

THE *Journal* OF WORDPLAY

#12 · FEB 2026

**“Greenland,” The Word
Chronograms, Updated
A New Crossword Form
More Mixed Metaphors
Talented TV Retitlings
Misleading Misnomers
At Play in “Wellfleet”
Recombined Elements
Bookshelf Anagrams
Dictation Errors**

**Catachresis, Anapodotons, Oronyms,
Euphemism/Dysphemism, More!**

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**An Interview with
Doug Beeferman**



THE JOURNAL OF WORDPLAY

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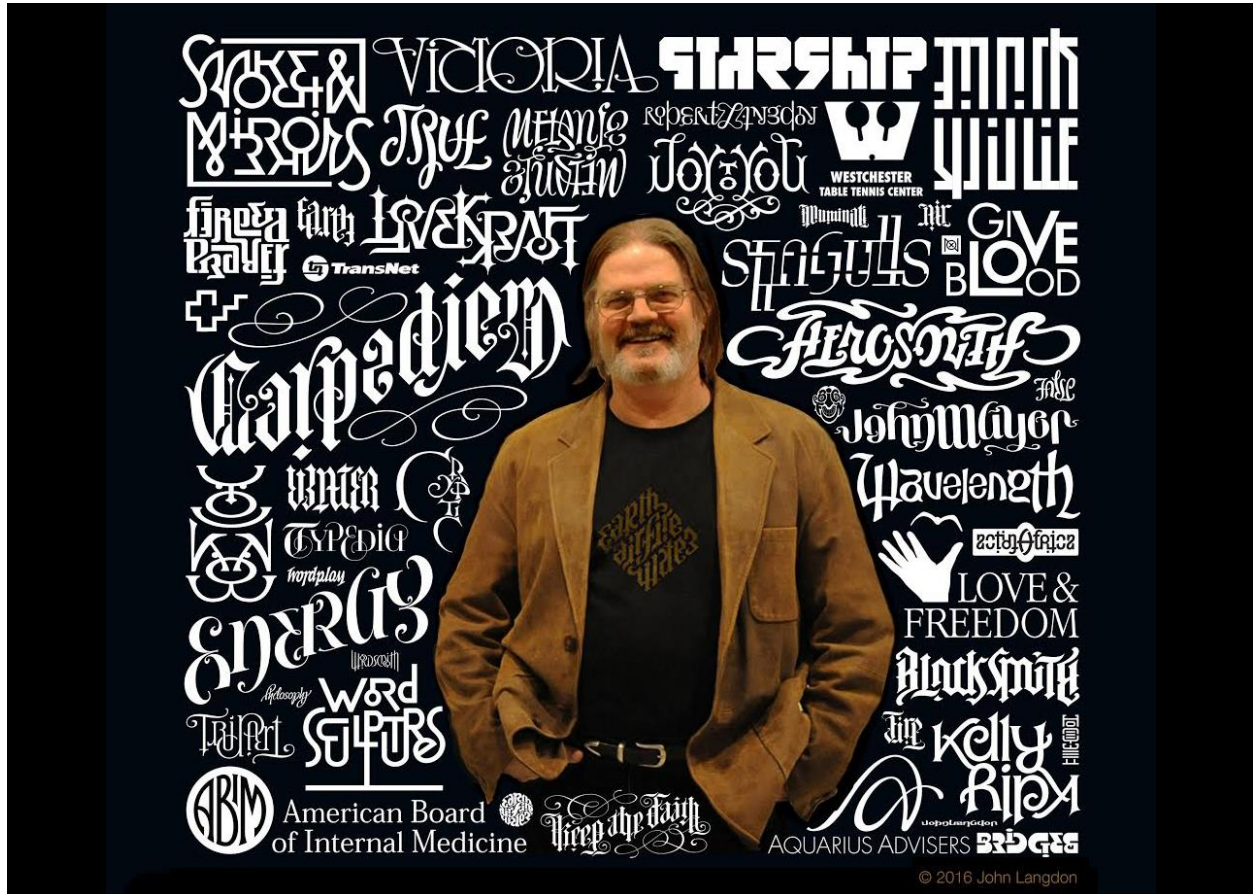
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INTRODUCTION

T Campbell, editor

I was going through the plan for this issue when I got word of the passing of John Langdon, a featured interview in issue #7 and the designer of our current letterhead. His influence appears in issue #6 as well, since other members of the ambigram-designing community are quick to mention him. Langdon corresponded with me until a month or so before his passing, and he will be missed.



A self-portrait from ten years ago, surrounded by his work.

Another loss led to the interview in this issue. I learned a couple of years ago of the passing of Harvey Beeferman, business manager for RhymeZone and OneLook. If you don't know the names of those websites, you should: they're vital resources for anyone who wants to do something unconventional or unexpected with words. I wrote up a memorial for Harvey, and that put me in touch with his son Doug, who's done most of both sites' technical development. RhymeZone is now a Merriam-Webster property, but in the year to come, OneLook and the Spanish-language Rimar.io will serve as the canvas for Doug's beguiling ideas.

All this has put me in a somber mood. It's underlined the importance of having the conversations we should when we can, of making a record of the things that feel important. But still, this is *The Journal of Wordplay*, and it's also important to enjoy what time we have. Let joy be our legacy. ■

THE WELLFLEET PUZZLE PACKET

Matthew Abate
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I recently spent time in Wellfleet, MA, and noticed a quaint pattern in its spelling: Wellfleet contains both ELL and LEE. I decided to make a short puzzle packet inspired by that idea.



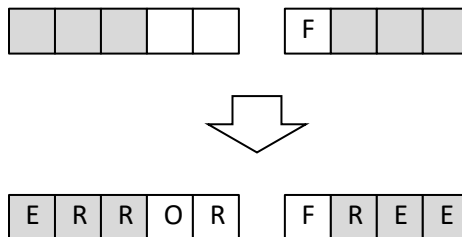
The Rules are as follows: For each puzzle, fill in the blanks using the clue so that either

- the pattern ABB / BAA appears in the spelling, as is the case with Wellfleet (ELL), or
- the pattern AAB / BBA appears, as is the case with Bittersweet (TTE).

I've marked the locations of these patterns in advance, however, not which one to use, and in certain instances I have provided one or more free letters as aids.

Example:

Clue: Flawless, literally (5-4)



Answer: Error free (ERR)

Helpful Tip: Each letter pattern (like ABB = ELL, BAA = LEE) is used only once across the 11 puzzles. That means if ABB = ELL appears in one puzzle, you won't see ABB = ELL again—though the reversed form (ABB = LEE, BAA = ELL) may appear elsewhere.

The puzzles begin on the next page—please enjoy.

Puzzles:

Puzzle 1:

Early Washington foe? (6, 4)



Puzzle 2:

Regular spot to find housemates? (6, 4)



Puzzle 3:

One under the covers? (6, 5)



Puzzle 4:

Group that's waiting to happen? (7, 4)



Puzzle 5:

Succumbed to tiredness (4, 6)



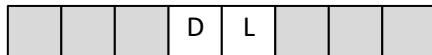
Puzzle 6:

Keg, maybe (4, 6)



Puzzle 7:

Grapes' classification in the produce aisle (8)



Puzzle 8:

Seesaw (6-6)



Puzzles cont.

Puzzle 9:

Epic weakness? (8, 4)

	C						S
--	---	--	--	--	--	--	---

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Puzzle 10:

It might contain a planner, folders, or
assignments (7, 6)

			P			
--	--	--	---	--	--	--

K						
---	--	--	--	--	--	--

Puzzle 11:

Last Stuart monarch (5, 4)

--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--

Answers on page 77.

UNIMORPHS

T Campbell

In “The Patterns of Statenames,” A. Ross Eckler reported that while most states had at least one other term that shared their letter-pattern, NORTH CAROLINA (pattern ABCDEFGCBHIAJ) did not. A couple were one-offs. TENNESSEE had the same pattern as PELLETÉE, a heraldic term meaning “charged with round black dots,” and INDIANA matched IOTISTS, members of a Jewish sect—the latter is almost unknown today and the former is normally spelled without the last “e,” so we’re scraping the bottom of the barrel already.

A few other state names were likewise unique—MISSISSIPPI, MASSACHUSETTS, CONNECTICUT, and PENNSYLVANIA—and they seemed likely to still be unique today. I thought that NORTH CAROLINA might be conquerable, though, given the shift of languages over time.

So I turned my developing “crossword database” to the task. It currently has over 500,000 entries that I’ll probably be combing through for some time to come, but that includes a lot of dictionary terms as well as pop culture references and up-and-coming slang. For INDIANA, I found BOMB POP, and for PENNSYLVANIA, ironically, I got MISS NEBRASKA.

But I got nothing for NORTH CAROLINA, with or without the spacing. (Nothing for TENNESSEE, either.)

So I have to conclude that these are **unimorphs**—strings whose letter patterns are unique in the standard language.

What makes TENNESSEE’s pattern special is probably obvious—one vowel, three double letters, and the third double letter *is* that one vowel. NORTH CAROLINA’s intricacies are a little subtler: it has two N’s, two O’s, two R’s, and two A’s, all in unpredictable spots.

Up to a certain point, our language favors uniqueness—the most common single pattern for strings of lengths 1-13 are the patterns where every letter is unique. (There aren’t a lot of unique 13-letter strings, but there aren’t a lot of strings of *any* single pattern at that length.)

Now, if I treat NORTH CAROLINA as a cryptogram, looking for common words in a novel phrase, I get GIRLS’ (or GIRLY) HERITAGE, ITCHY BACTERIA, and SHADY TEAHOUSE. The last of these is the “purest,” as it’s the only one that doesn’t repeat a letter in the same slot as the original. These are interesting in their own right, but you won’t find them in any dictionary or even a more permissive word list like mine.



The snack with the odd letter-pattern.

