering Plants and Ferns, 7th Edition, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1966) might be described as TORMINALES (the Latinform plural of the word). A region devastated by the hot, dry, violent wind known as a si­moom or samiel is a SAMIEL-TORN area. Most revealing, perhaps, is the term ELAN MORTIS: the spirited self-assurance or impetuous ardor of death - one that cuts across language boundaries.

I seek new AEILMNORT and AEILMNORST worlds to conquer.

Palindromic Fancies
Lying awake at night, unable to fall asleep, strange palindrom­ic questions float into my mind, troubling me severely.

What did MARGELET'S TELEGRAM say that made the young lady take the next plane to Istanbul? What is the new SCIENCE O' EC­NEICS all about? Where in the world is the REVIRA RIVER? Why do the EYES OF O'SEYE inflict a thirteen-year curse on you if you look straight into them? Where is EKALAKA LAKE? As regards the last of these questions, I note that there is a town by the name of Ekalaka in southeastern Montana, near one unit of the Custer National Forest, and that its museum includes animal fossils, but where is the lake - underground?

Any reader with information throwing light on my questions is urged to contact the editor at once.

Thinking Time
Here is a list of twelve English words in alphabetical order:
Avarian, axon, cad, finish, hind, iris, man, Norma, nose, reek, roan, sots.

1. What do these twelve words have in common?
2. The word SLAVIC differs from the words above. How?
3. The word ARCADIAN differs from them in another way. How?
4. What obvious examples could I have added to the list?
To ARCADIAN? To SLAVIC?

For answers, see Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

Any reader with information throwing light on my questions is urged to contact the editor at once.

Thinking Time
Here is a list of twelve English words in alphabetical order:
Avarian, axon, cad, finish, hind, iris, man, Norma, nose, reek, roan, sots.

1. What do these twelve words have in common?
2. The word SLAVIC differs from the words above. How?
3. The word ARCADIAN differs from them in another way. How?
4. What obvious examples could I have added to the list?
To ARCADIAN? To SLAVIC?

For answers, see Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

A Preview of Coming Attractions
I have it on good authority (from an informant who insists on remaining anonymous) that forthcoming issues of Word Ways will include the following items:
1. Using the Integral Calculus to Determine the Area of an Irregularly-Shaped Word Square
2. How to Solve Cryptic-Clue Crosswords While Undergoing an
Emergency Brain Transplant
3. The Letter Rebus: An Instrument of Soviet Foreign Policy
4. Should the FAA Permit Commercial Airline Pilots to Play Scrabble® for Big-Money Stakes During Flight?
5. The Irish Bull as a Function of Sibling Rivalry in a Matriarchal Society
6. How to Eat Your Words and Have Them, Too!
7. Palindromes with Which to Entertain Your Neighbor’s Pet Bulldog
8. A Revised Formula for Computing the Depreciation of Topical Anagrams over Time
10. Tyrannosaurus Rex: The First Modern-Day Puzzler!
11. Cryptograms Concealed in Chinese Fortune Cookies
12. Diverting Puzzles for the Victims of a Nuclear Winter
13. The Comparative Merits of Jogging and Wordplay in Keeping Physically Fit: A Critique of the Presidential Panel’s Findings
15. Nonalphabetic Lipograms – The Story Behind the Story
16. Extraterrestrial Forms of Wordplay Monitored by the United States Air Force During Its Project Blue Book
17. The Psychotherapeutic Value of Nine-Letter Swahili Word Reversals
18. Word Games for Deep-Sea Divers
20. How to Construct a 37 x 37 x 37 Word Cube in Sanskrit – Without Really Trying!

Let the Diaskeuast (that’s “Editor” in good English!) know which of these articles are your favorites, urging him to publish them ahead of the others.

Peculiar Acronyms and Code Words

Over a period of time, I have collected a limited number of acronyms and code words which are best described as peculiar. I present them here without special comment, other than to solicit additions to the list from readers aware of other specimens of similar character.

1. ETAOIN SHRDLU. A letter combination on a temporary marking slug, produced on a Linotype machine. The letters represent the twelve most common letters in English text, in the order of their frequency according to one count. The term, in Webster’s Third Edition, happens to be a transposa1 of the word OUTLANDISHER (“a foreigner”) in the Funk & Wagnalls Unabridged.

2. EUOVAE. A word consisting of the vowels in the last two words (“seculorum amen”) of a hymn, the Gloria Patri (the “lesser doxology”). It is the second most remarkable English example of an all-vowel word. The word is in Webster’s Second Edition.

3. EVOVAE. A corruption of EUOVAE, used more loosely to designate any trope, not just that of the Gregorian lesser doxology.

The word, all English dictionary consonants are

4. LEBKAM: “deans” in the Jeremis (the Athbash, by the last and so on. The code "deans” (informal)

5. QIOUEAI words (“words of the Gloria Patri”, remarkable English

6. QWERTY, of the first qkeyboard. The revised keyboard's

7. SHESHAC Authorized V(lp. pp.51:41). The replacing BAI

8. VIBGYOR of the seven yellow, orange

A Foursome of

A P A C H E
P O L L U X
A L M O S T
C L O T H E
H U S H E R
E X T E R

The square, seldom
The word, also in Webster's Second Edition, is probably the only English dictionary word of six or more letters in which the sole consonants are V's.

