

# THE *Journal* THE OF WORDPLAY OF WORDPLAY

#11 • Nov 2025

**Crosswords' Peak Years  
Variations on  $\pi$  and 11  
Maximized Word Grids  
Exploring Pascagoula?  
Transforming Sonnets  
Monogamous Words  
Palindromes with Q  
Useful Tautologies  
Comics Aptronyms  
Missing Opposites  
New Spoonerisms  
Sound Symbolism**

**Dog Latin • Big Words • More!**



THE JOURNAL OF WORDPLAY

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**Editor:**

T Campbell

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## INTRODUCTION

T Campbell, editor

Dictionary.com's word of the year is 67. Pronounce it "six-seven." What does 67 mean, exactly?

That's the question many older people are asking—and brace yourself for a shock: in this context, Zoomers count as "older people." The sight of the number draws widespread laughter from today's kids, AKA Generation Alpha, making life more difficult for math teachers—unless they have a sense of humor about the whole thing, in which case it may make their lives easier.

For me, the nearest thing to a 67 synonym is "Being a little wacky right now!" or... 🤪.

Emojis and emoticons have been used to add a jaunty sense of humor to text since the early days of the internet. "Oh, yeah, love to shorten my life expectancy by watching a bunch of movies with jump scares, thanks Hollywood, your October offerings are made 4 me 🤪." The upside-downness of the emoji adds a different flavor, though—this is the humor of the absurd. You'd read that quote in more of an amused Gomez Addams voice, whereas without the emoji it could sound sarcastic and bitter.

"67" is funny because the kids say it is. And that's all there is to it. If there's one thing *The Journal of Wordplay* is about, it's joyful absurdity expressed in language. I considered numbering this issue #67 as a salute—but a scholarly publication's also about being clear. Plus, one of our articles this issue is a celebration of our eleventh issue!

We've got more than 67 pages of interest for you here! We're setting new records in British crossword design and a diagonal Scrabble variant. We're performing new experiments with spoonerisms, palindromes, and anagrams. We've invited in the great word-inventors of history and the most notable apt names in the comics field. We'll relate an account of the two most dramatic years in crossword puzzle history—just in time for their hundredth (and 101<sup>st</sup>) anniversary. We'll tell you when tautologies and ultra-long words are actually *useful*.

And what are monogamous words, missing opposites, dog Latin, pilish alametish, and were-sonnets? You'll just have to dig in to find out.

67 skibidi and 23 skidoo!



The "6 7 kid," one of the meme's well-known speakers.



## THE LOGODAEDALISTS

T Campbell (with thanks to Ben Zimmer)

The world of word-coining has more Margaret Mitchells in it than James Pattersons: more people famous for one or two breakthrough works than the prolific creators who can churn out hit after hit. Still, a few are recognized for their productivity. This work has gone through multiple drafts but is now cross-checked with the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the most reliable source of word citations known.

“Coinage,” of course, is often an act of discovery rather than invention. The title of “coiner” can go to someone who invents a word all on their own, but it can also go to the first writer to set down on paper what others have already said,

**William Shakespeare** has the most source citations in the OED, with 2,255, and Geoffrey Chaucer is third with 2,062. The other most prolific logodaedalists are not as well known to modern audiences as one might expect: John Trevisa (#2, 2,101), Randle Cotgrave (#4, 1,953), Thomas Blount (#5, 1,610), John Florio (#6, 1,602), Nathan Bailey (#7, 1,520), William Caxton (#8, 1,444), Philemon Holland (#9, 1,398), Edward H. Knight (#10, 1,282), Robert Mayne (#11, 1,265), and Ælfric of Eynsham (#10, 1,094).

Some of Shakespeare’s inventions, though, are more notable than others. He invented *applause*, but only by modifying the existing *applaud*, and many of the more original terms he invented, like *anthropophaginian*, don’t see a lot of modern use. Much of his lexical creativity involved turning words from one part of speech into another, with or without a new suffix: the verb *dawn* was a century older than his works, but he was the first to make it a noun.

These words, though, are modern and more “his” without such qualifiers:

*Arouse, attest, bail, bandit, bated (breath), cold-hearted, downstairs, dwindle, earthbound, enmesh, eventful, fancy-free, fathomless, featureless, fitful, fixture, full circle, gnarled, high-pitched, hint, hostile, hurry, ill-tempered, impartial, impede, inaudible, inauspicious, incapable, incarnadine, jaded, lackluster, laughable, memento mori, misquote, motley fool, next world, overpower, oversized, pageantry, pebbled, pent-up, primrose path, purr, refractory, skim milk, slugabed, star-crossed, stealthy, stitchery, subcontract, sully, sympathize, twin brother, uncurl, undreamed, unearthly, unhelpful, unintelligent, unmitigated, unnerved, uproar, upturned.*

**John Milton:** *agape, amaranthine, arch-fiend, debauchery, effulgence, expanse, jubilant, lovelorn, miscommunicating (before miscommunicate or miscommunication), pandemonium, pettifoggery, poetics, typography.*

**Charles Dickens:** *abuzz, bulgy, Christmassy, conspiratorial, Guinness, kidney pie, oner, prune, sawbones, Scheherazade, shooting gallery, sledgehammering, snobbish, soupy, unyielding, vice-chair.*

**Lewis Carroll:** *chortle, frabjous, galumph, looking-glass world*. Carroll invented some other words like *jubjub* and *vorpal*, but they're not widely used outside of attempts to invoke his "Jabberwocky" poem.

**JRR Tolkien:** The plural *dwarves*, *elven* (as adjective), *hobbit*, *mithril*.

**Dr. Seuss** is often credited as the popularizer of the word *nerd*—and that's *sort of* true, but in Seuss's *If I Ran the Zoo*, a *nerd* is just one of Seuss's long procession of exotic animals with names he made up. (In that same procession are four other animal names that never made it into dictionaries—and a *seersucker*, which already meant a kind of fabric.)

Of the words attributed to **The Simpsons**, only *cromulent* is confirmed as original with the program. *D'oh*, *embiggen*, and *meh* all have earlier citations, though they owe their popularity in modern speech to use on the program. The *OED* doesn't recognize *yoink* and its origin is disputed, but I can't find a clear earlier source. *Simpsons* also seems to be the origin of the phrase *say the quiet part loud*.

**Seinfeld:** The *OED* does not currently acknowledge the words and phrases associated with *Seinfeld*—*Festivus*, *master of one's domain*, *not that there's anything wrong with that*, and *spongeworthy*, or the more specific meaning of *shrinkage*. However, the *OED* does acknowledge other television-created language, such as the exclamation *Not!* from *Saturday Night Live*, the phrase *friend zone* from *Friends*, *mission impossible*, *Energizer bunny*, and *Scooby snack*.

As stated above, the *OED* is the most reliable source of word citations known, but it's not the final arbiter on what is and isn't a word—that's something we decide together as a culture. The word *ent* in the sense of "tree-man" is another of Tolkien's creations. The *OED* doesn't recognize it, but the crossword-puzzle community sure does.

There are many more words *derived* from the above authors and their work but not used in ways most of them would have imagined. Some authors have become recognized adjectives themselves—see the eponyms *Shakespearean*, *Miltonian*, *Seinfeldian*, *Simpsonian*, *Seussian*—and others are just a little further away from that status.

*Falstaffian*, *Romeo*, *Juliet*, *Ghost of Christmas Past*, *Scrooge*, *Tweedledum* and *Tweedledee*, *flanderization*, *wonderland*, *grinch*, *grinch paw*—all these terms owe their existence to the above authors but really got their start as terms when others responded to those authors. Maybe Seuss's new posthumous book will inspire another.

That's also true for the broader, metaphorical senses of *golden ticket* and *Oompa-Loompa*, creations of **Roald Dahl**. Even when an inventive writer is involved, language is a game anybody can play.

## MONOGAMOUS WORDS

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Hoping to make some clean lucre to slake my hunger, I'm going to get a discussion in edgewise about a special category of words. Unless I give this topic long shrift, I'll be in rotten fettle. Please don't hurl aspersions at these words. I'd prefer that your dander and hackles be down and that you wait with bated curiosity. Even after searching every cranny, don't just sit there gnashing your lips and twiddling your toes.

The above paragraph was pretty weird, wasn't it? In fact, it was anything but on kilter. That's because lucre can never be clean, only filthy, thirst is the only need that can be slaked, and only a word can be gotten in edgewise. Although some people are given a lot of time to shrive (confess), we can speak about shrift only as being short.

*Fettle* must be *fine*, and *aspersions* can only be cast—never hurled, spoken, or written. Dander can be only gotten up and hackles raised. *Bated* can modify only *breath*. *Crannies* come only with nooks, and the only body parts that we can gnash are our teeth and that we can twiddle are our thumbs.

What's so odd about words such as *lucre*, *slake*, *edgewise*, *shrift*, *fettle*, *aspersions*, *dander*, *hackles*, *tenterhooks*, *bated*, *cranny*, and *twiddle*? Their commonality is that they are always yoked to one other word, a series of words, or a phrase. Monogamous words never stray.

I exclude reduplications, such as *razzle dazzle*, *super duper*, *namby-pamby*, *hurly burly*, *dilly dally*, and specialized medical terms, such as *anaphylactic* shock, *sleep apnea*, *carotid* artery, *circadian* rhythms, *ectopic* pregnancy, and *varicose* veins.

Many of these single-idiom words have fascinating origins: *Shrift* is the noun form of *shrive*, "to confess before a priest." The compound *short shrift* originally referred to the brief time that a condemned prisoner had to make a confession and receive absolution. *Tenterhooks* are hooks that hold cloth on a tenter, a framework for stretching cloth. To be *on tenterhooks* is to be in a state of great tension or suspense. *Bated* is a shortened form of *abated*. That's why *waiting with bated breath* means waiting with breath held back. (Have you heard about the cat who ate some cheese and breathed into a mousehole and waited with baited breath?)

Let's make a game of it. Here, alphabetically, are 125 examples of monogamous, special-team words. Fill in each blank with the word(s) or phrase that completes each idiom.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ aback 2. \_\_\_\_\_ afield 3. \_\_\_\_\_ aforethought 4. \_\_\_\_\_ afoul \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_ agape
6. \_\_\_\_\_ -aggrandizing 7. \_\_\_\_\_ akimbo 8. \_\_\_\_\_ amok 9. \_\_\_\_\_ arrears 10. \_\_\_\_\_ askance
11. \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ auspices \_\_\_\_\_ 12. \_\_\_\_\_ aweigh 13. \_\_\_\_\_ awry
14. bald-faced/barefaced \_\_\_\_\_ 15. batten \_\_\_\_\_ 16. \_\_\_\_\_ behest
17. \_\_\_\_\_ bended \_\_\_\_\_ 18. bides \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ 19. blithering \_\_\_\_\_ 20. bogged \_\_\_\_\_

21. \_\_\_\_\_ breather 22. breakneck \_\_\_\_\_ 23. briny \_\_\_\_\_ 24. \_\_\_\_\_ bumpkin  
 25. \_\_\_\_\_ bygoness \_\_\_\_\_ bygoness 26. \_\_\_\_\_ cahoots 27. cautionary \_\_\_\_\_  
 28. champing \_\_\_\_\_ 29. chock- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. \_\_\_\_\_ dint \_\_\_\_\_
31. dipsy \_\_\_\_\_ 32. \_\_\_\_\_ drag-out 33. if \_\_\_\_\_ druthers  
 34. \_\_\_\_\_ dudgeon 35. eke \_\_\_\_\_ 36. extenuating \_\_\_\_\_ 37. fatted \_\_\_\_\_  
 38. figment \_\_\_\_\_ 39. fine-tooth \_\_\_\_\_ 40. foregone \_\_\_\_\_
41. \_\_\_\_\_ forfend 42. \_\_\_\_\_ fritz 43. gainfully \_\_\_\_\_ 44. gibbous \_\_\_\_\_  
 45. gird \_\_\_\_\_ 46. grist \_\_\_\_\_ 47. gung \_\_\_\_\_ 48. \_\_\_\_\_ gussied \_\_\_\_\_  
 49. halcyon \_\_\_\_\_ 50. ward \_\_\_\_\_
51. hunker \_\_\_\_\_ 52. \_\_\_\_\_ immemorial 53. \_\_\_\_\_ inroads 54. \_\_\_\_\_ - intentioned  
 55. \_\_\_\_\_ kibosh \_\_\_\_\_ 56. \_\_\_\_\_ klatch 57. \_\_\_\_\_ lam 58. \_\_\_\_\_ lading  
 59. lickety \_\_\_\_\_ 60. \_\_\_\_\_ lieu \_\_\_\_\_
61. \_\_\_\_\_ loggerheads 62. madding \_\_\_\_\_ 63. \_\_\_\_\_ middling 64. misspent \_\_\_\_\_  
 65. \_\_\_\_\_ muckamuck 66. \_\_\_\_\_ nother 67. \_\_\_\_\_ nothings 68. nth \_\_\_\_\_  
 69. \_\_\_\_\_ offing 70. olden \_\_\_\_\_
71. opposable \_\_\_\_\_ 72. peter \_\_\_\_\_ 73. \_\_\_\_\_ pickings 74. pinking \_\_\_\_\_ 75. Pyrrhic \_\_\_\_\_  
 76. raring \_\_\_\_\_ 77. \_\_\_\_\_ red-handed 78. \_\_\_\_\_ riddance 79. \_\_\_\_\_ roughshod  
 80. runcible \_\_\_\_\_
81. \_\_\_\_\_ sanctum 82. scot- \_\_\_\_\_ 83. scruff \_\_\_\_\_ 84. self-fulfilling \_\_\_\_\_  
 85. \_\_\_\_\_ shebang 86. sleight \_\_\_\_\_ 87. \_\_\_\_\_ smithereens  
 88. snaggle \_\_\_\_\_ 89. suborn \_\_\_\_\_ 90. \_\_\_\_\_ suasion
91. \_\_\_\_\_ tat 92. \_\_\_\_\_ throes \_\_\_\_\_ 93. \_\_\_\_\_ tizzy 94. \_\_\_\_\_ trice  
 95. \_\_\_\_\_ turpitude 96. ulterior \_\_\_\_\_ 97. \_\_\_\_\_ umbrage 98. unsung \_\_\_\_\_  
 99. vale \_\_\_\_\_ 100. vantage \_\_\_\_\_
101. wend \_\_\_\_\_ 102. whiled \_\_\_\_\_ 103. \_\_\_\_\_ whippersnapper  
 104. wishful \_\_\_\_\_ 105. \_\_\_\_\_ wont 106. workaday \_\_\_\_\_ 107. wreak \_\_\_\_\_  
 108. \_\_\_\_\_ wroth 109. \_\_\_\_\_ yore 110. zoot \_\_\_\_\_

Now try some pairs connected by *and*:

111. \_\_\_\_\_ and abet 112. \_\_\_\_\_ and alack 113. \_\_\_\_\_ be-all and \_\_\_\_\_ 114. beck and \_\_\_\_\_  
 115. betwixt and \_\_\_\_\_ 116. \_\_\_\_\_ and caboodle 117. dribs and \_\_\_\_\_ 118. \_\_\_\_\_ and fro  
 119. \_\_\_\_\_ and haw 120. \_\_\_\_\_ intents and \_\_\_\_\_
121. kith and \_\_\_\_\_ 122. null and \_\_\_\_\_ 123. \_\_\_\_\_ and thither 124. vim and \_\_\_\_\_  
 125. \_\_\_\_\_ and wherefores

Answers are on page 99. ■



## DOG LATIN

T Campbell

Within the field of wordplay, examples like *anagrams* and *palindromes* get most of the attention. Some types are a lot more obscure, their definitions barely known, yet you've probably seen them in action at least once.

One such type is **dog Latin** (AKA *cod Latin* or *mock Latin*). The Law Dictionary [misidentifies this](#) as "the Latin of illiterate persons" (harsh!): "Latin words put together on the English grammatical system."

But really, it's almost the opposite—*English* words put together on the *Latin* grammatical system.



"Vulgar carnivore" vs. "incredible acceleration."

The Road Runner cartoons used Dog Latin in freeze-frames as a running gag. There's a full list of the Latin names used in each Road Runner cartoon [at this link](#).



"Eternally famished."



"Supersonic hot rod."

Dog Latin goes back as far as Shakespeare...

**Costard:** Go to; thou hast it *ad dunghill*, at the fingers' ends, as they say.

**Holofernes:** O, I smell false Latin; "dunghill" for *unguem*. (*Love's Labours Lost*, Act V, Scene I)

An example from the 1940s, used in the dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale* and its TV adaptation, is "Illegitimi non carborundum," mock-translated as "Don't let the bastards grind you down." A grim message for a grim world, but seasoned with a bit of humor for those in the know.

A modern example might be to term today's "Instagram girls" *filiae Instagrammae*.

This brand of wordplay had a brief window of relative popularity for a few decades there as society grew more media-savvy—but at the same time, society has gotten less familiar with even the rudiments of the Latin language, so that sweet spot may have already passed for it.

One can, of course, apply a similar set of rules to languages more familiar in modern life. Mock French: "The gendarmes promptly tossed the drug-dealing Americans into *le clink*." Mock Spanish: "Hasta la vista to my fave Mexican restaurant: I loved the food, but bribing the safety inspector was a *ño-ño*." Mock Japanese, mock Korean...mock Swedish.



The Muppet Show's Swedish chef.

But you've got to be careful about this kind of thing. Sometimes such "mock"-ery can be taken as mocking those who speak the language—or even intended that way, of course. Latin—in the sense of the Latin language, not *Hispanic* culture—is a relatively safe target, since the only people who speak it are long dead or in Vatican City.

Fortunately, the current Pope is a pretty mellow guy. He's probably enjoyed a Road Runner cartoon or two. ■

## UNDEC-AGRAMS AND A HENDECA-GRAM

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To celebrate this eleventh issue of the Journal, let's look at some words beginning UNDEC- and HENDECA-. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), the combining form UNDEC- is derived from the Latin *undecim*, meaning eleven. The OED also has the combining form HENDECA-, which is derived from the ancient Greek *ένδεκα*-, also meaning eleven.

There aren't any common words beginning UNDEC- which have a meaning related to eleven. Perhaps the least unfamiliar might be UNDECAGON (a geometric figure with eleven sides) and UNDECILLION ( $10^{36}$ , the number 1000 followed by eleven groups of three zeroes). Similarly, there are no common words beginning HENDECA-. Perhaps those with the easiest discernible meanings are HENDECANE (a liquid hydrocarbon found in petroleum, having eleven carbon atoms) and HENDECASYLLABIC (a noun and adjective, relating to something with eleven syllables).

Yet there are many words beginning UNDEC- which have no relationship to the number eleven. Examples of everyday words include UNDECLARED, UNDECAYED and UNDECISIVE. The same cannot be said for words beginning HENDECA-. Any word beginning with HENDECA- will inevitably have an eleven-related meaning.

The following 11 sets of transposals all begin with either UNDEC- or HENDECA-. All are taken from my extensive collection of transposals having 10 or more letters.

<b>undecamers</b> <i>Oligomers (particular types of polymer) having eleven <u>subunits</u></i>	<b>unscreamed</b> <i>Not screamed, as in "an unscreamed scream"</i>
<b>undecaploidy</b> <i>The state of having eleven sets of homologous chromosomes</i>	<b>Penycloddiau</b> <i>A <u>hill</u> in the <u>Clwydian Range</u> in <u>Flintshire</u>, <u>Wales</u></i>
<b>undeciever</b> <i>Somebody who frees a person from deception or mistake</i>	<b>unreceived</b> <i>Not received</i>
<b>Undecember</b> <i>A fictitious and/or humorous thirteenth month of the Western calendar</i>	<b>encumbered</b> <i>Hampered, impeded, burdened</i>
<b>undecimated</b> <i>Not destroyed, not reduced to one-tenth</i>	<b>unmedicated</b> <i>Not medicated, simple</i>
<b>Undecimber</b> <i>A variant of Undecember, see above.</i>	<b>incumbered</b> <i>Hampered, impeded, burdened</i>

<b>undecipher</b> <i>To make undecipherable, especially writings and inscriptions</i>	<b>unciphered</b> <i>Deciphered</i>
<b>undecision</b> <i>Absence of a decision</i>	<b>incendious</b> <i>Relating or pertaining to the malicious setting on fire of buildings or other property; incendiary</i>  <b>Nuncioides</b> <i>A genus of harvestmen (daddy-long-legs), with species such as <u>Nuncioides dysmicus</u> and <u>Nuncioides infrequens</u></i>
<b>undeclarations</b> <i>Acts or things previously <u>declared</u></i>	<b>connaturalised</b> <i>Made connatural, or of like or agreeable nature</i>
<b>undecorated</b> <i>Left without ornament or embellishment; plain</i>	<b>codenatured</b> <i>Removed a <u>natural</u> characteristic or <u>inherent</u> property of a thing (or a person) along with another property</i>  <b>undercoated</b> <i><u>Applied a coat of paint</u> or other material onto a surface before that of a <u>topcoat</u></i>
<b>hendecarchies</b> <i>Governments each by eleven people</i>	<b>Niedereschach</b> <i>A town, with 6000 inhabitants, in <u>Baden-Württemberg</u> in <u>Germany</u>.</i>

The words and names in this article can be found in at least one of *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the *Merriam-Webster Unabridged* website, Wikipedia and Wiktionary.

#### A footnote:

*The Oxford English Dictionary* lists *hendecasyllabic* as both an adjective and a noun. In the illustrative quotations for the noun form is the lovely 27-letter hendecasyllabic specimen, a nonce Italian word, taken from a 1902 source:

*He includes in this last class **sovrasmagnificentissimamente**, a hendecasyllabic in itself.*  
—G. Saintsbury, *History of Criticism* (ed. 2) vol. I. iii. ii. 430. ■



## PALINDROMES CONTAINING THE LETTER Q

Will Shortz

Earlier this year during my weekly puzzle segment on NPR I issued a creative challenge to listeners to compose a palindrome containing the letter Q. People had two weeks to submit their best efforts. I said entries would be judged on sense, naturalness of syntax, and overall elegance.

Although this seemed like a wordplay topic that would have been explored before, I couldn't find anything about it online. To be sure I wasn't missing anything, I reached out to my friend Mark Saltveit, the editor and publisher of *The Palindromist*. He recalled issuing a similar challenge around 1999, but its results were never published.

My NPR competition drew several hundred entries, containing lots of Iraqis, Qataris, NASDAQs, and Q-tips—almost nothing that included a regular, uncapitalized English word spelled with “qu.”

The contest's winner was Jon Wentz, of Stillwater, Minn., who submitted this little gem:

- *God, y'know Spot's I.Q. is tops. Wonky dog!*

It reads naturally, paints a coherent picture, and makes me smile. The following are a few runners-up that I read on the air. They're all smooth and make reasonable sense:

- *Do I report “Emir!” at a Qatari media period?* — Brian Canada
- *No, we were not new to Iraq; a riot went on ere we won.* — Jacob Stulberg
- *Let Oman ignite emir at a Qatari meeting in a motel.* — John Stern
- *Amor, tabibus diu quid subibat Roma.* [Latin for “Love, Rome was long suffering from decay.”] — Tom Severo
- *007's I.Q. is 700.* -- Robert Galejs

Below are 25+ additional Q-less palindromes that were, in my opinion, the best of the rest. These have never appeared anywhere, so I'd like to record them here (in no particular order).

- *I'm at a DNA Q. and A., Tami.* — Benjamin Collinsworth
- *Lin's I.Q. is nil.* — Daniel Heinlein
- *Dereg NASDAQ ads anger Ed.* — Kate Sanger
- *Yon NASDAQ ads annoy.* — Peter Gordon

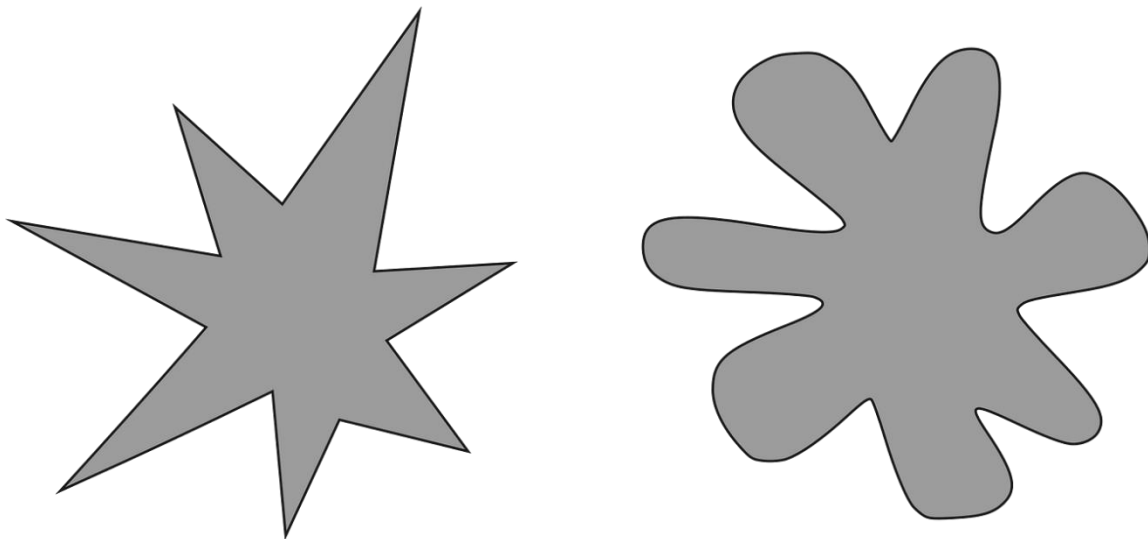
- *Stop, sir, at a Qatari's pots.* — Will Tripp
- *E.P.A. votes: Iraq, arise to vape.* — Mike Ecsedy
- *“Naomi, strap snug BBQ BB gun's parts,” I moan.* — Scott Smith
- *L.A. emir at a Qatari meal.* — Kristen Baxter
- *Set ten given index, if FAQ affixed nine vignettes.* — Cary Kawamoto
- *Llama set on red Iraq, a rider notes a mall.* — Ryan Berry
- *Q.: Aria's raw notes set on wars? A.: Iraq.* — Todd Hermann
- *Meeting in a cab, Aqaba can ignite 'em.* — Daniel Abramson
- *Me no spit Q-tips on 'em.* — Greg Smith
- *Did I aid emir at a Qatari media? I did!* — Hamidreza Hakimjavadi
- *Bosnia: Gasp! Iraq rubs as burqa rips again. Sob!* — Apryl Pooley
- *Tin? I spit Q-tips in it.* — Jennie Spencer
- *Anita spit Q-tips at Ina.* — Al Gori
- *Enola saw Len, a placid emir at a Qatari medical panel, was alone.* — Craig Mackie
- *Rod ran on a QAnon ardor.* — Shyra Latiolais
- *Emit? No, it's E.U. question time.* — Joseph Wolff
- *Lob my spur at a Qatar “up” symbol.* — Sheri Bone
- *Tired nudeness? Elton's I.Q. is not lessened under it.* — Mark Halpin
- *E.U.'s sign: Is Iraq a rising issue?* — Jay Kuklinski
- *Was it rad NASDAQ ads and art I saw?* — Everett Barr
- *Slain Nell, I'm war-torn. U.S.A. was in arid Iraq, arid Iran. I saw a sun rot raw millennials.*  
— Mark Saltveit
- *Engage le jeu que je le gagne.* [French for “Start the game so that I can win.”] — Emily Jackson ■

## SOUND SYMBOLISM

T Campbell

In “Light Stuff,” *Word Ways* #10.2 (1977), Leonard R. N. Ashley makes a puzzle out of twenty-five English words with a general meaning of “lightness”: *floe, fluke, flapdoodle, flan, flee, flick, floss, flip, flotation, flotsam, flit, flimsy, fluff, flux, flutter, flume, flaw, fletcher, flense, floccule, flivver, flock, flirt, flatulence, and flummery*. Without much effort, I can think of a few more: *flop, flip-flop, flounce, float, fly*.

Sound symbolism is one of those aspects of our language that *flits* on the edge of our perception most of the time. These two shapes, known as *kiki* and *bouba*, are part of a classic linguistic test: most people identify the first shape as *kiki*, the second as *bouba*, because we associate certain sounds with spikiness, other sounds with roundness. That association is further reinforced by the letters we use: *k* and *i* are much “pricklier” than *b*, *o*, *u*, and *a*.



*Kiki and bouba.*

*Snot, sniff, sneeze, snout, sneer, snicker, snort, snuff, snore, snooze, snub, snob.* Nose or breathing stuff. (Snobs have their noses in the air.)

*Glow, gleam, glimmer, glare, glisten, glitter, glacier, glide, glory, glint.* Illumination.

*Bump, chump, dump, crump, thump, mumps, hump, sump, pump, rump, lump.* Blunt, rounded.

An intriguing number of sound-symbols are consistent across languages, which hints at some grand, beautiful *universal meaning* lying just beyond our grasp.

But that’s a bit of a mental trap. Language is more complex than just the few impressions we can capture through our ears. Sound symbolism is part of it, sure, a persistent thread in the tapestry, but not enough of it to knit a whole language out of.

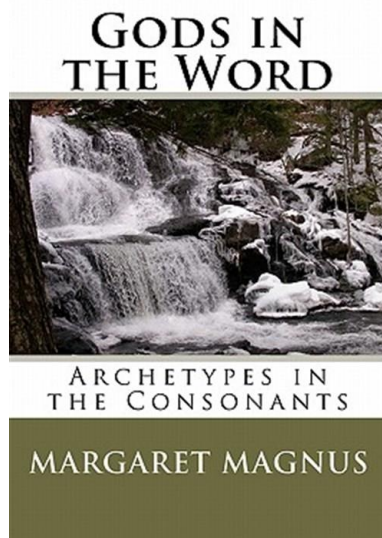
There are even exceptions to the trends above that make it clear they're not universal rules. There's nothing light about *flagrant flunking*, and while there's a certain lightness to *flailing* your arms, most would find the weapon known as a *flail* to be heavier than they'd like. *Snails* and *snow* shouldn't be anywhere near your nose; *glands*, *glue*, and *gluts* aren't especially *glowy*, and as for *trump*...

Well, that's becoming what linguists call a "skunked term." Since 2015, the capital-T Trump has been so, ahem, prominent in public discourse that even card players use the lowercase term less frequently than they once did. At one time, it meant a clean win or an elevation over something else: "In web design, content trumps speed." And that meaning's not dead, but it is receding.

In earlier times, it referred to a blunter kind of trickery (cough). You can see both meanings in the phrase *trump card*, used for any item that brings victory, but with its metaphorical roots in a card you probably tricked your opponent into thinking you didn't have.

So the word *trump* once fit in with words like *rump*, *dump*, and *chump*...and to Trump detractors, it may be doing so again now...but we can't ignore that middle period when it didn't. Language is fluid, and there are other words that may have had their origins in sound-sense but evolved into other positions. Regardless of its roots in the Greek *phono-*, if you still think of a *phone* as primarily a source of sound, you're probably over thirty.

Still, the mapping of sound symbols is a worthy endeavor, and some people have taken it pretty far. One of the better researchers into the field is Margaret Magnus, whose book *Gods of the Word* is available in [paperback](#) and as an [e-book](#). ■



*Margaret Magnus' work on sound symbols.*



## HIPPOMONSTROSESQUIPEDALIAPHILIA

T Campbell

Long words are usually discouraged in writing and speaking, and not without reason. They often just show off the writer or speaker's knowledge at the expense of comprehensibility—er—making us get what you mean.

Still, there are exceptions for everything. Sometimes unusual words can help a piece of writing, especially if the audience is given a clue what they mean or it's the kind of piece where a little decoding is part of the fun.

In other words, when thinking about long-word pieces, don't be too quick to **floccinaucinihilipilificate**, or estimate something as worthless. Even the OED says that *floccinaucinihilipilification* is a word "used chiefly as a curiosity," but does it have to be? Don't we all dismiss certain things as worthless every day?

And some of those things turn out to be utterly **supercalifragilisticexpialidocious**. There have been a few definitions for this word—Richard Lederer once cheekily dissected it as "atoning for being educable through delicate beauty," and Mary Poppins herself called it "something to say when you don't know what to say." However, the word is older than the film, and then as now, most people have just used it to mean "real great," with the *califragilisticexpialidocious* giving the *super* more weight.



"Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" from Mary Poppins.

The word *eellogofusciouhipoppokunurious* has a similar meaning, though not starting with super- makes it less intuitive. *What an eellogofusciouhipoppokunurious situation!* Long medical terms are often abstract, but a few of them evoke concrete visuals. An **electroencephalograph** is a brain scan, often abbreviated EEG, whereas a heart scan is an **electrocardiograph**, ECG or EKG.