I'm most attracted to the weird little pattern-matches like ALFALFA and ENTENTE, AKA the isomorphs. But there's also something beautiful about a pattern that isn't found *anywhere* else that we know of.

FANTASTIC FOUR? Two F's, two A's, two T's. Unique.

PATRICK STEWART? Two A's, three T's, two R's. Unique.

SYDNEY SWEENEY? Two S's, three Y's, two N's, two E's. Visually rhyming endings. Unique.

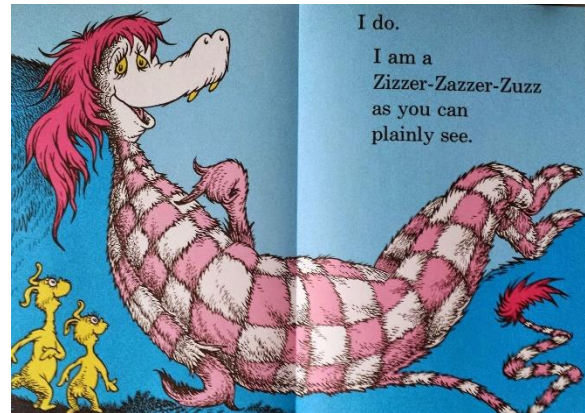
ZIZZER-ZAZZER-ZUZZ? You know it.

GARGANTUA? Two G's, three A's, starting with a 123124 pattern. Close—it has four matches, the best-known of which is MESMERIZE, followed by HATHA YOGA.

What about T CAMPBELL? Of course not—I turn up 483 matches. My name's fairly short at nine letters, and it only has one repetition, the two L's right at the end.

My wife's name *is* a unimorph, though—JANICE CAMPBELL has two A's and two C's in addition to its ending two L's. Her maiden name JANICE HOFER doesn't have any of these duplications—just one double E the married name shares.

I told you marrying me was a good idea, honey. ■



This creation of Dr. Seuss's ABC shows up now and again in word-trivia contests.

ORONYM BRACE, OR AN EMBRACE

Simultaneous Text Construction with Sound

Lori Wike

Imagine a poem of large or even epic proportions, say, the Iliad. Now try to imagine that the language of this poem is constructed in such a way that it simultaneously tells an entire additional story. Suppose, in other words, that each verse of the Iliad could simultaneously be read as narrating the Odyssey as well. It is hard to imagine that language could sustain such an effort and still be intelligible, let alone beautiful. We can conceive of punned words or even proverbial utterances that are doubly readable, such as “Gladly the cross-eyed bear” for “gladly the cross I’d bear,” but a large-scale poem that is consistently “bitextual” seems inconceivable. Now try to imagine the effort required to put together such a work.

—Michael Bronner, *Extreme Poetry: The South Asian Movement of Simultaneous Narration*¹

An **oronym** is a sequence of sounds in a *phrase* that can be understood and segmented in multiple ways, whereas a homophone typically refers to *single words* such as HEAR/HERE. An oronym poem consists of open sound pattern repetitions with meanings circumscribed by their visual transcription. One can imagine how amusing (and perplexing) it might be to present oronym poems in a poetry reading without the accompanying visual text!

I wrote the following two triolets prior to learning about the ancient Sanskrit tradition of ślesa, a term that means both “wordplay” and “embrace.” Ślesa poetry is a form of simultaneous text narration and its fascinating history is charted in Michael Bronner’s book *Extreme Poetry: The South Asian Movement of Simultaneous Narration*. While used in various contexts, this literary device was most often used to co-narrate the two great South Asian epics, the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata—a feat that is mind-boggling to contemplate.

As a thoroughly phonetic language, Sanskrit is particularly well-suited to the oronym form, much more so than English. Simultaneous text construction in English is, I think, more easily accomplished through a structurally parallel device like the **redivider**, in which the same letter sequence can be segmented and understood in multiple ways, as in this example:

FALLINGALWAYSSENDINGALONELYRESCUE

Fall in Galway,
Sending a lone lyre’s cue.

Falling, always ending,
A lonely rescue.

¹ Bronner, Michael. *Extreme Poetry: The South Asian Movement of Simultaneous Narration*, Columbia University Press, 2010; 1.

Nevertheless, oronym poems *are* possible to construct in English, even if not on the astonishing scale of Sanskrit ślesā poetry. Here are two oronym triolets, “Sensory Chord” and “Currencies”:

SENSORY CHORD

Sensory chord
Intuits whole
Sense or record
Sensory chord
Censor re-cored
Into its soul
Sensory chord
Intuits whole

CURRENCIES

A current’s ease,
form into mist.
Occurrence sees
a current’s ease.
A currency’s
for men too missed—
a current’s ease,
form into mist.

CATACHRESIS

A Wordplay Word Without a Purpose?

T Campbell

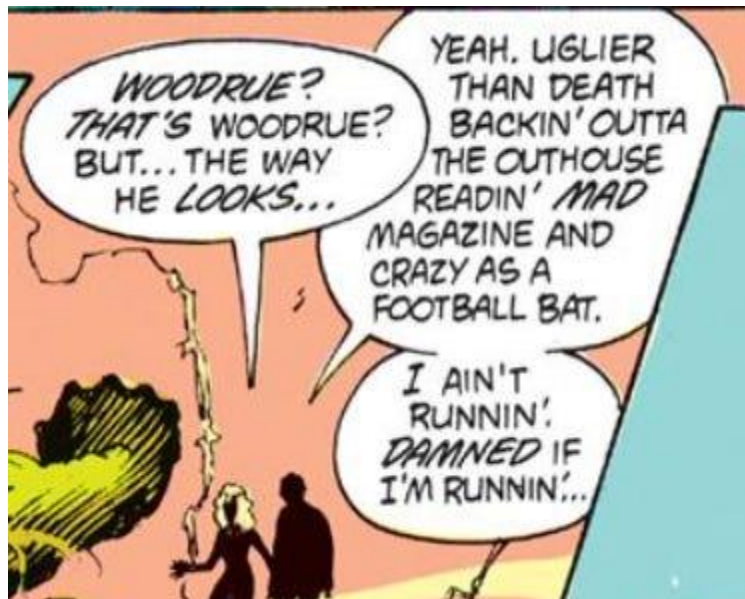
The word *catachresis* is taken almost straight from Greek *kata khrēsthai*, meaning *badly use*. But despite that straightforward etymology, word nerds aren't always clear on what it means. Sometimes it signifies a malapropism like *escalator music* for *elevator music*, or a malapropism that's becoming standard like *You've got another think coming* for *You've got another thing coming*. Sometimes it signifies a euphemism (see page 26).

And sometimes it's just a stretchy metaphor, like calling a razor a *beard mower* or *She ran so fast, she was a cheetah on methamphetamines*. [Wikipedia](#) gives the example "Tis deepest winter in Lord Timon's purse" from Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*.

It also talks about how stretching a metaphor past its usual bounds can give words new meanings when they slip in to fill a void, as in *legs of a chair*. You could argue that legs are something only living things have, but no word works as well for the support beams that keep a chair at butt-level.

But it's difficult to think of metaphors that are inarguably catachreses but still "work." Calling the Batmobile a *Corvette on steroids* seems ridiculous when you stop and think about it, but most people have heard the phrase *on steroids* enough that they automatically accept its meaning: *artificially strengthened, exaggerated, magnified, with its softer elements weakened or removed*.

Using *methamphetamines* above was my attempt to stick close to that idea but make it uncommon enough that you might've thought about it a little more. But you may have heard *on methamphetamines* or at least *on meth* as a metaphor before, too. That's the problem with figures of speech: so many of the good and concise ones have been done or inspire imitation. An outrageous metaphor or simile usually needs a little more elaboration. Here's one I'm fond of from *Saga of the Swamp Thing* #24.



A side character in *Saga of the Swamp Thing* #24, despite only lasting a few pages, makes an impression with his ability to turn a phrase.

In the end, though, most people would rather call a stretchy metaphor a *stretchy metaphor*, a euphemism a *euphemism*, a malapropism a *malapropism*. And the *chair legs* example doesn't feel that remarkable. What's left for *catachresis*, then? Is this a word without a real reason to exist?

It comes up most often in discussion of Dada writing, which flirts with or embraces deliberate nonsense, and in postcolonial theory, when a colonized group claims language that once applied only to the colonizers, like the idea of a non-Christian *missionary*. In the latter case, the "wrongness" comes at least in part from one sub-group taking language that's supposed to "belong" to another sub-group.

I can get behind that idea, but it seems like such a natural part of language as to be almost unremarkable. Ideas spread through words, and ideas, at least, should belong to all of us. While I hesitate to compare myself to anyone who's really marginalized, this is why I also rebel against the idea that I should stick to the words (and maybe the attitudes?) of my own generation.

I doubt that I write like a twenty-year-old overall (though maybe I didn't sound young even when I *was* one), but I don't hesitate to call a fashionable outfit *some drip*, being stood up *being ghosted*, or to use *Say less* for *I got it*. Sometimes these newer expressions confuse my friends, but I'd rather swim against the current of time than feel myself borne into the past.

With a few exceptions—such as certain words that most people recognize should remain the province of minorities—that current is worth resisting. You don't have to stay in your own verbal "lane." To do language right, do a little wrong. ■

TV PITCHES

Will Shortz

A few years ago, on my weekly puzzle segment on NPR's "Weekend Edition Sunday," I ran a creative challenge involving TV shows. The object was for listeners to pitch a program proposal to one of the TV networks, either broadcast or cable, in which the show's title differs by just one letter from an existing show's title, past or present. I asked for a summary of the show in 15 words or less. Entries were judged on their sense, at least remote plausibility, humor, and overall effect.

