WUTHERING FLAPDOCKS! YET MORE BISOGRAMS

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A word in which no two letters are the same is often called an isogram. In an article in the August 1998 Word Ways, Eric Chaikin coined the term bisogram to identify word pairs in which no letter occurs more than once. High-quality bisograms are essentially defined as those which contain only uncapitalized unhyphenated unabbreviated words which are listed in boldface type in Webster's Third; appropriate noun plurals and verb tenses of such words may be inferred when they are not specified, but other inflected forms (notably those adding -ly) may not be so inferred. Gerund plurals also may not be inferred.

The best (and so far only) known high-quality 20-letter bisogram is BLACKSMITH GUNPOWDERY, which was first reported by the editor in the February 1977 Word Ways. In his August 1998 article, Eric Chaikin for the first time presented some fifty high-quality 19-letter bisograms, and additional examples have been reported in Word Ways since then. This article, which summarizes the results of an unsystematic and incomplete manual search of Webster's Third, slightly extends the roster of known high-quality 19s and also introduces a listing of 18-letter bisograms.

But first, it should perhaps be mentioned that no new high-quality 20s were discovered in this search. The gunpowdery blacksmith, hump-backedly frosting on a chill winter's day as he shoes a prongbuck ham-fistedly and applies patchworks, defuzingly, to damaged artillery shells (called throwbacks in the munitions trade), remains unrivaled in his class (as well as outstanding in his field). Two near-bisograms which would have been high-quality 20s had Webster's Third only spelled both of their terms solidly are FLIGHT DECKS/JURYWOMAN and ZANTHOXY-LUMS/BIRD PECK.

These thirteen new high-quality 19s were found (the second word of each bisogram is written in lowercase):

AFTERSHOCK jumpingly    GUNPOWDERY backshift, mahlstick
BACKGROUND phyletism      HUCKSTERING amblypod
CARBETHOXYLS jumping      PROCUMBENT gawkishly
EXHORTINGLY mudpacks      PTERYGDUM blackfins
FLEXOGRAPHY disjunct      WHITEFLY backgrounds, campgrounds
FURTHCOMING lazybeds

Among the near-misses, these would have been high-quality 19s had not an inopportune space intervened in one of their terms: BAGY-WRINKLE/JUMP SHOT, FETCHINGLY/SQUAWK BOX, FLIGHT DECK/JURYWOM-
AN and NEIGHBORLY/DUCK STAMP. And this quintet of 19s would be high-quality if inflections listed in Webster's Second were acceptable: AFTERSHOCK BUMPINGLY, PLAYWRIGHTS UNMOCKED, PROJECTINGLY BUD-MASH, SQUAWKINGLY BROTCHED and UNCOPYRIGHTED FLAMES.

I must confess to a certain fascination with the way in which nature often manages to contrive apt or picturesque word pairings in bisograms. At 20 letters, of course, there is the improbably apposite gun-powdery blacksmith, while at 19 letters we encounter Eric Chaikin's uncombed playwrights (whom we might imagine to be lying gawkishly procumbent on sofas by their typewriters), ungainly overflying hump-backs and even a dread huckstering amblypod (a supposedly extinct elephant-like animal with both tusks and horns). But in this arena, at least, the longer bisograms appear to have nothing whatever on their 18-letter cousins. Among the several hundred examples of the latter that I have collected may be found the likes of frumping blockheads, naughty pickleworms, hulking myxobacters, flouting pachyderms, bump-kingly watchdogs, ladybugs' pitchwomen, extrabold chipmunks and gold-back whiterumps, not to mention muzjik lycanthropes in squawky bedclothing who, deploying bushcraft, jokingly thumbscrew a stupefying blowhard to the tune of a thumbscrewing polka as greyhounds backflip with a jumbling aftershock and unmoved playwrights (dumbly stenographic after sniffing fuming carbethoxyls) unforgivably sketch a copyrighted junkman as he carts tumblenown hayricks and blighted fancy-works off in behowling dumpcarts to his backup goldsmithery near a whitefly campground which is a mere objurgated flyspeck amid the thumping dayflowers and wuthering flapdocks.