My stepfather-in-law had been dealing with chronic hiccupping post-surgery, and the doctors were considering an **esophagogastrroduodenoscopy**, a procedure that involves swallowing a camera to get a look at his upper digestive tract. Looks like swallowing barium is the treatment they went with instead.

**Antidisestablishmentarianism**, of course, means resistance to the disestablishment of the English church. But does it have to be so specific? Can't we object to the disestablishment of, say, democratic norms or the emphasis on Christian kindness? The problem with generalizing the word, of course, is that people with repellent political beliefs might do the same and use "antidisestablishmentarianism" as an excuse to advocate for a state-sponsored church of America—one unlikely to have charity and empathy as its chief tenets. Let's put a pin in that one for now.

One word we might justly floccinaucinihilipilificate is **pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis**. Silicosis is a real disease known by other names like *miner's lung*—largely preventable with safe working practices today. But *pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis* implies the involvement of volcanic dust particles, which are actually much less dangerous than the particles found in ordinary mining. This word has its origins in the National Puzzler's League, and the 1935 president who coined it probably never even picked up a pickax.

**Paraskavedekatriaphobia** is the fear of Friday the thirteenth. Some elaborate -phobia words aren't based in reality so much as wordplayers having fun—*aibohphobia*, fear of palindromes, isn't widely reported outside of jokey, tongue-in-cheek articles. But I know from personal experience that paraskavedekatriaphobia is real.

It was a fear I picked up in my more superstitious youth, and one I outgrew through observation: after a while, I realized my really bad days didn't correspond with Fridays at all, thirteenth or otherwise.

In fact, Friday the thirteenth was *good* news because (1) it was the end of the work week and (2) if other people were a little intimidated on that day waiting for the piano to drop, that just meant more chances for *me* to take a bite out of life. So, TGIF13. ■

# A HIGH-SCORING THEORETICAL GAME OF DIAGONAL CLABBERS ON A SCRABBLE® BOARD

Stephen C. Root and Elizabeth Root Blackmer

## Abstract

This article describes a new variant of Scrabble®, Diagonal Clabbers, and presents a worked theoretical example of a complete game, amassing a total combined score of 552,556 points (for North American play, or 552,558 in international play), with the winner earning 552,193 points (or 552,195), likely a record on a Scrabble® board.

## Background

The game of Scrabble® has had many variants<sup>1,2</sup>, with some theoretical demonstrations of their maximum scores<sup>3,4</sup>. One variant, Clabbers, uses the rules of tournament play with the elegance of a single rule change: the tiles may be played on the board in any order. This creates a densely packed and high scoring board displaying anagrams of valid words.

## Diagonal Clabbers

A new variant, Diagonal Clabbers, adds the following rules:

- 1) plays may be made diagonally as well as vertically and horizontally,
- 2) racks consist of 15 tiles instead of 7,
- 3) words formed on diagonal lines which are valid anagrams are scored as usual, but there may exist non-anagrams in the diagonals; they are not scored.

## A Theoretical Maximum Game of Diagonal Clabbers

In the theoretical game presented here, a final combined score of 552,556 points is obtained by the rules and the dictionaries for North American tournament play (from 2014 onward<sup>5</sup>), with the winning player earning 552,193 points and the loser 363 points. The game assumes a cooperative venture between the two players with a benevolent tile dealer. The board configuration is shown in Figure 1 and the plays in Table 1. Altogether, there are 18 plays made, involving 104 words. For international play, an additional word worth 2 points, ST, is scored<sup>6</sup>, giving a total combined score of 552,558, and a winner's score of 552,195. See Appendix 1 for scoring details.

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia. *Scrabble Variants*. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scrabble\\_variants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scrabble_variants).

<sup>2</sup> O'Rourke, Mike (2003) "An A-Z of Scrabble® Variants" <https://www.absp.org.uk>.

<sup>3</sup> Root, Stephen C. and Hedt, Nathan (2003) "Best Scrabble Game, Best Clabbers Game," *Word Ways*: Vol. 36: Iss. 2, Article 19.

<sup>4</sup> Root, Stephen C. "? A Scrabble Record, 200-tile Game?" [Oook.info/scr/archives/001807.htm](http://Oook.info/scr/archives/001807.htm).

<sup>5</sup> "Official Tournament and Club Word List" 2014 Edition (where words up to 15 letters were first included).

<sup>6</sup> The Pixie Pit. "Dictionaries CSW12 through CSW24." [thepixiepit.co.uk](http://thepixiepit.co.uk).



Of interest beyond the high scores in this game are that the winning player plays a bingo (at least 7 tiles) in every play, and that there are four 15 letter plays made: OXYPHENBUTAZONE, MICROEARTHQUAKE, PHOTOJOURNALISM, and WAPPENSCHAWINGS. The most massively scoring is the opening diagonal play OXYPHENBUTAZONE, which garners 2 double letter scores (B and Y), 2 triple letter scores (Z and X), 9 double word scores, and 2 triple word scores, with a resulting score of 387,122 points.



Figure 1. The board configuration of the Diagonal Clabbers game.



Table 1. The 18 plays in the Diagonal Clabbers game. Both blanks are assigned P (lower case below), and the remaining tile in Player A's rack is a D (4 points for Player B, by tournament rules).

Play Player	Word Anagram	Location Direction	Bingo	# of Words Formed	Play Score
1 A	OXYPHENBUTAZONE PATNEXBHYZOUONE	15A NE	Yes	1	387,122
2 B	BO BO	9G E	No	2	9
3 A	WASHINGS GSWNSIHA	8B E	Yes	4	80
4 B	IS IS	7F S	No	2	4
5 A	ENTITIES TNTIIEES	13A E	Yes	5	67
6 B	AIN NIA	8E NE	No	1	3
7 A	FAITHFUL HAILFFTU	14A E	Yes	15 (16 int'l)	153 (155 int'l)
8 B	AT AT	6G E	No	1	2
9 A	MICROEARTHQUAKE EAARTQMHCKOURIE	1A SE	Yes	7	163,737
10 B	LIMY IMLY	7F E	No	4	21
11 A	RODEOING OGENDIRO	12A E	Yes	14	129
12 B	AG GA	8B NE	No	3	13
13 A	GOVERNED OEDGERVN	11A E	Yes	13	149
14 B	DIVULGATE DALTEVIGU	1B S	Yes	8	102
15 A	PHOTOJOURNALISM pORJMTLHOINOSUA	1H S	Yes	4	388
16 B	SEPARABLY PEBYRSAAL	15A E	Yes	12	173
17 A	WAPPENSCHAWINGS PGSWNSIHAEAWCNp	8A E	Yes	4	368
18 B	EX EX	10E E	No	4	32

## COMIC BOOK CREATOR APTRONYMS

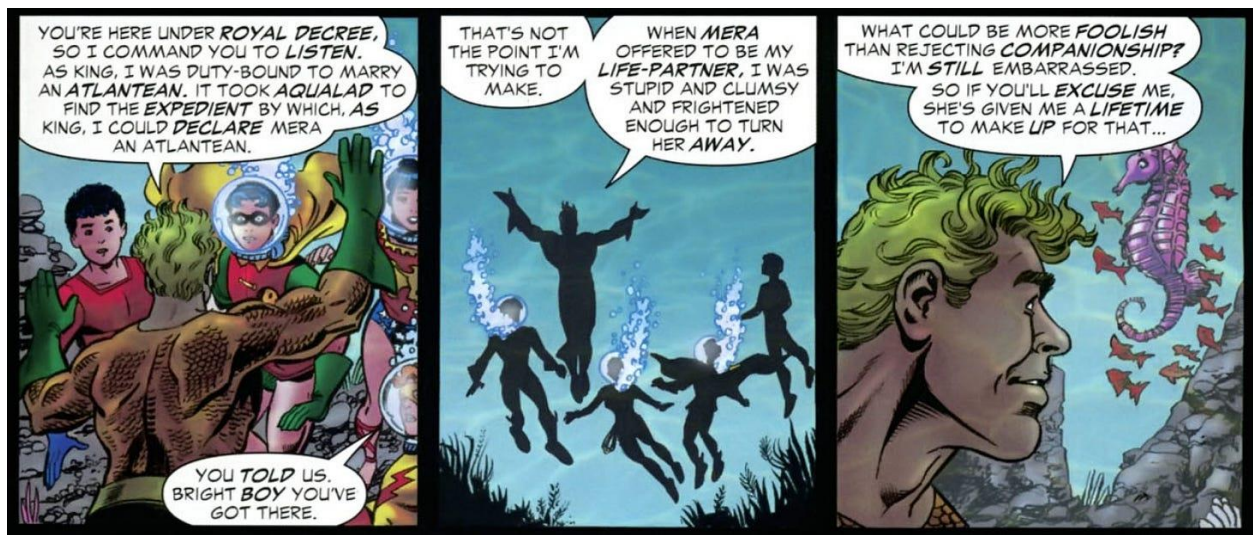
T Campbell

When I interviewed comics writer Mark Waid for [the previous Journal of Wordplay](#) (page 26), there was one wordplay-based question I didn't ask, because it was easy enough to work out on my own. "Waid...wade...wading...done anything with Aquaman?"

Of course he has. Here's two Waid-written scenes showing the character at different stages, one as an uncertain "fish out of water" learning English, another on the day of his wedding.



JLA: Year One.



The Brave and the Bold #10.

Comics continuity is ever-changing, and Waid's been doing this a while, so his most recent treatment shows Aquaman with a different personal history, now a native English speaker.

Waid hasn't done as much with Marvel's **wader**, the Sub-Mariner, but once described him, not inaccurately, as "comic books' first antihero."

But naming isn't always destiny. **Tom King** and **Clay Mann** are two professionals who've worked on Batman. And their names suggest prominent Batman villains—but, to my knowledge, neither has worked on those villains yet!

The "**tom king**" in Batman's general orbit is sometime villain Catman. However, a different Catman appeared on *The Fairly OddParents*, with storyboards by a *different Tom King*!



World's Finest: Teen Titans.



DC Comics' Catman.



The Fairly OddParents' Catman.

The "**clay man**" would be the shape-shifting sometime villain Clayface, set to get his own movie in the not-too-distant future.

(Then again, since Clayface can look like anyone, maybe Clay Mann *has* drawn him and we just don't know it!)



DC's Clayface.



Writer-artist **Frank Miller** is known for blunt and direct stories—so his writing was often **frank**, though later series like *Sin City* were more stylized. I couldn't find any stories of his about mill work, but I did spot one panel where he rendered a beer that could've been a **Miller**.



You could also pour your **Miller** into the Frank Miller glasses seen at top right and eat some **franks** with it.

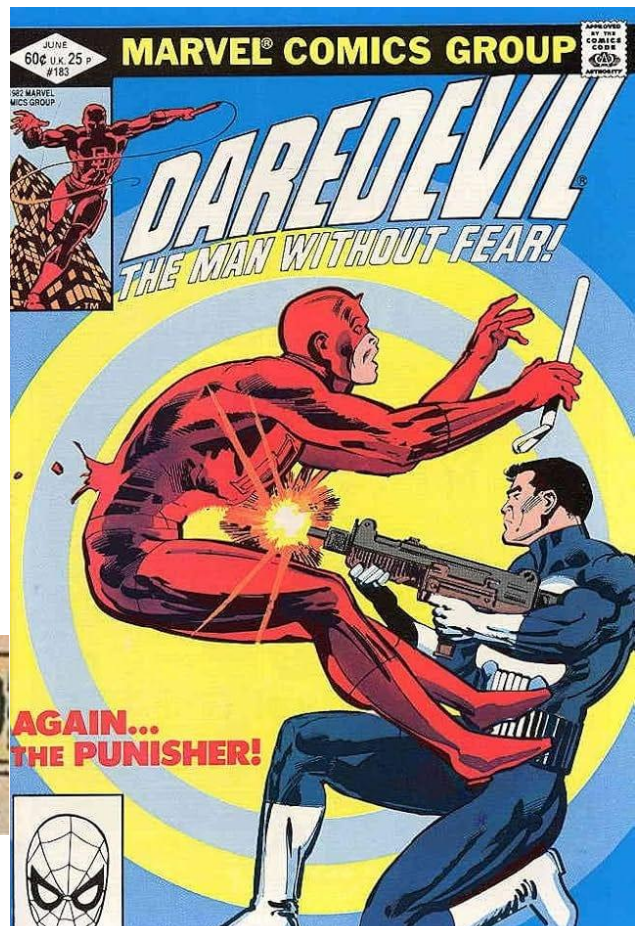
*Miller's Daredevil gets hit in the face--with a Miller? From a Miller glass?*

Miller's experience rendering the Punisher must've felt surreal. The Punisher's name is *also* Frank—but this isn't a "Charles Schulz/Charlie Brown situation." Miller's not the one who created the Punisher; Gerry Conway was. There are other cases of writers and artists working on their namesakes, but few as well known as "Frank on Frank."

The aptest aptronym in comic books might've been **Marv Wolfman**, who spent some of his early career writing **Marvel's wolfman**, the Werewolf by Night. Even the copy for his first issue on the series (#11) advertised how well the name suited the occupation.



*Marv Wolfman's first gig rendering Marvel's Werewolf by Night.*



*Frank Miller writing and drawing Frank Castle.*

Retroactively, it's a fun fact that **Stan** Lee did more to foster devoted fandom than anyone else in comics history and often acted like a fan of his collaborators himself. Devoted, over-the-top fans weren't called **stans** in Stan's day, but they are now.

A few more instances: John **Byrne** drawing Superman's **heat vision**, Amanda **Conner** rendering **smooth-talking trickery** in *Harley Quinn*, Carl **Barks'** villains the **Beagle Boys**. **Paul Pope** has not rendered the **Pope** to my knowledge, but he did produce an anthology titled ***PulpHope***. Alan **Moore** was known for writing **more** words than most of his contemporaries, and that tendency got more pronounced with his novel *Jerusalem*, one of the longest ever published.

There are probably instances I'm overlooking—or maybe just some cool ones that haven't happened yet. Don't know if Darywn **Cooke** ever drew a **cook**, but his work always cooked, RIP. I remember a few comic books numbered “#½,” but I don't think any were written by Matt **Fraction**. I thought Deniz **Camp** might've written a **camping** trip story, but if so, I couldn't find it for this roundup.

Still, he did post [this](#) earlier this year, riffing on his own initials...



*From Deniz Camp's social media.*

How could it not? 😊 Darwyn **Cooke** could have done the same. ■



## WORDS: MY MARK!

### More Transpositions and Spoonerisms, Original and Otherwise (Wise Other?)

DON HAUPTMAN  
New York, New York  
donhauptman@nyc.rr.com

Recently, I confessed to a friend that a disappointing experience was “a blushing crow.” She became irritated, protesting that the expression is meaningless. Well, it has meaning insofar as it’s one of the classic accidental spoonerisms attributed, albeit falsely, to the eponymous Dr. Spooner.

This raises the momentous question of whether meaningful wordplay reversals are morally superior to nonsensical ones. Well, yes. But the meaningless invented specimens are still amusing. After all, people say, “He’s as tarp as a shack” and “Go where you’re watching!” and especially the ubiquitous “One swell foop.” Moreover, the genuinely accidental ones can’t always be expected to make sense. “The poppy of my caper” was really uttered inadvertently.

Below, a gallimaufry of new specimens, presumably meaningful, albeit in some cases gloriously silly. I initially thought they were all original, but when I discovered earlier coinages via search, I so noted and credited; see footnote.

- Faddish vegetables generate hostility, hence a potential rallying cry: *Bash kale!*
- Why kids favor dessert more often than grownups: *There’s no room in the adult.*
- Wedding toast: *All the sips at she.*
- Discount retailer’s aggressive ad campaign: *We’re off our rocker, so rock our offer!*
- While another capitalizes on long audience lines for pop concerts: *The Store Between the Waits.*
- Medieval warrior despot: *The Louse of Hordes.*
- Cattle have become aware of the long-term consequences of their actions: *Steer karma.*
- Political cynicism: *Four years? Your fears.*
- Attacks on political correctness fall short: *Weak poke at peak woke.*
- Congress debates government borrowing: *Debt ceiling? Set dealing!*
- Legislation proposed for funding birth control: *Apportion bill.*
- Vegas newbie: *He sucked for a player, so he was played for a sucker.*
- Advice abounds for insomniacs: *The commentary is rest.*
- Regimen for above sufferers: *Hitting all the night notes.*



- Treating rattlesnake wounds with a powdered antibiotic: *Another one dusts the bite!*
- When temperatures plunge, resort visitors disappear: *You can't see the tourist for the freeze.*
- Relatedly, a common picnic problem on world tours: *Ants With My Travel.*
- Imagined sign on U.K. truck delivering condiments: *Lorry for Your Sauce.*
- Children's Easter celebration in Austin: *Egg—Grab It!*
- Relatedly, a gender kerfuffle in that conservative state: *Two sexes? Sue Texas.*
- Concealed shelters for hunters might require landscaping: *That really mows your blind.*
- Necrophilia is an abhorrent practice: *To lay the ceased.*
- Young people latch on to Eastern religions: *Gen Z? Zen, Gee!*
- Controversy over whether higher education increases incomes: *Low earning? O learning!*
- Relatedly, a lament for college students: *Grad loans? Lad groans.*
- Junior Varsity annual gala: *JV Dance.*

A few showbiz fantasies:

Plot idea for a future *Star Trek* TV series. The crew battles a biblical plague of insects infesting its trademark weapons. Episode title: *Laser-Focused on the Phaser Locust.*

Here in New York City, an annoyingly chirpy radio talk-show host prefaces each broadcast with, "I'm grateful you're here." This tiresome bromide invariably conjures an image of famed 1940s movie star Miss Garson, confronted by a vindictive ex-husband: *"I'm hateful; you're Greer."*

Fans of celebrities often join cutely named groups, such as Taylor Swift's Swifties and Justin Bieber's Beliebers. Perhaps admirers of three-time Oscar winner Meryl should be called: *The Sweet Streepers.*

Comedian Mr. Rogen could launch a gossipy podcast: *Dirt 'n' Seth.* A curmudgeonly critic at an annual film festival is ridiculed: *A worm of Cannes.* And perhaps the once-popular *Lassie* film and TV franchise should be revived, with the beloved canine attending college: *Pal Collie at Cal Poly.*

The end—or *is it?* Having read this far, you might exclaim: *Wow, that's some sheared wit!*

*NOTES & CREDITS: Since Google began offering AI Overviews, my searches have generated results prefaced by caveats such as: "This is not a standard expression, but is likely a typographical error or a play on words." Yes, I know! Crediting originators can be tough, but assiduous searching produced these results: The title was anticipated in a sermon by a clergyman named G W Bill Elliott Jr. "Set dealing": squirlz88 in a Reddit thread. "Dusts the bite": a pop singer named Purple Headed Yoghurt Slinger. "Mows blind" in a series of spoonerism books by Beth Romano. "Phaser": Reddit user Assassin8nCoordin8s. Multiple coiners (though lacking my setups) for "kale," "steer karma" (it's on T-shirts!), "four years," "weak poke," "JV Dance," "Streepers," "sheared."*

## USEFUL TAUTOLOGIES

T Campbell

A tautology is defined as “the saying of the same thing twice in different words, generally considered to be a fault of style.” And usually, that’s what it is. We want to be clear, so we often over-explain to be sure we’ve made our point—***In the past, I used to be a big star; we provided a safe haven; what a heartless psychopath!***

However, at times, what *seems* like a redundancy actually has a useful meaning. This Tyler Hinman crossword in 2010 has three examples:



Tyler Hinman's puzzle for the *Onion A.V. Club*, 2010.

**Haters gonna hate** = “You’ll never please all the critics.”

**Rules are rules** = “Sorry, nonconformists, I can’t let you do that.” (Similarly, in the military, “We have to obey the chain of command” is “**Orders are orders.**”)

**Seeya when I seeya** = “No need to schedule our next encounter, we’ll surely bump into each other again soon!”

**“Cheaters cheat”** is another good one, in a romantic or sexual context: a clarified version is “If they cheat *with* you, they’ll cheat *on* you.” You might be swept up in the passion that led your mistress to start sleeping with you behind her

boyfriend’s back, but can you really trust someone who’d do that to him? (Or rework the genders on that.)

Taylor Swift paired “Haters gonna hate” with “**Players gonna play,**” which is not too far off from “Cheaters cheat.”

In another piece, I wrote that “Actresses put on an act,” implying that people who get used to performing their emotions might not show their real selves in their everyday lives.

Don Hauptman, who’s [written](#) a [number](#) of [pieces](#) about [tautologies](#), reminded me of **A is A**, “the fundamental principle of epistemology.” Also known as the law of identity, created by Aristotle, it’s a foundation stone for Objectivism and other logic-focused philosophies.

You could argue that “**It is what it is**” has a similar meaning, but its function is different. When someone says this, they seek to signal others—or themselves—to curtail any “what if” thinking and deal with the situation at hand.

"We are who we are" can express similar resignation—or, at times, self-love and self-acceptance.

I've seen the "[Name] is [Name]" construction (and used it) here and there. "Bob is...you know...he's *Bob*." "Jack is...Jack. He's never going to change." The speaker seems a little defeated, like they can't find adequate words to describe the person they're naming and instead ask the listener to contemplate everything they know about that person.

There's a similar cadence in this example Don sent, in which **grief is grief and loss is loss**. The implication here is that the emotions invoked exhibit the same behaviors we know from the human experience, even if their *source* seems artificial.

Don also cited "**Nothing succeeds like success.**" The implied meaning: one success often opens the door to other successes.

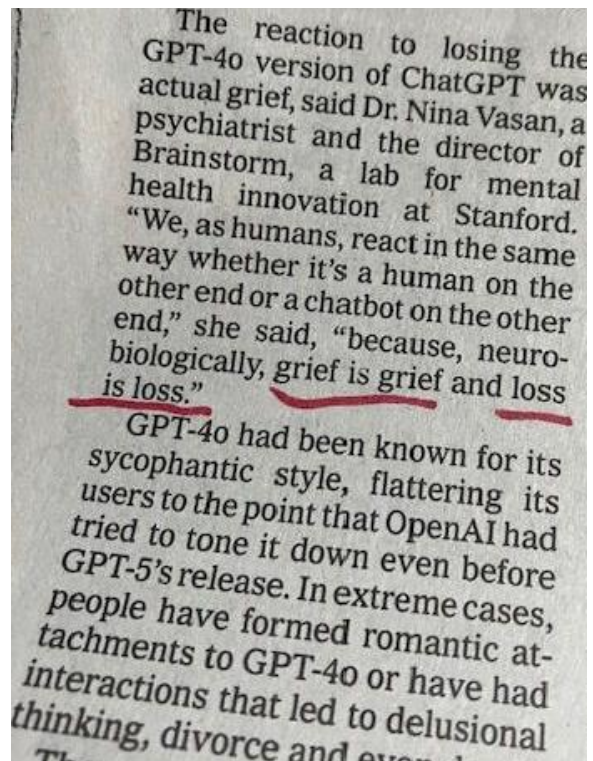
Yogi Berra is known for his nonsensical aphorisms, but there's a Zen wisdom in his best-known quotation, "**It ain't over 'til it's over.**" Sports fans know all about this—you can analyze a game to death and feel confident you know when one team's chances of victory drop to zero, but sometimes the game can surprise you. Sometimes a strong spirit overcomes a seeming statistical disadvantage. And that's true of other aspects of the game we call life.

Other instances of technically redundant phrasing work as intensifiers. *I myself* have used them now and again! You can cut the previous sentence down to "I've used them," but it doesn't hit the same tone.

For instance, there's **above and beyond the call of duty**. You could narrow that down to *above* or



From Justice League International #8, 1987.



From Dylan Freedman's "The Day ChatGPT Went Cold," New York Times, August 19, 2025.

*beyond*, but you lose something by abandoning the familiar phrasing. “He went beyond the call of duty” doesn’t feel right, at this point.

I would argue **aid and abet** is an edge case. There’s a familiar legal cadence to the phrase, and some might employ it to evoke the reasoning we associate with the courtroom. It’s not usually to my taste—I’d shorten it to *abet* on most occasions—but I can’t say I’d *never* use it.

Finally, you have to dabble in seeming redundancy when you’re talking about words and phrases that describe themselves! **Short phrase is a short phrase**, whereas **sesquipedalian rodомontade is sesquipedalian rodомontade**. [See “Hippomonstrosequipedaliaphila,” page 20.]

All of the above tautologies might get logicians or linguists to argue whether they *really* qualify as tautologies. Some would *define* a tautology as useless or self-evident, but sometimes a certain truth or extra meaning can be snatched from the jaws of seeming redundancy. Or to put it another way: a tautology is a tautology...except when it isn’t. ■



*Greeting card from Julia Walck.*

## MISSING OPPOSITES

Anil

Perth, Australia

Negative prefixes create opposites to the word appended, e.g., *dysfunctional*, *unsteady*, *incapacitate*, *asexual*, *decontrol*, etc. In contrast, I here compile a list of negatives wherein removing the negative prefix does not yield the opposite but rather a non-word. I call these missing opposites. The opposites exist but in a modified form or with a different, opposite prefix. In some that I omitted the opposite was found in some dictionaries but not in others. Also omitted are several examples where removing the prefix did leave a word although not the opposite, e.g., *aversion*, *derange*. I was surprised at how many hundreds I found, making this a more laborious study than anticipated.

Thanks to Jeff Grant for review and adding a couple.

<u>prefix</u>	<u>word(s)</u>	<u>literal etymological meaning</u>
a-	aconite, aconitic	without dust
	adamant, adamantine	untamed
	amorphous	without (discrete) form
	apathy	without sympathy
	asphyxia	not throbbing
	asylum	no right of seizure
	asymptote	not falling together
	ataxia ≈ atonia	uncoordinated
	atomic, atomize, atomy	not divisible
	aversive	turning from
	avulsion	pluck away from
	azote	(nitrogen) can't maintain life
	an- anaemia, anemia	without blood
	anarchism, anarchist	no rule(r)
	anecdote, anecdotal	not published
ab-	abdicate	surrender dictatorship
	abeyance	hope deferred
	abolish, abolition	nourish not
	abortion	rise not, reversal of rising
	abrogate	not ask
	absence	being away
	abstemious	away from strong wine
	abstention	hold away from
	abyss, abyssal, abysmal	from depth, bottomless
	abusive	(away) from use
ant-, anti-	antinomy, antinomian	against (divine) law
	antipathy	feeling against
	antiphrasis, antiphrastic	against speech

<u>prefix</u>	<u>word(s)</u>	<u>literal etymological meaning</u>
ant-, anti-	antipodes, antipodean	opposite foot
	antistrophon	turning against
	antitrussive	against cough(ing)
	antonym	against a name
contra-	contradictory, etc.	say(ing) against
	contragestion	post-fertilization contraception
	contraponend	placed opposite
	contrapuntal	against melodic notes
	contravene	come against
counter-	counterfeit/feiter/feisance	do(ing) against, imitate
	countermand	order against
de-	debauch, debauchery	away from work
	decapitating	beheading
	decelerate	down swift
	defying, defiant	deny(ing) faith
	defamation	taking away (good) report]
	defect, defection, defective	
	≈ deficient, deficiency	doing down
	deference, deferential	carrying asunder
	deflate, deflated, deflation	remove(ing) breath
	defunct	done with life
	deject, dejected, dejection	throw down
	delirium, delirious	off the furrow
	demoting	moving away (from)
	denounce, denunciation	announce against
	deplete, depletion	unfilling
	depreciate, depreciation	price(ing) down
	deprive, etc	remove privilege
	derangement	disarrange
	desecrate	anti-sacred
	despair ≈ desperate	no hope
	despise, despising	look down on
	despond, despondency	away from promise
	detention	holding from
	deviation, deviate ≈ devious	down from the way
dis-	disastrous	evil star
	disconcerting	apart from concert
	discouraging, -agement	denying the heart
	disdain	not worthy
	dismemberment	members (limbs) depart
	dispute ≈ dissension	think apart
	disrupt, disruption	break(ing) apart
	dissident, dissidence	sit apart

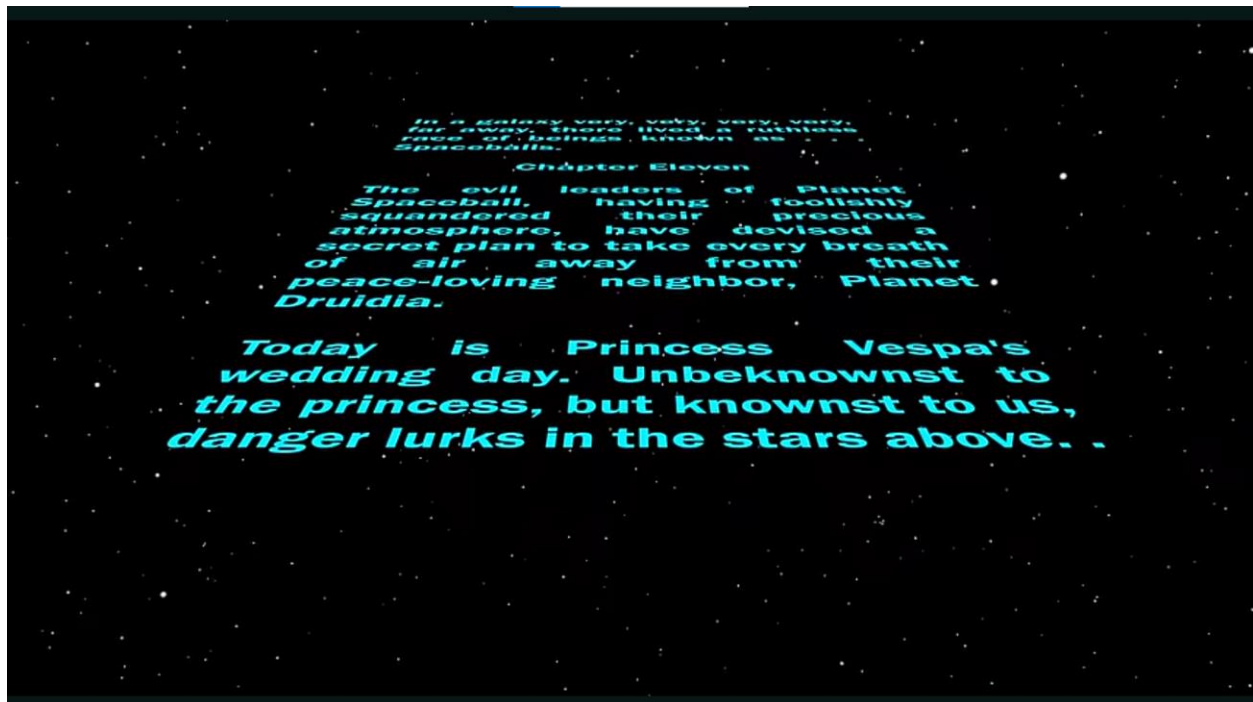


<u>prefix</u>	<u>word(s)</u>	<u>literal etymological meaning</u>
dis-	dissipate	throw apart
	dissuade	advise apart
dys-	distinction, distinguish	separate
	distortion	twist apart
	distraught	drawn apart
	disturb, disturbance	agitate, a crowd apart
	dysarthria	bad joint
	dyscalculia = acalculia	poor calculating ability
	dyschroa	poor complexion
	dyscrasia, dyscrasic	poor fluid mixing
	dysentery	faulty guts
	dysgraphia	can't write
	dyskinesia	poor movement
	dyslexia, dyslexic, dyslectic	poor with words
	dysmelia	poor limbs
	dyspareunia	poor coitus, poor in bed
	dyspathy	dislike
	dyspepsia	ill digestion
	dysphagia, -ic, -y	poor swallowing
	dysphasia	poor vocalising ability
	dysphemism, dysphenistic	reversing a euphemism
	dysphonia	poor sound production
	dysphoria, dysphoric	poor forbearance, impatience
	dysplasia	poor (biological) moulding
	dyspnoea = dyspnea	difficulty breathing
	dyspraxia, dyspraxic	poor doing or practice
	dysprosium (rare earth)	difficult going to
	dysrhythmia	defective rhythm
	dystectic	poor melting or fusing
	dysthesia	poor position(ing)
	dystocia, dystocial	childbirth difficulty
	dystonia	poor (muscle) tension
	dystopia, dystopian	anti-utopia/n
	dystrophia	poor nourishment
	dysuria	difficult urination
ex-	exculpate, exculpation	free of blame
	excuse	free from accusation
	execrate, etc.	not or beyond sacred
	exert, exertion	unbind
	exhibit, exhibition	hold out (disinhibit)
	exhume, etc.	out from earth, unbury
	exonerate, etc.	free of onus
	exorbitant, etc.	deviating from the track

<u>prefix</u>	<u>word(s)</u>	<u>literal etymological meaning</u>
ex-	exorcise, exorcism	move beyond the oath]
	explode, exploding	from clapping the hands together
	extricate	(free) from hindrance
	extrinsic $\approx$ extreme	from outside, beside
	extrude, etc.	thrust out
	exude, exuded, extrusion	sweat out
exo-	exuviae, etc.	draw(n) out
	exogenous, exogenously	not inborn
extra-	exonumia	not numismatic
	extradition	deliver(ed) from
	extraforaneous	outdoors
	extralimital	outside a specified area
	extraneous	outside
	extrapolate, etc.	beyond intermediate terms
	extravagant, etc.	wander beyond
	extravasate	out of vessel
	extroversive	turning outside
	immensity	not measurable
im-	immune, immunity	free of public obligation
	impeachment $\approx$ impede, etc.	hinder, tangle feet in
	importunate, importunately	not favourable
	impromptu	without preparation
	improvise, improvisation	not provided for
in-	impunity	not punishable, without pain
	inanity	emptiness
	inanimateness	not living
	incessant, incessantly	not ceasing
	inchoate, inchoately	just begun, not properly finished
	incognito	not known or recognisable
	incommunicado	no communication
	indefatigable	not tiring
	inept, ineptness, ineptitude	not apt
	inert, inertness	unskilled, no art
	infamy	no fame, i.e., negative fame
	infidel	no faith
	infinitesimal, infinity, -ive	not final, unfinished
	infirmity	not seated on throne
	inimical, etc.	not a friend
	insipid	not tasty
	insomnia	without sleep
	insouciance, insouciant	not worrying
	integrity, etc.	not touched
	intransigent, intransigence	not play(ed) across

<u>prefix</u>	<u>word(s)</u>	<u>literal etymological meaning</u>
in-	intrepidity	not trembling
non-	nonchalant, nonchalance	unconcerned
	noncom, noncoms	not a combatant
	nondescript	not described
	nonjuring	refusing allegiance
	nonpareil	non par, without equal
	nonsuches	nonpareil people or things
re-	recalcitrant, recalcitrance	kick back, not heel
	recantation	singing back
	receive, etc.	take back
	recusal, recuse	cause back, not cause
	redemption	buy back
	referendum	carry back
	refusal ≈ refute, etc.	pour back, drive back
	regress, regression	go back
	regurgitate, regurgitation	gulf back ≈ gulp back
	reject, rejection	throw back
	remittance, remitting	send back
	renounce, renouncing	announce away
	resilient, resilience	leap back
	restoration	give back (something lost)
	result, resultant, resulting	leap back
	revoke, revoking	call back
un-	unawares	without awareness
	unbedinned	not made noisy
	unbeknownst	unknown
	uncouthly, uncouthness	unknown
	uncoined	not coined
	uncreatedness	not having been created
	undeafed, etc.	freed from deafness
	undoubtedly	without doubt
	unexperient	inexperienced
	unfilde	undefiled
	unforeskinned	circumcised
	ungenitured	not produced by ordinary generation (birth)
	ungord	not gored
	unherst	removed from a hearse
	unhouzzled = unhoussled	has not received the sacraments
	unkempt	uncombed
	unlaste	unlaced
	unnaneld	not given extreme unction
	unredrest	can't escape
	unruliness	ruleless

<u>prefix</u>	<u>word(s)</u>	<u>literal etymological meaning</u>
un-	unsatable	not satiable
	unscavengered	not cleared of rubbish
	unskand	not scanned, unconsidered
	unspeakable	not utterable
	unspid (Milton)	unspied, not seen
	unwieldy	not easily moved



*In the introduction to 1987's Spaceballs, "unbeknownst" gets matched to its usually missing opposite.*

## PASCAGOULA

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Every once in a while, I like to take a particular word or name and see what wordplay themes can be applied around it. Here are some examples taken from the long-running but now defunct *Word Ways*: MONTREAL (February 1976), NEUSTRIA (February 1982), YELTSIN (May 1992), BARCELONA (November 1992), CAROLINE (May 2003), EBOLA (August 2015), and KYBO (February 2016). And more recently (November 2024) from this journal: ARCH.