Several thousand pitches were submitted altogether. Some of my favorite titles, needing no explanation:

- *Perks And Recreation*
- *The O.C.D. Couple*
- *Father Knots Best*
- *Star Trek: The Next Veneration*
- *Big Brothel*
- *The Mary Tyler Moose Show*
- *Beverly Sills 90210*
- *Mayberry B.F.D.*
- *The Punsters*
- *The Incredible Hunk*
- *The Incredible Hula*
- *Little Souse on the Prairie*
- *Let's Make a Meal*
- *Saturday Night Jive*
- *Lust in Space*
- *Big Bong Theory*
- *Get Kmart*
- *PR*
- *The Greatest American Herb*
- *Who Waits to Be a Millionaire?*
- *America's Next Top Mohel*
- *As the World Burns*
- *Hawaii Five-K [race]*

The winner, chosen for its originality, surprising letter substitution, naturalness of its description, and humor, was submitted by Gail White:

- ***I Remember MOMA***

Each episode focuses on a past exhibit or artist at the Museum of Modern Art

Runner-Up Entries

- *Antiques Roid Show*

Large bodybuilders try to navigate obstacle course in an antique shop without breaking anything

—Rose Cunnion

- *Shrubs*

Intern John Dorian is unexpectedly rotated to the groundskeeper position at Sacred Heart Hospital

—David Rudofsky

- *M*U*S*H*

A wacky veterinarian-based sitcom set in interior Alaska during the 1890s gold rush

—William White

- *Mr. Roget's Neighborhood*

Fred Roget teaches children all sorts of ways to say the same thing

—Steve Pennington

- *Pet Smart*

Set in a popular pet-care store where the animals are the ones in charge

—Shaun Ingalls

- *Father Knows Jest*

1950s dad abandons office job and flannel suit for gig as standup comedian

—Steve Walsh

- *Will and Grape*

An estate lawyer quits his job and moves to Sonoma to become a vintner

—John McMillen

- *Welcome Back, Potter*

Harry Potter returns to Hogwarts to teach a history class to a collection of teenage wizards

—Patrick Jones

- *Slackish*

Four millennials avoid work, responsibilities, and “adulting” in general

—Sue Hirsh

- *Gear Factor*

Car enthusiasts modify standard cars into high-performing street machines

—Steve Gilmore

- *Sesame Streeep*

Follows Meryl Streep on her quest to find the best sesame chicken in America

—Whit Morison

- *AOL in the Family*

Set in the 1980s. Siblings’ rivalry plays out daily on a dial-up email server

—John Khanlian

- *Leopardy!*

Players must get out of an escape room before the leopards are released

—Ed Pegg

- *America’s Next Top Yodel*

Singing competition set in the Swiss Alps

—Patrick Berry

- *Texter*

Group of millennial detectives solve crimes using nothing but the victims’ cell phones

—Lauren Funk

- *Today with Kathie Lee and Yoda*

Wit and wisdom combine in an intergalactic tour de force. Entertaining and educational they are

—Jim Levering

- *What's My Wine?*

Panelists identify grape, vintage, and vineyard of wines presented to them

—Jeff Bradway

- *Hollywood Squires*

Prospective male escorts vie for lucrative dating gigs by cleverly sabotaging their competitors

—Dena McClung

- *The Ghost and Mrs. Meir*

The Israeli prime minister's rise to power, narrated by her late husband

—Andrew Cohen

- *Masterpiece Cheater*

Art forgers take turns trying to dupe museums and galleries around the world

—Anthony Gray

- *Jersey Shorn*

The ups and downs of a leading wool-purveying family on a scenic British isle

—Tom Meredith

- *It's Always Sunni in Philadelphia*

Four Muslim-American friends have zany adventures in Pennsylvania's most populous city

—Dan Giordano

- *This Is Ur*

Chronicles the trials and tribulations of a Sumerian family

—Bob Amar

- *Two and a Half Yen*

Reality/game show: American ex-pats must make it on minimal money

—Arielle Poritsky

**PEOPLE WHO CLUTCH THEIR PEARLS
SHOULDN'T SWEEP THEM UNDER THE RUG
More Mixed Metaphors, Caught in the Wild**

Don Hauptman
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As I write, *Song Sung Blue*, a new Hollywood movie, is playing in cinemas. The 1972 Neil Diamond pop hit that inspired the film begins:

Song sung blue, everybody knows one
Song sung blue, every garden grows one

But come on! Can a garden grow a song, whatever its color? However poetic the lyric, it's a quintessential instance of a mixed metaphor: a figure of speech that creates an incongruous or absurd or impossible image.

This linguistic solecism is surprisingly common, in part because writers and editors fail to recognize the error. The problem can usually be avoided via a simple test. Interpret the expression literally and ask, to take a classic example: Can something on a back burner really be in a holding pattern?

Now we're off to the races, and it's full steam ahead! Following are specimens I've encountered in my reading since my previous mixed-metaphor compilation in the May 2024 issue of this *Journal*.

- "He called the report 'a house of cards built on sand.'"
- "It just felt like someone had thrown me a life raft, and I could see the light at the end of the tunnel."
- "Ukraine must become a steel porcupine, undigestible for potential invaders."
- "It's an opportunity to claw back some of the rewiring on global trade. . . ."
- "The business model is to propose that people become the C.E.O.s of their own health journeys."
- "The Palisades attracted middle-class families seeking their slice of the California dream."

- “The writing was on the wall for us that this entire landscape has changed.”
- “I thought any kind of bad blood had blown over. . . .”
- “These are still gems that Americans treasure, but they are teetering.”
- “It would not seem as though she were trying to bigfoot her heat-seeking peers.”
- “The reason he can eat kryptonite is he was elected to be the hand grenade underneath the establishment’s door.”

Here’s a pair sharing a similar theme: “This . . . point slid down a slippery slope into an alphabet soup.” “The F.D.A. and abortion advocates continue down the slippery slope of chipping away at medical standards for women seeking abortion.”

And two political headlines in a major newspaper, the editors of which should know better: “[Federal Reserve Chair Jerome] Powell’s Armor: A Groundswell Built With Care.” “Trump Floats Sticking Around.”

Then there are what I call mashed or muddled metaphors. These don’t officially qualify as mixed, but the components still clash awkwardly because of their proximity and cliché overload:

“Star Who Burned Bright Got the Cold Shoulder.” “We’re making a bet that this book has legs. It’s not going to be a flash in the pan.” “All his bases were covered. There was no stone left unturned.” “[Securing a doctor’s appointment is] like getting an audience with the pope. I can’t quarterback anything.” “The senator had tried to ‘thread a fine line’ and he got burned.” “It’s not that we need to go back to square one, but it’s that we need to press pause. . . . It’s possible that something very well intended was overshot a bit. . . .”

Finally, everyone knows the classic Yogi Berra redundancy blooper, although its attribution is apocryphal. A public official took it one step further, most likely in jest: “It’s déjà vu all over again on steroids.”

Whew! That’s a lot for this quirky genre. When the chickens come home to roost, it’s a tough nut to crack. But I’ve stuck to my guns, and I didn’t drop the ball!

ANAPODOTONS

T Campbell

An **anapodoton** is an incomplete phrase or sentence that implies the complete version. It's a rhetorical device, but it has a certain place in any part of speech and writing. It should send your brain into autocomplete mode when you see it, inviting you to *participate* in supplying the missing words.

(Some of the official definitions of *anapodoton* are more elaborate than this, getting specific about main clauses and subordinate clauses. But those definitions don't seem to line up with how anapodoton is actually used, so I don't have much interest in them.)

One example is “All Good Things,” a title used both for the *Star Trek: Next Generation* finale and a 2010 Ryan Gosling-Kirsten Dunst movie. In both, the meaning of the full phrase—*all good things must come to an end*—hangs over the work, furthering the suspense and drama.

When you say...

- “Birds of a feather!”
- “Great minds!”
- “If the shoe fits!”
- “Speak of the devil!”
- “When in Rome!”

...you're alluding to longer well-known phrases and calling upon the meaning of those phrases, not just the particles you're speaking out loud. (*Birds of a feather flock together. Great minds think alike. If the shoe fits, wear it. Speak of the devil and he will appear. When in Rome, do as the Romans do.*)

Apheresis (shortening a word from the beginning) and **apocope** (shortening from the end) are somewhat like anapodotons on a smaller scale.

There are dangers in using a shortened form of a common quip—some people might hear you and think that's all there is to it. *Sticks and stones may break my bones* is a little depressing or disquieting if you don't know it's to be followed by *but words will never hurt me*.



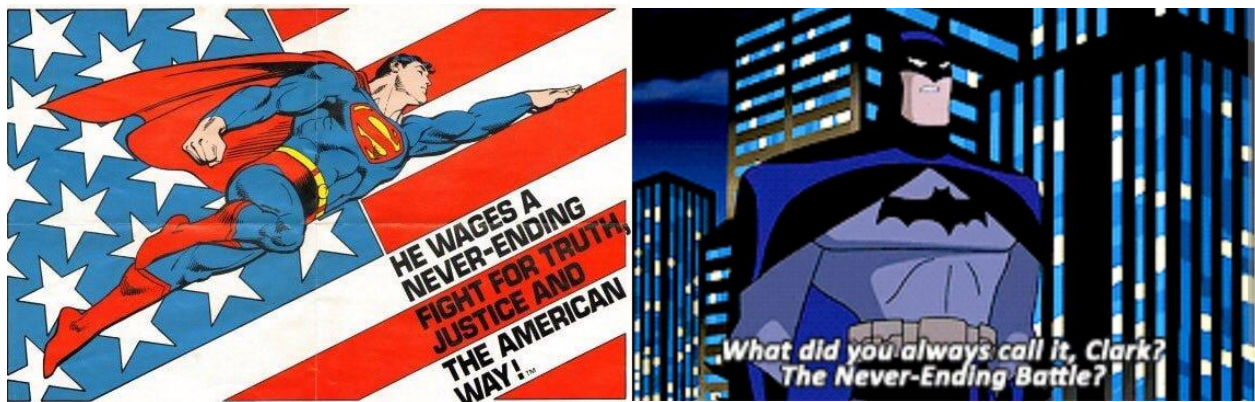
A popular anapodoton in popular culture.