Although 18-letter bisograms are far more abundant than 19s, they are still relatively uncommon, and may therefore be of some interest. In the list of 444 Websterian 18s which follows, all of the words (including a few in which plurals or tenses have been inferred) are Webster's Third except for the asterisked words, which may be found in Webster's Second.

| AFTERSHOCK dumpling, flumping, fumbling, jumbling, plumbing | BLACKSMITHERY found, pound, undog, wound |
| AFTERSHOW bumpkinly, jumpingly | BLACKTONGUE shrimpy |
| AMBROTYPE/S duckling, duckwing | BUCKETING hydroflap, swordplay |
| BACKFLIPS enwrought | BUCKETING/S flaxdrop, moldwarp |
| BACKFLOWS extruding | BUCKSAW grinthorped, providently |
| BACKSWORDING zythum | BULWARKS hypnotized, phytogetic, pythogenic |
| BACKSWORD/ING duplex | BUMPINGLY* aftershow, headstock, headworks, rockshaft, shoecraft, shortcake, whetlocks |
| BACKVELDS inwrought | BUMPKINLY forthgaze, overwatch, shoecraft, watchdogs |
| BARODYNAMIC klephts, zestful | BUSHCRAFT deploying, exploding |
| BATCHWISE flunkydom | BYSMALITH unfrocked |
| BATHYSEIZY wrongful | CAMPFIGHTS unworked |
| BECOMINGLY updrafts | |
CARBETHOXY dumpling, flumping slumping
CARBETHOXYL dumping, jumping, CARBETHOXYLS duping, fuming, fuzing, juking, puking
CHIPMUNKS afterbody, extrabold*, goldwater, waterfowl
CHIPMUNK/S afterblow, afterglow, batfowler*, dayflower
CHOKEDAMPS blurring
CHOKESTRAP fumbling, jumbling
CLERGYWOMAN tubfish
COMPLEXIFY draughts, kvutzahs, stunkard
COMPLEXING barukhzy, futharks, kvutzahs, yawshrub
COMPUTABLE gherkins
CONFIGURATED lymphs
CONTRAPLEX dumbfish
COPIGMENTS barukhzy
COPYRIGHTABLE dunks, funks, junk, munks
COPYRIGHTED junkman
CRYPTOGAM knivesful
DAYFLOWERS thumping
DAYFLOWER/S mutchkin
DEATHWORMS buckling, plucking
DEMULSIFY patchwork, throwback
DEPLEXING backsword, backworts, boschvark, rockshaft, throwback
DERMATOGlyphic bunk, buns, busk, funk, junk, knub, nubs, snub, sunk
DERMATOGlyphICs bun, fub, fun, nub
DERMATOPSY buckling
DEUTSCHMARK blowing, bowling, flowing, fowling, jowling, plowing, wolfing
DEVOURING schmaltzy
DOUBLETHINKS crampy
DRUMBEAT/ING shylock
DUPLEXING backworts, boschvark, rockshaft, throwback
DUPLEXITY boschvark, chamfrons
DYSTROPHIC fugleman
EMBLAZING duteworks
EXACTINGLY jodhpurs
EXCULPATING droshky
EXHORTINGLY backups, bucksaw, mudpack
EXPANSIBLY* ductwork
FANCYWORKS blighted
FANCYWORK/S multiped
FECUNDITY lampworks
FLAMMOURTHED cryings
FLAUGHTBRED smoking, spoking
FLEXOGRAPHY muziks
FLUKEWORMS batching, patching, yachting
FLUSKERING matchbox
FLYWEIGHT/S backdrop
FORMIDABLY ketchups
FRUMPING blockkups, deathblows, headblocks
FRUMPISHLY backdown, downbeat, downtake, takedown
FUMEWORTS* hackingly
FURTHERCOMING bespawl, bywalks, lazybed
FURZECAT goldspink
FURZECATS bodingly, bowingly, dopingly, jokingly, mopingly*, movingly
GAVELKIND/S wrymouth
GOLDENBACK frumpish
GOLDENBACKS furmity
GOLDENBACK/S triumph
GOLDSMITHERY backup
GOWPENFUL dithyramb, yardstick
GOWPENFUL/S birthday, jackbird
GREYHOUND/S backflip
GUNPOWDERY blackish, jackfish, jawsmith
GUNPOWDER/Y schmaltz
HUMPBACK defrosting, destroying, fosterling, toweringly, wrestingly*
HUMPBACKED frostling, jostling, loftings, strongly, strowling
HUMPBACKS flowering, longevity, overlying, revolting
HYPANDRIUM fetlocks
IMPOUNDERABLY skutch
JACKFRUIT/S phlegmon
JUDGESHIP workmanly
JUMPINGLY backword, backworts, boschvark, headstock, headworks, rockshaft, shoecraft, shortcake, showbread, throwback, waterbosh, whetrocks
JURYWOMAN stepchild
JURYWOMEN backflips, backlight, backshift
JUXTAPOSED cymbling
JUXTAPOSING freckly
KHIDMUTGAR convexly
KYMOGRAPHIC blunted, bundles, unblest, zestful
LADYFINGER buckshot, campshot
LAZYBED/S quickthorn
LEXIGRAPHY bundocks
LUMBERJACK fishpond, pondfish, township
