

SELF-CONTAINED WORDS

- Solomon W. Golomb

How empty is the word *empty*? Since it contains MT, pronounced “empty” (in the form eMpTy), it is “self-contained”, so *empty* may not be empty after all.

A number of self-contained words are pronounced like a single letter that they contain. Examples include *bee*(B) and *gee*(G), the printer’s measures *em*(M) and *en*(N), and the curve *ess*(S). In fact, such examples can be as short as a single letter, such as I or O, or as long as five letters: *queue*(Q). Other three letter examples include *jay*(J), *ell*(L), *are*(R), *tea*(T), *tee*(T), *you*(U), and *why*(Y), as well as the names *Bea*(B), *Dee*(D), *Jay*(J), and *Kay*(K). A word pronounced like one or more letters not all of which it contains are *not* self-contained, but “bulging”. Those pronounced like single letters include *sea*(C) and *see*(C), *aye*(I) and *eye*(I), *ewe*(U) and *yew*(U), and *cue*(Q).

There are quite a few self-contained words pronounced like two of their letters such as *beady*(BD) and *envy*(NV), as well as many personal names like *Abie*(AB), *Arby*(RB), *Edie*(ED), *Ellen* (LN), *Ennis*(NS), *Estee*(ST), *Opie*(OP), and *Owen*(ON), as well as *Bibi*(BB), *Cici*(CC), *Deedee*(DD), and *Gigi*(GG). Some bulging examples include *decay*(DK) and *easy*(EZ), as well as the names *Casey*(KC) and *Elsie*(LC).

Some self-contained words pronounced like three of their letters include the sea between Greece and Turkey, the *Aegean*(AGN), the Mid-East title of respect *effendi*(FND) and *avian*(AVN), an example for the birds. Don’t forget *opium*(OPM) and *Iowan*(ION), or *envious*(NVS) or *devious*(DVS), or *entity*(NTT) or *tedious*(TDS). On the other hand, the word *escapee*(SKP), *extasy*(XTC), and the element *cesium*(CZM) are not fully self-contained, but bulging.

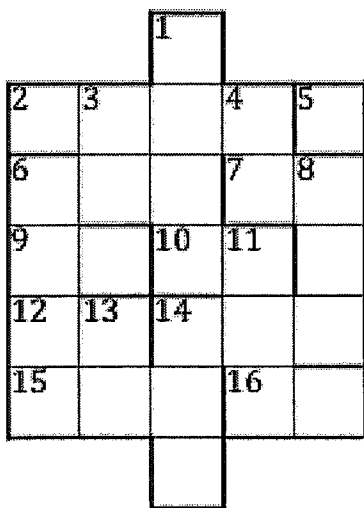
Is *Emily* self-contained? All three letters of MLE are found in *Emily*, but not in order, so Emily is self-contained only if she is deranged! The same is true of *Emmy*(ME). And your *enemy*(NME) must also be deranged to be self-contained. (Is it advantageous to have an enemy who is self-contained if he is also deranged?)

Very few self-contained words are pronounced like *four* of their letters. One example is found in the title “Your *Excellency*”(XLNC). And the only self-contained word I could find pronounced like *five* of its letters is *expediency*(XPDNC), whose five consonents pronounce its name. The

word *Arcadian*(RKDN) is pronounced like four letters, but since the word has no “K” it is bulging, and not self-contained.

All the lists of words pronounced like fewer than four letters are incomplete. Let me know if you have more examples pronounced like four (or more) letters.

Only letters of the alphabet are to be entered in this puzzle and pronouncing their names given the defined words, some of which are self-contained, while others are bulging. Many entries will be found as examples in the text given above.



ACROSS

1. Word often preceding the name of someone addressed
2. Pastorally ideal
5. Old cloth measure
6. State of bliss
7. Middle of Caesar’s boast
9. Name of a spokes-bovine
10. Prose composition
12. Random selection from a set
14. Covetousness
15. Element no. 55
16. Boy’s name

DOWN

1. Ulysses
2. Exist
3. Girl’s name
4. Jealousy
5. See 5. across
6. Title of respect (after “your”)
8. Shifty
11. Bird-like
13. Simple
14. Foe