However, many “longer versions” of common phrases are attempts to modify the original sentiment. *Curiosity killed the cat* needs little explanation. But sometimes you’ll see the variant *Curiosity killed the cat, but satisfaction brought it back*, claiming that pursuing curiosity is worth it in the end. I tend to be pro-curiosity, but I’m not sure I can get behind the idea that it’ll resurrect you and reduce your death to a minor inconvenience.

Other sentences with subversive add-ons include *Slow and steady wins the race...till truth and talent take their place*; *The early bird gets the worm...but the second mouse gets the cheese*; *Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery...that mediocrity can pay to greatness*; and *Rome wasn’t built in a day...but it burned in one*. (No, it didn’t. Also, Oscar Wilde didn’t say that third one.)

And then there are the playful subversions, where the writer and the intended audience both know how the original phrase is supposed to go, but head in another direction. Rihanna’s “S&M” used *Sticks and stones may break my bones, but whips and chains excite me*, and it was a well-known joke before that, too.

We do the same thing to pop quotes of more recent vintage. When quoted, “We’re not in Kansas anymore” usually lops off “Toto, I’ve a feeling...” And the Superman-inspired sentence, “He wages a never-ending fight/battle for truth, justice, and the American way” gets reduced a lot...



A DC Comics promo and a scene from *Justice League Unlimited* parse and reparse a well-known bit of Super-branding.

...especially since we don’t always agree on what “the American way” is any more. (If we ever really did.)

In our quest to produce concise language that delivers the most bang for each word, we keep shortening familiar phrases into their memory-triggering keywords. The trick is to do that without losing too much meaning to too many people, especially since there are *new* people all the time who might not have heard the original phrase yet. But we’ll keep at it.

It’s a never-ending battle. ■

SIRI FOR THE INTERRUPTION

Another Roundup of Entertaining Dictation Flubs

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New York, New York

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It's time for a new compilation of creative bloopers produced by dictation in text and email and search, all drawn from my own recent experiences. My iPhone has Siri, but I welcome examples from users of other voice-recognition platforms, such as Alexa and Google Assistant. Some specimens that I had cited previously continue to appear, so evidently there is still no A.I. "learning" that corrects mistakes.

Here is what I dictated, followed by the on-screen result, in all instances verbatim. Although the phenomenon is troublesome, the upside is the amusement generated by the puns and other wordplay, however unintended.

- *chauvinist* → *shopping list*
- *somewhat incongruous* → *someone in Congress*
- *will ensue* → *Will and Sue*
- *palimpsest* → *pal obsessed*
- *salmagundi* → *Selma Gandhi*
- *gallimaufry* → *Gallamore free*
- *Fats Waller* → *fat swallower*

Literary references are a special source of intriguing confusion, such as when *Chaucer* became *choice sir*, and on another occasion, *trouser*. The word *kerfuffle* keeps being transcribed as *Gruffalo*, the semi-scary monster in the eponymous classic children's book. And I had the opportunity to meet the lovely *Alison Wonderland*.

Other voice-to-text transformations: *amiss* to *a mess*, *artifacts* to *art defects*, *cognoscenti* to *caliente*, *Iris* to *high-res*, *newsletter* to *new sweater*, *panacea* to *paranoia*, *redux* to *red duck*, *semester* to *Sylvester*.

Best example? The traditional Italian confection *panettone* was rendered as *Bennett Tony*, appropriate because the beloved singer was indeed Italian. ■

TERRAFORMING “GREENLAND”

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In the previous edition of the *Journal*, I lighted on PASCAGOULA, and looked at some wordplay around that name. This time, it’s the turn of GREENLAND, the Danish island much in the news in early 2026.

First off, let’s note the three transposals of the name GREENLAND. There’s ENGLANDER (hey, that’s me!) and GLENARDEN, a city in Maryland about 10 miles east of Washington DC, and with a 2020 census population of about 6400 souls. The third transposal is ENGERLAND—as urbandictionary.com explains, “this is used mostly by (England) football fans. The advantage of ‘Engerland’ as opposed to ‘England’ is the extra syllable allowing the chanting of the England team’s name being easier and more melodic.”

How about transposals of some Greenland-related words? *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) lists these words: GREENLANDER, GREENLANDIC, GREENLANDISH and GREENLANDITE, each with a legitimate transposal:

GREENLANDER (a native of Greenland) can be rearranged to LARDEN GREEN, a small village in the English county of Cheshire;

GREENLANDIC (relating to Greenland) can be juggled to give CALENDERING, the process of passing something (for example, cloth, paper) through a calender, a machine or device with rollers for pressing cloth, paper, etc. So, nothing to do with calendars showing dates;

GREENLANDISH (also relating to Greenland) can be morphed to SINGLEHANDER, a yachtsman or person who sails a boat singlehandedly;

GREENLANDITE (a greenish mineral found in Greenland) can have its letters shuffled to give ENTERDEALING, an old spelling of INTERDEALING, negotiating mutually.

Wikipedia has an entry for GREENLAND DOG, a large breed of husky-type dog used for pulling sleds. The OED provides us with a colourful transposal, GREEN-AND-GOLD, and offers a couple of illustrative quotations, referring to “the green-and-gold cuckoo” and “the green-and-gold diploma.”

Let’s look at transdeletions—where letters are deleted from GREENLAND. Some obvious 8-letter examples are ENDANGER, ENLARGED and LARGENED. 7-letter examples abound, including ANGERED, DANGLER, DERANGE, ENLARGE, ENRAGED, GENERAL, GLEANED, GLEANER, GNARLED, GRANDEE, GRENADE, LEARNED and REGALED.

How about transadditions? Adding just one letter to those of GREENLAND can give us ENGLANDERS, LEGENDRIAN (pertaining to the French mathematician Adrian Marie Legendre) and UNENLARGED. Although it's a two-word term, I particularly like the simple insertion of the letter G into GREENLAND, generating GREEN GLAND, an organ found in crustaceans.

Adding two letters to GREENLAND gives us a wide collection of words, including ENDEARINGLY, ENGARLANDED, LAVENDERING, LEGENDARIAN (the writer of a legend), LENINGRADER (a resident of Leningrad, USSR, now Saint Petersburg, Russia) and UNGENERALED. If we admit hyphenated words and two-word terms, we can add items such as ALMOND GREEN, ANGEL-WARNED, GARDEN LEMON, LARGE-FINNED, LEADING REIN and URBAN LEGEND.

Adding three letters to GREENLAND provides a goodly mix of words, including DISENTANGLER, INTERTANGLED, MEANDERINGLY, NONREGULATED and UNDERSEALING. A couple of terms that I particularly like are MERRY ENGLAND and NEW ENGLANDER.

What's the longest unhyphenated word which uses all the letters of GREENLAND? Here are some 19-letter contenders, rendered in the Courier New font so that their equal lengths are obvious:

GENTLEHEARTEDNESSES
GRANDMOTHERLINESSES
INTEGRODIFFERENTIAL
SUPERACKNOWLEDGMENT (S)
TRANSCENDENTALIZING

And here are a couple with 21 letters:

PHARYNGOEPIGLOTTIDEAN
PSEUDOCONGLOMERATIONS

Even the familiar biggies like these, from regular unabridged dictionaries, don't contain some of the letters of GREENLAND:

PNEUMONULTRAMICROSCOPICSILICOVOLCANOCONIOSIS
SUPERCALIFRAGILISTICEXPIALIDOCIOUS
PSEUDOPSEUDOHYPOPARATHYROIDISM
FLOCCINAUCINIHLIPILIFICATION
ELECTROENCEPHALOGRAPHICALLY
HONORIFICABILITUDINITATIBUS
ANTIDISESTABLISHMENTARIAN
HUMUHUMUNUKUNUKUAPUAA

Any advance on 21 letters with words from regular unabridged dictionaries?

And how about this 12-step triangle of solidly spelled words where each word is a transaddition of the one above it? Is there a 13-stepper?

A
 AN
 RAN
 NEAR
 ANGER
 DANGER
 ENRAGED
 ENLARGED
 GREENLAND
 LEGENDRIAN
 ENDEARINGLY
 MEANDERINGLY

But if hyphenated words and two-word terms are allowed, check out these two 15-step triangles:

A	A
AN	AN
RAN	RAN
NEAR	NEAR
ANGER	ANGER
DANGER	DANGER
ENRAGED	ENRAGED
ENLARGED	ENLARGED
GREENLAND	GREENLAND
LEGENDRIAN	LEGENDRIAN
LEGENDARIAN	LAVENDERING
RADIAL ENGINE	NOVEL-READING
DANIEL NORIEGA	SOVEREIGN LAND
RAILROAD ENGINE	SOVEREIGN LANDS
RAILROAD ENGINES	SANDER VOLGENSIS

All words, names and terms can be found in at least one of *The Oxford English Dictionary*, *Webster's New International Dictionary* (2nd edition), Unabridged Merriam-Webster (online), and Wikipedia. ■

EUPHEMISM, DYSPHEMISM

T Campbell

Euphemism is a choice of language that makes things sound more pleasant. **Dysphemism** is a choice of language that makes things sound more unpleasant.

There are simple words that serve as familiar euphemisms—*powder my nose* for *use the toilet*, *passed on* for *died*, *love handles* or (less euphemistic) *middle-age spread* for *belly fat*. Though we hear them a bit less often, there are plenty of dysphemisms in everyday speech too. A face that you don't like might have a *mop* instead of *hair*, a *beak* instead of a *nose*, *peepers* instead of *eyes*. These terms are also more descriptive, implying disheveled hair, big nose, beady eyes.