4. LEBKAMI, LEB-KAMI, or LEB-QAMAI. A cryptogram for "Chal-deans" in the American Standard Version (1901) of the Old Testament (Jeremiah 51:1). The Hebrew cryptographic scheme used was the Athbash, in which the first letter of the alphabet is replaced by the last one, the second letter by the next-to-last one, and so on. The cryptogram replaced KASDIM, the Hebrew word for "Chal-deans" (information supplied from numerous reference works).

5. OIQUQAE. A word consisting of the vowels in the last four words ("world without end, Amen") of the English version of the Gloria Patri, a hymn (the "lesser doxology"). It is the most remarkable English example of an all-vowel word. The word is in Rupert Hughes's Music Lovers' Encyclopedia, revised by Deems Taylor and Russell Kerr (Garden City, NY: Garden City Books, 1954).

6. QWERTY. The standard typewriter keyboard. The word consists of the first six letters on the second row of keys in the standard keyboard. The Qwerty (or Sholes) keyboard contrasts with a revised keyboard known as the Dvorak Simplified Keyboard (The Second Barnhart Dictionary of New English, by C.L. Barnhart, R.K. Barnhart, and S. Steinmetz, Bronxville, NY: Barnhart/Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980; The People's Almanac #2, by David Wallace, New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1978, pp. 1375-1378). QWERTY is one of only three solidly-written words in Modern English beginning with the digraph QW. Do you know what the other two are? For the answer, see Answers and Solutions.

7. SHESHACH. A cryptogram for "Babylon" in the King James or Authorized Version (1611) of the Old Testament (Jeremiah 25:26 and 51:41). The Hebrew Athbash was again used, with the cryptogram replacing BABHEL, the Hebrew word for "Babylon" (information compiled from numerous reference works).

8. VIBGYOR. A mnemonic word consisting of the initial letters of the seven colors of the spectrum (violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, red). The word is in Webster's Second Edition. I understand that the mnemonic ROY G. BIV has been used for the same colors in their order from red to violet, but I have not seen that mnemonic in any reference book. Have you?

A Foursome of Sixsomes

Shown below are four word squares of the sixth order:

P O L L U X  A V I A T E  H E R E A T  T R I N A L
A L M O S T  G I F T E D  A R C A N E  H I G H L Y
C L O T H E  N A T U R E  R E A D E R  I N H A L E
H U S H E R  I T E R U M  M A N E G E  C A L L U S
E X T E R N  O E D E M A  S T E R E O  S L Y E S T

The squares depicted here exemplify a certain quite unusual feature, seldom encountered in word squares. What is it?
The Nameless One

One of the axioms of our trade proclaims that, for a concept to become the fit subject of logological inquiry, it must don the garb of language. In other words, an idea without a corresponding word or name is outside the pale of logology. Nonetheless, logophiles occasionally turn to a contemplation of ideas unattired in the cloak of words. Let us consider such an idea here.

A child born as a member of a multiple-birth group has an obvious designation: it is a TWIN, TRIPLET, QUADRUPLET, QUINTUPLE, Sextuple, SEPTUPLE, or OCTUPLE, as the case may be. Even if the child has no littermates, it may have, or come to have, older or younger brothers or sisters, in which case it is a member of a group of SIBLINGS.

What, however, if the child’s parents have no other offspring whatever? The hapless child is then described as an ONLY CHILD. That description is a definition, not a name: no dictionary includes the entry ONLY CHILD. The only child is, in effect, nameless. Despite its incredible wealth, the English language provides no name for an only child.

What might we call an only child? Three words suggest themselves quite readily: SINGLE, SINGLET, and SINGLETON. The word SINGLE already has a multiplicity of meanings, one of which is currently so popular that it would be confusing to apply the word to an only child: a SINGLE is a young, unmarried, socially-active individual. The word SINGLET, despite its superficial appropriateness, has highly specific meanings both in modern physics and in the field of clothing, with no hint of applicability to living things. That leaves SINGLETON, a word Webster’s Third Edition defines as a single offspring, exemplifying use of the word with an application to spotted fawns. The implication is that the term applies to animals but not to humans. In addition, the sample sentence implies that the term describes a single birth, not a sole offspring over time of a given set of parents. We are, accordingly, back to the definitional approach of an only child.

Do you have any suggestions as to what this miserable little wretch of an only child ought to be called?

The "Budget of Paradoxes" Department

Our Paradox of the Quarter calls your attention to the fact that the male counterpart of a mermaid is a merman. Who, then, was the best-known merman of the twentieth century? Ethel Merman, a female entertainer!