Back in August this year, on Substack (T Campbell's Grid), our editor [penned a piece](#) following the death of his aunt, Mary Bet Evans. The piece included a picture of a mural created by his aunt of her hometown, Pascagoula, Mississippi. I decided to explore PASCAGOULA further, and to see what wordplay can be developed around the name.

This was not my first brush with Pascagoula. I had actually driven through it back in 2001. I was en route from Gulf Shores, Alabama, to New Orleans, Louisiana, and was following the main roads reasonably close to the shoreline (having taken a ferry across Mobile Bay). To be honest, I don't really remember anything about the city of Pascagoula, other than its name. The same applies to other places on that journey—Gautier, Biloxi, and Gulfport. This short article is a chance to make some kind of amends to the city.

The name Pascagoula originates from a Native American tribe, the Pascagoula, and means “bread eaters” in the Choctaw language. This name was given to the people who lived along the river where the city of Pascagoula is now located. Various spellings of the name are recorded in documents from the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries—these include:

<b>Pacha-oglouas</b>	<b>Pascagolas</b>	<b>Pasca-Oocoolos</b>	<b>Paskaguna</b>
<b>Pacha-Ogoulas</b>	<b>Pascagoulas</b>	<b>Pascoboula</b>	<b>Paspagola</b>
<b>Pasagoula</b>	<b>Pasca Ogoulas</b>	<b>Pascogoulas</b>	<b>Paspagolas</b>
<b>Pascaganlas</b>	<b>Pasca Oocolas</b>	<b>Paskagoulas</b>	<b>Pescagolas</b>

But for the remainder of this article, I shall stick with the modern-day spelling, PASCAGOULA. First off, let's note that the name can be viewed as being made up of three words pushed together: PAS, CAGOUL, and A. PAS is a dance step; CAGOUL is a lightweight, waterproof (or windproof) hooded garment; and A is simply one of the two indefinite articles. CAGOUL is interesting: *The Oxford English Dictionary* spells it with a final E, CAGOULE; the *Merriam-Webster Unabridged* website doesn't list the word with any spelling at all; and the only dictionary appearing to list the CAGOUL spelling is *The Chambers Dictionary* (12<sup>th</sup> edition).

Using the letters of PASCAGOULA, what are the longest words that can be spelled out? Here's a dozen, each with seven letters:

<b>acausal</b>	<i>Not causal, independent</i>
<b>acoupas</b>	<i>Various food fishes found off the Atlantic coast of South America</i>
<b>alpacas</b>	<i>South American members of the camel family, resembling small woolly llamas</i>
<b>cagouls</b>	<i>Waterproof hooded garments</i>
<b>capsula</b>	<i>A small envelope of gelatin used to enclose a dose of medicine</i>
<b>coagula</b>	<i>Small masses of coagulated matter</i>
<b>copulas</b>	<i>Linguistic forms that link subjects with their predicates</i>
<b>cupolas</b>	<i>Rounded vaults or domes forming the roofs of buildings</i>
<b>pascual</b>	<i>A plant that grows in pasture or sheep-grazed grassland</i>
<b>scapula</b>	<i>The shoulder blade</i>
<b>scopula</b>	<i>A small brush-like group of hairs on the feet of bees and spiders</i>
<b>Solpuga</b>	<i>A genus of tropical or semi-tropical spiders</i>

Going the other way, are there any words which use all the letters of PASCAGOULA, along with other letters? Yes, indeed! We've unearthed 14 such words, nearly all incredibly obscure, and with lengths varying from 13 to 34 letters:

<b>agranuloplastic</b>	<i>A medical term: not forming granular cells</i>
<b>cephalothoracopagus</b>	<i>Teratological fetuses joined at the head, neck, and thorax</i>
<b>galactophagous</b>	<i>Feeding chiefly on milk</i>
<b>malacophagous</b>	<i>Feeding on mollusks</i>
<b>Malacopygaeus</b>	<i>An extinct genus of prehistoric bony fish</i>
<b>Parauchenoglanis</b>	<i>A genus of catfishes native to Africa</i>
<b>Plagiobatrachus</b>	<i>An extinct genus of primitive amphibians</i>
<b>plantaginaceous</b>	<i>Of the plant family which includes the plantains</i>
<b>polygalacturonase</b>	<i>An enzyme forming part of the structure of plant walls</i>
<b>pseudostalagmitical</b>	<i>Having a deceptive resemblance to a stalagmite</i>
<b>quasi-apologetically</b>	<i>In a seemingly but not actually apologetic manner</i>
<b>quasi-biographical</b>	<i>Seemingly but not actually biographical</i>
<b>quasi-biographically</b>	<i>In a seemingly but not actually biographical manner</i>
<b>supercalifragilisticexpialidocious</b>	<i>Fantastic, fabulous (a word well-known to word-lovers!)</i>

The above words are spelled solidly or with a hyphen. During the search for such words, I found many multi-word names and terms containing the letters of PASCAGOULA, far too many to include here. But here are a couple which I thought were of particular interest:

<b>stamp catalogue</b>	<i>A straightforward term, understandable by anyone outside of the wordplay environment. It is given as a variant of "stamp catalog," which has an entry in Wikipedia</i>
<b>Funk &amp; Wagnalls Corporation (also Funk &amp; Wagnalls Company)</b>	<i>The dictionary and encyclopedia publisher well-known in the world of wordplay</i>



Apart from Pascagoula itself, I discovered a number of other places in the USA which use all the letters of Pascagoula. Some of these no longer exist, some are simply parks or localities in larger towns and cities. Here are the ones I discovered:

<b>Cedar Grove, Shreveport, Louisiana</b>	<i>A neighborhood within the confines of Shreveport</i>
<b>Copenhagen, Louisiana</b>	<i>An unincorporated community in Caldwell Parish, with a population of about 1000</i>
<b>DuSable Park, Chicago</b>	<i>A former commercial and industrial site, currently undergoing redevelopment into a public park</i>
<b>Gaspur, California</b>	<i>A former settlement in Los Angeles County, close to what is now Long Beach and Torrance. Gaspur has faded into the annals of history, and is now a ghost town which only exists in old documents and geological studies</i>
<b>Palmer Square, Chicago</b>	<i>A green space in Chicago's Logan Square Boulevard National Historic District</i>
<b>Pulaski Park, Chicago</b>	<i>A park in Chicago's West Town neighborhood</i>
<b>Spaulding, California</b>	<i>An unincorporated community and census-designated place in Lassen County, with a population of about 400</i>
<b>Sugar Pine, California</b>	<i>An unincorporated community in Madera County, close to Yosemite National Park, with a population of around 6500.</i>
<b>West Pullman, Chicago</b>	<i>A neighborhood located on the far south side of the city, with a population of about 28,000</i>

And not to be left out, here are a couple of places in England which also use the letters of PASCAGOULA:

<b>Taynton Parva, Gloucestershire</b>	<i>A former medieval settlement near the village of Taynton</i>
<b>Drayton Parslow, Buckinghamshire</b>	<i>A village with a population of just over 600</i>

## PILISH ALPHAMETISH

Michael Keith

In the realm of constrained writing, the existence of two constraints—say, for example, (a) the palindrome and (b) univocalic writing—is often quickly followed by the idea to try and write something using *both* constraints simultaneously, which in that case would be a univocalic palindrome. In this article we explore the possibilities of combining these two constraints:

**Pilish:** The number of letters in successive words of the text must follow the digits of the number  $\pi$ , which begins 3.141592653589793238462643383267950288... The most famous Pilish sentence, and one of the earliest, is *How I need a drink, alcoholic in nature, after the heavy lectures on quantum mechanics* (author unknown, probably from the 40s or 50s), and this constraint is still popular today.

**Alphametish:** Divide the text into chunks of words in some natural way—for example, sentences in prose or lines of poetry. Each chunk of words must form a pure addition alphametic, with the last word in the chunk being the sum and the other words being the addends. An alphametic is a “word equation” like  $SEND + MORE = MONEY$ , in which each different letter of the alphabet can be replaced with a specific decimal digit to yield a valid numerical equation (in this case is  $9567 + 1085 = 10652$ ). The qualifier “pure” means that there is only one way to assign letters to digits that works, as opposed to an *impure* alphametic that has multiple solutions. The first long(ish) composition in Alphametish was composed in 1998, a 20-line poem called *The James B. Cabell Estate* (see [1]). An Alphametish text hides an extra bit of fun: after reading it, the reader can try to solve the alphametic contained in each line. Also note that an alphametish chunk must use no more than 10 different letters of the alphabet, though each chunk can use a different set of letters.

Can these two somewhat esoteric constraints be combined to yield anything interesting, or is this challenge just too hard?

### Step 1: 314

The alphametish constraint imposes another subsidiary restriction: the lengths of the words in each chunk, which are determined by the digits of  $\pi$ , must be such that the addends can produce a sum having the required length (which is the length of the last word). Note that, by definition, each chunk in an alphametish text must have at least three words, since the shortest possible addition equation is  $X + Y = Z$ , where  $X$ ,  $Y$ , and  $Z$  are words. As luck would have it, using the minimum-sized chunk from the beginning of  $\pi$  (314) actually works, since a 3-digit number and a 1-digit number can (for certain values of those numbers) produce a 4-digit sum.

At this point it’s useful to introduce the concept of the *normal form* of an alphametic. One goal of a pleasing alphametic is for it to use real words, and if at all possible correct English syntax (as “SEND MORE MONEY” does), but when analyzing an alphametic we can drop that proviso and represent an alphametic using a standardized scheme that just uses the first  $k$  letters of the alphabet, where  $k$  is the number of distinct letters in the alphametic. Starting with either the

word-based (SEND + MORE = MONEY) or digit-based ( $9567 + 1085 = 10652$ ) version, we write “A” as the first letter in the normal-form representation, then continue to scan from left to right through the equation. If a letter (or digit) we encounter has already been seen then we write the appropriate letter in the normal form, but if it’s a letter we haven’t seen before we assign it to the next unused letter of the alphabet (B, then C, then D, etc.). The end result is three equivalent representations of the same alphametic:

Numbers:      $9567 + 1085 = 10642$   
 Words:        SEND + MORE = MONEY  
 Normal form: ABCD + EFGB = EFCBH

Normal form is useful for the 314 case since, as we’ll see, it’s difficult to make real words or real sentences from the available alphametics (though we’ll be successful with two of them). There are, in fact, only six pure 314 alphametics, shown below in normal form. (There are six more impure ones.)

- #1 AAA B BCCC
- #2 AAB A BCCC
- #3 AAA B CDDC
- #4 AAB A CDDC
- #5 AAB B CDDD
- #6 AAA A BCCD

#3 and #4 can just barely be coerced into (perhaps slightly strained) English:



...with the second one (#4) being clearly better, as all three of its words are in most dictionaries. Can the reader come up with a representation in words for #1, #2, #5, or #6?

All six of these alphametics are easy to solve (hint: what do the first and second digits of the sum have to be?), but readers are encouraged to solve them as a warm-up for the more difficult ones coming up soon. The solutions to all alphametics in this article are given in this issue’s *Answers* section.

## Step 2: 31415

Again, it's just luck, but the first five digits of  $\pi$  also work nicely. Much more nicely, in fact, because instead of the 6 pure alphametics for "314" there are 1,540,509 of them for "31415". The letter lengths are not that great, as you can see by ignoring the alphametic constraint and just trying to write a sentence whose letters have 3, 1, 4, 1, and 5 letters in that order. Still, it's quite possible, despite the somewhat awkward one-letter words. For the two one-letter words the ordered pair {I, a} seems to be the most natural, {a, I} is second best, and the pairs {a, a} and {I, I} are occasionally useful.

Here are a few of our favorites, illustrated. These sentences were mostly hand-crafted, but a computer program was used to verify that each alphametic is pure (has a unique solution).



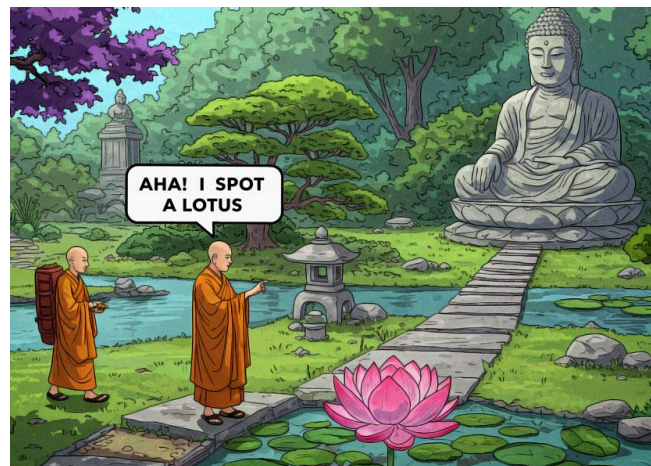
#7 CAN + I + PLAY + A = SNAIL



#8 YES + I + HAVE + A = SKINK



#9 NOT + A + MOAT + I = CRIED



#10 AHA + I + SPOT + A = LOTUS

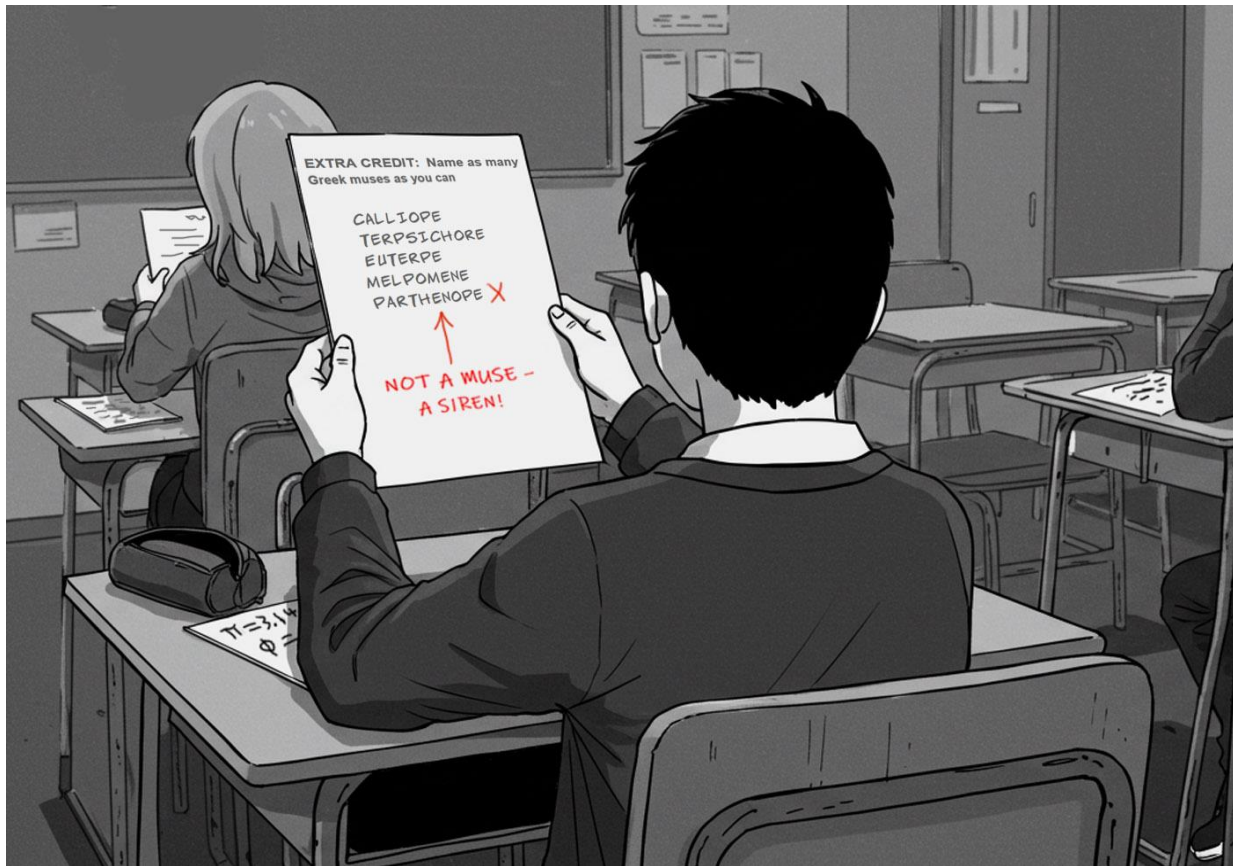




#11 CAN + I + FILM + A = MOLLY



#12 MAY + I + CALL + A = BOGEY



#13 NOT + A + MUSE + A = SIREN





#14 YOU + N + WINE + N = POESY



#15 AAH + I + LOVE + A = WHELK



#16 HAS + A + FROG + A = SWIRL



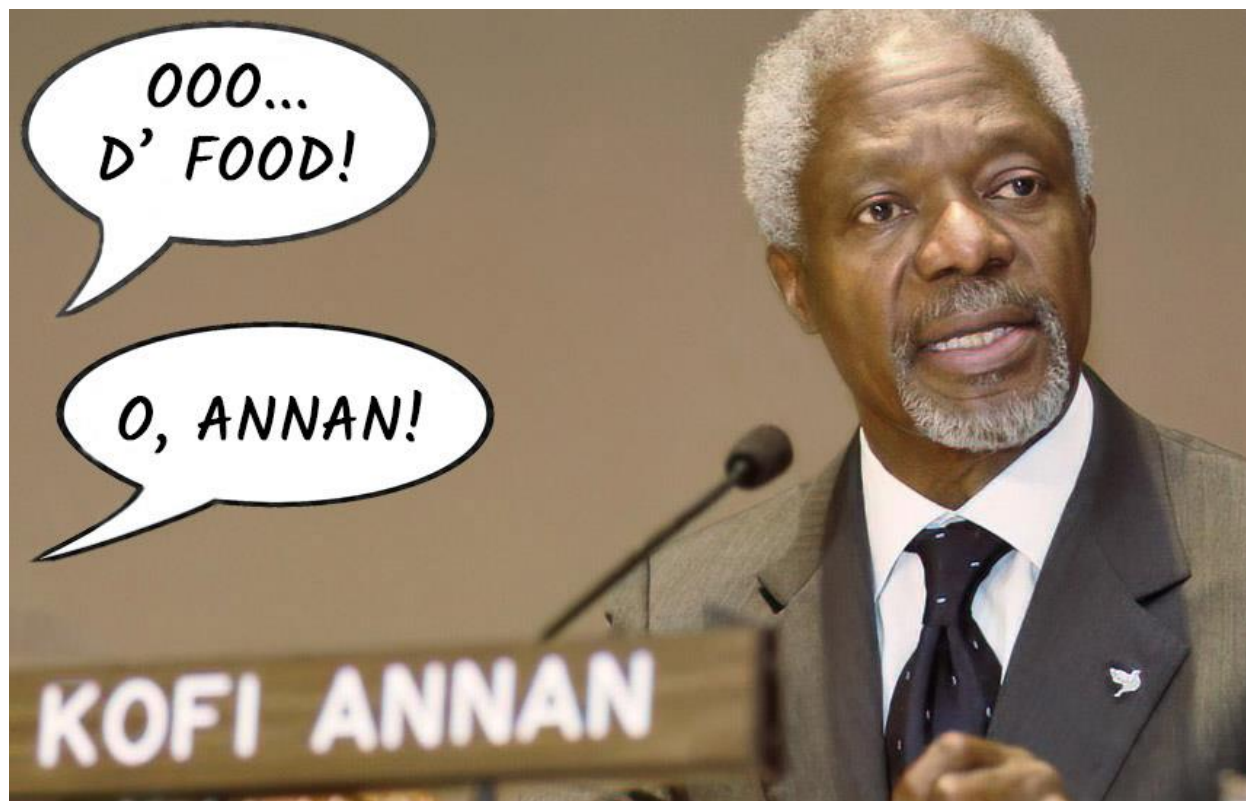
#17 HAH + I + PEED + A = CLOUD

Two of these have the additional constraint of alluding to an existing text. #14 is a homage to quatrain XII in the 1879 (fourth translation) version of Edward Fitzgerald's *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, which begins

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,  
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou

(The accompanying illustration is by Sarkis Katchadourian, from the Grossett 1946 edition of *The Rubaiyat*.) #16 is a pun on the title of a paper presented at The Metaphysical Society in London by Thomas Huxley on 8 November 1870, entitled *Has A Frog A Soul?*

Here's a strange one whose normal form is  $AAA + B + CAAB + A + DEEDE$ , which is (like the 314s) difficult to render in words, but with a little help from an illustration we can interpret it as comments heard when the snacks arrived at a United Nations meeting some time around the year 2000. Also, this puzzle contains a metapuzzle: what's especially noteworthy about it? Hint: solving the alphametic first helps with the metapuzzle.



#18  $000 + D + FOOD + O = ANNAN$

It's perhaps interesting to note that four of these 31415's (numbers 7, 10, 16, and 18) satisfy a third constraint: they are E lipograms.

To close this section, here's a single comic-book panel containing *three* Pilish Alphameticish utterances:



#19: MAN + I + NEED + A = DRINK  
#20: KID + I + WISH + I = COULD  
#21: BUT + I + HAVE + A = GUEST

### Step 3: Beyond 31415

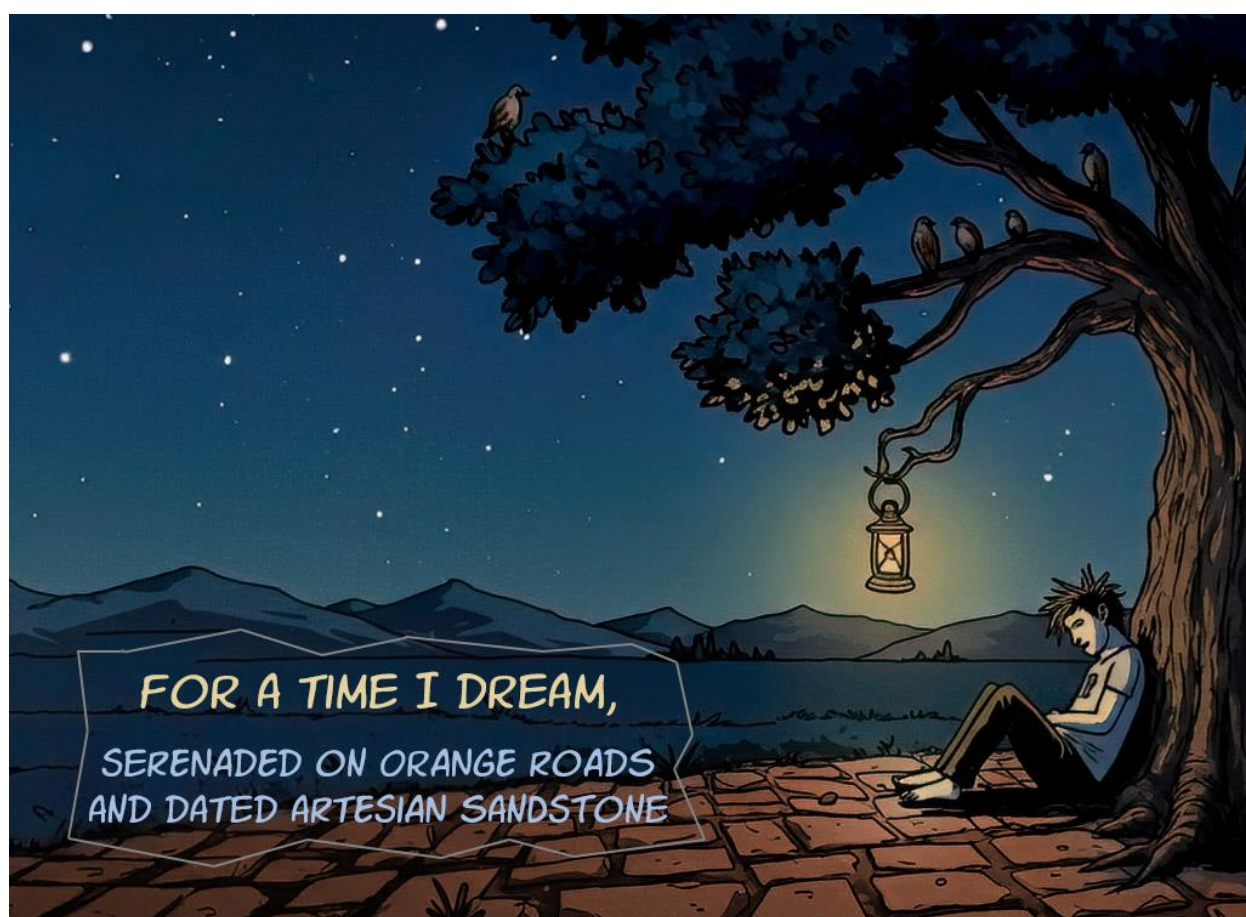
Is it feasible to go further, by starting with the 31415 chunk and adding another one? The next digit of  $\pi$  is a 9, so the shortest possible second chunk is 92653589 and the shortest possible chunk after that is 793238462643383279. A slight variation would make the second one be



9265358979, in which case the third chunk is 3238462643383279. If we always take the shortest chunk, we end up with this sequence:

31415, 92653589, 793238462643383279, 50288419716939937510, 582097494459230, 781640628620, 899, 8628, 0348253421170, . . .

Note that in Pilish the digit 0 in  $\pi$  corresponds to a 10-letter word, which is why the fourth, fifth, sixth, and ninth chunks have to end with 0 (due to the presence of an earlier 0 in the chunk). This sequence of chunks looks rather daunting after the second one, given the desire to create meaningful sentences, though it's theoretically possible that some of those long chunks could be successfully constructed. We were able to craft the 13-word Pilish Alphametish sentence shown below using only the first two chunks (31415 followed by 92653589). Creating an even longer text that goes beyond these first 13 words is left as an open challenge.