This kind of verbal selection is as old or almost as old as language itself, but it's not universal. There are some terms that have both recognized euphemisms and dysphemisms—a *prison* could be a *correctional facility* or a *pit*, depending on who's asking—but if you try to find a word or common phrase to euphemize or dysphemize a *tree*, you're likely to come up empty-handed.

My original idea for this piece was to present a set of neutral terms with their corresponding euphemisms and dysphemisms, but I didn't get very far, and found others had done it better.

euphemisms	orthophemisms	dysphemisms	Formal	Euphemism	Dysphemism
demise	death	the Grim Monster/ Reaper	toilet	bathroom	pisser
depart, decess, expire, perish	die	kick the bucket, kiss the dust,	orca	sea panda	killer whale
deceased, defunct	dead	croaked, gone cold, stiff	euthanize	put to sleep	kill
(mortal) remains, the loved one,	corpse	cold meat, food for worms	rebel	freedom fighter	terrorist
cremains	ashes	dust	spouse	better half	ball and chain
casket	coffin	bone box, wooden suit, cold box	cigarette	torch of freedom	cancer stick
entombment	funeral, burial	cold meat party	fat	metabolically challenged	lard ball
			he died	passed away	snuffed out

Sources: "Euphemisms and dysphemisms as linguistic means of coping with the taboo of death," G. Cebrat, *pojęcie śmierci*, A. Dabrowska; "The Power of Robot Groups with a Focus on Persuasive and Linguistic Cues," Jürgen Brandstetter.

Of course, there's some room for disagreement about the above. Is *euthanize* really the neutral term here, or is it a euphemism for the more common *kill*? It shares an *eu-* root with *euphemism*. It is important, though, to use *euthanize* when the subject is a sick pet, as it conveys that the euthanasia is an act of mercy. But if the sentence is, *Yeah, I euthanized my obnoxious husband*, well, that's a bit different.

Euphemism and dysphemism, it seems, are reserved for areas of our life with a more emotional charge. But they also have a lot of distinct emotional nuance. You probably learned first about euphemisms that censor the realms of the bathroom or the bedroom—and *the realms of the bathroom or the bedroom* is itself a more elaborate euphemism. But you get what I mean, right?

Other euphemisms are there to protect us from the world's violence—or to be more precise, they're there to protect us from *thinking* about the world's violence at every moment. *Surgical*

strikes, friendly fire. Or poverty, or disease, or other ills. This can be a respectable usage—there’s a lot of ugly in the world, and thinking about it all too much would weigh anybody down.

But such euphemism also allows people to turn a blind eye rather than experience moral discomfort. Even a summary can be euphemistic—*bombings* invites people to scan its meaning and move on rather than dwell on the human carnage such a strike creates.

Yet when we put a euphemism in scare quotes—*Those “surgical strikes” sure involve a lot of “friendly fire,” don’t they?*—their tone shifts from neutered to contemptuous. Other euphemisms are more cheerful—*making love* is a lot more joyous than *conjugal visit*.

Dysphemisms are usually considered to be harsh, but they can be humorous, even affectionate, as when calling a favorite *diner* a *greasy spoon*. It might not be fine dining, but it’s about the atmosphere.

In the end, a skillful writer can wring almost any emotion out of word choice. I mentioned that *tree* has no ready-made euphemisms or dysphemisms, but with a little more work, one can ennoble it into a *magnificent wooden edifice* or dismiss it as a *overgrown weed with delusions of grandeur*. Language can serve almost any end we shape for it, and that’s what makes it beautiful—and ugly. ■

ONE-LETTER ELEMENT SYMBOLS

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As most readers will probably know, there are 118 elements currently in the periodic table, and each element has a corresponding symbol. The symbols have either one or two letters. There are 14 elements with one-letter symbols, and the remaining 104 elements have two-letter symbols, ranging from Ac (actinium) to Zr (zirconium).

The one-letter symbols are:

B - boron	O - oxygen
C - carbon	P - phosphorus
F - fluorine	S - sulfur
H - hydrogen	U - uranium
I - iodine	V - vanadium
K - potassium	W - tungsten
N - nitrogen	Y - yttrium

What wordplay can we initiate round these 14 letters?

Our first challenge was to find a set of words using just a single example of each of the 14 letters. Below is a dozen solutions, each with four words, and all words in *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). There will be other solutions.

BUCK - FOPS - VIN - WHY	BY - FISK - PUNCH - VOW
BUNK - IF - PSYCH - VOW	BY - CHOW - FUNK - SPIV
BUNK - CHIV - FOP - SWY	COP - FUNK - VIBS - WHY
BY - CHIPS - FUNK - VOW	CUBS - FINK - HYP - VOW
BY - CHIV - FUNK - SWOP	FIB - PUNCH - SKY - VOW
BY - CHUNK - FIP - VOWS	FUB - KIN - PSYCH - VOW

A three-word solution is just about possible if an Old English word is allowed. Listed in the OED is VHY, an old spelling of WHY:

COWPUNKS - FIB - VHY

Second challenge: what are the longest words using any of the 14 letters, but with none repeated? By definition, these will be isograms.

Here are four 8-letter examples:

CHIBOUKS - COWPUNKS - CUSHIONY - UNBISHOP

And a dozen 7-letter examples:

BOHUNKS - BOYSHIP - BUCKISH - COUSINY - CUSHION - FUCHSIN
PHONICS - PUCKISH - PUNKISH - UNPICKS - UNSPICY - WICKYUP

And a dozen with 6 letters each:

BIOPSY - BISHOP - BOUNCY - BOYISH - COUSIN - COYISH
FUSION - KIBOSH - PHOBIC - PUNISH - SIPHON - WHISKY

There are several other 6- and 7-letter examples.

Third challenge: what are the longest words using repeated letters? The longest I could find is the 15-letter NONSUBCONSCIOUS, courtesy of *The Random House Dictionary (unabridged edition)*. Here are some others, with 10 to 13 letters:

INCONSPICUOUS	PINCUSHIONS
KINNIKINNICK	UNCONSCIOUS
NONPOISONOUS	UNPOISONOUS
POPPYCOCKISH	BOBBY SOCKS
SUBCONSCIOUS	BUFFOONISH
UNSUSPICIOUS	CONFUSIONS
CONCUSSIONS	SUSPICIOUS
CONSPICUOUS	VICHYSOIS

Fourth challenge: what other interesting words and names can be found using only these 14 letters?

Only two US state names out of the 50 use solely these letters: OHIO and WISCONSIN

Only two US presidents use only these letters, but both with the same name: BUSH

Only one US vice-president uses these letters—BUSH yet again.

There are no US state capitals using only these letters. The largest US municipality using only these letters is CHICO (California), which Wikipedia ranks as the 339th most populous municipality in the US. But much worthier of note is the relatively well-known OSHKOSH, because it is in WISCONSIN, which allows for the 16-letter pairing OSHKOSH, WISCONSIN. Lesser-known places in the state include:

POY SIPPI, WISCONSIN
IPSWICH, WISCONSIN
POSKIN, WISCONSIN
SWISS, WISCONSIN
UNION, WISCONSIN
UPSON, WISCONSIN

There are no countries which are members of the United Nations which use only these letters. But there is one country, a non-UN member, which uses the letters—KOSOVO. However, KOSOVO is recognised by over 100 UN country members—so it is partially recognised.

There are only two capital cities using these letters: KYIV (the capital of Ukraine) and NUUK (the capital of Greenland, itself part of the kingdom of Denmark). Interesting how both KYIV and NUUK are particularly newsworthy at the moment.

And almost finally, here are some famous names, both real and fictional, using only some of the 14 letters:

CONFUCIUS	the Chinese philosopher
PINOCCHIO	the fictional character created by Carlo Collodi
HUCK FINN	the fictional character created by Mark Twain
PICKWICK	the fictional character Samuel Pickwick, created by Charles Dickens
PIUS VIII	the Pope for a short period in 1829–1830
PUCCINI	the Italian composer Giacomo Puccini, 1858–1924
PUSHKIN	the Russian playwright, Alexander Pushkin, 1799–1837
YOKO ONO	the Japanese musician and activist, turning 93 this month
CHOPIN	the Polish composer Frédéric Chopin, 1810–1849
HICKOK	the folk hero Wild Bill Hickok, 1837–1876

And last of all, almost certainly unknown to all *Journal* readers, is an English football player called BOBBY HOPKINSON, born in 1990, and with a Wikipedia entry.

What else can be done with these single-letter symbols: B C F H I K N O P S U V W Y ? ■

MISNOMERS

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Never pride yourself on your knowledge. Always remember that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing—especially when you discover that Alexander Pope actually wrote that famous quotation as “A little *learning* is a dangerous thing.”

Let’s start with your knowledge of the animal world. The Canary Islands in the Atlantic got their name from what creature?

“Canaries, of course!” you chirp.

Wrong.

The answer is dogs, i.e. canines. The Latin name was *Canaria Insula*, “Isle of the Dogs” because a doglike creature roams the territory. Canaries got their name from the islands, not the other way around. There are no canaries on the Canary Islands.

Now I want to talk to you about the Virgin Islands. There are no canaries there either.

In our ginormous, humongous, but erratic English vocabulary, we discover that catgut is usually sheep, goat, cattle, hog, horse, mule, or donkey intestines and that camel-hair brushes are made from squirrel fur.

A ladybug is a beetle, and they’re not all female. A lightning bug is also a beetle. And a firefly is actually a lightning bug, which, as you now know, is a beetle. Wormwood is a European plant that yields a bitter-tasting oil but contains neither worm nor wood.