LYCANTHROPE/S muzjik
MUDBANKS hypergolic, xerophytic
MUDLARKS phytogetic, pythogenic
MUDPACKS hoveringly, neighborly
MUSKFLOWER batching, patching, yachting
MYXOBACTERS hulking
OBJURGATED flyspeck
OBSERVANCY mightful
OVERFLIGHT/S mudbank, mudpack
OVERFLYING buckwash, hackbutts, humpback, mudpacks
OXYWELDING buckstay, humpback, pushcart
OXYWELDINGS buckram
OXYWELDINGS/S bumtrap, futhark, hackbut
PACHYDERMS flouting
PADLOCKING thumbers
PATCHWORKED fluming, fluxing
PATHFINDERS bvoxomly
PHAGOCYTIZED flunks
PHLEBOGRAM disjunct
PHYMATIC underblows, underflows
PICKLEWORMS naughty
PINCHGUT/S dayflower, mayflower
PITCHFORKS unblamed, unglazed
PITCHWOMEN ladybugs
PLAYRIGHT uncombed, unmocked*
PLAYRIGHTS dockmen, jukebox, unboxed, unmoved
PROFUNDITY jacklegs
PROGNATHISM buckled
PROJECTINGLY* squawk
PSEUDONYM backlight, jacklight
PTERYGODUM blackfin, blackish, jackfish
PUNCTIFORM lazybeds, skewbald
QUESTINGLY backdrop
SCHEMINGLY zubrowka
SYOKEFARTHING duply
SPHYGMIC unwordable, unworkable
SQUAWKINGLY* botched, botcher frothed, potherb, project, torched
STENOGRAPHIC dumbly, jumbly
STUPEFYING blowhard, holdback
SUBJECTIFY markdown
SUBVERTING flapdock
THORNGFUL* zweibacks
THUMBLINGS copyread
THUMBROPES fadingly, wakingly*, wavingly
THUMBSCREW dopingly, jokingly, pyingado, pyinkado, wakingly*, wavingly
THUMBSCREWING flaky, polka
THUMPINGLY bedrocks, casework, jackrods
TWACKINGLY* deforms, devours
TRUMPING blockheads, headblocks
TUMBLEDOWN crayfish, graphics, grayfish, hayricks, jackfish
UNBEWITCH flaxdrops
UNBLIGHTED paroxysm
UNCOPYRIGHTED* balks, balms, blows, flabs, flakes, flams, lambs, jambs, wakfs, waqfs, walks, whams
UNDERPITCH folkways
UNDERSTOCK gawblimy
UNFORGIVABLY sketch
UNFORMED backlights, jacklights
UNPROVED backlights, campfights, jacklights
UPHOLSTERY backwind, wingback
VETCHWORM daubingly, quakingly
VEXINGLY patchworks, throwbacks, touchmarks
WATERBUCKS dopingly, hopefully, mopingly*, movingly
WAVERINGLY buckshot, campshot
WHETROCKS plumbagin, pylangium
WHIPSOCKET gurdy man
WHITEFLY background, campground
WHITERUMP/S backdown, goldback
WORKPLACES thumbing
WRACKFUL hypnotized, hypnotizes
WUTHERING flapdocks
XYLOGRAPHIC debunks, dumbest, dustmen, junkets
ZANTHOXYLUM bricked, frisked, pricked, scribed, sickbed
ZANTHOXYLUM/S bicker, bridge, dicker, picker, wicker
ZANTHOXYLUMS griped, picked, priced, ridged, wicked
ZINCOGRAPHY beflums, dumbest, fumbled, fumbles, stumble, tumbled, tumbls
ZYGANTRUM boschveld, sicklepod
ZYMOSTHENIC bulwark

How many high-quality long bisograms are there, altogether, in Webster's Third? In the absence of a scientific sampling only seat-of-the-pants estimates are possible, but based upon perceived frequencies of occurrence I would guess that probably just the one 20, around ninety 19s, and perhaps fifteen hundred 18s are to be found there. If the last figure is approximately correct, then my experience of finding about eight 17s (which I did not record) for every 18 which turned up suggests a total population of 17s in Webster's Third of roughly twelve thousand.

What about the possibility of superlong bisograms? If the search is expanded beyond Webster's Third, can the English lexicon supply instances of 21-letter or longer bisograms? This would seem a fairly unlikely prospect, but even so it is not necessarily an impossible one, as the following examples employing several remotely-plausible coined words may demonstrate:

"I suppose we ROCKSHAFT workers are somewhat promiscuous," Tom said BEDJUMPINGLY.

"Is this how you swing a BACKSWORD?" Tom asked FEZTHUMPINGLY.

After failing on his twentieth attempt to FEZJUMP BACKSWORDINGLY, the novice saber dancer was thoroughly JUMPVEXT.

These are 21- and 22-letter faux bisograms; is it possible to cobble up a 23?