Untapped Dictionary Word Resources

Many or most logologists rely on dictionaries as guides to word usage, often elevating them to supreme arbiters of word acceptability. Yet, they neglect doing what dictionaries specifically tell their users to do, thereby cutting themselves off from immense word resources rightfully theirs. This vignette highlights just one of these resources.
The English language provides a simple mechanism for indicating the repetition of an action indicated by a given verb: attaching the prefix RE- to the verb. Large dictionaries list quite a few verbs beginning with the prefix RE-; when they regard the meanings of such verbs as self-evident, they list them without providing definitions for them, on the assumption that the dictionary user is intelligent enough to deduce the meanings of the verbs from those of the basic verbs and the prefix RE-, which means "again." Because space is at a critical premium in every dictionary, thousands of RE- verbs are not listed at all. However, the dictionaries tell their users to go ahead and form those thousands of other verbs themselves, as the occasion requires. The RE- verbs are, in other words, there - they exist - waiting to be used. This message has escaped most logologists. The purpose of this vignette is to document the message of the dictionaries.

The Century Dictionary (1889-1911) states that, in the specified sense, the prefix RE- is "applicable to any English verb whatever, whether of Latin origin, or of Anglo-Saxon or other origin." Moreover, as an English formative, "RE- may be prefixed to a primitive verb, adjective, or to derivatives, indifferently." The dictionary defines indifferently as "without distinction, without concern or preference."

The Oxford English Dictionary (1933) supports this stand, stating that RE- is "freely employed in English as a prefix to verbs, and to substantives or adjectives derived from these." It adds that "since 1600, the use of the prefix has been very extensive," and that, "toward the end of the 16th century, RE- begins to rank as an ordinary English prefix, chiefly employed with words of Latin origin, but also freely prefixed to native verbs." The dictionary defines freely as "without constraint, restraint, restriction, reluctance or stipulation; unreservedly; without let, hindrance, or interference."

Other dictionaries and language reference works add their support to the unrestricted use of the prefix RE-. The New Century Dictionary of the English Language (1952) states that RE- is "a prefix used freely as an English formative." Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary (1965) states that the prefix is "used so freely, especially with verbs, that it is impossible to give a full list." The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 5th Edition (1964) states that RE- "is treated as a living prefix. In the latter capacity, it may be prefixed for the occasion to any verb or verbal derivative." Walter W. Skeat's An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language, Revised and Enlarged Edition (1879-1882) states that, "as this prefix can be arbitrarily set before almost any verb, it is unnecessary to give all the words which are found with it." The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, New College Edition (1980) states that "many compounds other than those entered here may be formed with RE-." The Oxford Universal Dictionary on Historical Principles, 3rd Edition Revised (1955) takes the ultimate step, asserting that the prefix RE- is "freely employed in English" and that "the number of forms resulting from the use
of this prefix in English during the 19th century is infinite."

The eight authorities that I have quoted inform their consultants that the prefix RE- may be attached to all verbs of any kind whatever, and to the nouns and adjectives derived from them, pointing out that it would be physically prohibitive for a dictionary to try listing all RE- words - as well as unnecessary. It follows that many thousands - possibly, tens of thousands - of words beginning with the prefix RE- but not listed in any dictionary are fully existing and acceptable words, and that logologists are free to form them at will, whenever they need or want them. Under the circumstances, it is foolish for any logologist to deprive himself or herself of the option of doing so, and still more foolish to condemn others for doing what dictionaries explicitly sanction doing. Timidity in applying the license extended by dictionaries is out of place.

The Days of Our Lives

From time immemorial, man has sought the impossible - the fountain of youth, the elixir of life, the philosophers' stone, the universal solvent, the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. In the same vein, logological man has sought the universal transformer: an operation uniformly applicable to all words and names, converting them into other words and names. The first two Word Ways editors joined that quest - Dmitri Borgmann in "The Paratransposition" in May 1978, and Howard Bergerson in "Sea-Changed Words" in February 1969. Both, alas, failed to satisfy other logologists.

The problem becomes tractable if it is scaled down, limiting the desired operation to terms of ten or fewer letters, and accepting a success rate of only 99 per cent. Subject to these restrictions, I have found an operation that fulfills logological man's eternal dream, the substitute-letter transposal. The method operates is illustrated by applying it to a small but singularly intransigent word group, the names of the days.

Using this technique, SUNDAY transforms into UNEASY by replacing D with E; MONDAY becomes YEOMAN by a similar change. Exchanging T for R enables us to go from TUESDAY to DASYURE, a long-tailed marsupial of Australia that has found a new home in five collegiate dictionaries. WEDNESDAY becomes SANDWEEDS, and FRIDAY is FRAYED. Interestingly, THURSDAY and SATURDAY are mutual quasi transposals; the H in one is replaced by an A in the other. Both days can be quasi transposed to ST. AUDREY of Ely, England, a saint whose feast day is observed on October 17 (Hugh Weideman's The Rapid Fact Finder, New York, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1958, p. 212; the Funk & Wagnalls Unabridged, 1945 Edition, p. 2899).

Within the specified limits, the universal transformer works just as effectively with any other group of words or names. Try it yourself - today!