In fact, a whole menagerie of animals are not what their names indicate. Take the hedgehog. Light verse master Bob McKenty explains the truth about the spiny insectivores:

*No matter what their name alleges,
Hedgehogs aren’t hogs or hedges
(Like kindred quadrupeds with spines
Who aren’t porks and aren’t pines).*

The koala bear is a marsupial, not a bear. The guinea pig is neither a pig nor from Guinea: it is a South American rodent. A prairie dog is not a dog; it too is a rodent. The horned toad is a lizard, not a toad, while a silkworm is not a worm; it’s a caterpillar. Half of peacocks are actually peahens. A titmouse is neither mammariated nor mammal; it’s a bird. A jackrabbit is a hare, not a rabbit. Blindworms are actually legless lizards, and, of course, they can see.

A cuttlefish is not a fish, nor are starfish, jellyfish, silverfish, or shellfish, including crawfish. But a seahorse is a fish. So is Bombay duck.

What color is an immigrant's green card? Pink, quite obviously. Which country is greener—Greenland or Iceland? Iceland, of course. Greenland is mostly covered by an ice sheet. The blackbird hen is brown, purple finches are distinctly raspberry red, and many greyhounds come in colors other than gray.

Where do Labrador Retrievers and Great Danes come from? Where else but Newfoundland and Germany?

Where are the West Indies located? In the Caribbean, not off the coast of India.

In what country did the Pennsylvania Dutch originate? Germany. *Dutch* was originally *Deutsch*, the German for “German.”

Now that you are in control of these quirky facts, how solid is your knowledge of nations and their legacies to the world?

French fries were invented in Belgium. *Frenching* describes a method of cutting vegetables into long strips. Arabic numerals were invented in India. The English horn is an alto oboe from France. Russian dressing did not originate in Russia but in the US of A.

Danish pastry originated in Vienna, the Turkish bath in Rome; Swiss steak in England; India ink in China and Egypt; Panama hats in Ecuador; Dresden china in Meissen; Chinese gooseberries in New Zealand; Jordan almonds in Spain; and Jerusalem artichokes in North and South America—and they're tubers, not artichokes.

How are refried beans made? Despite the name, refried beans are not fried twice. *Frijoles refritos* actually means “well fried,” not “refried.”

Long ago, you discovered that there is no ham in a hamburger. In fact, if someone ever invented a bulky roll with a ham patty inside, we'd have a hard time coming up with a name for it.

Not only is there no ham in a hamburger, there's no butter in buttermilk, no egg in eggplant, and no straw in a strawberry. The strawberry is not a berry, but tomatoes, bananas, peppers, eggplant, kiwis, and watermelons are. A litchi nut is a fruit of the soapberry family. Welsh rabbit, often called Welsh rarebit, is a meatless dish whose primary ingredient is melted cheese. An egg cream contains neither eggs nor cream. Its ingredients are milk, chocolate syrup, and a jet of seltzer water. Shortbread is a thick cookie, and a sweetbread is not sweet and not bread. It's from a calf's or lamb's pancreas or thymus.

A sweetmeat isn't meat; it's a candied fruit. Lemon sole is a flounder, not a sole, and not necessarily prepared with lemon. Although breadfruit resembles bread in texture and color when baked, it contains no bread. Cold duck is the poor man's champagne. Apple butter contains

apples, sugar, and spices—but no butter. Grape-Nuts contain wheat and malted barley, not grapes or nuts. Plum pudding usually contains raisins, currants or other fruits, but almost never plums.

Now that you're disillusioned with the accuracy of the names we bestow upon food, ask yourself, *How spot-on are the names we assign to plants?*

A peanut is neither a pea nor a nut; it's a legume. A prickly pear is not a pear; it's a cactus. A sugarplum is a candy, not a plum. A Mexican jumping bean is not a bean. It's a seed with a larva inside. And a caraway seed is a dried fruit, not a seed.

Now, how do you stack up in your knowledge of other objects and concepts in the universe?

A ten-gallon hat is big, but not big enough to hold ten gallons of liquid. The name derives from the Mexican Spanish *sombrero galon*, "hat with braids or ribbons." A pea jacket isn't green, nor does it resemble a pea. The name derives from the Dutch word *pijjekker*, meaning "jacket made of coarse woolen material." And in dry cleaning, all items are immersed in a liquid solution.

Lead pencils contain no lead; they contain graphite. Briar pipes are made of the roots of white heather. A shooting star is actually a meteor. A Douglas fir is a pine tree, a witch hazel is an elm, and a banana tree is an herb, not a tree.

Finally, here's a brief history quiz. Answers follow on page 77.

1. The sides of Old Ironsides were made from what material?
2. In what month do Russians celebrate the October Revolution?
3. What was George VI's first name?
4. What was the cesarean section named for?
5. How long did the Hundred Years' War last?
6. How long did the Thirty Years' War last?

TILING MINIS

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Special editor's note: I see a lot of crosswords in a lot of different places, but I've never seen one that works quite like this. Give it a try, you might be surprised! Answers appear on page 78. —T

Four Minis



Grid 1

Across:

1. Tariff / menu
5. Glazer / mafiosa
6. First named
7. Nanny, to a kid
9. Exists (Fr.)
11. Absorbed

Down:

1. Good / ticket
2. Good / cards
3. French island / note
4. Uh (Brit.)
8. Exist
10. Prof's underling

Grid 2

Across:

1. Hay cube
5. Greek god
6. About / word prefix
7. For / before
9. Sensory organ
11. Lincoln / Shinzo

Down:

1. Naked / empty
2. Surface
3. The (Fr.) / Word suffix
4. Founded (abbr.)
8. Brava (Sp.)
10. Egyptian god



Grid 3

Across:

1. Lake / flan suffix
5. Think / stew
6. Yours truly
7. 51
9. Residue / tree
11. Kong / echo

Down:

1. Stone / Watson
2. Regrets
3. Peoria st. / he (Fr.)
4. Annex
8. Social suffix / go (Lat.)
10. Guffaw

Grid 4

Across:

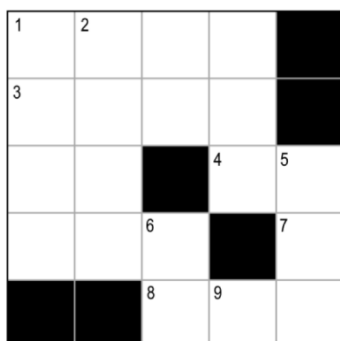
1. Movie dog
5. True / old coin
6. You (Sp.)
7. The (Fr.) / note
9. Tip / stop
11. Just a number

Down:

1. Commedia dell' ____
2. Viewed
3. (With 10D:) Voilà
4. Total / soap
8. Amazement
10. (See 3D)



Four Tiles



Grid 1

Across:

1. Tariff / menu
3. Glazer / mafiosa
4. Lion's pride
7. Stop / ____ stop
8. Absorbed

Down:

1. Good / ticket
2. Good / cards
5. Exist
6. Weight
9. Word / duration

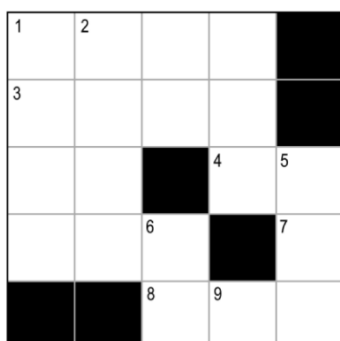
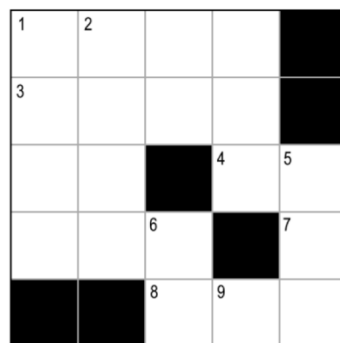
Grid 2

Across:

1. Hay cube
3. Greek god
4. Shredded
7. King / jet
8. Lincoln / Shinzo

Down:

1. Naked / empty
2. Surface
5. Brava (Sp.)
6. Lung noise
9. Top / Ahmed



Grid 3

Across:

1. Lake / flan suffix
3. Think / stew
4. Fruit / light
7. Short facial hair
8. Kong / echo

Down:

1. Stone / Watson
2. Regrets
5. Social suffix / go (Lat.)
6. Hi / hard rain
9. ____-mell

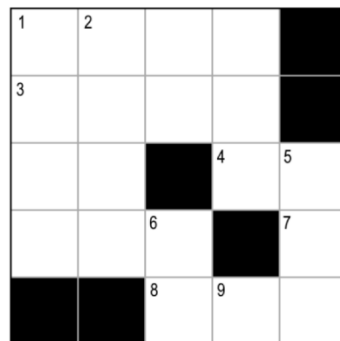
Grid 4

Across:

1. Movie dog
3. True / old coin
4. Dead / tardy
7. Proceed
8. Just a number

Down:

1. Commedia dell' ____
2. Viewed
5. Amazement
6. Info
9. Brazenness



Four Tiles (Assembled)

1	2				3	4			
5					6				
			7	8				9	10
		11		12			13		14
		15	16				17	18	
19	20				21	22			
23					24				
			25	26				27	28
		29		30			31		32
		33	34				35	36	