#22: FOR + A + TIME + I = DREAM

#23: SERENADED + ON + ORANGE + ROADS + AND + DATED + ARTESIAN = SANDSTONE

## References

1. M. Keith, *Alphametish Cabell*, Word Ways, Vol. 31, Issue 3 (1998), p. 191. ■

## TWO WERE-SONNETS

Daniel Galef

### Casey to His Bat: The World's First Were-Sonnet (Or Were-Ballad?)

#### *As a sonnet:*

You're swell! No wizard's-wand or Rod of Aaron  
With this ease can whack one past the glove  
The way a sparrow weaves through trees. No baron  
Wields your power—you're the scepter of  
A king, and blood descendant of the club  
That Hercules did swing. That bat was blessed!  
It knocked the blocks off lions. (Not a cub—  
A full-grown beast.) Herc wore its skin, the rest  
Cooked up for grub. My point: We'll stand immobile.  
It's beneath us—just a dud. To swing  
At these poor lulus would insult your noble  
Blood. One pitch will come—the air will sing—  
We'll know that *this is it*. We'll swing. We'll hit!  
The crowd will cheer! We'll run! We'll win!—Oh, *shit*.

~~~~~

#### *As a ballad in the meter of Thayer's "Casey at the Bat":*

You're swell! No wizard's-wand or Rod of Aaron with this ease  
Can whack one past the glove the way a sparrow weaves through trees.  
No baron wields your power—you're the scepter of a king,  
And blood descendant of the club that Hercules did swing.  
That bat was blessed! It knocked the blocks off lions. (Not a cub—  
A full-grown beast.) Herc wore its skin, the rest cooked up for grub.  
My point: We'll stand immobile. It's beneath us—just a dud.  
To swing at these poor lulus would insult your noble blood.  
One pitch will come—the air will sing—we'll know that *this is it*.  
We'll swing. We'll hit! The crowd will cheer! We'll run! We'll win!—Oh, *shit*.

**A Poke of Gold to the Lady that's Known as Lou (The World's Second Were-Sonnet)**

*As a sonnet:*

I saw the sigh in your pretty eye when you dreamed  
That I'd be yours, but those who steal me fast  
Reveal in my shine is the start of wars. First I passed  
Through the purse of a miner who nursed a chill. He seemed  
To be just a helping of hurt in a flannelette shirt  
From Plumtree, Tennessee. It's the goal of gold  
To be bought and sold and melted and poured in a mold.  
From the day they scratched me out of that patch of dirt,  
I've been near as cold. Now again I change hands, and again  
The sands run out, and men lie dead. Good chances,  
I'd rate, that the heftier weight is a couple of rounds  
Of lead. I've been sought by those men—half a dozen or ten—  
Who flash gold in pokes and pounds, who begged you for dances  
And killed for your glances—It's not as nice as it sounds.

*As a ballad, in the meter of Robert Service's "The Shooting of Dan McGrew" and "The Cremation of Sam McGee":*

I saw the sigh in your pretty eye  
    When you dreamed that I'd be yours,  
But those who steal me fast reveal  
    In my shine is the start of wars.

First I passed through the purse of a miner who nursed  
    A chill. He seemed to be  
Just a helping of hurt in a flannelette shirt  
    From Plumtree, Tennessee.

It's the goal of gold to be bought and sold  
    And melted and poured in a mold.  
From the day they scratched me out of that patch  
    Of dirt, I've been near as cold.

Now again I change hands, and again the sands  
    Run out, and men lie dead.  
Good chances, I'd rate, that the heftier weight  
    Is a couple of rounds of lead.

I've been sought by those men—half a dozen or ten—  
    Who flash gold in pokes and pounds,  
Who begged you for dances and killed for your glances—  
    It's not as nice as it sounds.



In 2017 I wrote these two poems as part of a series of “Imaginary Sonnets” (a poem series which eventually became my first book). I would love to claim that these poems are the first of their kind, and, in some ways, they are, but this is a scholarly outlet, and so I am obliged to give proper acknowledgment to all the giants on whose shoulders I tread, even unconsciously.

The concept is something I had first encountered in the writing of Willard Espy, on a much smaller scale: In his 1975 compendium *An Almanac of Words at Play* (which I trust is well-known to all readers of this journal) Espy republished a short light verse by Mary Youngquist, originally printed in *Word Ways* in 1971, that is readable either as eight lines of six syllables or as six lines of eight syllables. David Silverman, in the “Kickshaws” section from that issue, identifies as precedent two poems by J. A. Lindon and Walter Shedlofsky published a couple of years earlier.

If Lindon’s is made a bit easier by only bothering to have one of the two versions of the poem adhere to a meter, Shedlofsky’s is even more impressive by having not two but three versions, one in hexameter, one in pentameter, and one in tetrameter! Lindon’s 1969 poem is referred to at its initial publication as “a novel prosodic concept.”

But, of course, there is nothing new under the sun (I just came up with that metaphor). The poet Robin Helweg-Larsen informed me about the French surrealist Louis Aragon who toyed with similar four-six/six-four patterns in the 1940s, as well as that Tad Richards, inspired by this, later wrote a poem of the same type and dubbed the form an “aragon.”

I do not believe, however, that such a composition has ever been maintained over more than a few lines or with more than three end rhymes until now, and never an entire sonnet. Lindon called his poem “Convertible.” Richards called his an “Aragon.” Robin called mine “Transforming Sonnets” or “Biform Poems.” Jim Puder called them “Equivocal Poems,” and categorized the concept as a variation of the nineteenth-century practice of “Equivoque,” in the same tradition as prose passages that can change meaning depending on how they are punctuated. The nomenclature doesn’t really matter, though. Today I am calling these were-sonnets, which seems appropriate to the recent Halloween season.

In all, I have written three of these were-sonnets. “Casey” was written first but published second, in the formal verse journal *Able Muse* in 2020, “Poke” in *Snakeskin Poetry* in 2019, and a third, a parody of Macaulay’s “Horatius at the Bridge,” is forthcoming in a British newspaper. In each case, I tried to make the gimmick more than merely a gimmick by attaching significance to both the form of the poem and the theme of transformation within the poem itself. Like all of the Imaginary Sonnets, each is based on a prior person or poem.

Ernest Thayer’s “Casey at the Bat” was possibly the last American poem to have massive popular appeal to the extent that it was commonly memorized for fun, performed on the vaudeville stage, and adapted into multiple films and even Disney cartoons. I memorized it in college as a party trick, and I’m eager to try the trick out if I ever get invited to any parties. Thayer’s poem was satirically subtitled “A Ballad of the Republic, Sung in the Year 1888,” a composition date which also coincides with the publication of Eugene Lee-Hamilton’s collection *Imaginary Sonnets* that inspired the poem series in the first place. Thayer’s verse is composed in

a form of ballad meter, rhymed couplets of seven iambs/fourteen syllables, and in its ballad form “Casey to His Bat” adheres to the same.

“Poke” takes its model from Robert Service poems like “The Shooting of Dan McGrew” and “The Cremation of Sam McGee,” which also employ a form of ballad meter, though a different kind: they use a three-syllable foot rather than iambs, with a lot more metrical variation. (This has the unfortunate effect of making the sonnet feel less sonnet-like.) The rhyme scheme is also different. “The Shooting of Dan McGrew” rhymes only at the end of lines, like “Casey,” but “The Cremation of Sam McGee” adds to this scheme a more rich and lyric system of internal rhymes every two feet, so that the stanzas take the form AABCCBDDEFFE.

Naturally I chose the more involved of the two rhyme schemes to work with and layer on top of/integrate with the Petrarchan sonnet scheme. This construction is not possible with any two poetic forms, and relies on an arithmetical coincidence in the specific received forms employed by the sources: five stanzas of ballad meter (or ten lines in Thayer’s and Service’s couplet format) works out to precisely seventy metrical feet, since each line contains seven feet, sometimes broken down asymmetrically as one half-line of tetrameter followed by one half-line of trimeter. Likewise, a sonnet, either Shakespearean or Petrarchan, also consists of exactly seventy metrical feet, since it comprises fourteen lines and each line comprises five metrical feet. A standard sonnet cannot be used to convert a poem purely in tetrameter or alexandrines, like Youngquist’s or Aragon’s, since 70 is not evenly divisible by the numbers 4 or 6 and would leave unaccounted-for extra syllables that don’t fit.

If anyone else would like to try this poetic challenge, I would highly recommend it! The methodology I used, which probably is not the most efficient, was to draw out two diagrams of seventy boxes each, representing the seventy feet in the poem, and connect the boxes to indicate each rhyme scheme, then combine both schemes in a third diagram with letters or numbers identifying each set of rhymes. It’s a lot of fun!

If you do, please send me the results. And, after that, you can spread the curse yet further. I do not want to be the only were-sonneteer out there.

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**Editor’s note:** Other were-sonneteers are also invited to submit to the Journal: see *Submission Guidelines* on page 98! ■

## OPEN BRITISH CROSSWORD GRIDS

Michael Keith and Christopher Kocher

American-style and British-style crossword grids look quite different, primarily because in an American grid every square in each word is checked (which means it is also part of a word in the other direction), whereas in a British grid, only about half of the letters in each word are checked. In both cases, however, we can imagine a maximally “open” crossword having as few black squares as possible, as shown below for a 7x7 American grid and a 13x13 British grid.

|    |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 9  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 10 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 11 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 12 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 13 |   |   |   |   |   |   |

|    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1  |   | 2 |   | 3 |   | 4 |   | 5 |   | 6 |   | 7 |
|    | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   |
| 8  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|    | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   |
| 9  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|    | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   |
| 10 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|    | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   |
| 11 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|    | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   |
| 12 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|    | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   | ■ |   |
| 13 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

Creating an open American grid filled with different valid words both horizontally and vertically is simply the well-known problem of constructing a double word square. As far as we know, the corresponding problem of filling a completely open British grid with real English words (or phrases) has not been studied extensively, if at all. In this article we present some results on this problem, focusing on grid sizes of 11x11, 13x13, and the most common grid size, 15x15.

### Filling Open British Grids

Open American grids are equivalent to double word squares, and so are open British grids once we make a certain observation. In the British 13x13 grid above, for example, each 13-letter answer has 7 checked letters (the letters at odd-numbered positions in the word) and 6 unchecked letters (the letters at even-numbered positions). The six unchecked letters can be anything (since they’re unchecked) so they can, in a sense, be ignored when trying to fill the grid.

This means that the problem reduces to filling a 7x7 square (i.e., the diagram on the left above) with 14 7-letter words to make a double word square, where all the “words” in the square are taken from a list of 7-letter “words” *whose letters are the letters in odd-numbered positions of the 13-letter words in some dictionary*. Note that some of these 7-letter pseudo-words may result from the reduction of more than one 13-letter word, so in a particular 7x7 solution some of the rows and columns might correspond to several valid 13-letter answers. When we expand a 7x7 solution to its 13-letter answers we can freely choose between these alternatives.

As usual, we have to decide what words to consider valid. There's a tradeoff: using a larger word list increases the odds of finding solutions, but it also increases, in a faster-than-linear way, the runtime of a computer-based search. For this study we basically made the word list as large as we could without making the search time completely unfeasible. To make our word list we combined all the NWL words (the NASPA Word List used in North American Scrabble tournaments) with a crossword-oriented list of words and phrases compiled by Peter Broda, available at [peterbroda.me/crosswords/wordlist/](http://peterbroda.me/crosswords/wordlist/).

After combining the NWL words and Peter Broda's list and removing duplicates, we found 38,379 13-letter words and 30,368 15-letter words. For 11x11, we used a different word list with no phrases and mostly common words. It only has 8,698 words, but this was sufficient to find quite a few 11x11 solutions.

The small size of the 11x11 grid combined with the small word list results in a quick search (just a few minutes) for 11x11 solutions. Not so for the larger sizes! Using a highly optimized C program that implements an efficient exhaustive search algorithm, the 13x13 run took a total of 180,469 core-minutes. A core-minute is one minute on one core of a CPU, a useful metric to use for modern multi-core CPUs. Since this search is easily parallelizable, we can run it on  $n$  cores simultaneously to reduce the actual elapsed time by a factor of  $n$ . On average we used about 8 cores, so the 13x13 search took 180,469 core-minutes  $\approx$  125 core-days, which divided by 8 is roughly 16 days. The 15x15 search took about 20 days, though this involved two separate searches, as we'll describe later.

## Results

Below are six of our favorite fills for 11x11. Unlike the 13x13 and 15x15 solutions to come later, all answers in these squares are single words, none of them particularly obscure. We especially like #6 with its amusing combination of TREPIDATION and TREPANATION.

| #1                    | #2                    | #3                    |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| A N G L I C A N I S M | I M M E N S E N E S S | P E R P E T R A T E D |
| R E N T N U           | N A U X X T           | R E L E R I           |
| C O N S T I T U T O R | C O N S T I T U T O R | E X P R E S S W A Y S |
| H E E R E D           | O T R R R A           | D R C T G G           |
| I N T E R M I N G L E | M U L T I V A L E N T | E L E C T I O N E E R |
| P I S B R R           | P E M D M E           | S S R R D U           |
| E N C A P S U L A T E | E U P H E M I Z I N G | T R E P I D A T I O N |
| L I E T T S           | T I N T T I           | I N C T E T           |
| A B S U R D I T I E S | E L E C T R I F I E S | N U T R I T I O N A L |
| G T S V V E           | N C A N E T           | E O A V N E           |
| O B S C E N E S S     | T H E O L O G I S T S | S T R A N G E N E S S |

#4

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | I | D | E | S | T | E | P | P | E | D |
| T |   | E |   | E |   | X |   | R |   | I |
| A | S | S | U | M | P | T | I | O | N | S |
| T |   | I |   | A |   | R |   | H |   | I |
| I | N | C | A | N | T | A | T | I | O | N |
| S |   | C |   | T |   | P |   | B |   | T |
| T | H | A | L | I | D | O | M | I | D | E |
| I |   | T |   | C |   | L |   | T |   | R |
| C | R | I | M | I | N | A | T | I | V | E |
| A |   | N |   | S |   | T |   | N |   | S |
| L | I | G | H | T | W | E | I | G | H | T |

#5

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

#6

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| U | N | S | A | T | I | S | F | I | E | D |
| N |   | W |   | R |   | P |   | N |   | I |
| P | R | E | F | E | R | E | N | C | E | S |
| R |   | E |   | P |   | C |   | R |   | C |
| A | T | T | R | I | B | U | T | I | V | E |
| C |   | H |   | D |   | L |   | M |   | R |
| T | R | E | P | A | N | A | T | I | O | N |
| I |   | A |   | T |   | T |   | N |   | M |
| C | E | R | T | I | F | I | C | A | T | E |
| E |   | T |   | O |   | V |   | T |   | N |
| D | I | S | I | N | T | E | R | E | S | T |

And here are eight of our favorites for 13x13, chosen from a total of 691 examples.

#1

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | R | C | T | I | C | A | I | R | M | A | S | S |
| C |   | A |   | N |   | C |   | U |   | M |   | A |
| C | O | N | S | T | R | A | I | N | M | E | N | T |
| O |   | A |   | E |   | D |   | N |   | R |   | I |
| U | N | D | E | R | R | E | V | I | S | I | O | N |
| N |   | I |   | M |   | M |   | N |   | C |   | B |
| T | R | A | V | E | L | I | N | G | W | A | V | E |
| L |   | N |   | D |   | C |   | B |   | N |   | D |
| E | N | G | L | I | S | H | M | A | J | O | R | S |
| D |   | O |   | A |   | O |   | T |   | L |   | H |
| G | O | O | U | T | O | N | S | T | R | I | K | E |
| E |   | S |   | E |   | O |   | L |   | V |   | E |
| R | E | E | N | D | O | R | S | E | M | E | N | T |

#2

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

#3

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | U | T | O | F | A | C | T | O | R | I | E | S |
| C |   | H |   | E |   | O |   | P |   | T |   | T |
| C | L | E | A | R | A | N | C | E | S | A | L | E |
| E |   | D |   | T |   | C |   | R |   | L |   | A |
| N | E | O | L | I | B | E | R | A | L | I | S | M |
| T |   | D |   | L |   | N |   | T |   | C |   | E |
| U | N | E | L | E | C | T | R | I | F | I | E | D |
| A |   | C |   | P |   | R |   | N |   | Z |   | C |
| T | R | A | D | E | L | A | N | G | U | A | G | E |
| I |   | N |   | R |   | T |   | R |   | T |   | L |
| O | N | E | L | I | F | E | T | O | L | I | V | E |
| N |   | S |   | O |   | O |   | O |   | O |   | R |
| S | P | E | N | D | I | N | G | M | O | N | E | Y |

#4

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | O | N | G | L | O | M | E | R | A | T | E | D |
| H |   | A |   | E |   | A |   | A |   | R |   | A |
| E | X | T | R | A | O | R | D | I | N | A | R | Y |
| R |   | A |   | D |   | J |   | S |   | D |   | O |
| R | E | S | I | G | N | O | N | E | S | E | L | F |
| Y |   | H |   | U |   | E |   | C |   | U |   | T |
| P | L | A | Y | I | N | G | A | H | U | N | C | H |
| U |   | F |   | T |   | O |   | I |   | I |   | E |
| D | O | A | B | A | R | R | E | L | R | O | L | L |
| D |   | T |   | R |   | T |   | D |   | N |   | O |
| I | T | A | L | I | A | N | A | R | T | I | S | T |
| N |   | L |   | S |   | E |   | E |   | S |   | U |
| G | R | E | A | T | G | R | A | N | D | M | A | S |

#5

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| M | I | S | S | T | H | E | T | A | R | G | E | T |
| O |   | P |   | A |   | X |   | B |   | L |   | H |
| N | E | A | R | L | Y | T | H | E | S | A | M | E |
| K |   | C |   | K |   | E |   | L |   | M |   | B |
| E | L | E | C | T | O | R | A | L | R | O | L | L |
| Y |   | M |   | O |   | N |   | F |   | R |   | U |
| S | W | E | E | T | C | A | R | O | L | I | N | E |
| A |   | D |   | H |   | L |   | R |   | Z |   | A |
| R | A | I | S | E | D | I | N | A | B | A | R | N |
| O |   | C |   | H |   | T |   | D |   | T |   | G |
| U | N | I | M | A | G | I | N | A | T | I | V | E |
| N |   | N |   | N |   | E |   | N |   | O |   | L |
| D | E | E | P | D | I | S | C | O | U | N | T | S |

#6

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| R | A | I | S | E | O | N | E | S | H | A | N | D |
| E |   | N |   | R |   | A |   | P |   | M |   | I |
| A | N | T | H | O | L | O | G | I | Z | E | R | S |
| P |   | E |   | T |   | M |   | R |   | R |   | I |
| P | A | R | T | I | C | I | P | A | T | I | O | N |
| E |   | A |   | C |   | C |   | L |   | C |   | F |
| A | R | C | H | I | V | A | L | I | M | A | G | E |
| R |   | T |   | Z |   | M |   | N |   | N |   | C |
| A | N | I | M | A | L | P | I | G | M | E | N | T |
| N |   | O |   | T |   | B |   | D |   | A |   | A |
| C | A | N | D | I | C | E | B | E | R | G | E | N |
| E |   | A |   | O |   | L |   | B |   | L |   | T |
| S | I | L | E | N | T | L | E | T | T | E | R | S |

#7

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| R | I | C | H | A | R | D | W | A | G | N | E | R |
| E |   | R |   | D |   | A |   | C |   | O |   | O |
| B | L | I | N | D | I | N | S | T | I | N | C | T |
| R |   | M |   | R |   | N |   | N |   | I |   | A |
| O | N | E | V | E | R | Y | C | O | R | N | E | R |
| A |   | F |   | S |   | T |   | N |   | T |   | Y |
| D | R | A | W | S | T | O | A | C | L | O | S | E |
| C |   | M |   | M |   | R |   | H |   | X |   | N |
| A | N | I | M | A | L | R | E | A | R | I | N | G |
| S |   | L |   | R |   | A |   | L |   | C |   | I |
| T | H | I | N | K | I | N | G | A | G | A | I | N |
| E |   | E |   | E |   | C |   | N |   | N |   | E |
| D | I | S | O | R | I | E | N | T | A | T | E | S |

#8

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

Of these eight, the one with the most single words is #6, with six.

We ran the same search program for 15x15 with the same word list and unfortunately did not find any solutions. This was somewhat faster (only 2 days instead of 16) and we suspected we might be “close” to a solution, so we wondered if we could find a solution that’s *almost* a fully open grid. The fewest number of extra black squares we could add would be one, and it would have to be located in the center of the grid, because otherwise the requirement for the grid to be rotationally symmetric would mean the rotated position of that one black square would also have to be black, for a total of two black squares. Unfortunately, the center square of a 15x15 grid is already black. Thus, the minimum number of extra blacks we can add is two: one placed at any location plus its rotationally positioned mate.

We guessed that putting the two extra blacks in the middle of the leftmost and rightmost columns might work the best, as it splits those columns into the smallest possible words (two 7’s). It’s



fairly nice aesthetically, too. So we set our program running for this case, and 18 days later had a total of 116 filled grids. Below are six of our favorites.

#1

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| E | X | P | I | R | A | T | I | O | N | D | A | T | E | S |
| R |   | E |   | E |   | H |   | U |   | O |   | W |   | A |
| U | N | R | E | A | L | I | S | T | I | C | G | O | A | L |
| P |   | P |   | D |   | C |   | O |   | T |   | T |   | V |
| T | H | E | B | O | O | K | O | F | J | O | S | H | U | A |
| E |   | T |   | N |   | E |   | I |   | R |   | O |   | G |
| D | O | U | B | L | I | N | G | T | H | E | C | U | B | E |
|   |   | A |   | Y |   | I |   | S |   | D |   | S |   |   |
| F | A | L | L | S | O | N | D | E | A | F | E | A | R | S |
| O |   | M |   | T |   | G |   | L |   | O |   | N |   | H |
| C | H | O | C | O | L | A | T | E | F | O | N | D | U | E |
| U |   | T |   | R |   | G |   | M |   | T |   | F |   | A |
| S | K | I | P | A | G | E | N | E | R | A | T | I | O | N |
| E |   | O |   | G |   | N |   | N |   | G |   | V |   | U |
| D | A | N | C | E | D | T | O | T | H | E | B | E | A | T |

#2

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| G | O | D | D | E | S | S | O | F | W | I | S | D | O | M |
| E |   | O |   | C |   | P |   | R |   | N |   | E |   | I |
| N | O | N | D | O | M | I | N | A | N | T | H | A | N | D |
| E |   | T |   | L |   | C |   | M |   | E |   | D |   | G |
| M | E | T | E | O | R | I | T | E | C | R | A | T | E | R |
| A |   | H |   | G |   | N |   | D |   | S |   | R |   | I |
| P | L | A | C | I | N | G | E | N | D | T | O | E | N | D |
|   |   | T |   | C |   | T |   | A |   | R |   | E |   |   |
| S | A | B | B | A | T | H | B | R | E | A | K | E | R | S |
| E |   | E |   | L |   | I |   | R |   | T |   | D |   | A |
| L | E | A | R | N | I | N | G | A | B | I | L | I | T | Y |
| F |   | T |   | I |   | G |   | T |   | F |   | T |   | S |
| I | N | A | C | C | E | S | S | I | B | I | L | I | T | Y |
| E |   | L |   | H |   | U |   | V |   | E |   | O |   | E |
| S | I | L | V | E | R | P | H | E | A | S | A | N | T | S |

#3

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| J | A | M | E | S | B | O | N | D | M | O | V | I | E | S |
| A |   | A |   | Z |   | N |   | O |   | R |   | N |   | K |
| M | A | R | I | E | J | E | A | N | N | E | B | E | C | U |
| J |   | I |   | C |   | H |   | T |   | G |   | V |   | L |
| A | F | E | W | H | O | U | R | S | T | O | K | I | L | L |
| R |   | A |   | U |   | N |   | T |   | N |   | T |   | E |
| S | O | N | G | A | N | D | D | A | N | C | E | A | C | T |
|   |   | T |   | N |   | R |   | R |   | R |   | B |   |   |
| R | E | O | R | C | H | E | S | T | R | A | T | I | O | N |
| O |   | I |   | U |   | D |   | W |   | B |   | L |   | O |
| C | O | N | S | I | D | E | R | I | T | A | G | I | F | T |
| K |   | E |   | S |   | I |   | T |   | P |   | T |   | A |
| G | E | T | T | I | N | G | T | H | E | P | O | I | N | T |
| O |   | T |   | N |   | H |   | M |   | L |   | E |   | E |
