HEALTH WARNING: This article could damage your Scrabble vocabulary

According to Official Scrabble Lists (OSL), the most fecund set of six letters, to which a seventh letter can be added then anagrammed to form a valid seven-letter word, is AEINRT. This is closely followed by the AEINST set. The US equivalent of OSL is Mike Baron and Jere Guin’s The Wordbook, based on The Official Scrabble Players Dictionary (OSPD). According to The Wordbook, the top three six-letter groups are AEINST, AEIRST and AEINRT. Taking an “average” of the two sources, AEINST is the most fertile set of six letters.

To most US Scrabble players, the universe of words extends only to The Official Scrabble Players Dictionary (OSPD). If they need to confirm a longer word not included in OSPD, then they will check out the Merriam-Webster Tenth Collegiate Dictionary. And to many UK Scrabble players, the universe of words extends only to Official Scrabble Words (OSW), or maybe to The Chambers Dictionary for longer words. Many countries around the world, though, admit the existence of words in both Official Scrabble Words and The Official Scrabble Players Dictionary. (These are the so-called SOWPODS countries—a rearrangement of the letters in OSPD and OSW.)

I want to demonstrate that the world of words is much, much broader than the combination of OSW and OSPD. There are many dictionaries beyond these, and they include words which could be valid for Scrabble if you were playing an “open reference sources” game. I decided to mine a number of dictionaries just to see what additional AEINST+1 words could be found.

Let’s take a quick tour of a few dictionaries. Official Scrabble Words contains a total of 74 different AEINST+1 words:

A TAENIAS
B BASINET, BESANCT, BESTAIN
C CANIEST, CINEAST
D DETAINS, INSTEAD, SAINTED, SATINED, STAINED
E ETESSIAN
F FAINEST, NAIFEST
G EASTING, EATINGS, GAINEST, GENISTA, INGATES, INGESTA, SEATING, TANGIES, TEASING
I ISATINE

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If we now turn to The Official Scrabble Players Dictionary (OSPD), a further 10 AEINST+1 words can be found. Brief definitions are shown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A ENTASIA</td>
<td>spasmodic contraction of a muscle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D DESTAIN</td>
<td>to remove stain from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H SHEITAN</td>
<td>an evil spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H STHENIA</td>
<td>excessive energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L NAILSET</td>
<td>a steel rod for driving a nail into something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L SALTINE</td>
<td>a salted cracker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M ETAMINS</td>
<td>loosely woven fabrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M TAMEINS</td>
<td>garments worn by Burmese women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X SEXTAIN</td>
<td>a stanza of six lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z ZEATINS</td>
<td>chemical compounds found in maize</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let's now turn to Webster’s Third New International Dictionary (W3). Although this has been in print since 1961, it is still the most authoritative and unabridged of American dictionaries. I’ve trawled through the pages of W3 and located another 21 AEINST+1 words. (For those who may be familiar with W3, I have excluded words which W3 marks as “usually capitalised” or “capitalised”.) Again, I have included brief definitions in order to make the words more interesting or meaningful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A ANISATE</td>
<td>a salt of anisic acid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B BANTIES</td>
<td>bantams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B BINATES</td>
<td>celebrates two masses on the same day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C ACTINES</td>
<td>star-shaped spicules (as of sponges)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C CASINET</td>
<td>lightweight twilled trousering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D TIENDAS</td>
<td>shops or stores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G SIGNATE</td>
<td>having markings like letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M ESTAMIN</td>
<td>worsted twilled fabric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M INMEATS</td>
<td>inner parts of an animal that are used for food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M TAIMENS</td>
<td>giant trout of northern Asia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The predecessor of W3 was Webster's New International Dictionary (Second Edition). This was published between 1934 and 1961, and is still regarded as perhaps the greatest unabridged American dictionary. This contains many words which for various reasons didn’t make it into W3. Again, I've excluded proper names. Brief definitions are included here. This time, another eleven AEINST+1 words have been found:

- B BETAINS crystalline sweet-tasting alkaloids
- B INBEATS drives in by beating
- G GAINSET to oppose
- G TINAGES large porous water-jugs
- L LANITES various Philippines trees
- M STAMINE a coarse woollen cloth
- O AEOIST one who holds the eternal duration of the world
- P PEISANT weighty
- P PIANETS magpies
- R ASTERIN a pigment of the China aster
- R ERANIST a member of a club

Onwards and upwards! The magnificent Oxford English Dictionary (Second Edition, 1992)(OED) is a record of the English language up until just a few years ago. It is a rich source of obsolete spellings. Examination of the OED reveals another 31 AEINST+1 words. As well as giving definitions, I have marked obsolete words, just in case anyone wishes to discard them. (But why? The Chambers Dictionary and OSW contain many thousands of obsolete words.)

- B BETANIS betonies, plants (obs)
- G ATEIGNS attains (obs)
- G GAITENS gaits
- G GNAISTE to gnash (obs)
- G GNASTIE nasty (obs)
- G STIGEAN supremely binding
- G TEAINGS tea-meetings
- H SHANTIE a cabin
- H THAINES thanes (obs)
L ALIENTS aliens (obs)
L ATELINS yetlings, cast-iron pots (obs)
M MANIEST superlative of 'many'
N INNATES makes innate
N SINNATE sinnet, a kind of cordage (obs)
N TANNIES tawnies (obs)
O INOSATE a salt of inosic acid
P PASTINE ground prepared for planting
R ESTRAIN to bind tightly
R RANITES greyish-black minerals
R SARIENT sergeant (obs)
R SERIANT sergeant (obs)
R SERTAIN certain (obs)
R STRAINE strain (obs)
R TIRANES tyrants (obs)
R TRAINES trains (obs)
S STAINES stains (obs)
T NATTIES natty persons
U ASTIUNE a kind of precious stone
U TAUINIES tawnies (obs)
U UANITES vanities (obs)
V VANITES vanities (obs)

And just to finish with, I checked the pages of Funk & Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary. Just one further AEINST+1 specimen came to light:

D SEDATIN a white crystalline compound

All told, that makes 148 AEINST+1 words, exactly twice the number allowed by OSW! I could go on to examine increasingly obscure dictionaries, especially dialect dictionaries, but I had to draw the line somewhere.

As I said at the start of this article, it could damage your Scrabble vocabulary! I am not proposing that the Scrabble world starts to use references beyond OSW and OSPD, but I would like Scrabble players to recognise that the universe of words does not stop at just these two works. There are many other sources of words, and many other words, outside of these two familiar works. Don't let the limited solar system of OSW/OSPD blind you to the existence of a myriad galaxies of words beyond!