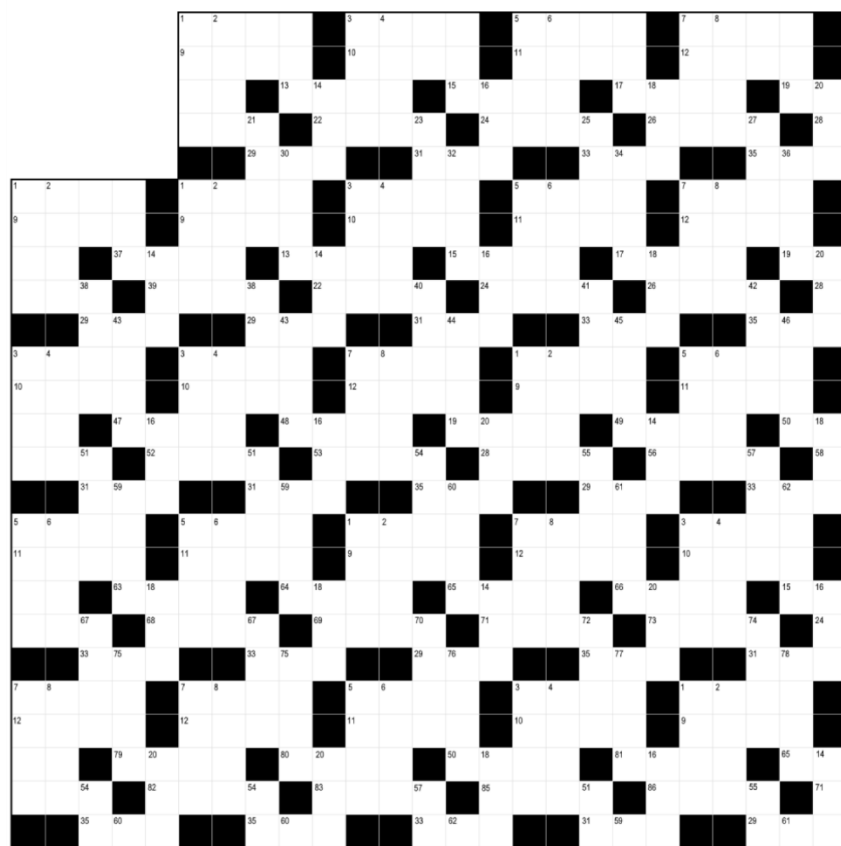
Across:

1. Tariff / menu
3. Hay cube
5. Glazer / mafiosa
6. Greek god
7. Colt maker
9. Sound / firm
12. Back / raise
14. For fear that
15. Absorbed
17. Lincoln / Shinzo
19. Lake / flan suffix
21. Movie dog
23. Think / stew
24. True / old coin
25. Lo-cal
27. Dull / fabric
30. Serve / be likely
32. Clean
33. Kong / echo
35. Just a number

Down:

1. Good / ticket
2. Good / cards
3. Naked / empty
4. Surface
8. Exist
10. Brava (Sp.)
11. Back / follow
13. Pro ____
16. Say / William
18. Orb / Kirsnick
19. Stone / Watson
20. Regrets
21. Commedia dell' ____
22. Viewed
26. Social suffix / go (Lat.)
28. Amazement
29. Rabbit / ____ Krishna
30. Valley / Carnegie
34. Hairstyle
36. Chivalrous act

Four Tiles (Recombined)



Across:

1. Tariff / menu
3. Hay cube
5. Lake / flan suffix
7. Movie dog
9. Glazer / mafiosa
10. Greek god
11. Think / stew
12. True / old coin
13. Colt maker
15. Volume
17. Lo-cal
19. Alley / Artis
22. Back / raise
24. Hair / whip
26. Serve / be likely
28. Left / Kanye
29. Absorbed

31. Lincoln / Shinzo
33. Kong / echo
35. Just a number
37. Lion's pride
39. Stop / ____ stop
47. Split / sped
48. Bag / add
49. Hit musical
50. Turkish coins
52. King / jet
53. Grant
56. Hasty / swelling
58. Drop / split
63. Fruit / light
64. Queue / verse
65. Pal / "I win"
66. Den (obs.)
68. Hair / fabric

Down:

69. Exam / shell
71. Split
73. Don / erode
79. Dead / tardy
80. Dull / fabric
81. Sound / firm
82. Proceed
83. Clean / stain
85. Drop / rip
86. For fear that
1. Good / ticket
2. Good / cards
3. Naked / empty
4. Surface
5. Stone / Watson
6. Regrets

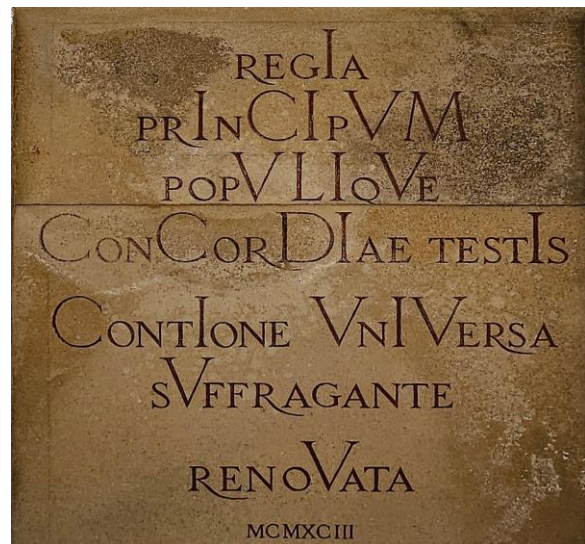
7. Commedia dell' ____
8. Viewed
14. Exist
16. Brava (Sp.)
18. Social suffix / go (Lat.)
20. Amazement
21. Weight
23. Lung noise
25. Hi / hard rain
27. Info
30. Word / duration
32. Top / Ahmed
34. ____-mell
36. Brazenness
38. Story
40. Pro ____
41. Rabbit / ____ Krishna
42. Meadow (Scot.)
43. Experiment
44. Orb / Kirsnick
45. Hairstyle
46. Strong wind (Scot.)
51. Train track / fume
54. Challenge
55. Goodbye (Brit.)
57. Robust / drag
59. Chime
60. Virus / origin
61. High / far-fetched
62. Nuisance
67. Japanese clan
70. Back / follow
72. Meadow (U.S.)
74. Uncommon
75. Dull / cloak
76. Say / William
77. Chivalrous act
78. Mound

MODERN CHRONOGRAMS

T Campbell

A *chronogram* is a piece of writing that contains letters signifying a year. There are a few different approaches one can take to building them. You could remember how we all started using Zoom in 2020 and refer to that year as a Zoom zone—a **20OM 20NE**. This example’s a little inelegant, especially with that extra O, but you get the idea: change the number to its nearest letter-equivalent.

More often, chronograms use Latin numbers and ask their intended audience to do some addition as well as transliteration. All the Latin numbers seen in the inscription at right—every I, C, V, M, L, and D—all add up to the year of establishment printed at the bottom. This doesn’t seem terribly elegant either, although at least it does involve every word in the numbering: some “impure” chronograms do not.



A common chronogram from centuries past.

Trying to add Latin numbers as in *VnIvErsa* above feels extra strange because I + V doesn’t equal IV—in Roman numerals, the position of I, X, and C matters, but the above exercise asks us to pretend that it doesn’t. VIV isn’t 11 in Rome. In fact, it’s not anything.

Other Latin chronograms are selective, counting *some* of the “Roman numeral letters” in a phrase but not others. A friend invited me to a 2009 party whose theme was “coMMIXing,” and I restrained myself from pointing out the word’s *c* and its last *i*.

My Day Closed Is In Immortality is an inscription on Queen Elizabeth I’s tomb—the initial letters indicate she died in MDCIII, 1603. But we have to read only the initials here, ignoring the *d* in “Closed” and the second *i* in “Immortality.” Had Elizabeth miraculously lived to 1630—MDCXXX—the tombmakers would have faced a greater challenge.

(The “perfect” chronogram—*ChronograM*—indicates the year 900. I hope the English-speaking world had a nice party about that back then.)

Chronograms are also popular in Hebrew and Arabic traditions, but I’m not qualified to unpack those, much less to evaluate them. Looking at the Latinate chronograms, I’m more frustrated by their imperfections than admiring of their ingenuities.

Is it possible to take the Roman numerals for modern years and express them in a way that commemorates each year’s events? Could one take, for instance, 1911—MCMXI—and transform it into a commemoration of the Chinese Revolution? I’ve made an attempt, covering one significant event from each of the years 1900–2025—and occasionally two or three. Can you

guess what events are being covered? Fair warning: some significant events may be upsetting to remember—but that’s history for you.

- 1900. **M.P. confronts quantum**
- 1901. **Monochrome’s in**
- 1902. *Moon* project: **amazing Trip**
- 1903. **Make canopy zoom in Wrights’ first**
- 1904. **My perfect game—big serves**
- 1905. **Moscow: mass grave**
- 1906. **Mega-shock moves Big-Sur**
- 1907. **Money scare means reserve originates**
- 1908. **Motor cars’ market vigorization**
- 1909. **Mounts compass’s wintry apex**
- 1910. **Major coup: Mex.**
- 1911. **Manchus make exit**
- 1912. **James Cameron’s exhibit**
- 1913. **Measure: cash money? Tax it in IRS**
- 1914. **Army combat, expansive**
- 1915. **Submergence (boom!)...ex-voyagers**
- 1916. **Make tracks: armor, boxy heavies**
- 1917. **Moscow: Marx’s vision**
- 1918. **Macabre pneumothorax virus, rising**
- 1919. **Temperance maxixe**
- 1920. **Woman comes, X’s box**
- 1921. **Massacre: ugsome xenophobes, axing**
- 1922. **Monarch’s tomb: expose extra-big shrine**
- 1923. **Untermensch man, ex-expressionist, prisoner**
- 1924. **Enormous cosmos: extra x-rays in heavens**
- 1925. **“Monkey” courtroom exponents exhort, fervent**
- 1926. **Massachusetts boomer’s oxygen-hexane reservoir**
- 1927. **5809-km across major expanse; express voyage in airboat**
- 1928. **Pharmacy matter: exogenous, exuviated fungi bits**
- 1929. **Pompous, cheeky men hex stox tix**
- 1930. **More cartoon *Mouse*: art-boxes, text boxes**
- 1931. **Mobster Capone makes tax hax? Sweatbox! (Prison.)**
- 1932. **May-15 coup: PM ex-Japanese, ex-person, ex-breathing being**
- 1933. **Maybe consume XXX inebriants again?**
- 1934. **German autocrat’s merx, extra-extenso-shivs**
- 1935. ***Monotony*’s entrance?—game box’s expenses tax nerves**
- 1936. **Malcontent Games? Extraneous hoaxes extenuate event, Nazis!**
- 1937. **Fumes combust—expunge ex-extant voyagers in skies**
- 1938. **March! Germans annex next X, takeover in inner Austria**
- 1939. **More combatants: Saxons, bureaux, Axis. Next...?**
- 1940. **Stomp French army exuberantly**
- 1941. **Menace bombs external piers**
- 1942. **Emergency groupment expels opposition**