| D | E | E | P | E | S | T | R | E | C | E | S | S | E | S |

#4

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | C | O | T | C | H | T | A | P | E | R | O | L | L | S |
| H |   | N |   | O |   | H |   | R |   | O |   | E |   | C |
| A | L | A | I | N | R | E | N | E | L | E | S | A | G | E |
| N |   | M |   | V |   | A |   | P |   | N |   | D |   | N |
| A | L | I | M | E | N | T | A | R | Y | T | R | A | C | T |
| N |   | C |   | Y |   | R |   | E |   | G |   | D |   | E |
| A | N | A | B | O | L | I | C | S | T | E | R | O | I | D |
|   |   | B |   | R |   | C |   | I |   | N |   | U |   |   |
| C | A | L | V | I | N | A | N | D | H | O | B | B | E | S |
| A |   | E |   | Z |   | L |   | E |   | L |   | L |   | T |
| S | I | T | U | A | T | I | O | N | C | O | M | E | D | Y |
| H |   | E |   | T |   | T |   | T |   | G |   | L |   | P |
| C | O | R | R | I | G | I | B | I | L | I | T | I | E | S |
| A |   | M |   | O |   | E |   | A |   | S |   | F |   | I |
| B | U | S | I | N | E | S | S | L | E | T | T | E | R | S |

#5

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | O | F | A | A | N | D | L | O | V | E | S | E | A | T |
| A |   | I |   | Q |   | R |   | P |   | X |   | X |   | E |
| C | O | R | R | U | G | A | T | E | D | P | A | P | E | R |
| K |   | S |   | E |   | W |   | R |   | L |   | L |   | R |
| S | A | T | O | S | H | I | N | A | K | A | M | O | T | O |
| O |   | D |   | T |   | N |   | B |   | I |   | S |   | R |
| F | E | E | D | I | N | G | F | R | E | N | Z | I | E | S |
|   |   | R |   | O |   | T |   | O |   | E |   | V |   |   |
| F | R | I | E | N | D | O | F | A | F | R | I | E | N | D |
| I |   | V |   | O |   | A |   | D |   | V |   | D |   | E |
| T | R | A | F | F | I | C | A | C | C | I | D | E | N | T |
| S |   | T |   | T |   | L |   | A |   | D |   | V |   | E |
| O | R | I | G | I | N | O | F | S | P | E | C | I | E | S |
| U |   | V |   | M |   | S |   | T |   | O |   | C |   | T |
| T | H | E | S | E | V | E | N | S | I | S | T | E | R | S |

#6

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T | U | R | K | E | Y | B | A | C | O | N | B | I | T | S |
| A |   | U |   | R |   | E |   | O |   | O |   | N |   | U |
| T | E | R | M | I | N | A | L | S | E | R | V | E | R | S |
| T |   | A |   | C |   | T |   | T |   | M |   | V |   | A |
| I | D | L | E | S | P | E | C | U | L | A | T | I | O | N |
| E |   | N |   | T |   | N |   | M |   | L |   | T |   | N |
| S | L | O | W | O | N | T | H | E | U | P | T | A | K | E |
|   |   | V |   | N |   | O |   | D |   | R |   | B |   |   |
| P | L | A | Y | E | D | T | H | E | P | O | N | I | E | S |
| U |   | S |   | S |   | H |   | S |   | C |   | L |   | H |
| P | A | C | E | T | H | E | S | I | D | E | L | I | N | E |
| T |   | O |   | R |   | D |   | G |   | D |   | T |   | I |
| E | N | T | R | E | P | R | E | N | E | U | R | I | A | L |
| N |   | I |   | E |   | A |   | E |   | R |   | E |   | A |
| T | W | A | S | T | E | W | A | R | D | E | S | S | E | S |

A big open question remains: with a different and/or larger list of words and phrases, could a fully open 15x15 be filled? On the one hand, the fact that we were able to fill these almost-open grids suggests that it might be possible, but on the other hand, such a fill is equivalent to an 8x8 double word square (using an every-other-letter “word” list), and it is well known that 8x8 double word squares are few and far between.

But wait!—we’ve been holding in reserve the two highest quality (in our opinion) open grids we discovered for 11x11, 13x13, and the “almost open” 15x15. On the following pages the two grids for each size are presented as crossword puzzles with clues. The first puzzle in each pair uses American-style clues and the second uses British-style cryptic clues. Answers to all of these puzzles can be found in the Answers section of this issue.

*(continued next page)*

## MAGES & MICHELIN STARS

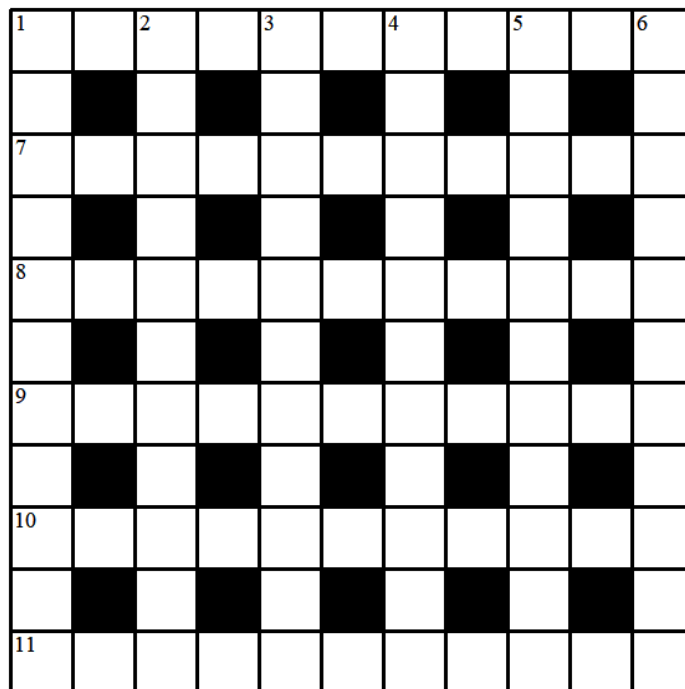
(All answers are single words)

### ACROSS

- 1 Becoming accustomed to, like a swimmer in cold water
- 7 Stymies in the loo
- 8 Criminal that could be your main squeeze?
- 9 The act of counting or listing
- 10 Philosophy that favors gut feeling over logic
- 11 Morgan le Fay, Hermione Granger, etc.

### DOWN

- 1 Batman and The Joker, e.g.
- 2 One who builds
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_ conflict: in-fighting
- 4 “We wring from our souls their \_\_\_\_\_ strength” (E. B. Browning)
- 5 Grows stronger or more active
- 6 Foodies



# UN-DIS TRACK

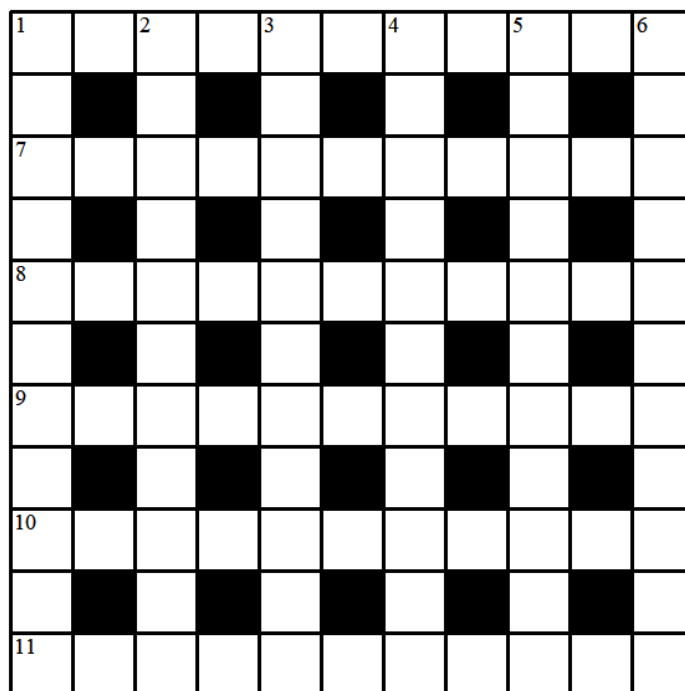
(All answers are single words)

## ACROSS

- 1 Not inhibited, so his pants were never ironed again
- 7 On intercom, fort-less soldiers seem miserable
- 8 Spay kitten with charged atom, leading to a fight
- 9 Infant tries (poorly) to grok this kind of number beyond 1, 2, 3, ...
- 10 Fixable? That's nearly certifiable!
- 11 That frisbee-and-sea-bird process requires deep understanding

## DOWN

- 1 Wacky "Race Thunder" boat is not yet hired
- 2 German with browned skin amid endless school break makes payments
- 3 Mutant viper ogress Flo's company
- 4 Former long-standing custom leads to deportation
- 5 Epic fails? Be creative, the answer is well defined
- 6 Unbury on New York time, revealing indifference



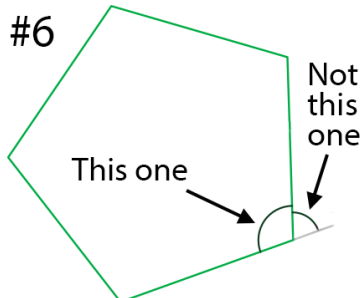
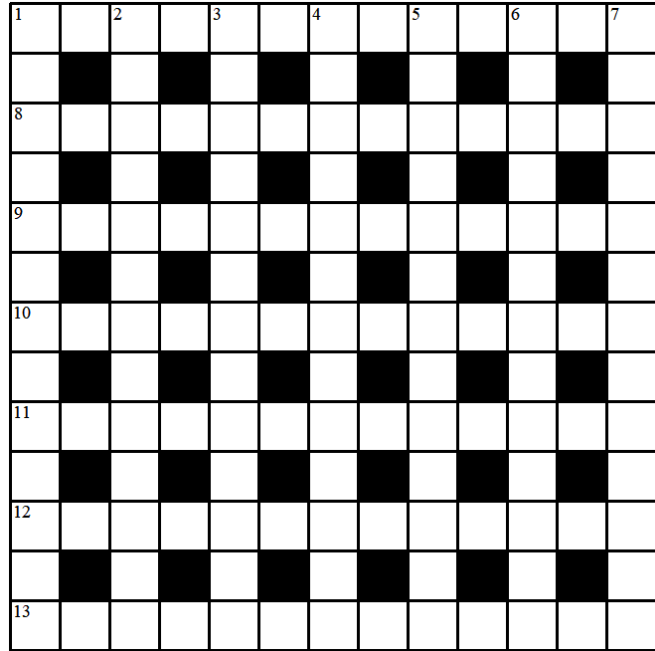
## PICTURE THIS

### ACROSS

- 1 Extreme attraction to Pic #1? (13)
- 8 Railroad to the land of dreams? (3, 5, 5)
- 9 What this clue ends on (3-6, 4)
- 10 Infants born on Halloween, e.g. (7, 6)
- 11 Congress meeting on U.S. finances (6, 7)
- 12 Abstinence, litotes style (13)
- 13 Pic #2 (6-3, 4)

### DOWN

- 1 Pic #3 (4, 9)
- 2 Pic #4: Tyke's terpsichorean hint (3, 5, 5)
- 3 Pic #5: Oscar-nominated (6, 7)
- 4 Home with a unique saga? (3, 5, 5)
- 5 Pic #6 (8, 5)
- 6 Well-placed for (2, 1, 8, 2)
- 7 Creators of things like Pic #7 (4, 9)



| TIMES COFFEE SHOP     |         | #7 |
|-----------------------|---------|----|
| <i>Drinks</i>         |         |    |
| FARRAR FRAPPUCCINO    | \$3.14  |    |
| WILL WENG WHOLE BEANS | \$15.92 |    |
| MALESKA MACCIATO      | \$6.53  |    |
| CAMPBELL CAPPUCINO    | \$5.89  |    |
| <i>Snacks</i>         |         |    |
| SHORTZ-BREAD COOKIES  | \$7.93  |    |



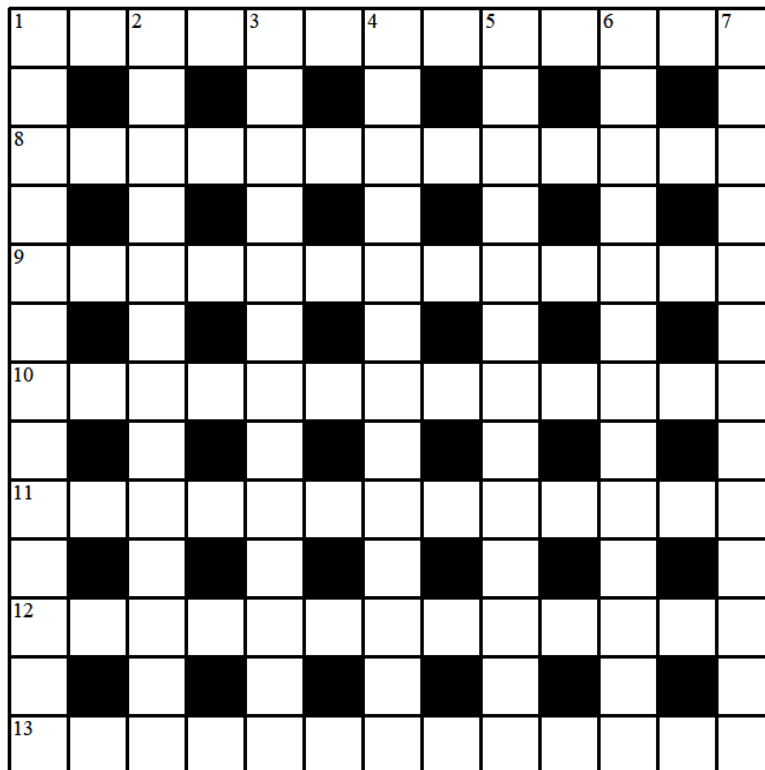
## A STOUT BEGINNING

### ACROSS

- 1 Pub offering: actor Alec's thoughts about percussive dance? (8, 2, 3)
- 8 Just after 9:59, cadet ran madly to give medical and personal assistance (9, 4)
- 9 Awful east hamfest Romeo is like every day's news broadcast (4, 2, 3, 4)
- 10 Don, musician Brian, 60s world chess champion and I create *Close Encounters* tag line (2, 3, 3, 5)
- 11 Look at lunar rat I've Poe-modified to be like *The Raven*! (9, 4)
- 12 Changing to a slanted font, as in the strange *I Lit a Zinc Iota* (13)
- 13 Area Ten target morphs into large myrmecophagy (5, 8)

### DOWN

- 1 My man, wringing nervously, is now holding top music award (6, 7)
- 2 Peculiar margarine rite leads to mixed wedding (13)
- 3 Not French impressionist with wonky Indian guitar!—he doesn't care about the money supply (13)
- 4 White queen on d1 is site for a surprised reaction (5, 8)
- 5 To manage sheep easily, be in agreement (2, 3, 4, 4)
- 6 Student of death is drunk, loathing toast (13)
- 7 Silly reminder: Peter is the one who fixes elections (13)



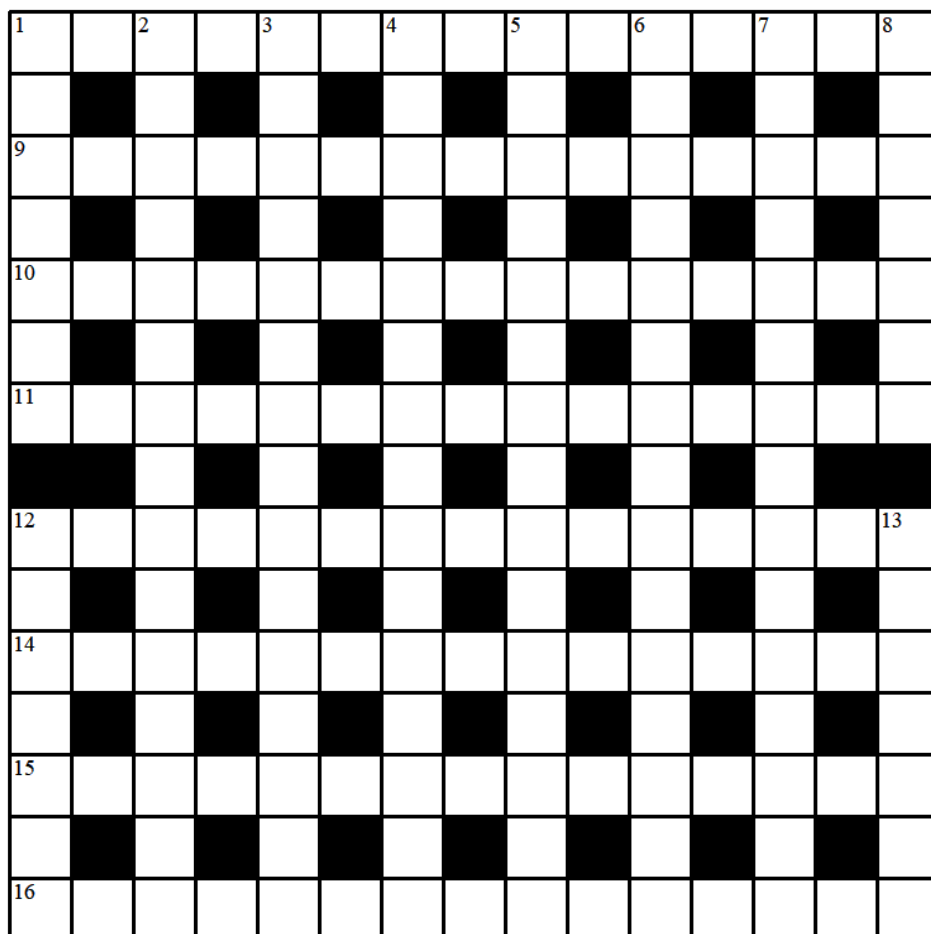
## ALMOST OPEN

### ACROSS

- 1 Given a military trial (5, 10)
- 9 Early party exit line (1, 4, 2, 3, 5)
- 10 "In this article we \_\_\_\_\_: can open British crossword grids be filled?" (4, 3, 8)
- 11 Gossip's *raison d'être* (9, 6)
- 12 Bing Crosby sang this 1944 Best Original Song Oscar winner (8, 2, 1, 4)
- 14 The rock partridge, scientifically (9, 6)
- 15 Ancient bicultural god, like Zeus/Jupiter or Hades/Pluto (5-5, 5)
- 16 Last-resort solution in a difficult situation (9, 6)

### DOWN

- 1 Mexican state closest to Antarctica (7)
- 2 Distinctive trait of a shrinking violet (15)
- 3 Long-running Cecil Adams column that ended in 2018 (3, 8, 4)
- 4 A common eating disorder (8, 7)
- 5 Assistant to a ship's doctor, and title of 1980 novel by Patrick O'Brian (3, 8, 4)
- 6 Mile-long span over the Orinoco (9, 6)
- 7 Spoke sternly and honestly (4, 2, 2, 3, 4)
- 8 Sea cows (7)
- 12 Caught on a nail, say (7)
- 13 "I'll pick you up—be \_\_\_\_\_ five!" (5, 2)



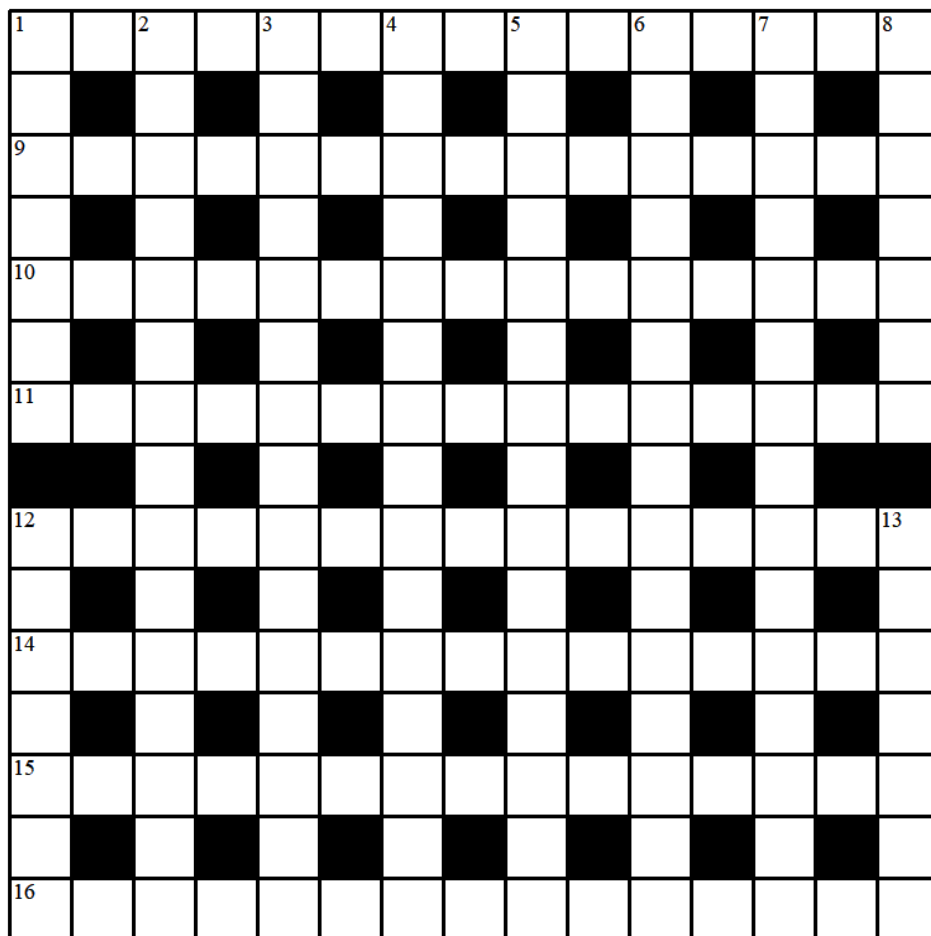
## ALMOST OPEN—CRYPTIC

### ACROSS

- 1 Promote cured British ham slice as board game token (10,5)
- 9 Checking developed film...you're disease-free! (7,8)
- 10 Very narrow roads evoke comical hen analogies. Why? (3-4,8)
- 11 After flipping the toggle, our Dan (oddly) is rearranging stuff (9,6)
- 12 Caesar with twitch, leveling up, makes an elegant dinner for two (8,7)
- 14 Wild feral doe chases manic teacher—now front runner in marathon (6,2,3,4)
- 15 Make no impact? Election tellers wouldn't do that (5,3,7)
- 16 Final theater run-throughs...for disembodied frocks? (5,10)

### DOWN

- 1 Robot Tom's got two rear ends! (7)
- 2 Make up a bar of music that's only a superficial improvement (8,7)
- 3 Six-string showcases like *de Aranjuez* (6,9)
- 4 Attractive Fe deposit in remote organic wildness (8,4,3)
- 5 *Call Me Ishmael* movie premiere is on time (7,8)
- 6 *Prunis persica* inner rings reveal noted section of downtown Atlanta (9,6)
- 7 100 in doomed ocean liner follow Ms. Jong to the Spanish heath (5,10)
- 8 Being partly risen out of the water miraculously redeems (7)
- 12 Declare undone shoes tied again (7)
- 13 Ogre I gesture at likes gray/tan colors (7) ■



## CROSSWORDS 1924-1925: THE PEAK YEARS

T Campbell

This continues an ongoing year-by-year exploration of the history of the crossword puzzle, beginning with its official origins in 1913. See issues [#7](#), [#8](#), and [#9](#) of *The Journal of Wordplay*.

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### 1924

This was the year things got *really* nuts.

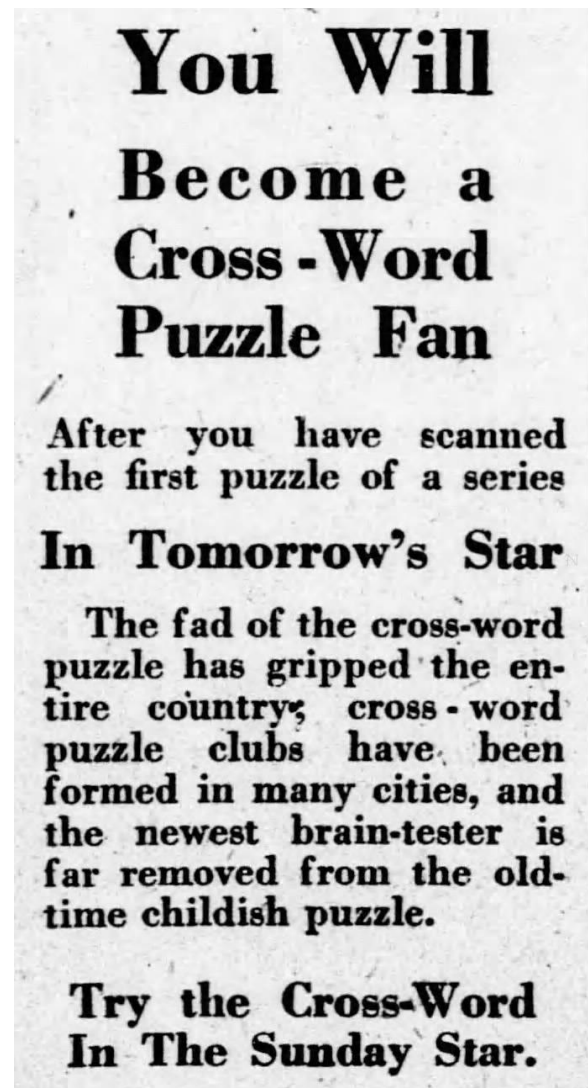
This account will run long—it just *has* to—and still won't be long enough. For fuller accounts, I recommend Anna Shechtman's *The Riddles of the Sphinx* and Ben Zimmer's [Crossword Craze](#). I'll be referencing both in more detail. But I disagree with Zimmer on one point.

Zimmer places the “crossword craze's” beginning on April 10, 1924, with the publication of the *Cross Word Puzzle Book*. But even in the year's first few months, more and more newspapers were adding crosswords, citing their addictive power and the rise of “cross-word puzzle clubs.”

On January 16, *The Palisade Times* praised the crossword as “a sensible fad...gaining in popularity all the time” and followed up with the February 20 observation, “Just when we got autos and balloon tires to get us away from home, here comes the radio and cross-word puzzle to keep us there.”

“**You Will Become a Cross-Word Puzzle Fan,**” *The Evening Star* screamed at its readership, hawking the February debut of its feature on its front page. (“**Your Fandom Is Inevitable! Free Will Is an Illusion! SURRENDER TO THE GRID**”)

But maybe Zimmer and I are just arguing semantics. Because we do agree on this: on April 9, the crossword had greater heights yet to reach. And when *The Cross Word Puzzle Book* did hit shelves the next day...it hit them with a *thunderclap*.



*The Evening Star adopting the hard sell.*

Richard L. Simon had been a sugar importer and piano salesman before meeting trade magazine editor M. Lincoln Schuster. Founding the “Plaza Publishing Company” to test the waters for a crossword collection, they printed a tentative 3,600 copies and left their names off it.



*Simon and Schuster of Simon and Schuster.*

Success cured this modesty within hours. The second, third, and fourth volumes—all put out that year—bore Simon and Schuster’s name and dominated four of the five top slots for nonfiction that October.

*In a single day in December, they sold almost 150,000 copies, and by the end of the year, they had sold half a million.*

—Anna Shechtman, *The Riddles of the Sphinx*

Simon and Schuster weren’t the only ones emerging from anonymity. Margaret Petherbridge came out as *New York World* crossword editor, dropping her earlier “he/him” and “Ye Ed.” disguises. Her roles as book and *World* editor were symbiotic. *Crossword Puzzle Book* volumes pulled material, with permission, from the *World*’s slush pile.



Petherbridge didn't take center stage, though. Though her foreword came first, her name came third in the *Cross Word Puzzle Books'* title pages and would for years afterward, behind two other *World* editors who worked with her on the books, both of whom would try to achieve even greater prominence a year later.

No one knows who decided to credit Petherbridge third. Everyone was a little skittish about the marketplace they were entering. Would it minimize risk to have two male names before the female name on the cover? Such thoughts could have come from the risk-averse Simon and Schuster, the credit-hungry co-editors, the self-effacing Petherbridge, or some combination.

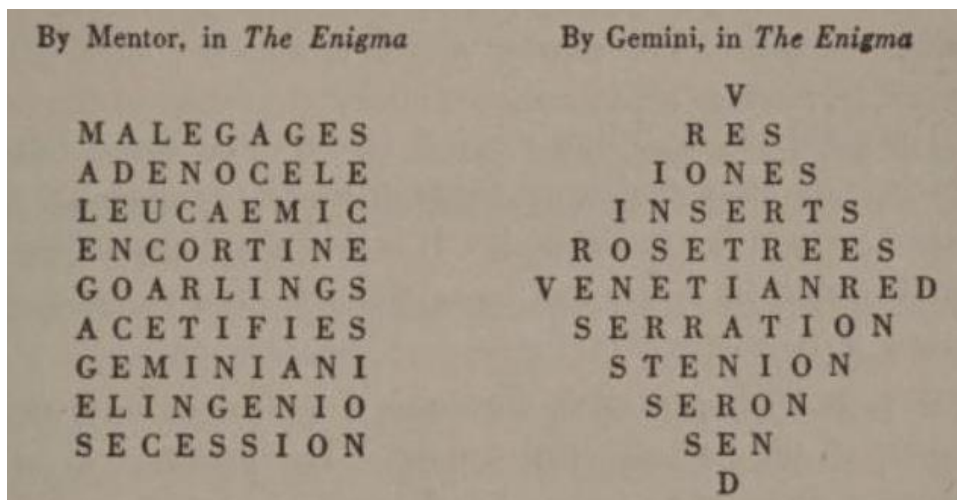
However, it seems probable Petherbridge's co-editors did more than just collect accolades, at least on the earliest books. The workload called for all hands. In 1923, Petherbridge published her edits of about 60 puzzles; in 1924, "Team Petherbridge" published closer to 300. Two hundred came from the books, but the *World* was also stepping up its crossword output: by year's end, it was running three or four on Sunday, one every weekday and Saturday.

And those co-editors were no intellectual lightweights. Prosper Buranelli was a polymath and walking encyclopedia who "looked like an unmade bed." Later that decade, he'd begin working with writer and explorer Lowell Thomas on film and newsreels. He'd play a role in the development of Cinerama and early television.

His foreword placed crosswords within a heritage including the Sphinx's riddle and rebus-like Mayan hieroglyphics. He also recognized the "recondite ingenuities" of the National Puzzler's League—word squares, word diamonds, and such.



*Prosper Buranelli.*



*NPL works published in The Cross Word Puzzle Book.*

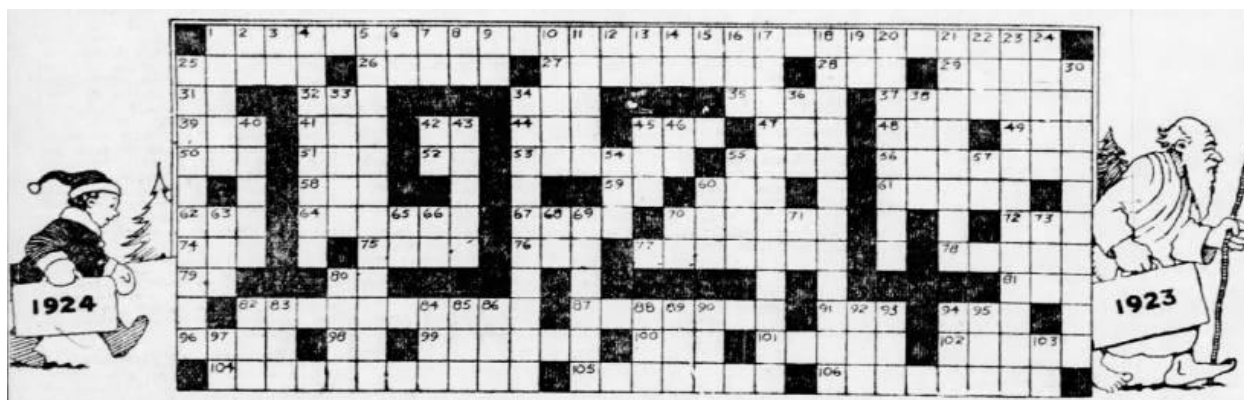
Less is known about F. Gregory Hartswick, whom Buranelli once called an “office bug.” Hartswick’s writings included cosmopolitan pieces for those curious about the world (“Bohemia Table d’Hote,” “A Chinese Marvel”) and advice (“If I Wanted To Be Sure of an Income at Sixty,” “If I Wanted to Protect Myself Against Sickness”). He took to the crossword gig, and in the first volume, he showed his cognitive chops:



F. Gregory Hartswick.

*There is the pure esthetic stimulation of looking at the pattern with its neat black and white squares, like a floor in a cathedral or a hotel bathroom; there is the challenge of the definitions, titillating the combative ganglion that lurks in all of us; there is the tantalizing elusiveness of the one little word that will satisfactorily fill a space and give clues to others that we know not of; and there is the thrill of triumph as the right word is found, fitted, and its attendant branches and roots spring into being.*

Petherbridge, Buranelli, and Hartswick were trying their hands at construction, too, just to keep from getting *bored*. We don’t know which if any 1924 puzzles were Petherbridge’s (many ran with no byline or with obvious pseudonyms). She did publish a Buranelli-Hartswick collaboration as a *World New Year’s* puzzle, adding this poem: “To honor Nineteen Twenty Four, this puzzle was assembled. Two experts burned the midnight oil, the dictionary trembled.”



A Buranelli-Harstwick jam, with a poetic intro by Petherbridge.

Another two-editor collaboration ran as "A Duet" in the second *Cross Word Puzzle Book*, though the editors would not reveal *which* two had gone out to lunch and come back with a puzzle design. It wouldn't be their only productive lunch date—but later for that.

Simon and Schuster acted fast to cement their success. As Zimmer notes, this ad in *Publisher's Weekly* hyped the book to booksellers as a can't-miss opportunity:

#### Features to Remember:

- (1) At least one hundred hours of entertainment for \$1.35.
- (2) Pencil and eraser with each book—an excellent talking point.
- (3) Only one person can use a book—no lending—and plenty of repeat business: EVERY FAMILY NEEDS SEVERAL COPIES TO KEEP PEACE IN THE HOUSE!
- (4) Not a Juvenile—Prominent display means immediate turnover.
- (5) Puzzles are All Brand New—fifty of them—and 100 per cent perfect.
- (6) Forty Big Newspapers Throughout the Country are Featuring the Puzzles Intensively.
- (7) THE CROSS WORD PUZZLE BOOK is out-bridging bridge and out-punging Mah-Jong as a national fad.

"No lending!" One to a solver! Simon sold books the way he'd sold pianos: like his next meal depended on it. He and Schuster would often spend five or ten times as much on marketing as their competitors. They had a vision for their

The Publishers' Weekly

1908

CROSS WORD PUZZLES—EVERYBODY'S DOING THEM—CROSS

1921—Coulé  
1922—Mah Jong  
1923—Bananas

**1924—The Cross Word Puzzle Book**  
**The Cross Word Puzzle Book**  
**The Cross Word Puzzle Book**

*Book-Sellers, Are You Cashing In On This Book That Is Sweeping The Country Like a Cyclonic Fad? People Don't Want This Book—They Crave It!!!*  
**Price \$1.35—Fifty Brand New Puzzles—Pencil Attached**

**Repeat Orders Tell the Tale**  
(From the Publisher's Diary of the First Three Days)  
**April 10, 4 P. M.—First Cross Word Puzzle Books Leave Bindery.** Two New York jobbers placed to double original orders because advance orders they have on hand are greater than anticipated first shipments.  
**April 11—Liberty Tower Book-Shops, New York,** reports first order of 10 copies depleted; phones for 10 more.  
**April 12—Liberty Tower Book-Shops** orders another 25 more; Brentano's, after initial order of 25, telephones for 50 more; Lord and Taylor Book-Shops sends messenger for second order of 25; three book-stores that were cool toward book at outset send messengers and telephone for 5's and 10's.  
(Note: This diary is for the first three days only. See the box in the center of this page for the last-minute news.)

**LAST-MINUTE NEWS**  
Since writing the rest of this advertisement the following six representative New York book-stores have bought the CROSS WORD PUZZLE BOOK as follows:  
Brentano's.....250  
Lord and Taylor.....100  
R. H. Macy.....200  
Putnam's.....150  
Liberty Tower.....60  
Whaley's.....75  
**3300 copies sold in New York alone in 3 weeks!**  
*Get your share of this business!*

**4 Hoorays from F.P.A.**  
**BOOK-REVIEW**  
Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!  
Hooray!  
"The Cross Word Puzzle Book's" out today!  
—F. P. A. in *The World*.  
Other celebrities who are devotees of this most fascinating of indoor and outdoor sports are Bob Benchley, Nerys McMein, Gelett Burgess, John Farrar, Alice Duer Miller, Hendrik Willem Van Loon, and others too humorous to mention—they're all boosting THE CROSS WORD PUZZLE BOOK!

**Features to Remember:**  
(1) At least one hundred hours of entertainment for \$1.35.  
(2) Pencil and eraser with each book—an excellent talking point.  
(3) Only one person can use a book—no lending—and plenty of repeat business: EVERY FAMILY NEEDS SEVERAL COPIES TO KEEP PEACE IN THE HOUSE!  
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(6) Forty Big Newspapers Throughout the Country are Featuring the Puzzles Intensively.  
(7) THE CROSS WORD PUZZLE BOOK is out-bridging bridge and out-punging Mah-Jong as a national fad.

The Cross Word Puzzle Book is a sure bet—It brings the re-orders!  
Order at least 5 copies and ask for the display poster when you  
Write, telegraph or telephone your jobber or  
**The Plaza Publishing Company**  
39 West 57 Street New York Plaza 6409

CROSS WORD PUZZLES—EVERYBODY'S DOING THEM

Ad from Publisher's Weekly.

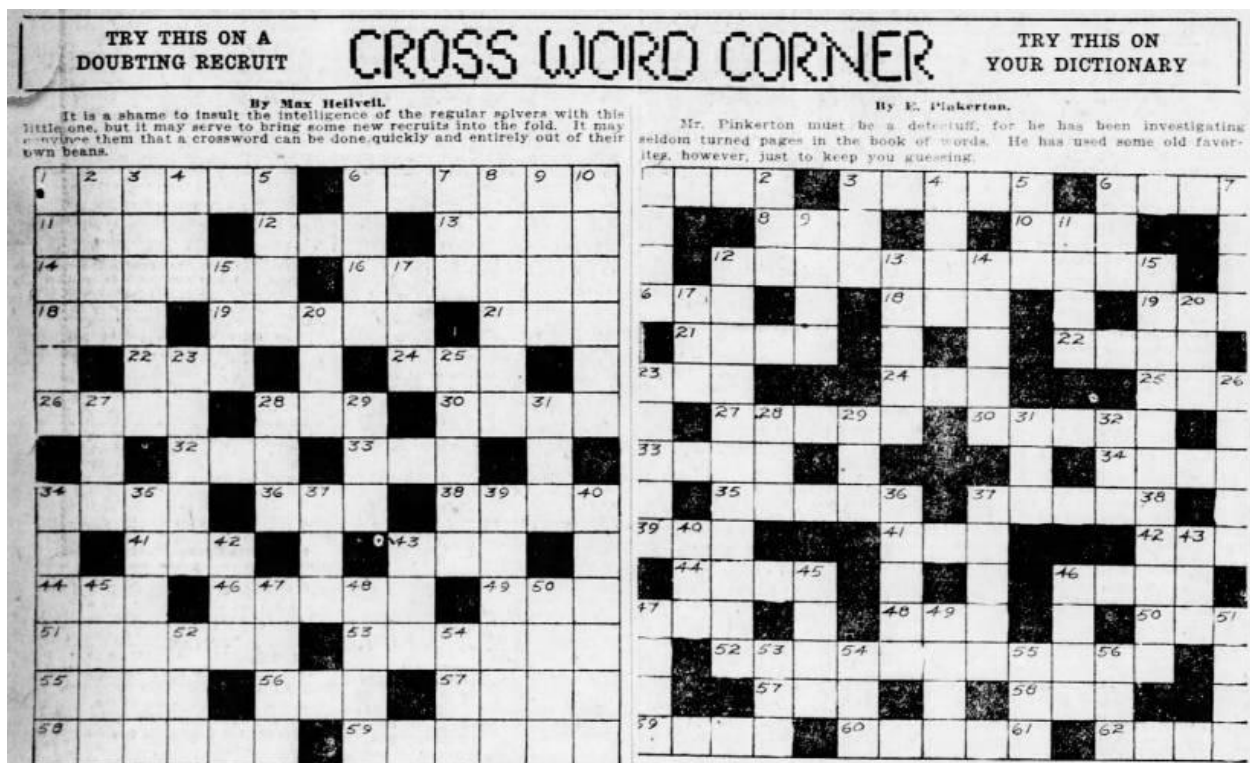


future and their industry's. That vision went far beyond puzzle-peddling, a fact they'd make clear soon enough.

But the *Cross Word Puzzle Book* series would become the longest-running book series ever published. The crossword was something one usually filled in and threw away, and the craze would be short-lived. Crazes always are. But Petherbridge and company were building a brand, and building it to last.

Margaret Petherbridge could've rested on her laurels in 1924. She was getting more money and more respect, and the nation had gone bananas for an art form she knew better than anyone. But there was still room for improvement. "Can't please everybody," she'd shrug, but she was still game to try.

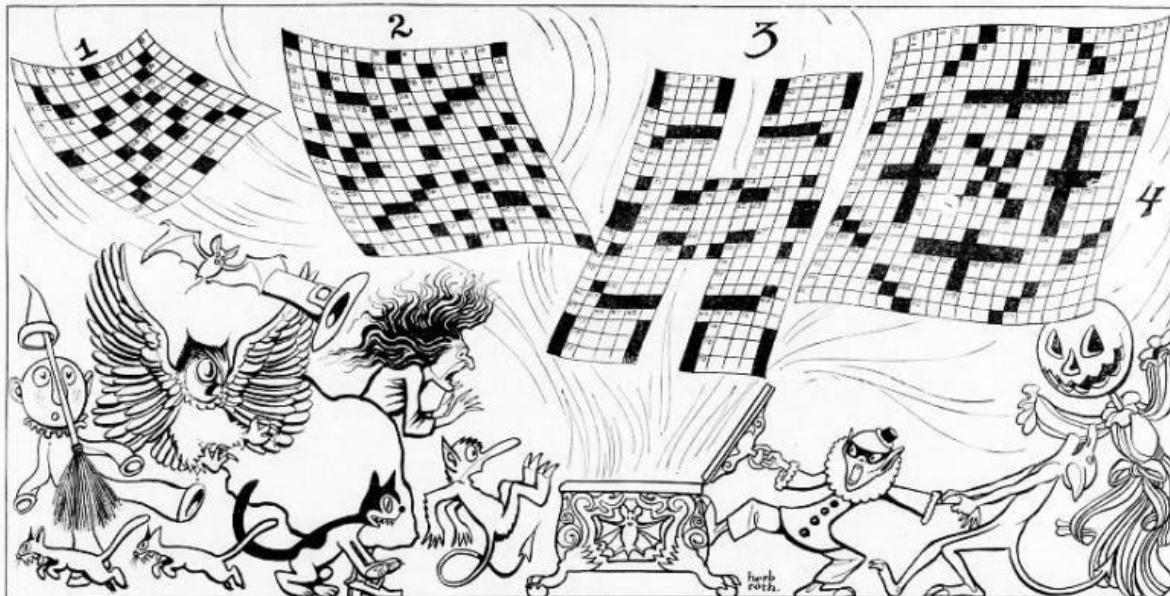
One of her experiments involved publishing two puzzles side-by-side—one for beginners, one for experts.



Two puzzles, labeled "Try This on a Doubting Recruit" and "Try This on Your Dictionary."

By year's end, crossword fever had grown so hot that four grids weren't uncommon, crowding out the anagram and word-find puzzles that had kept the crossword company in the puzzle section before.

## SOME HALLOWEEN CROSS WORD PUZZLES EVEN IF HALLOWEEN IS PAST—YOU CAN STILL TRY YOUR INGENUITY ON THESE.



A Halloween four-puzzle spread. Solvers had to fill out these grids, despite their “windblown” look.

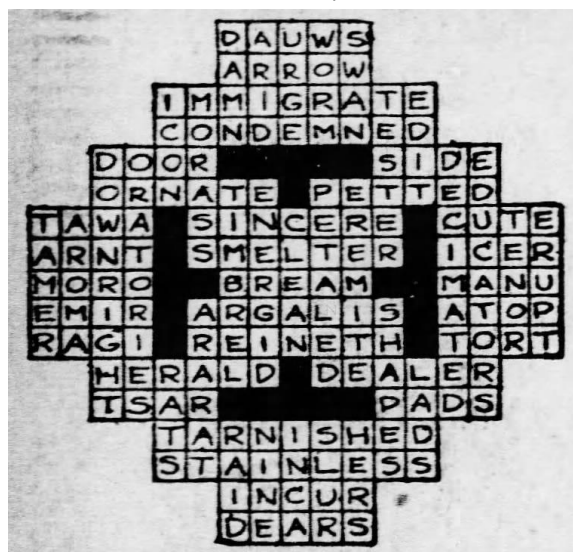
Petherbridge continued to praise puzzles that limited or eschewed two-letter words and/or unchecked letters. But one issue was dearer to her heart than any other:

*When, oh when, will you puzzlers learn that all parts of a cross word pattern must INTERLOCK! Otherwise, you’re making a number of small cross words, each independent of the others. By some juggling, we fixed this one of Mr. [H.E.] Wright’s, but think of all the work you can save us by doing it yourself.*

Puzzlers listened. More puzzles appeared in the *World* with all-over interlock, no unchecked (“unkeyed”) letters, or no two-letter words. Very few achieved all three, but there was a grid from “Professor,” about which Petherbridge wrote:

*No unkeyed letters, a complete interlock with solid center, and no word of less than four letters...the Professor closes with: “This, I think, will be my last contribution for some time.” Can you blame him?*

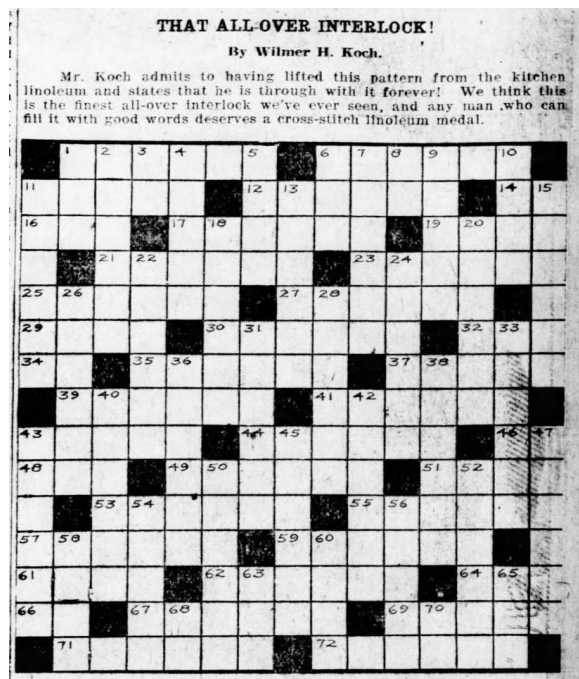
Other constructors Petherbridge celebrated this year were Wilmer H. Koch, for his wide-open, linoleum-inspired designs (next page); and Kathleen Norris, a Ms. Manners-style commentator whose column was often the puzzle section’s neighbor.



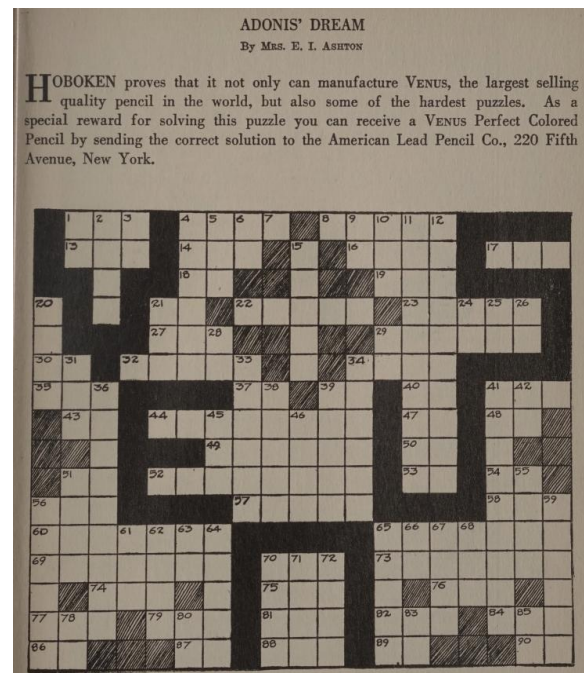
Like modern grids, the “Professor’s” is symmetrical, interlocking, and without unkeyed letters. Plus, it has no two- OR three-letter words.



Not all Petherbridge's experiments were motivated by pure artistry. The third *Cross Word Puzzle Book* contains an early example of **sponcon** (sponsored content), a crossword that doubled as an advertisement for Venus pencils (at right).



One of Wilmer H. Koch's notably open grids.



Grid brought to you by Venus pencils.

But even this shows a desire to experiment one's way into discovering the art form's future. Petherbridge's promotional savvy worked in both directions. She had organized fundraisers for her alma mater; she knew the value of social gatherings. In the *World* and the pages of the book series, she took note of multiple crossword conventions across the country.

"Why Not Give a Cross Word Puzzle Party?" asked the back matter of the second and third *Cross Word Puzzle Book* volumes, noting that such had been a great success in the First National Cross Word Puzzle Convention, held at the Ambassador Hotel in New York on May 18, 1924. Said convention was a watershed in early crossword history. That puzzle party was the first "world championship" competition. William Stearn II won, though a few months later, second-place finisher Madeleine Marshall [issued a cheeky demand for a rematch](#). It was another woman who'd dethrone Stearn before the year was up—

But later for that. The convention's main purpose was the foundation of the Cross Word Puzzle Association of America.

This organization had competition from the start in the form of Ruth Hale's Amateur Cross Word Puzzle League, founded months earlier. Hale was a pioneer in the movement to let married women keep their maiden names. As founding president of the League, she directed its first meeting to codifying the following rules:

- *The pattern shall interlock all over.*
- *Only approximately one-sixth of the squares shall be black.*
- *Only approximately one-tenth of the letters shall be unkeyed.*
- *The design shall be symmetrical.*
- *Obsolete and dialectic words may be used in moderation, if plainly marked and in some standard dictionary, such as Merriam's Webster, Funk & Wagnalls's, Century, etc.*
- *Foreign words that are more or less familiar and are easily accessible may be used and should be marked with the language to which they belong.*
- *Technical terms that are found in a standard dictionary may be used.*
- *Abbreviations, prefixes, and suffixes should be avoided as far as possible. When used, they should be plainly marked and must be legitimate.*
- *[Regarding definitions,] the only requirement is common sense.*
- *Synonyms that are too far removed from the word should be avoided, and also what Gelett Burgess calls smarty-cat definitions.*

As Shechtman wrote:

*If this sounds like all games and no fun, all rules and no play...it was. Hale was witty but never frivolous; she took herself and (for better or worse) her crossword puzzles very seriously. When a friend once accused her of lacking a sense of humor, she replied, "I thank God that the dead albatross of a sense of humor has never been hung around my neck."*

Odd, then, that the last of her rules cited Gelett Burgess, the "Purple Cow" author and humorist whose irreverent personality would soon clash with hers.

