

UNFED ROCKS AND SCALY THINGS

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Many types of word puzzles depend on manipulating the letters of a particular word or phrase. Anagrams and charades preserve the letter-set of the initial word set; beheadments and word ladders change a letter at a time. Beheadments, charades and word ladders preserve the order of letters in the given word; anagrams alter it.

Word deletions, the subject of this article, also preserve letter order. In a word deletion, a word embedded in another word is deleted, and the ends of the original word are drawn together to form a new one. A typical example: deCREMENTal = dental + CREME. Also, from this article's title: unfROCKed = unfed + ROCK, and scaTHINGly = scaly + THING.

I believe that word deletions should meet three further conditions: (1) the constituent words should each be relatively long, not just two or three letters; (2) the constituent words should be unrelated to the combination, which rules out backBREAKing = backing + BREAK; and (3) no proper names should be used. I prefer combinations which also satisfy: (4) the inner word is deeply embedded, so neither division of the outer word is a single letter, and (5) the constituent words form an interesting phrase.

More word deletions which satisfy the five conditions above are: reDISCOVering = revering + DISCO, anAPEStic = antic + APES, be-TRAYers = beers + TRAY, chANGELess = chess + ANGEL, forfUNATE = forte + TUNA, seAFARers = seers + AFAR, suSPENDers = suers + SPEND. There is a ring of truth of prePROGRAMmed = premed + PROGRAM, although this pair violates rule (2).

Word deletions have been known for many years; the editor called my attention to examples from the 1890s in A Key to Puzzledom (1906) by William W. Delaney.

In Beyond Language (1967), Dmitri Borgmann listed 25 word deletions which he termed shell-and-kernel words. These words were each twelve letters long; the center six letters and the outer six letters of each formed new words. Borgmann's category was broader than mine, in that he also included Latin words, archaic words, proper nouns and words which violate rule (2). However, seven of Borgmann's remarkable words fully qualify: intrACISTern, lab-ORATORial, lipOBLASToma, misPOSSESSed, misREHEARSal, recORDERShip and resIDENTShip. (Lipoblastoma is found in standard medical dictionaries; mispossessed and misrehearsal are in Funk & Wagnalls 1971 edition, but not in Webster's Second or Third.)

The two lists below form a puzzle. Match each word from the first list with a word from the second list to form a word deletion. The puzzle is not difficult, but the matches are amusing. Answers can be found in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

apply	pitting	early	carry	reading	emetic
chilly	redness	imply	colons	runts	lumen
coral	sander	mates	course	sights	misers
deities	surer	pence	diary	tries	piners
disable	banes	purrs	embed	center	reaping
fling	cling	resents	innate	comes	safer
marts	cotes	shies	misdeed	curly	skier
monies	deter	thing	piers	dirts	unified
AGED	RENT	LIVER	AUNT	ROUE	NEST
CAME	RUBBER	OLDEN	DELI	SCONCE	PASS
DISH	STILE	PENS	ETCH	THOU	PEAR
FORM	TINE	PORE	LAMA	UTTER	REND
LATE	ASTER	ROPER	MITT	BERM	ROVING
NUMB	CHASE	RUST	OPERA	DIME	SEMI
PATH	DIVERS	STRIP	PENT	FLOW	TIME
POND	KNOT	TRESS	RATIO	LAST	VERSION

Whether one finds word deletions aping + PEAL or aping + PALL, this puzzle provides seers + ARCH a porous + TENT forte + ETAS of a phenomenon which may prorate + LIFE in commies + UNIT. As we say family + LIAR: no unwed + ARRANT coming + PLAIN, please!