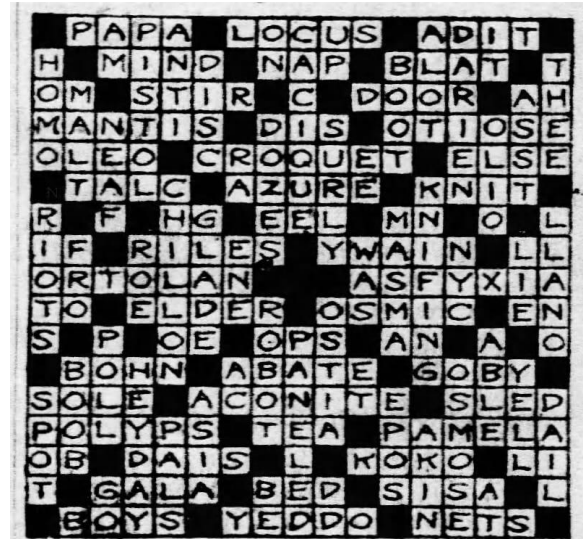
Early publicity for the Cross Word Convention suggested it might codify an even stricter set of rules. F. Spencer Halsey, the convention secretary, wrote:

*The following resolutions are to be discussed: That only dictionary words are to be used in the construction of cross word puzzles. No foreign words allowed. Abbreviations are forbidden, save such as are used commonly in speech, such as A.D., e.g., and so on. Unfamiliar words, such as archaic and technical words are to be discouraged. Prefixes and suffixes are forbidden.*

At the conventions, Hale argued for more straightforward definitions in crosswords, Burgess against. (The most complete contemporary account from the era—if laced with contemporary sexism—comes from "Cross Ed," the crossword editor of *The Boston Globe*.)

To some degree, Burgess and Hale's debate over colorful, "personal" clues versus straightforward, fair-play clues continues today, with the "Gen Z" cluing style set against the style more traditional to modern newspapers.

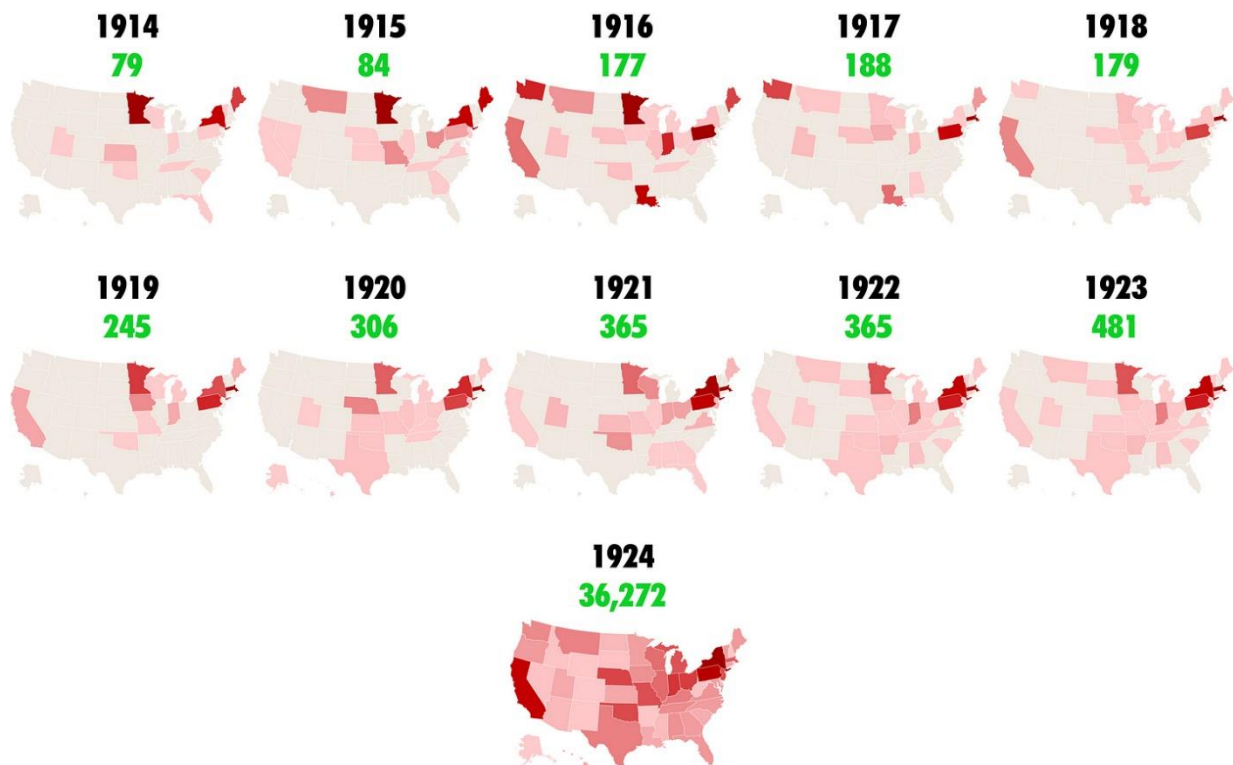
The *World* responded to this debate the way Petherbridge usually tried to improve the art form, by trying different things out and seeing how solvers liked them. It ran one “nineteen square” with extra-terse, super-straightforward clues (e.g., “Shaft,” “Nourishes,” and “Bog”), and one “seventeen square” “for the intelligentsia” with a much more creative cluing style. 1-Across includes a reference to Hale’s husband Heywood Broun (another *World* employee). Clue: “What Mr. Broun is never called.” Answer: PAPA.



Note “PAPA” at 1-Across.

Hale and Broun had a six-year-old son, so this appears to be a reference to Broun’s popular newspaper column (which Hale sometimes ghost-wrote). The *Globe* might not have known quite what to make of Hale and Broun’s disdain for language like “Papa” and “Mrs. Heywood Broun,” but the *World* knew how to celebrate it.

Newspapers.com has been invaluable in gathering information for this series, but 1924 is the year it starts returning too many results to sift through them all. Check out these year-by-year search numbers for the term “crossword” (with variants “cross-word,” “crosswords,” and “cross-words”):



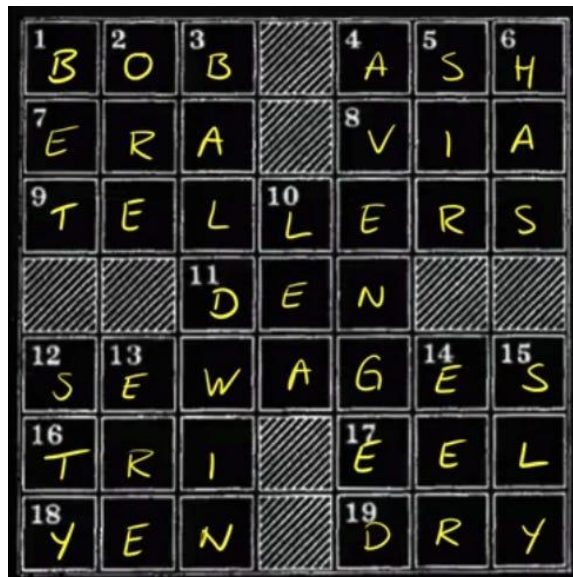
The numbers spike so much here, a bar graph would be useless. The geographic distribution shows the craze was nationwide.

These results show a couple of quirks—mentions in archived papers dipped in 1918 and had no growth from 1921 to 1922. And a few mentions (roughly 30-50 per year) used the other, now-outdated meanings of “crosswords.” But the picture is clear: in 1923 America, hobbyists were talking crosswords; in 1924 America, *everyone* was.

Crosswords remained mostly American and English-language at this point, with halting steps toward globalization. The Yiddish *Jewish Daily Forward* began publishing a Yiddish crossword, and the *Sunday Express* debuted a feature in Great Britain. The first *Sunday Express* crossword is notable for its vocabulary: many of its words are among the most popular words in crosswords to this day—EEL, E’ER, ERA, ERE, ETON, ORE.

It has a curious history related in *Ximenes on the Art of the Crossword*:

*This puzzle was one of a small batch offered by Mr. Wynne to Mr. C.W. Shepherd, a member of a syndicate known as “Newspaper Features,” who in turn sold half a dozen to the Sunday Express. As it happened, the first puzzle chosen for publication contained a word with an American spelling, and in order to eliminate it, Mr. Shepherd was forced to make a drastic reconstruction of the diagram: so this puzzle must be called the joint work of Mr. Wynne and Mr. Shepherd.*



*A pioneering Sunday Express puzzle with a pioneering vocabulary.*

Note also BALDWIN at 3-Down, then the British prime minister. Was that the born-in-England, now-American Wynne’s contribution or the British Shepherd’s?

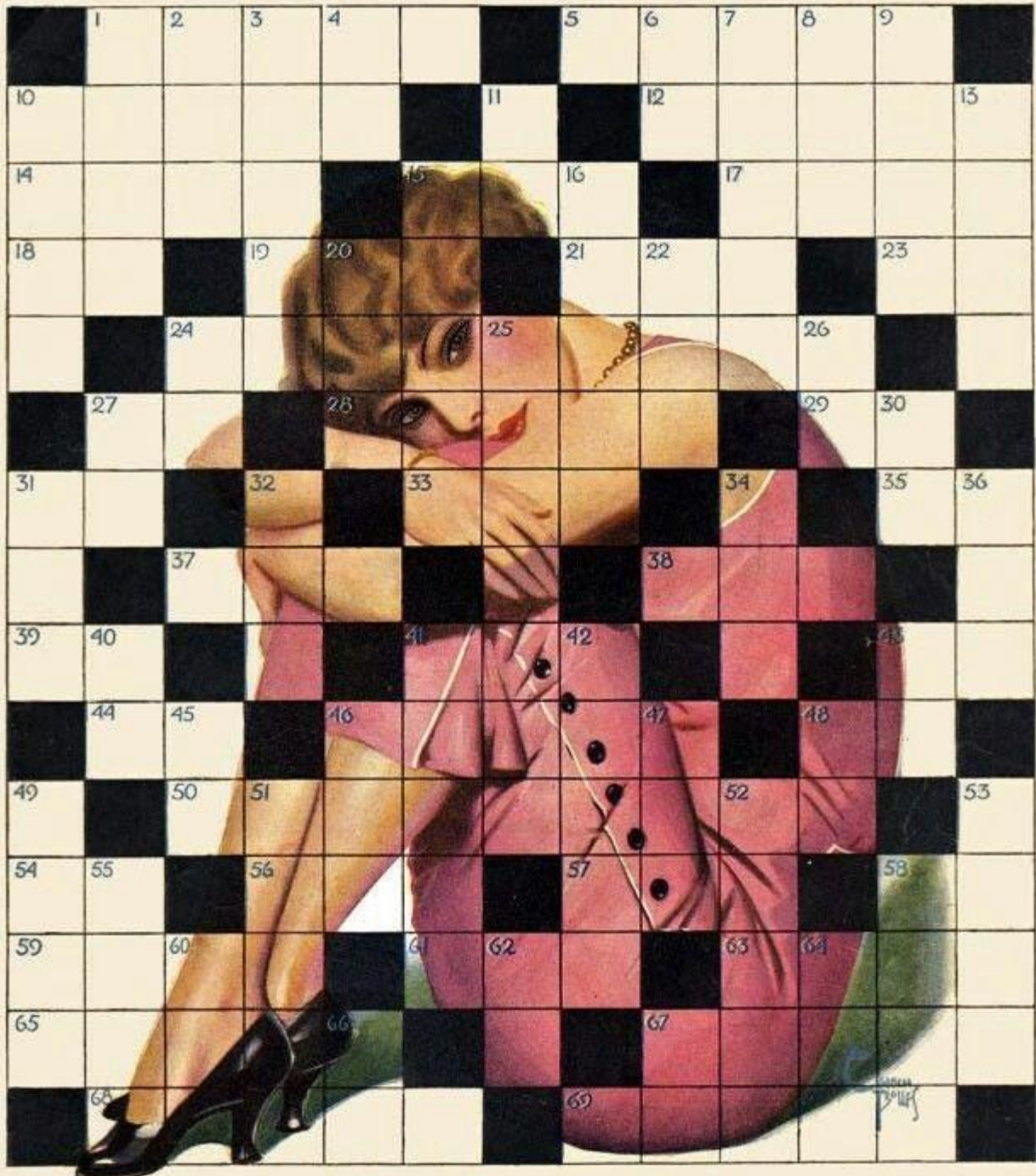
Meanwhile, in the States, crosswords were busy conquering mass media. And not just print media—you could hear them immortalized in song. In 1921, F.P.A. had penned a tongue-in-cheek, lyrics-only “Crossword Puzzle Blues” for his column: now there were two *actual* blues releases, D.J. Michaud and Marguerite Bruce’s downbeat “I’ve Got the Crossword Puzzle Blues” and the Duncan Sisters’ upbeat “Cross-Word Puzzle Blues.” “Cross-Words (Between Sweetie and Me)” was a love song from an anxious, insecure man—anticipating the next year’s release, “Crossword Mama, You Puzzle Me (But Papa’s Gonna Figure You Out)”. Of all these, only “I’ve Got the Crossword Puzzle Blues” unavailable online today.

Those last two songs would share a theme: women love crosswords—and men just don’t get it and long for the days when women were interested in *them* instead. This theme would keep showing up in a lot of crossword-related media. The crossword-solving “new woman” began to appear in magazine covers and cartoons of the time, too.



J U D G E

PRICE 15 CENTS



## THE GREATEST PUZZLE OF THEM ALL

75

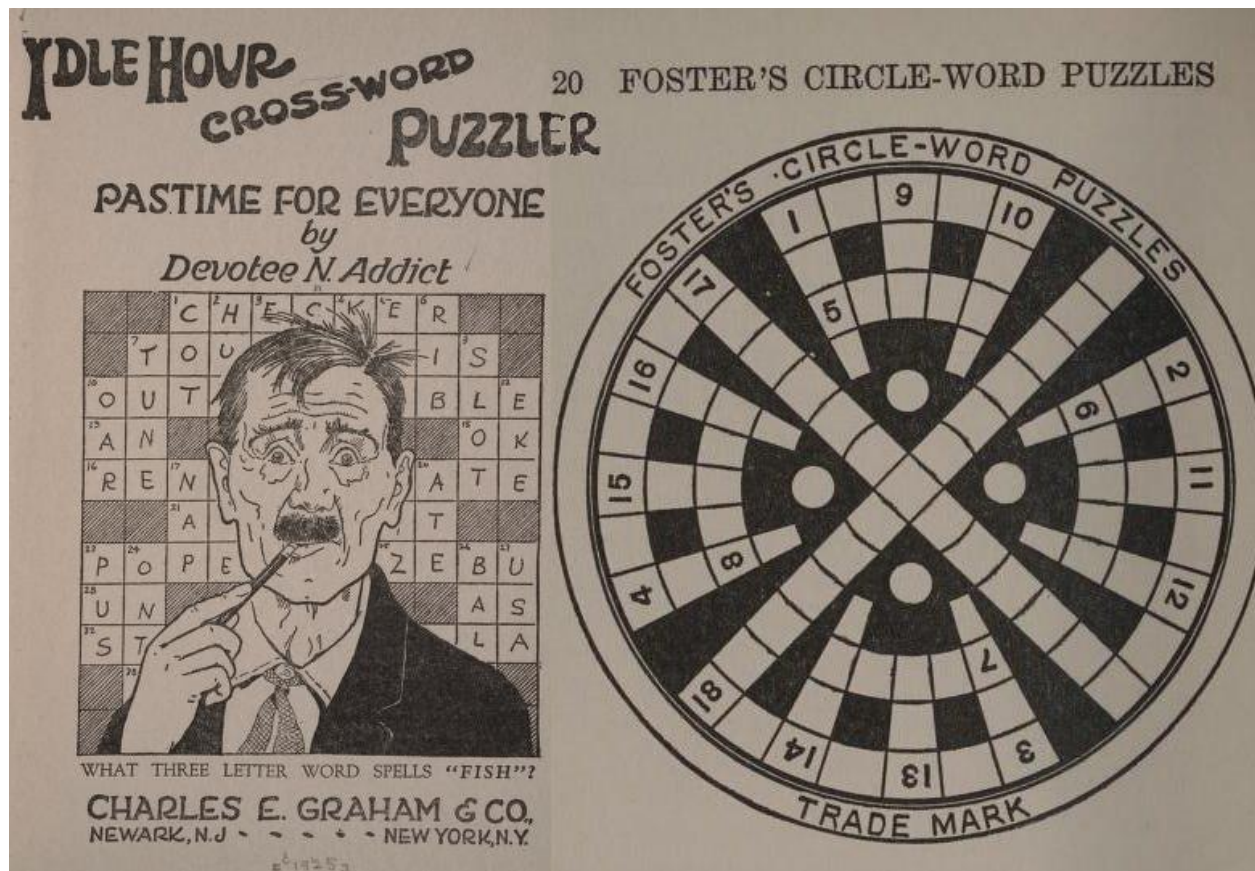


## INTRODUCING FLORADORA'S CROSSWORD QUARTET



The cigarette extending just past the panel border is a nice flourish by artist Sals Bostwick. Floradora and her boys were recurring characters, but the interest in the crosswords was new.

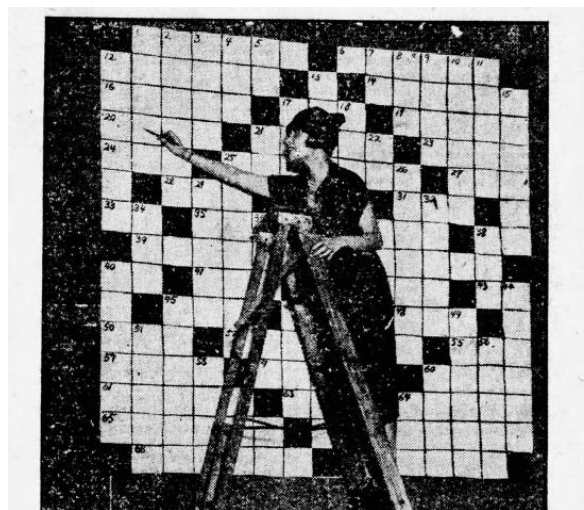
But the craze gripped both genders. Men and women alike rushed to compete with *The Cross Word Puzzle Book* series. R.F. Foster, a prolific writer on games, developed his own trademarked “Circle-Word Puzzle” format (extensive review [here](#)). *Carolyn Wells’ Crossword Puzzle Book* featured 52 puzzles from the prolific author who’d already seen publication in the *World*. And the *Idle Hour Cross-Word Puzzler* pronounced the game a “pastime for everyone,” with a befuddled man on its cover (and a spoiler for the first puzzle behind him).



Samples from the *Idle Hour Cross-Word Puzzler* and *Foster's Circle-Word Puzzles*.

*The New York Herald Tribune* staged a two-day all-comers crossword contest some time after the Ambassador Hotel convention. William Stearn II won the men’s division, Ruth von Phul the women’s—and von Phul defeated Stearn in the final contest, securing the title of “international champion.” (Stearn and his wife did get the honor of being mixed-doubles champs.)

Later that year, von Phul was solving puzzles in public for charity, turning the act into a kind of theater.



Ruth von Phul, solving on stage.

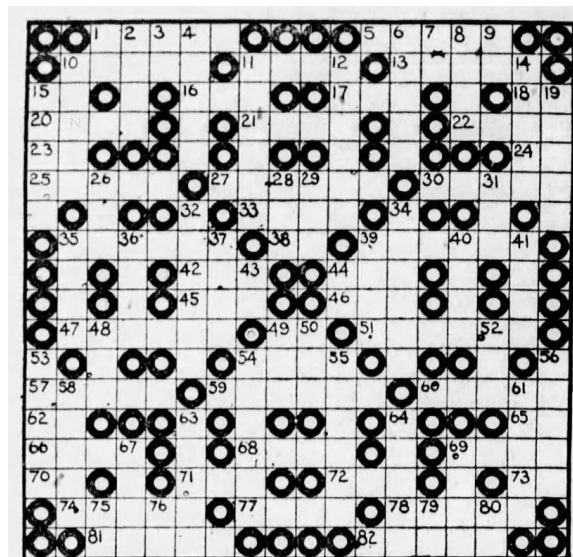


The multimedia spread of puzzles had even further to go in 1925. The most crossword-obsessed medium, though, was the medium where it all began: the newspaper.

Almost every paper was featuring crosswords, often daily, and some went further. *The Boston Globe* continued its post-game analysis, publishing readers' responses to the puzzle—and to each other's responses. Other papers like *The Minneapolis Journal* followed suit.

Perhaps noticing the distinctive cross-hatched squares on the Jerry King crossword, the *Indianapolis Star* released a series of crosswords with artistic squares in both unfilled grids and answers. Indianapolis solvers could tell at a glance that they were solving a *Star* puzzle.

Sensing they were lagging behind in this arms race, some papers threw money at the problem. The *Chicago Tribune*, the *Des Moines Register*, and the *Daily Courier* were among the papers offering cash for original puzzles. The *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, *Reading Times*, *Star-Gazette*, and *Sunday Telegram* offered cash prizes to solvers. Prizes were often in the five-dollar range, about \$92.28 today. Those figures would go up.



The Indianapolis Star used several distinct designs for its crosswords' "black" squares.

Another sign of newspapers' eagerness was that they would often put crossword-related material on the *front page*—stories about the Immigration and Citizenship Acts would just have to accept their lesser importance. One Alabama paper, the *Alexander City Outlook*, took this design priority as far as it could...



The Alexander City Outlook, with a crossword above the fold.

...although, in fairness, headlines like WASHINGTON'S ANNIVERSARY OBSERVED and CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ANNUAL MEETING HELD lead one to believe the *Outlook* wasn't doing a lot of important or spine-tingling reporting in any event.

In short, in almost all spheres of life, the crossword was now ridiculously popular. Maybe...*too* popular?

Whenever a new medium becomes successful enough to seem like it's everywhere, some kind of backlash follows. It happened to novels, which Victorians called a gateway to narcissism, crime, and depravity. It happened to comic books—almost killing that industry in the 1950s. It happened to TV and movies, leading to restrictive content standards—at least for those media's formative decades. It happened to role-playing games, video games, and several generations of music, with some early moralizers claiming *all* music was a path to the devil.

There is a case to be made against the addictive power of modern media. And some of the arguments for crosswords' benefits—hawked without shame by newspapers and publishers—were specious and disingenuous. Doing crosswords won't make you a genius; it does exercise certain mental muscles but leaves many others idle; a simple question-and-answer format is not a substitute for deeper thought.

You can have too much of a good thing—too much of anything, really—and some of the people in the grip of the crossword craze should have calmed down a little. Libraries had to keep buying new dictionaries as the old ones wore out from careless overuse.

But even the most extreme crossword fans didn't seem half as crazed as crossword *critics*. On December 27, *The Tamworth Herald* indulged in that favorite British pastime, belittling American culture: many other papers reprinted the piece. (Various sources, including near-contemporary ones, attributed this article to *The Times of London*. But I could find no evidence that the *Times* itself ever published the piece.)

#### CROSS-WORD PUZZLES: AN ENSLAVED AMERICA

*All America has succumbed to the allurements of the cross-word puzzle. In a few short weeks it has grown from the pastime of a few ingenious idlers into a national institution and almost a national menace: a menace because it is making devastating inroads on the working hours of every rank of society.*

*Everywhere, at any hour of the day, people can be seen quite shamelessly poring over the checker-board diagrams, cudgelling their brains for a four-letter word meaning "molten rock" or a six-letter word meaning "idler," or what not: in trains and trams, or omnibuses, in subways, in private offices and counting-rooms, in factories and homes, and even—although as yet rarely—with hymnals for camouflage, in church.*

*Crossword puzzles have dealt the final blow to the art of conversation, and have been known to break up homes. Twice within the past week or so there have been reports of police magistrates sternly rationing addicts to three puzzles a day, with an alternative of ten days in the workhouse, because wives have complained that their misguided spouses have been neglecting the support of their families.*

*Nearly every newspaper in the larger cities, and many in the smaller, now print a daily cross-word puzzle. It is estimated that no fewer than 10,000,000 people have caught the infection, and they spend half an hour daily, on the average, with the insidious pastime—that is to say 5,000,000 daily of the American people's time, most of them nominally working hours, are being used up in trifling. It is, indeed, no longer a joke, this loss of productive activity of far more time than is lost by labour strikes...*

*Some of the puzzles will take an experienced hand as many as two hours or more to complete, being filled with rare and even obsolete words. Many of them involve prolonged search in dictionaries, books of synonyms, and atlases. And all of them make wanton waste of time. Many years ago, a misguided person thought to beautify some ugly stretches of shallow Southern rivers by planting them with wild hyacinths. The plan succeeded beyond all expectation. The hyacinths spread with amazing rapidity, choking the rivers at last and putting the authorities to enormous expense to clear out their channels again. The crossword puzzle threatens to be the wild hyacinth of American industry.*

Let's not get into what the *Herald* seemed to think of worker's rights.

And the *New York Times*? Its 1922 sneer of dismissal was just a warm-up. For most of 1924, the NYT almost ignored crosswords, but in its last two months, it released no fewer than *twelve* articles focused on them.

Not all were negative. Two focused on theories that Phoenicians or medieval Europeans may have had primitive crosswords. Another few admitted possible benefits to the puzzle in certain circumstances, such as education—one piece concerned Princeton, another high school Latin, a third church sermons—or by revealing eyesight problems that otherwise might have gone unnoticed.

Even the headline "CROSSWORDS DELIGHT INSANE" wasn't the condemnation you might expect: it reported crosswords' soothing effect in mental institutions.

However, the positive NYT coverage always felt grudging and narrow. *We suppose the cross-word might be all right*, it seemed to say, *if it's helping the mentally or optically afflicted, or if it's designed by some authority like a teacher or a pastor. After all, the ancients and medievals did it, though maybe they didn't know any better, and civilization didn't end.*



And when the *NYT* went negative...it went all the way. One pictures a cigar-chomping J. Jonah Jameson writing the following headlines from that period:

*PUZZLES PROVE A MENACE*

*AAU [American Athletic Union] Delegate Says Cross-Word Efforts Interrupt Training.*

*CROSSWORD MANIA BREAKS UP HOMES*

*Neglected Cleveland Wives Said to Plan Divorces From Stricken Husbands.*

*FIGHT OVER "CELL" IN CELL.*

*Cross-Word Puzzle Adds to Troubles of Pittsburgh Jail Inmates.*

*A FAMILIAR FORM OF MADNESS*

*CONDEMNS CROSSWORD FAD.*

*The working of crosswords "is the mark of a childish mentality..."*

Failed athletes! Prison fights! Divorce epidemic! And all over something so *pointless*! Underlying it all was the authors' conviction that the crossword was a con job, a time-wasting exercise of no benefit to the intellect and not even offering pleasure to anyone of true intelligence. Louise A. Sinclair wrote in to protest:

*Just why your Topics of the Times writer should have elected to fulminate against the harmless cross-word puzzle rather intrigues me...Though this, like mah jong, may be termed "a temporary madness," it must be admitted that unlike mah jong, its cost is negligible and that classing either as sinful waste is rather more extravagant than fair.*

Some side-eyes weren't the full-throated condemnations the *NYT* and *Herald* issued. Eddie Cantor's "A New and Puzzling Disease" from *The Baltimore Sun* carries some of the same ideas as the *NYT* articles—that an obsession with puzzles can ruin your marriage and make you insensate to the world around you. But it carries them into the realm of humorous exaggeration, where they belong.

The same can be said for Clare Briggs' "The Cross-word Puzzler's Bridegroom," featuring a new wife too besotted with crosswords to pay attention to her partner on her wedding night. "Alas! How quickly may happy dreams be blasted."



"The Crossword Puzzler's Bridegroom" by Clare Briggs.

Briggs seemed to get more mileage, however, out of his bickering-but-stable couples, who would have found other ways to irritate each other if the crossword didn't exist (next page).

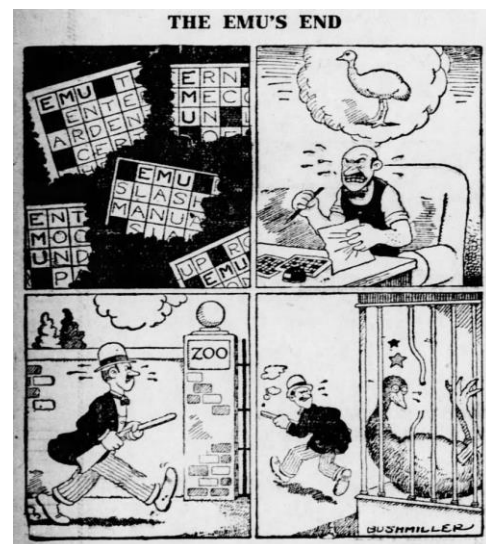
## It Happens in the Best of Regulated Cross Word Puzzle Families—By BRIGGS.



"It Happens in the Best of Regulated Cross Word Puzzle Families," also by Briggs.

One might expect Ernie Bushmiller to buy into the anti-crossword movement. He'd had a job illustrating anagrams for the *World* until the crossword's expansion crowded out his feature.

But in one of his last cartoons for the section, he took the side of the solver instead, using a little cartoon violence to illustrate a familiar complaint: "Why's the EMU gotta be in every darn one of these things?"



"The Emu's End" by Ernie Bushmiller.



F.P.A. had declined to involve himself in the *Cross Word Puzzle Book* series, but had done his bit to promote it in his column ("Hooray, hooray, hooray, hooray! The Cross Word Puzzle Book is out today!"). About the panic, he wrote...

*The booksellers have not mentioned the Menace of the Crossword. But that is obvious. The booksellers sell a lot of Crossword Puzzle books, and they don't care much whether they sell a Crossword Puzzle book, or a novel, or a book of poems. Those who fear Menaces fear them not as menaces to art, but to sales.*

As for Margaret Petherbridge, she took the moral panic in good humor, introducing one of the *World's* new puzzles like so:

*THE ROAD TO THE ASYLUM. By Rinix. Crosswords have been accused of many dire results, among others that they provide an easy way of landing in a padded cell. This one is worth taking a chance on, however...*

She could afford to. At this point, the frowns of moralizers were only adding to the allure, and that allure still hadn't peaked.

## 1925

For the first six months after the crossword's eleventh birthday, its place in world culture seemed secure. "Crossword thumb" and "the crossword puzzle stare" were part of everyday life. Headlines used the shorthand "x-word" to report conquest after conquest after conquest for the form.

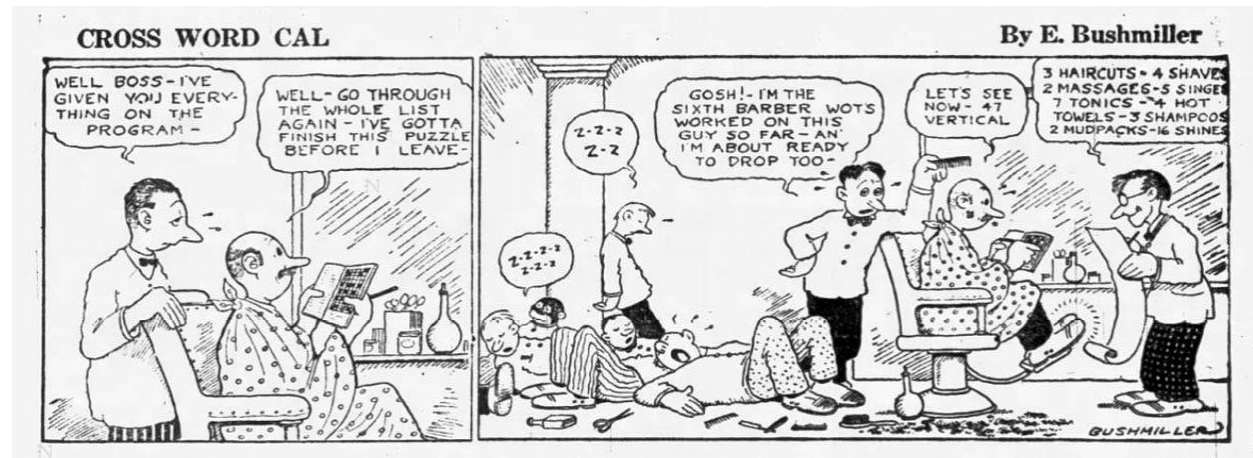


A cross-section of "x-word" headlines from January-June 1925.

Crossword contest prizes (for designs and solutions) had ramped up from \$5 to \$100—even \$1,000 for the *Macon Telegraph*, over \$18,400 in today's money. And those weren't total payouts—those were *single* grand prizes.

Interactive crossword mystery series like “EMU: The Double Cross-Word Mystery” (*The Daily Gazette-Times*) and “The Long Green Gaze” (*The Saturday Evening Ottawa Citizen*) suggested a future for the form in narrative suspense.

Already all over the comics pages, crosswords got a *featured character* in the form of Cross Word Cal, another Ernie Bushmiller creation.



Cross Word Cal by Ernie Bushmiller again. Cal's existence was notable but brief.

Crosswords invaded Europe. In Britain, Queen Mary Victoria joined Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin in puzzle addiction. As they went, so went their nation. France resisted somewhat, but the first book of “mots croises” appeared that year, too. Netherlands, Austria, Italy, and Australia all embraced the craze. Even dead languages got in on it: instructors R.J. Scott and R.O. Kent created *Cross-Word Puzzles in Latin*. (Unstandardized spelling made Irish crosswords a tougher sell, though.)

Crosswords invaded Broadway. Margaret Petherbridge wrote one as bonus material for *Houses of Sand*. *Puzzles of 1925* featured a “Crossword Sanitorium” (for recovering addicts, naturally; see right).



Puzzles of 1925 hit the Broadway stage.

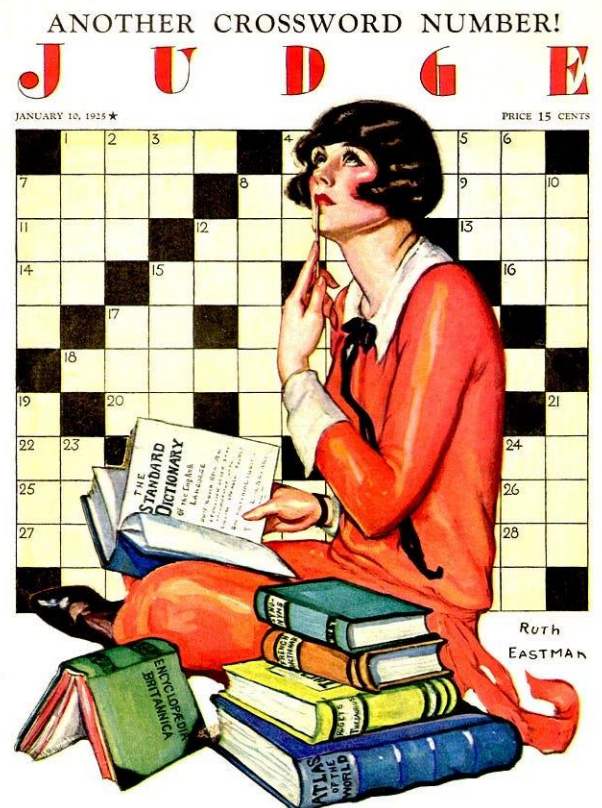
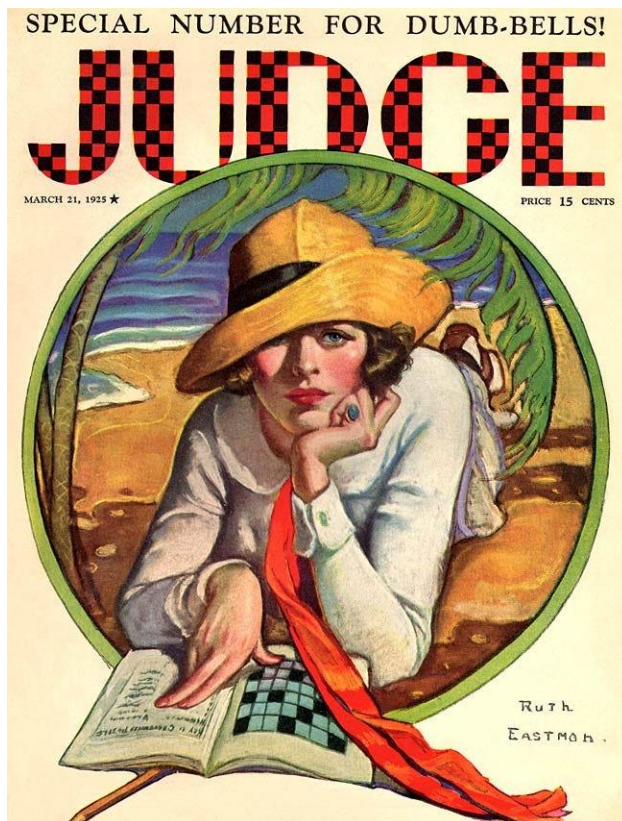


Crosswords invaded the screen. In *Puzzled by Crosswords* and *The Freshman*, they fueled slapstick. Paul Leni's avant-garde *Rebus Film No. 1* showed they'd reached Germany as well—at least German Expressionist filmmaking. It was one of *three* 1925 films with a black cartoon cat as assistant crossword-solver—along with *Felix: All Puzzled* and Walt Disney's partly animated *Alice Solves the Puzzle*.

Crosswords invaded fashion. Sort of. A “crossword shoe” was for sale in Britain, ads appeared for patterned bathing caps and hankies, and crossword hosiery in Paris excited Americans—though not many Parisians.

These fashions seemed more avant-garde than popular. Still, fashion is sometimes considered a proxy for sex. And Anna Shechtman builds a case that crosswords had *already* invaded sex:

*There are hundreds of other Jazz Age relics that conflate the flapper and the crossword as features of the zeitgeist. In these images, the puzzle represents the enigma of female desire and fuels intimacy between men and women in an otherwise chaste culture of heterosexual courtship... By the dual logic of the crossword craze, the woman is the puzzle, and the puzzle brings solvers closer to their desire. The puzzle was, in other words, a sex object.*



More "crossword women" from Judge covers...



and even more from Judge and the racier Follies Quarterly.

This vision of the crossword didn't just please men, though. The images excited male eyes but reflected a new social space that excited female minds. Rewarding the smarts a "lady" often had to conceal could be a turn-on. Dr. H.E. Jones and Prescott Lecky claimed participation in the crossword fad satisfied "a long list of the fundamental desires of human kind," including social and sexual connection.

James G. Bentley and Catherine Langley, the daughter of a U.S. representative, consummated this narrative with the **first engagement-announcement crossword** in a Pike County paper simply called *The News*. (It folded the following year, for unrelated reasons, I'm sure.)

Meanwhile, the three editors who'd started the trend were meeting sex symbols in person. *The Celebrities Cross Word Puzzle Book* boasted bylines by fifty "name" authors. Some—Ruth Hale, Heywood Broun, Clare Briggs, Gelett Burgess, Ruth von Phul—were already part of the scene. Others are familiar today—Harry Houdini, Irving Berlin, Emily Post, Will Rogers, Al Jolson—or footnotes to history like cartoonist Herb Roth and star actress Pola Negri.

Too bad the book was built upon a big fat lie. Oh, all fifty celebrities cited *tried* making a crossword. But most failed.





Petherbridge, Buranelli, and Hartswick to ghost most puzzles themselves, based on the roughest of concepts.



Covers from the short-lived Cross Word Puzzle Magazine.

Like they didn't have enough to do already. They were giving speeches, making public appearances. The *World* cranked out daily puzzles, with more on Sundays. Simon and Schuster had launched *The Cross Word Puzzle Magazine* for the editors to handle as well. Crosswords had invaded all their free time.

One innovation was a response to their own hectic schedules. During a working lunch to which they'd brought a set of crosswords to test-solve, they realized they had one set of clues too many—its corresponding grid was back in their office.

Hartswick got out a pen and re-created the grid using only the clues. Once he realized this was achievable and enjoyable, he'd created the **diagramless crossword**, and defaced the back of a perfectly good menu. Farrar and Buranelli toasted him with their water glasses. The *World* ran its first diagramless in February, noting *any* crossword could be a diagramless if you hid the grid from yourself. (See next page for a modern diagramless.)



But trouble ahead threatened to break up this merry camaraderie. On May 31, Raleigh's *News and Observer* ran an editorial headline with the ominous cadence of a stage-whisper:

*What Has Become of the Cross-Word Puzzle Devotees?*

Some fans insisted the downturn was just a seasonal lull. Once cold weather returned, so would the obsession. A few anecdotes in early autumn supported this theory.

But by the end of the year, dictionary, thesaurus, and encyclopedia sales had retreated to 1922 levels, newspapers weren't getting many mailed-in solutions, and prize money had dried up. The *World* and other papers cooled their crossword production to weekly. Some smaller venues dropped the crossword altogether. Simon and Schuster now delayed putting out a fifth volume of the original *Cross Word Puzzle Book* series.

The international phenomenon hit choppy waters too. Hungary banned the puzzle form after finding royalist messages like LONG LIVE OTTO in opposition newspaper puzzles.

The National Puzzler's League, having once embraced crosswords as a gateway to its complex constructions, now disdained them. "They are too easy, too sloppy for us," said NPL member James W. Davis. "Please don't mention those things. They're not in the same category at all." Dr. Arthur F. Kleykamp, the League president, called the crossword best of all fads but echoed that it was too easy for the NPL's *real* puzzlers who focused on "purer" word matrices, elaborate anagrams, and other word games.

Some commentators were now happy to predict the crossword might drop to its former status as a curiosity for New York elitists, or its even earlier status of blessed nonexistence. And the people who'd made their names through crosswords had to contemplate a world without them.

## DIAGRAMLESS

**ACROSS**

- Objective
- Dynamic start
- Pierce
- Introductory part
- Tropical nut
- Belt
- Idolizes
- Prefix for "three"
- Jolson and Pacino
- Convert into leather
- Cape —
- Expert
- Winter drink
- Peeper
- Plucked instrument
- Armed conflict
- Circle
- Milky gem
- Some
- Rim
- Talk
- Gang-ho
- Sub finder
- Woe is me!
- Pod veggie
- Divisible by two
- Doily material
- Diego
- Food shop
- Not at work
- Ms. Shore
- Museum display
- Moral infraction
- In favor of
- Humorist
- George —
- Entirely
- Breakfast food
- Restrict
- Dessertlike
- Take the witness stand
- Cronies
- Hint
- Biddies

**DOWN**

- Breach
- Neath's opposite
- Mars, to the Greeks
- Place for hay
- Glide smoothly
- Currently
- Unaccompanied
- Lawyer's exam
- Blood vessel
- Train unit
- Ilad, e.g.
- Resonate
- Lathers (up)
- Battery fluid
- Extended
- Wise
- Curtain
- Kindled
- Food container
- Metal source
- Amiable
- Before now
- Talks wildly
- Artifact
- Betsy's
- "Wedding" star
- Put down
- Complexion woe
- Abundance
- Bible book
- Musical acuity
- Innings number
- Sung drama
- Delicate
- Creases
- Stop
- Whisper
- Hip-hop music
- Urge
- Mah-jongg piece
- Enjoyable
- Certainly!

Solution on the next page

For all your favorite puzzles go to [PennyDellPuzzles.com](http://PennyDellPuzzles.com)

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A typical "diagramless" puzzle today provides a grid for the solver to fill in, sometimes larger than the final matrix of squares turns out to be. Hartswick's original version included only clues, leaving the solver to create the grid on a sheet of blank paper.

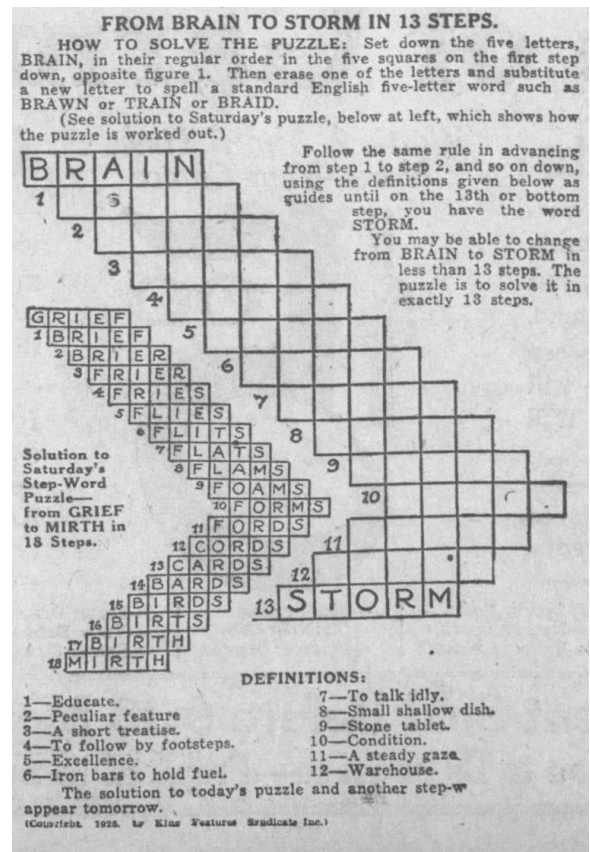


Such circumstances could be seen as a test of character. If so, many of them failed it. Not because their ideas didn't catch on, but because of the dishonesty or muleheadedness they showed in their pursuit.

One such innovator was Arthur Wynne, inventor of the crossword. Now at King Features Syndicate, he rolled out his "next step" in word puzzles, the step-word.

Like Wynne's original word-cross, the step-word wasn't *that* new. Turning MICE into RATS one letter at a time (MICE, rice, race, rate, RATS) is a game Lewis Carroll called "Doublets," which may predate him too. Wynne's additions were a diagonal grid (Wynne loved his diagonal designs), crossword-style clues for each step, and a "patent pending" notice and copyright with his name on it.

The step-word did address long-held complaints about the crossword—Wynne banned obsolete and foreign words and kept definitions simple. Instead of taking responsibility for these foibles, though, he pushed a weird alternate history in which the cretinous *New York World* only featured his crosswords "for a little while" before replacing the feature with cut-out dolls, forgot it for almost a decade, then ruined it with complicated words and definitions *he never* would've tried!



Arthur Wynne's step-word puzzle, accompanied by the answer to the previous week's version.

*He took his new word toy to his chief, who, however, was casual about it, but he consented to putting a few examples of it in the paper. The master journalist's idea was that the public wants to be pampered and not put to work and that a newspaper feature must be so constructed in character and kind as to make an appeal to no mind older in quality than that of the average child of three years.*

*So in a little while, Wynne's cross-words were dropped from the paper and some cut-out dolls given the place. Wynne's ultimate justification swept the country last year, but by then the cross-word was anybody's puzzle and Wynne never drew a penny from its overwhelming popularity.*

*Profiting by melancholy experience, Mr. Wynne has arranged that his new step-word puzzle shall not be the property of the world at large. He has copyrighted it and applied for a patent on it. In this part of the United States, the only newspaper that will have it is this newspaper. Its creator has seen to that.*

Anyway, now things could be put right. Now tasteful readers could correct the *World's* shortsighted injustice. At long last, *simple* word-grid puzzles could prevail, as God and Arthur Wynne had intended!

This from the guy whose very first grid included the words NEVA, TANE, and NARD.

Wynne was entitled to feel, as he did, that his failure to patent or copyright the crossword was a lost opportunity. His notion it would've become a craze under his ownership seems unlikely, but we can't be sure. However, the claim he "never saw a penny from his creation" ignores his entire tenure as crossword editor, including several years where he was arguably *the only person on Earth* making any money from crosswords directly—often crosswords submitted to him by readers for free.

Perhaps not thrilled at being compared to three-year-olds, puzzle fans failed to rally around the new feature. *Knoxville Journal* readers rejected it in favor of the crossword—on June 30, when the crossword craze was already in free-fall.

By November, Wynne's step-words included anagramming as well as letter-changing, making them much more difficult.

Did this variation call for too much cutting and pasting—in an era where you did that with scissors and glue? Or was it just too little, too late? The step-word got its patent but lasted less than a year.

F. Gregory Hartswick pursued two "next big things" that year: tangrams and limericks. Hartswick released *The First Tangram Book: Adventures of the Beautiful Princess in Triangle Land* with Simon and Schuster. To solve a tangram, you assemble the cut-up pieces of a square into given designs. Hartswick's book contained illustrations of the "princess" composed of vertical, horizontal, and diagonal lines. Attentive children could re-create these illustrations for themselves. Tangrammatically.

Letter the word ATTENTIVE in capitals on a strip of paper, or cardboard. Then cut the letters apart, being careful not to lose any of them. You will observe that in the accompanying diagram the letter T happens to fall in the heavy-bordered square. Discard that letter and rearrange the other eight letters and one more, which you must supply yourself, so that they spell a nine-letter word corresponding to the definition below. Letter that word in across step 1 in the diagram and repeat the performance in progressing to step 2 and so on to the bottom step.

There is a heavy bordered square on each step to indicate which letter is to be discarded.

**DEFINITIONS.**

|                                                                     |                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 1—To produce a free circulation of air, as by means of open shafts. | 10—Keeping one closely to strict requirements |
| 2—A February letter or token indicating regard                      |                                               |
| 3—The act of raising from a lower to a higher place or rank         |                                               |
| 4—Unbroken                                                          |                                               |
| 5—Turning aside, as from a straight road                            |                                               |
| 6—A period of probation                                             |                                               |
| 7—The act of doing or uttering again                                |                                               |
| 8—The period before the riots began                                 |                                               |
| 9—Of short duration                                                 |                                               |

**Solution to yesterday's step-word.**

**A N S W E R S**  
W A S T E R S  
S T E W A R D  
S T A R V E D  
V E R D A N T  
V A U N T E D  
U N D A T E D  
A T T U N E D  
N A T U R E D  
T R A I N E D  
T A R D I E R

Step-word with anagrams.

This Chinese invention had been a puzzle craze more than a century before the crossword, so Hartswick's reinvention seemed as good an investment as any. But no second book would follow. (It did at least get a second edition, retitled *The Tangram Book*.)

Hartswick's role in the Limerick Society of America had an inauspicious beginning. A June contest mocking William Jennings Bryan—weeks before the Scopes trial—produced this:

*There was a young fellow named Bryan,  
Whose voice was forevermore cryin',  
"Do you think that my shape  
Was derived from an ape?  
Well, I think Charlie Darwin was lyin'."*

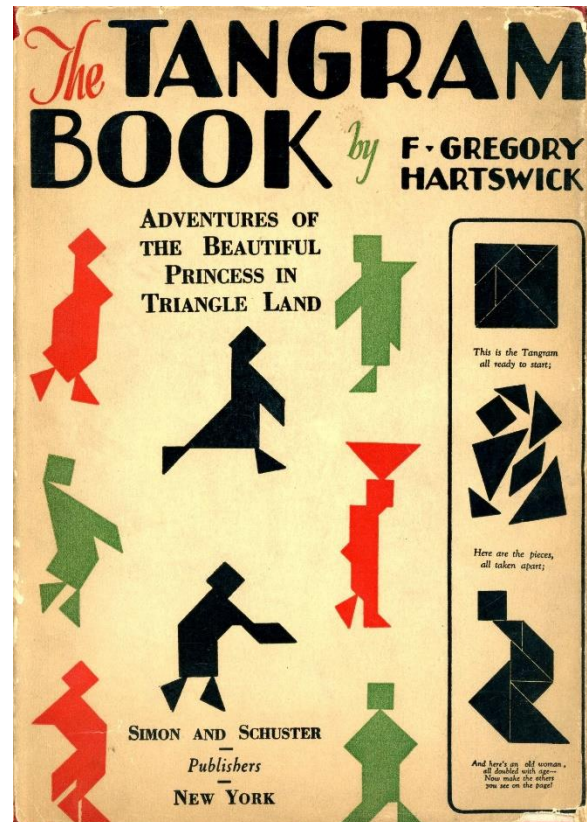
According to the *Progress-Bulletin*, things went downhill from there:

*Immediately thereafter, there arose a debate between Sigmund Spaeth and F. Gregory Hartswick, formerly one of the nation's foremost cross-words. The matter in dispute was whether the final "g" might be dropped in words to rhyme with "Bryan," "lion," etc., and whether New Yorkese might be employed to make "Siberiar" rhyme with "furrier." The debate continued long, long after the meeting adjourned.*

Bryan, it seemed, was not the only 1925 figure losing gravitas by getting bogged down in debate. Nobody reported which side Hartswick took, in favor of the winning entry or against it. In the end, it wouldn't really matter.

The January 27 *Collier's* and January 29 *Greensboro Daily News* presented a crossword history that was almost accurate—except they claimed Prosper Buranelli and Margaret Petherbridge as co-editors of the *World* puzzle since Wynne's day. This contradicted the account in the first *Cross Word Puzzle Book*, which showed that Petherbridge had set policy for years before bringing Buranelli in.

(*Collier's* also cheerfully contemplated murdering them both.)



The Tangram Book, by F. Gregory Hartswick (originally *The First Tangram Book*.)





PROSPER BURANELLI



MARGARET PETHERBRIDGE

**T**HEY are gentle, inoffensive persons, but for calculating cruelty their work makes the Spanish Inquisition look like kindergarten punishment. They started the crossword puzzle craze—nursed it and fought for it before it could crawl. And now look at the thing! We shall lure them to the office some day. An open elevator shaft, a quick shove—and we can go home in peace.

*From a Collier's piece on Buranelli and Petherbridge.*

On February 28, the *San Francisco Bulletin* featured a solving guide by Buranelli, “one of the originators of the crossword puzzle.” On March 17, the *Waco Times-Herald* claimed Buranelli as the crossword’s sole inventor(!):

*Everybody’s doing it and Texas is responsible! The cross-word puzzle of course. Prosper Buranelli of Temple, now of the staff of the New York World, originated the cross-word puzzle as a feature for the World and promptly the conflagration swept round the world. His brother, Albert Buranelli, became cross-word puzzle editor of the New York Tribune-Herald, but left that post to open an office for supplying the insistent demand of the universe for more and more cross-word puzzles. Besides Prosper Buranelli’s newspaper work and Albert’s cross-word puzzle office work, the brothers Buranelli are responsible for bringing out half a dozen cross-word puzzle books.*

Albert Buranelli’s *Plaza Cross Word Puzzle Book* (with H.V. Crosby), his sole contribution to this total, seemed designed to cause confusion in the marketplace with the original *Cross Word Puzzle Book*—except that Simon and Schuster/Plaza Publishing was only competing with itself.

# THE PLAZA CROSS WORD PUZZLE BOOK

An Anthology of New Cross Word Puzzles Selected as the Best of the Thousands Submitted to the New York Herald Tribune, Published Here Exclusively for the First Time Together With Complete Instructions for Constructing and Solving Cross Word Puzzles.

Edited by  
**ALBERT BURANELLI**  
Cross Word Puzzle Editor, New York Herald Tribune  
and  
**H. V. CROSBY**

Foreword by  
**RUTH FRANK VON PHUL**  
Cross Word Puzzle Champion of the World



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[PLAZA PUBLISHING COMPANY]  
New York      11      1924

The front page of *The Plaza Cross Word Puzzle Book*, by the other crossword Buranelli (Albert).

Another piece from the *Pomona Bulletin* identified Prosper as the only crossword editor worth mentioning. It seems unlikely so many journalists could have formed this impression without one or both Buranellis leading them to it.

However, the pro-Prosper propaganda ended after October of 1925, a period of personal tragedy for the Buranellis.

Lawrence Buranelli, a third brother and airplane inspector, died in a crash on October 8, in the first event of the National Air Races. Prosper was attending along with yet another Buranelli brother, Vincent, who had designed the plane. The crash was several miles away from them, so they didn't see it. But they may have heard it.

Despite everything its contributors were going through, the *World* continued to innovate. Though themeless puzzles were still standard, it published experiments themed around psychology and golf, much like its earlier

president-focused puzzles. Other experiments included rhymed clues and a theme of long words that began and ended with the same vowel.

And at the end of the year, it was still encouraging puzzle diehards to "do [regular crosswords] diagramless," just by cutting off the grids or folding them out of sight. But while Petherbridge's copy was still bright, it seemed a bit distracted. Note the repeated "delights" twice in the first two sentences here:

*Once more let us emphasize the delights of diagramless solving. One who has not tried it has Olympian delights in store!... It's the true puzzler's way of doing it. Once tried, never stopped. Do them diagramless.*

Surely a synonym for "delights" was not beyond a crossword editor's grasp? "Joys," perhaps?

The sheer volume of crosswords the *World* put out that year might've been one reason for Petherbridge's lessened focus; the reversal of the crossword's fortunes, a second possible reason; friction with Buranelli, a third. But there was a fourth possible reason that'd be clear enough in 1926.

She had other delights to distract her.



To be continued in 2026...and 1926!



*This 1925 Saturday Evening Post shows two old men pondering the really big questions.*

## OTHER RESOURCES OF INTEREST

T Campbell

This is the spot for additional items of interest to *Journal* readers. Though it's aimed at recent work, sometimes things don't come to my attention right away, so publications can be from anytime in the last couple of years.

"Another Hidden Anagram in Valerius Flaccus?," [Mnemosyne, 78 \(4\)](#): Melissande Tomcik argues for the presence of reversed "MEDEA" strings in the classical Medea-related work *Argonautica*.

"Eponyms in Science: how long can they get?" [Scientometrics 130](#). Niklas Manz and Ian McCullough note that to credit everyone, some names for scientific principles are getting comically unwieldy.

"Misrecognition and Meaning: Rethinking AI Understanding through Malapropisms" by Hiroto Fujita at <https://philpapers.org/archive/FUJMAM.pdf> proposes a new model for evaluating AI: its generation of technical "mistakes" that might be considered meaningful in a broader context—such as malapropisms.

"The need for uprooting offensive plant eponyms," [Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society, 209 \(2\)](#). Jithu K Jose adds to the growing consensus that racial slurs have no place in plant names.

"The Tradwife's Journey: Portmanteaus and Ideology" is a lecture available online from Star Vanguri, Nova Southeastern University, at <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/openclassroom/2025/schedule/5/>, discusses how portmanteau formation reflects modern culture and ideological debate.

Douglas Hofstadter's *Ambigrammia* (Yale University Press, 2025) is a collection of thoughts about the vibrant art form of ambigrams, from one of its greatest practitioners.

*Puzzle Mania!* (Authors Equity, 2025) is a book collection of the *New York Times*' more experimental puzzle forms that it usually reserves for oversized holiday editions.

*Schott's Significa* by Ben Schott (Michael Joseph Ltd, 2025) comes in two volumes with different subtitles, both tracking the exotic jargon of various professions, cultures, and other subgroups.

Volodymyr Rafeyenko's *Mondegreen: Songs about Death and Love* (Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2019) has attracted many 2025 reviews, enough so we'll recommend it here. From the official summary: "A mondegreen is something that is heard improperly by someone who then clings to that misinterpretation as fact. Fittingly, [this book] explores the ways that memory and language construct our identity, and how we hold on to it no matter what. The novel tells the story of Haba Habinsky, a refugee from Ukraine's Donbas region, who has escaped to the capital city of Kyiv at the onset of the Ukrainian-Russian war."

*You Took the Last Bus Home: The Poems of Brian Bilston* (Macmillan Publishers International Limited, 2025) is another creative collection, experimenting with Scrabble tiles and Venn diagrams as well as zeugma, initialisms, and other forms of wordplay. ■

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

*The Journal of Wordplay* is a free-to-submit, free-to-read publication. All rights revert to the original authors after publication.

Formats are generally 12-point Times New Roman or Calibri without indents, though exceptions can be made, especially if the format is important to the content of the piece.

*The Journal* is interested in any studies, essays, puzzles, exercises, or other works that showcase wordplay of any kind. However, broader forms of wordplay call for a more specific approach.

Almost any material that uses specific wordplay types like anagrams, spoonerisms, palindromes, or letterbanks might be of interest. That's just a quick list of some of the most prominent types: there are many more.

Broader forms of wordplay include puns, puzzles, writing-style exercises, and even well-worn literary techniques like alliteration and rhyme. However, we wouldn't want to publish a piece of short fiction just because it reads like James Patterson, or song lyrics just because they rhyme, or a crossword with some punny theme entries. In the case of each of those examples, there are plenty of other venues for such works, and there'd be no point in us competing for those!

Here are a few examples of specific approaches to those broader forms: a jokey exercise where a famous work is rewritten in the styles of different authors, an account of how a songwriter might build a "book of rhymes," a study of Shakespearean punning, or a survey of the most commonly used crossword grids. (Here too, there are many more possibilities.)

We are fine with wordplay that ventures into sex, bathroom humor, and other taboo topics. However, we do not generally accept studies that focus on words that primarily insult genders and minority groups, and we will sometimes edit submissions to remove those terms. This policy helps maintain the playful spirit and long-term health of the publication.

Rule of thumb: *The Journal of Wordplay* is here to provide studies and perspectives on wordplay that readers won't often find anywhere else. If that sounds like something you're into, then we look forward to your *Journal* submission!

Submissions can be directed to the editor at [tcampbell1000@gmail.com](mailto:tcampbell1000@gmail.com). ■

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Anil** is a preacher turned biologist turned writer of wordplay. Born in Henderson, Kentucky, he was valedictorian and senior class president. He was further educated at Wake Forest (BS) and Johns Hopkins (PhD), with positions at U. Illinois, U. Pittsburgh, and U. Western Australia. Now a dual citizen of the USA and Australia, he lives in Perth.

He has published six books of wordplay humor, with two others in press, four of them award-winning. He published over two hundred articles in the now defunct *Word Ways* and will continue contributing to its successor, *The Journal of Wordplay*.

His major influences were a humor-loving mother and authors Walt Kelly (Pogo), Lewis Carroll, Will Cuppy, and Dave Morice.

**T Campbell** has written many experimental works, including long-running webcomics series (*Fans*, *Cool Cat Studio*, *Rip and Teri*, *Penny and Aggie*, *Guilded Age*, *Traveler*), collections of anagrams, and the Ubercross Abecedaria, the world's largest crossword puzzle. He has served *The Journal of Wordplay* as editor and contributor since its inception. Regular updates can be found at his Substack, <http://tcampbell.substack.com>.

**Darryl Francis** writes:

My introduction to word puzzles and word games came via a Martin Gardner review in *Scientific American* of one of Dmitri Borgmann's first two books—either *Language on Vacation* or *Beyond Language*. I very quickly bought both books, then began subscribing to *Word Ways*, from its first issue in February 1968. I've created over 200 articles for *Word Ways* right up until its last issue in 2020. Then a brief stint at *Interim*, and now finally onto *The Journal of Wordplay*. I had ongoing correspondence with *Word Ways* editors Borgmann and Ross Eckler over the years, plus plenty of occasional contact with other word puzzlers. I've also been a member of the National Puzzlers' League. I've written books on Scrabble and been a longtime compiler of Collins Official Scrabble Words, which is used pretty much everywhere outside the US. I also collect all sorts of dictionaries, word books, gazetteers, thesauruses (thesauri!), and puzzle material.

**Daniel Galef** is a PhD student at the University of Cincinnati, where he teaches classes on science fiction and collects counterfeit coins. His puzzling poems have appeared in, among others, *Word Ways*, *Light Quarterly*, and *Scientific American*. If you liked this and want to read more weird persona poems chock full of wordplay, check out his book *Imaginary Sonnets*: [danielgalef.com/book/](http://danielgalef.com/book/).

**Don Hauptman**, *TJoW* Resident Punster, says:

I'm a recreational linguistics enthusiast, thoroughly captivated by what Leo Rosten once called "the mischief of language." I've written two published books in this genre: My celebration of spoonerisms, *Cruel and Unusual Puns* (Dell, 1991), received rave reviews



and quickly went into a second printing, selling in total almost 40,000 copies. The second book is *Acronymia* (Dell, 1993), a serious/funny look at abbreviations.

For its last several decades, I was a regular contributor to *Word Ways*. My humor, wordplay, and light verse have appeared as articles, fillers, and letters in *Reader's Digest*, *Writer's Digest*, *The Village Voice*, *The New York Observer*, *7 Days*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and two major in-flight magazines: *Sky* (Delta) and *American Way*.

I made more than 100 appearances in the wordplay competitions that were a popular feature of *New York Magazine*. For four and a half years, I wrote "The Language Perfectionist," a (mostly) serious weekly column on grammar and usage, for *Early to Rise*, at the time the largest-circulation online daily newsletter. In real life, I'm a freelance advertising copywriter, now quasi-retired.

**Michael Keith** Michael Keith is a retired software engineer whose career included Bell Labs, the David Sarnoff Research Center, and Intel. His abiding interest in recreational mathematics and wordplay is the direct result of religiously reading Martin Gardner's monthly column in *Scientific American* starting in the mid-1960s. He contributed around 40 articles for *Word Ways* and 10 or so for *Interim*. In 2010 his book *Not A Wake* was released, the first (and still the only) book ever published written entirely in Pilish (English but with the letter counts in successive words following the digits of pi).

**Christopher Kocher** is a retired systems engineer who enjoys words and languages. As a long-time member of the Philadelphia Precolumbian Society, he helps facilitate the monthly meeting of the Glyph Group that studies Mayan inscriptions and other texts.

**Richard Lederer** is the author of sixty books about language, history, and humor, including his best-selling *Anguished English* series and his current books, *Lederer's Language & Laughter* and *A Feast of Words*. He is a founding co-host of "A Way With Words" on public radio. Dr. Lederer has been named International Punster of the Year and Toastmasters International's Golden Gavel winner.

**Stephen C. Root and Elizabeth Root Blackmer**, brother and sister, have been playing word games since *Spill* and *Spell* in the '50s, were nationally ranked Scrabble players, and now, in retirement, play Clabbers over the Internet.

Stephen majored in Chemical Engineering at M.I.T. and did graduate work there, became a programmer, and worked for NASA, then worked on teams designing and testing computers and operating systems at Digital Equipment Corporation, Compaq, and Intel. He and his now deceased wife had four children. He was a contributor to *Word Ways* and a member of the Lexington, MA scrabble club. In retirement in California, as a sort of hobby, he built the diagonal Clabbers game presented here.

Elizabeth Root Blackmer attended Harvard, then, after serving in the Peace Corps in Malaysia, received her Ph.D. from Stanford in Communication Research. She was a tenured professor at Acadia University in Nova Scotia, teaching psycholinguistics among other subjects, published accent reduction software, and was later senior editor of the Alsos Digital Library for Nuclear Issues based at Washington and Lee University. She has been married for 61 years and has two adult children. Elizabeth is also a photographer; her work can be seen at [www.brootphoto.com](http://www.brootphoto.com).

**Will Shortz** is a long-running figure in the world of crosswords and wordplay. He has edited the *New York Times* crossword since 1993, been the Puzzle Master on NPR's "Weekend Edition Sunday" since 1987, hosted the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament since he founded it in 1978, and written or edited more than 750 puzzle books. Prior to joining the *Times*, he was the editor of *Games* magazine. Will has been the historian for the National Puzzlers' League since 1992. His college thesis on "The History of American Word Puzzles before 1860" appeared in four issues of *Word Ways* magazine in 1974-75. ■

## ANSWERS

### Monogamous Words:

1. taken aback 2. far afield 3. malice aforethought 4. run afoul of 5. mouth agape 6. self-aggrandizing 7. arms akimbo 8. run amok 9. in arrears 10. look askance

11. under the auspices of 12. anchors aweigh 13. went awry 14. bald-faced/barefaced lie 15. batten down 16. at [pronoun] behest 17. on bended knee 18. bides [pronoun] time 19. blithering idiot 20. bogged down

21. take a breather 22. breakneck speed 23. briny deep 24. country bumpkin 25. let bygones be bygones 26. in cahoots 27. cautionary tale 28. champing at the bit 29. chock-full 30. by dint of

31. dipsy doodle 32. knockdown drag-out 33. If [pronoun] had [pronoun] druthers 34. high dudgeon 35. eke out 36. extenuating circumstances 37. fatted calf 38. figment of the imagination 39. fine-tooth comb 40. foregone conclusion

41. heaven forfend 42. on the fritz 43. gainfully employed 44. gibbous moon 45. gird [pronoun] loins 46. grist for the mill 47. gung ho 48. all gussied up 49. halcyon days 50. ward heeler

51. hunker down 52. time immemorial 53. make inroads 54. well-intentioned 55. put the kibosh on 56. coffee klatch 57. on the lam 58. bill of lading 59. lickety split 60. in lieu of

61. \_\_\_\_\_ loggerheads 62. madding crowd 63. fair to middling 64. misspent youth 65. high muckamuck 66. whole nother 67. whisper sweet nothings 68. nth degree 69. in the offing 70. olden days

71. opposable thumb 72. peter out 73. slim pickings 74. pinking shears 75. Pyrrhic victory 76. raring to go 77. caught red-handed 78. good riddance 79. ride roughshod 80. runcible spoon

81. inner sanctum 82. scot-free 83. scruff of the neck 84. self-fulfilling prophesy 85. the whole shebang 86. blown to smithereens 87. sleight of hand 88. snaggle tooth 89. suborn perjury 90. moral suasion

91. tit for tat 92. in the throes of 93. in a tizzy 94. in a trice 95. moral turpitude 96. ulterior motive 97. take umbrage 98. unsung hero 99. vale of tears 100. vantage pont

101. wend [pronoun] way 102. whiled away the time 103. young whippersnapper 104. wishful thinking 105. as is [pronoun] wont 106. workaday world 107. wreak havoc 108. waxed wroth 109. days of yore 110. zoot suit

111. aid and abet 112. alas and alack 113. the be-all and end-all 114. beck and call 115. betwixt and between 116. kit and caboodle 117. dribs and drabs 118. to and fro 119. hem and haw 120. for all intents and purposes

121. kith and kin 122. null and void 123. hither and thither 124. vim and vigor 125. whys and wherefores.

## Pilish Alphametic Answers

#1 AAA + B = BCCC      999 + 1 = 1000  
#2 AAB + A = BCCC      991 + 9 = 1000  
#3 OOO + A = PEEP      999 + 2 = 1001  
#4 AAH + A = DEED      992 + 9 = 1001  
#5 AAB + B = CDDD      995 + 5 = 1000  
#6 AAA + A = BCCD      999 + 9 = 1008

#7 CAN + I + PLAY + A = SNAIL 820 + 5 + 9427 + 2 = 10254  
#8 YES + I + HAVE + A = SKINK 571 + 4 + 9837 + 8 = 10420  
#9 NOT + A + MOAT + I = CRIED 867 + 4 + 9647 + 5 = 10523  
#10 AHA + I + SPOT + A = LOTUS 747 + 2 + 9603 + 7 = 10359  
#11 CAN + I + FILM + A = MOLLY 586 + 7 + 9731 + 8 = 10332  
#12 MAY + I + CALL + A = BOGEY 653 + 8 + 9577 + 5 = 10243  
#13 NOT + A + MUSE + A = SIREN 637 + 2 + 9815 + 2 = 10456  
#14 YOU + N + WINE + N = POESY 706 + 3 + 9835 + 3 = 10547  
#15 AAH + I + LOVE + A = WHELK 660 + 5 + 9723 + 6 = 10394  
#16 HAS + A + FROG + A = SWIRL 861 + 6 + 9472 + 6 = 10345  
#17 HAH + I + PEED + A = CLOUD 757 + 8 + 9662 + 5 = 10432

#18 OOO + D + FOOD + O = ANNAN 999 + 6 + 8996 + 9 = 10010

**Solution to #18's metapuzzle:** The unusual feature of this puzzle is that the first digit of the four-digit number is an 8, rather than the much more common 9. Of the 1,540,509 distinct pure "31415" alphametics, only 532 have this property.

#19 MAN + I + NEED + A = DRINK 729 + 3 + 9661 + 2 = 10395  
#20 KID + I + WISH + I = COULD 762 + 6 + 9658 + 6 = 10432  
#21 BUT + I + HAVE + A = GUEST 804 + 2 + 9563 + 5 = 10374

#22 FOR + A + TIME + I = DREAM  
680 + 2 + 9734 + 7 = 10423

#23 SERENADED + ON + ORANGE + ROADS + AND + DATED + ARTESIAN + SANDSTONE  
201038404 + 73 + 718390 + 17842 + 834 + 48604 + 81602583 = 283426730



## MAGES & MICHELIN STARS

|                 |   |                |   |                |   |                |   |                |   |                |
|-----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|
| <sup>1</sup> A  | C | <sup>2</sup> C | L | <sup>3</sup> I | M | <sup>4</sup> A | T | <sup>5</sup> I | N | <sup>6</sup> G |
| R               |   | O              |   | N              |   | P              |   | N              |   | A              |
| <sup>7</sup> C  | O | N              | S | T              | I | P              | A | T              | E | S              |
| H               |   | S              |   | E              |   | L              |   | E              |   | T              |
| <sup>8</sup> E  | X | T              | O | R              | T | I              | O | N              | E | R              |
| N               |   | R              |   | N              |   | C              |   | S              |   | O              |
| <sup>9</sup> E  | N | U              | M | E              | R | A              | T | I              | O | N              |
| M               |   | C              |   | C              |   | T              |   | F              |   | O              |
| <sup>10</sup> I | N | T              | U | I              | T | I              | V | I              | S | M              |
| E               |   | O              |   | N              |   | V              |   | E              |   | E              |
| <sup>11</sup> S | O | R              | C | E              | R | E              | S | S              | E | S              |

## UN-DIS TRACK

|                 |   |                |   |                |   |                |   |                |   |                |
|-----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|
| <sup>1</sup> U  | N | <sup>2</sup> R | E | <sup>3</sup> P | R | <sup>4</sup> E | S | <sup>5</sup> S | E | <sup>6</sup> D |
| N               |   | E              |   | R              |   | X              |   | P              |   | I              |
| <sup>7</sup> C  | O | M              | F | O              | R | T              | L | E              | S | S              |
| H               |   | I              |   | G              |   | R              |   | C              |   | I              |
| <sup>8</sup> A  | L | T              | E | R              | C | A              | T | I              | O | N              |
| R               |   | T              |   | E              |   | D              |   | F              |   | T              |
| <sup>9</sup> T  | R | A              | N | S              | F | I              | N | I              | T | E              |
| E               |   | N              |   | S              |   | T              |   | A              |   | R              |
| <sup>10</sup> R | E | C              | T | I              | F | I              | A | B              | L | E              |
| E               |   | E              |   | V              |   | O              |   | L              |   | S              |
| <sup>11</sup> D | I | S              | C | E              | R | N              | M | E              | N | T              |

### PICTURE THIS

|                 |   |                |   |                |   |   |                |   |                |   |                |                |
|-----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|----------------|
| <sup>1</sup> A  | U | <sup>2</sup> T | O | <sup>3</sup> E | R | O | <sup>4</sup> T | I | <sup>5</sup> C | I | <sup>6</sup> S | <sup>7</sup> M |
| L               |   | H              |   | I              |   | N |                | N |                | N |                | E              |
| <sup>8</sup> T  | H | E              | S | L              | E | E | P              | T | R              | A | I              | N              |
| O               |   | P              |   | E              |   | S |                | E |                | P |                | U              |
| <sup>9</sup> T  | W | O              | L | E              | T | T | E              | R | W              | O | R              | D              |
| R               |   | T              |   | N              |   | O |                | N |                | S |                | E              |
| <sup>10</sup> O | C | T              | O | B              | E | R | B              | A | B              | I | E              | S              |
| M               |   | Y              |   | R              |   | Y |                | L |                | T |                | I              |
| <sup>11</sup> B | U | D              | G | E              | T | H | E              | A | R              | I | N              | G              |
| O               |   | A              |   | N              |   | O |                | N |                | O |                | N              |
| <sup>12</sup> N | O | N              | I | N              | D | U | L              | G | E              | N | C              | E              |
| E               |   | C              |   | A              |   | S |                | L |                | T |                | R              |
| <sup>13</sup> S | E | E              | I | N              | G | E | Y              | E | D              | O | G              | S              |

### A STOUT BEGINNING

|                 |   |                |   |                |   |                |   |                |   |                |   |                |
|-----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|
| <sup>1</sup> G  | U | <sup>2</sup> I | N | <sup>3</sup> N | E | <sup>4</sup> S | S | <sup>5</sup> O | N | <sup>6</sup> T | A | <sup>7</sup> P |
| R               |   | N              |   | O              |   | T              |   | N              |   | H              |   | R              |
| <sup>8</sup> A  | T | T              | E | N              | D | A              | N | T              | C | A              | R | E              |
| M               |   | E              |   | M              |   | R              |   | H              |   | N              |   | D              |
| <sup>9</sup> M  | O | R              | E | O              | F | T              | H | E              | S | A              | M | E              |
| Y               |   | M              |   | N              |   | P              |   | S              |   | T              |   | T              |
| <sup>10</sup> W | E | A              | R | E              | N | O              | T | A              | L | O              | N | E              |
| I               |   | R              |   | T              |   | S              |   | M              |   | L              |   | R              |
| <sup>11</sup> N | A | R              | R | A              | T | I              | V | E              | P | O              | E | M              |
| N               |   | I              |   | R              |   | T              |   | P              |   | G              |   | I              |
| <sup>12</sup> I | T | A              | L | I              | C | I              | Z | A              | T | I              | O | N              |
| N               |   | G              |   | S              |   | O              |   | G              |   | S              |   | E              |
| <sup>13</sup> G | R | E              | A | T              | A | N              | T | E              | A | T              | E | R              |

# ALMOST OPEN

|                 |   |                |   |                |   |                |   |                |   |                |   |                |   |                 |
|-----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|-----------------|
| <sup>1</sup> C  | O | <sup>2</sup> U | R | <sup>3</sup> T | M | <sup>4</sup> A | R | <sup>5</sup> T | I | <sup>6</sup> A | L | <sup>7</sup> L | E | <sup>8</sup> D  |
| H               |   | N              |   | H              |   | N              |   | H              |   | N              |   | A              |   | U               |
| <sup>9</sup> I  | H | A              | V | E              | T | O              | G | E              | T | G              | O | I              | N | G               |
| A               |   | S              |   | S              |   | R              |   | S              |   | O              |   | D              |   | O               |
| <sup>10</sup> P | O | S              | E | T              | H | E              | Q | U              | E | S              | T | I              | O | N               |
| A               |   | E              |   | R              |   | X              |   | R              |   | T              |   | T              |   | G               |
| <sup>11</sup> S | P | R              | E | A              | D | I              | N | G              | R | U              | M | O              | R | S               |
|                 |   | T              |   | I              |   | A              |   | E              |   | R              |   | N              |   |                 |
| <sup>12</sup> S | W | I              | N | G              | I | N              | G | O              | N | A              | S | T              | A | <sup>13</sup> R |
| N               |   | V              |   | H              |   | E              |   | N              |   | B              |   | H              |   | E               |
| <sup>14</sup> A | L | E              | C | T              | O | R              | I | S              | G | R              | A | E              | C | A               |
| G               |   | N              |   | D              |   | V              |   | M              |   | I              |   | L              |   | D               |
| <sup>15</sup> G | R | E              | C | O              | R | O              | M | A              | N | D              | E | I              | T | Y               |
| E               |   | S              |   | P              |   | S              |   | T              |   | G              |   | N              |   | B               |
| <sup>16</sup> D | E | S              | P | E              | R | A              | T | E              | R | E              | M | E              | D | Y               |

# ALMOST OPEN—CRYPTIC

|                 |   |                |   |                |   |                |   |                |   |                |   |                |   |                 |
|-----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|-----------------|
| <sup>1</sup> B  | A | <sup>2</sup> C | K | <sup>3</sup> G | A | <sup>4</sup> M | M | <sup>5</sup> O | N | <sup>6</sup> P | I | <sup>7</sup> E | C | <sup>8</sup> E  |
| O               |   | O              |   | U              |   | A              |   | P              |   | E              |   | R              |   | M               |
| <sup>9</sup> T  | E | S              | T | I              | N | G              | N | E              | G | A              | T | I              | V | E               |
| T               |   | M              |   | T              |   | N              |   | N              |   | C              |   | C              |   | R               |
| <sup>10</sup> O | N | E              | L | A              | N | E              | H | I              | G | H              | W | A              | Y | S               |
| M               |   | T              |   | R              |   | T              |   | N              |   | T              |   | L              |   | E               |
| <sup>11</sup> S | W | I              | T | C              | H | I              | N | G              | A | R              | O | U              | N | D               |
|                 |   | C              |   | O              |   | C              |   | S              |   | E              |   | S              |   |                 |
| <sup>12</sup> R | O | M              | A | N              | T | I              | C | E              | V | E              | N | I              | N | <sup>13</sup> G |
| E               |   | E              |   | C              |   | R              |   | N              |   | C              |   | T              |   | R               |
| <sup>14</sup> L | E | A              | D | E              | R | O              | F | T              | H | E              | R | A              | C | E               |
| A               |   | S              |   | R              |   | N              |   | E              |   | N              |   | N              |   | I               |
| <sup>15</sup> C | O | U              | N | T              | F | O              | R | N              | O | T              | H | I              | N | G               |
| E               |   | R              |   | O              |   | R              |   | C              |   | E              |   | C              |   | E               |
| <sup>16</sup> D | R | E              | S | S              | R | E              | H | E              | A | R              | S | A              | L | S               |

## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1: Scoring Details for the Diagonal Clabbers Game

| Play # | Word            | Anagram         | Word Score | Play Score |
|--------|-----------------|-----------------|------------|------------|
| 1      | OXYPHENBUTAZONE | PATNEXBHYZOUONE | 387,122    | 387,122    |
| 2      | BO              | BO              | 4          |            |
| 2      | HO              | HO              | 5          | 9          |
| 3      | WASHINGS        | GSWNSIHA        | 69         |            |
| 3      | NONWORD         | SB              | 0          |            |
| 3      | BI              | IB              | 4          |            |
| 3      | OI              | IO              | 2          |            |
| 3      | YA              | YA              | 5          |            |
| 3      | NONWORD         | OA              | 0          | 80         |
| 4      | IS              | IS              | 2          |            |
| 4      | IN              | NI              | 2          | 4          |
| 5      | ENTITIES        | TNTIIEES        | 59         |            |
| 5      | TA              | TA              | 2          |            |
| 5      | NA              | NA              | 2          |            |
| 5      | IN              | NI              | 2          |            |
| 5      | IN              | NI              | 2          | 67         |
| 6      | AIN             | NIA             | 3          | 3          |
| 7      | FAITHFUL        | HAILFFTU        | 75         |            |
| 7      | PHT             | THP             | 8          |            |
| 7      | NONWORD         | HN              | 0          |            |
| 7      | IN              | NI              | 2          |            |
| 7      | TI              | TI              | 2          |            |
| 7      | NONWORD         | II              | 0          |            |
| 7      | NONWORD         | TL              | 0          |            |
| 7      | NIL             | NIL             | 3          |            |
| 7      | LI              | LI              | 2          |            |
| 7      | IF              | IF              | 5          |            |
| 7      | IF              | IF              | 5          |            |
| 7      | FE              | FE              | 5          |            |
| 7      | FIN             | NIF             | 14         |            |
| 7      | EF              | EF              | 13         |            |
| 7      | FE              | FE              | 13         |            |



|    |                          |                 |         |           |
|----|--------------------------|-----------------|---------|-----------|
| 7  | ET                       | ET              | 2       |           |
| 7  | ET                       | ET              | 2       |           |
| 7  | NONWORD OR ST<br>(INT'L) | TS              | 0 (2)   |           |
| 7  | NONWORD                  | EU              | 0       |           |
| 7  | US                       | SU              | 2       | 153 (155) |
| 8  | AT                       | AT              | 2       | 2         |
| 9  | MICROEARTHQUAKE          | EAARTQMHCKOURIE | 163,634 |           |
| 9  | QIS                      | QIS             | 32      |           |
| 9  | QAT                      | QAT             | 32      |           |
| 9  | MI                       | IM              | 7       |           |
| 9  | NONWORD                  | SMT             | 0       |           |
| 9  | BIMA                     | AMIB            | 11      |           |
| 9  | COB                      | BOC             | 10      |           |
| 9  | CAY                      | YAC             | 11      | 163,737   |
| 10 | LIMY                     | IMLY            | 9       |           |
| 10 | ALA                      | ALA             | 3       |           |
| 10 | LI                       | IL              | 2       |           |
| 10 | HOLT                     | TLHO            | 7       | 21        |
| 11 | RODEOING                 | OGENDIRO        | 62      |           |
| 11 | PHOT                     | OTHP            | 10      |           |
| 11 | ION                      | ONI             | 4       |           |
| 11 | NONWORD                  | TG              | 0       |           |
| 11 | NAG                      | GNA             | 4       |           |
| 11 | NONWORD                  | GTL             | 0       |           |
| 11 | HEN                      | HNE             | 6       |           |
| 11 | TIE                      | ETI             | 3       |           |
| 11 | FIE                      | EIF             | 6       |           |
| 11 | NONWORD                  | IID             | 0       |           |
| 11 | DEFI                     | EDIF            | 8       |           |
| 11 | TED                      | DET             | 4       |           |
| 11 | NONWORD                  | LII             | 0       |           |
| 11 | NONWORD                  | EIEU            | 0       |           |
| 11 | FIE                      | IEF             | 6       |           |
| 11 | FER                      | FER             | 6       |           |
| 11 | RET                      | RET             | 3       |           |
| 11 | NONWORD                  | RS              | 0       |           |

|    |                 |                 |     |     |
|----|-----------------|-----------------|-----|-----|
| 11 | FOE             | FEO             | 6   |     |
| 11 | SOU             | OSU             | 3   | 129 |
| 12 | AG              | GA              | 4   |     |
| 12 | AS              | AS              | 3   |     |
| 12 | AW              | AW              | 6   | 13  |
| 13 | GOVERNED        | OEDGERVN        | 63  |     |
| 13 | PHOTO           | OOTHP           | 10  |     |
| 13 | NONWORD         | OGTL            | 0   |     |
| 13 | OE              | OE              | 2   |     |
| 13 | GAEN            | EGNA            | 5   |     |
| 13 | NONWORD         | EEIF            | 0   |     |
| 13 | NONWORD         | TGD             | 0   |     |
| 13 | TIDE            | DETI            | 5   |     |
| 13 | FIND            | DNIF            | 8   |     |
| 13 | NONWORD         | HNEG            | 0   |     |
| 13 | LING            | GNIL            | 5   |     |
| 13 | NONWORD         | GDET            | 0   |     |
| 13 | IRID            | IIDR            | 5   |     |
| 13 | FIXER           | XRIF            | 15  |     |
| 13 | NONWORD         | RRS             | 0   |     |
| 13 | VOX             | XVO             | 13  |     |
| 13 | NONWORD         | LIIV            | 0   |     |
| 13 | VERT            | VRET            | 7   |     |
| 13 | FERN            | FERN            | 7   |     |
| 13 | ONUS            | NOSU            | 4   | 149 |
| 14 | DIVULGATE       | DALTEVIGU       | 72  |     |
| 14 | ED              | ED              | 3   |     |
| 14 | LA              | LA              | 2   |     |
| 14 | TA              | TA              | 2   |     |
| 14 | VAW             | VAW             | 17  |     |
| 14 | AI              | IA              | 2   |     |
| 14 | IS              | IS              | 2   |     |
| 14 | US              | US              | 2   | 102 |
| 15 | PHOTOJOURNALISM | pORJMTLHOINOSUA | 356 |     |
| 15 | MAIN            | NIAM            | 6   |     |
| 15 | BIS             | SBI             | 5   |     |
| 15 | NONWORD         | LIIVIC          | 0   |     |

|    |                 |                 |     |     |
|----|-----------------|-----------------|-----|-----|
| 15 | GATED           | GDETA           | 21  | 388 |
| 16 | SEPARABLY       | PEBYRSAAL       | 70  |     |
| 16 | HE              | HE              | 5   |     |
| 16 | AGENE           | EGNAE           | 6   |     |
| 16 | NONWORD         | EIDR            | 0   |     |
| 16 | TAB             | TAB             | 5   |     |
| 16 | DEBIT           | DETIB           | 8   |     |
| 16 | NONWORD         | BLIIVE          | 0   |     |
| 16 | YONI            | ONiy            | 11  |     |
| 16 | LYING           | GNILY           | 13  |     |
| 16 | FERNY           | YFERN           | 15  |     |
| 16 | NONWORD         | OGTLR           | 0   |     |
| 16 | FIRED           | EDIFR           | 9   |     |
| 16 | FORE            | RFEO            | 7   |     |
| 16 | NONWORD         | EEIFS           | 0   |     |
| 16 | FIXERS          | XRIEFS          | 16  |     |
| 16 | NONWORD         | STS             | 0   |     |
| 16 | NONWORD         | DNIFA           | 0   |     |
| 16 | AVERT           | VRETA           | 8   |     |
| 16 | NONWORD         | AU              | 0   |     |
| 16 | NONWORD         | EIEUL           | 0   | 173 |
| 17 | WAPPENSCHAWINGS | PGSWNSIHAEAWCNp | 338 |     |
| 17 | PI              | PI              | 12  |     |
| 17 | UP              | PU              | 12  |     |
| 17 | TYE             | TYE             | 6   |     |
| 17 | NONWORD         | BLIIVICE        | 0   | 368 |
| 18 | EX              | EX              | 9   |     |
| 18 | HENGE           | HNEGE           | 9   |     |
| 18 | DEFIER          | EEDIFR          | 10  |     |
| 18 | ERRS            | ERRS            | 4   | 32  |

**HIPPOM  
ONSTRO  
SESQUI  
PEDALIA  
PHILIA**