1943. Many **corpsmen** exeunt: Stalin's stygian "win"
 1944. Make beachfront, **my Xenophons! Live!**
 1945. "A-bomb creates Appomattox!" (Also: graves.)
 1946. Homefront pregnancy: **make pre-Xers, love, whoopie!**
 1947. **Mach-1 (max) flyover in air**
 1948. **Manufacture German "exes"** halving partition
 1949. **Mao's coup: "Post-Marx, proles in exurbs"**
 1950. **Assertment: "SECRET ENEMY PLOT!"**
 1951. **Major pentachrome linkup**
 1952. **Monarch female, British**
 1953. **STEM sequences genome's subtle protein "fingerprint"**
 1954. **Human secernment? Repulsive**
 1955. 'Bama boycotts **motorbuses**, walks brave
 1956. **Motorcars assemble over interstate**
 1957. **Spheroform escapes atmosphere—Look! Soviet Sputnik!**
 1958. **Mercy me! People view...GiGi** 📺
 1959. **Samsara's changes: monk ruler in externe**
 1960. **Youngsome charm relaxes**
 1961. **Merry spaceman flexes: Gagarin**
 1962. **Arms, Cuba? Engagement, stressful extra-nigh brink**
 1963. **Statesman Jack, martyr: LHO's Texas gunfire hits, assassinates**
 1964. **Smart Congress' measure outlaws sex/skin-hate. Brave!**
 1965. **Quorum's enactment shelters extant voters**
 1966. **USMC mans klaxons: "(So)Viets!"**
 1967. **Supreme Court: *Moral Sex v. Bigots' Spite***
 1968. **Gunman whacks MLK—exhorter, vibrant, against antipathy**
 1969. **Armstrong paces moon, walks expressing proxyness**
 1970. **Phenomenon: space boom-blast expunges oxygen**
 1971. **"Aurum becomes wealth"? Now-nonextant expression**
 1972. **RMN's CREEP-y men loot texts ex Washington inn**
 1973. **Home computers: aptly, Xerox's GUI is first**
 1974. **"Am...crook": shameful expose extorts signoff, "V"-gesture**
 1975. **Motor, copters! Nam flux, nox over**
 1976. **Mars-cam—lens exposes xenosphere, rover witness**
 1977. **"May th'force..." \$307m 'plex apex evokes euphoria, grins**
 1978. **James Carter makes gentle exonerator: *Pax Ave Israe-Egyptiania***
 1979. **Ransom country's employees, extra taxpayers. Iran: ex-shah-state.**
 1980. **Moscow Games? RefUSal: expresses, "thanx, next"**
 1981. **Ms. Spencer, marry royal (XOXOXO) heir!**
 1982. **M. Jackson's money? Luxe, extra exuberant earnings, insane!**
 1983. **Assument? Bureaucrats, presumptuous generals exert extra pretexts...
 IP: Internet's birth**
 1984. **Mac!...Quarrymen relax...X taxes, win votes**
 1985. **Statesman-actor, meet analogue. Exert pharynxes, extroverts!**
 1986. **BOOM! Catastrophes mangle ex-power "extrusor," ex-star navigators**
 1987. **Arms? Contras? Embezzle expenses? "Sexy," extravagant fibs? Stain!**

- 1988. Forum **compels** *pax ex exturba*: Soviets quit Afghanistan
- 1989. **Smash cement** bulwark!...Exxon's toxin **expanse**
- 1990. Superzoom **cosmos-exposure** 'scope
- 1991. Norman Schwartzkopf **masters exchange**, Iraq
- 1992. **MORE** race-meanness(!) exacerbates King riots
- 1993. Bombs, WTC? **Tame, except** in posterior-sight
- 1994. Amazon's preface: **mere** textbook, paperback, print purveyor
- 1995. **Moot court?** *Mort* **ex-spouse** controversy
- 1996. "Barmy cow" **meat?** Expectorate! Aversion!
- 1997. **Amp** search program, **excavate** finest internets
- 1998. **Mr. C's temp** (subtext: "**curviest**, **finest intern**")
- 1999. Homogenous **cash marks** Saxony's continent's expenses
- 2000. **MarketBomb.net**
- 2001. **Monument** perishes
- 2002. EU-**membership** rises
- 2003. Human genome's **partitioning**
- 2004. Sumatra tsunami **event**
- 2005. Stream, web**mavens!**
- 2006. **Meager** messages, vast Twitter
- 2007. "**Smartphone**"? "**Moviephone**"? iPhone.
- 2008. Obama's **moving** aspirations
- 2009. Guantanamo, Sotomayor, Iran, sexts
- 2010. Abatement: HMO **expense**
- 2011. **Mute** Osama, expert sniper
- 2012. Atom **smasher** exposes Higgs's bit
- 2013. **Major PM: Xi Jinping**
- 2014. Musab's **megaterror** extensive
- 2015. "**Marry same-sex**" events
- 2016. Trump somehow **prexy, obvi**
- 2017. **Ammo** exposure: Vegas gathering's shooting
- 2018. #MeToo **promoters**: "Sex knaves **injure** sisters, nation"
- 2019. Torment from "**Brexit tax**"
- 2020. **Symptoms**, pox's **expanse**
- 2021. Rampage! Trump's proxy **attax** strike
- 2022. "**Matryoshka**": armor, ex-USSR boxes in Ukraine
- 2023. Transhuman boom: "**Exert** expert AI in ubiety!"
- 2024. **Muster** mass exports? **Xi** overtakes
- 2025. Gub'**ment** arrestment: extent's extra severe

Answers start on page 78. Hoping to write some bright, positive summaries of the years ahead! ■

MARRIAGE AND DEATH: CROSSWORDS 1926

T Campbell

This continues an ongoing year-by-year exploration of the history of the crossword puzzle begun in issue [#7](#) of *The Journal of Wordplay*.

Did Margaret Petherbridge Farrar, then the leading editor of crosswords, have a shotgun wedding? We can't be sure, but certain details of her life story point in that direction. The wedding was the culmination of a years-long courtship begun in the same offices where she began her career.

John Chipman Farrar was a literary man. But not, he would hasten to add, a pretentious one:

It would be a bore for me for me to publish only for the highbrow. I like the "middlebrow." I like the "lowbrow." I have always despised the literary snob. I like a good story, and am bored by a pretentious, dull book, no matter what scholarly cloak it wears.

He'd produced poetry and two one-act plays—*Nerves* was inspired by his time as a World War I pilot. He'd done some work for the *New York World* after the war, where Prosper Buranelli introduced him to Petherbridge in 1922. He'd write book criticism for *Time* and movie and play criticism for other publications. But his true gift was editing. In 1926, he was turning thirty and editing the literary journal *The Bookman*.

By all accounts, he was generous and sociable, which made him popular in the cutthroat publishing sphere—yet he was also shrewd enough to survive it.

He'd left the *World* for *The Bookman* by 1923, but he'd never lost touch with the also outgoing Petherbridge. He'd been involved in the early crossword puzzle books, and unlike others in that sphere, he seemed more than willing to give her the credit for them she was due.

News of their engagement broke on April 7 in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, which announced their wedding would be in June. A two-month lead time would not be unreasonable in 1926.

Yet the date seems to have been moved up: it took place Friday, May 28, 4:30, at the St. Bartholomew's chapel in New York. At least one source noted the unconventionality of a Friday wedding (*The Daily News*, May 29, by "Debutante"). It could have noted that June weddings were more traditional, too.

Society Bride Spurns Friday's Omens!



(NEWS photo)

NO SUPERSTITION can faze Margaret Petherbridge. A fashionable society contingent yesterday saw her married to John C. Farrar in St. Bartholomew's church chapel. The bride wore splendid costume of cream colored satin covered with old rose point lace and long veil of white tulle. The blueblood newlyweds leaving the church. —Story on page 5.

The Farrars' wedding announcement.

Coverage of the wedding put Margaret's *New York World* crossword editorship in the past tense; she'd left the role earlier that year. Petherbridge would later say she left the *World* "when our children started coming along." She claimed her oldest, John Curtis Farrar, came in

March 1927, in correspondence I examined in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University.

March 4, 1927, would be 280 days after May 28, 1926. It's possible Margaret and John had a productive honeymoon. It's *also* possible the two editors found themselves "in a family way," got married fast, then "edited" the younger John's birthdate to get things *just* on the right side of propriety. The rescheduling of the marriage, as if in haste, would seem to support that theory. So would Margaret's memory of leaving her job because of her incoming *children*, not her marriage, despite the actual timing of her departure.

To be clear, this is all circumstantial. There are other reasons to change a wedding date (even to a Friday). Honeymoon babies are real. So are memory glitches. But John and Margaret had known each other for four years. They lived in cosmopolitan New York City during the sexual revolution of the Jazz Age. Such things did happen.

In any case, the Petherbridge-Farrar marriage wasn't the end of Margaret's crossword career. It wasn't even a complete pause, because that year, the fifth *Cross Word Puzzle Book* came out. Margaret, still working with Buranelli and F. Gregory Hartswick, wrote that crosswords had passed the fad stage and "settled into a steady, easy stride."

"A steady, easy stride" would characterize much of Margaret's married life. And that stride would lead her to make contributions to the art form beyond those of her more irreverent single days. But not for a while yet. Motherhood would preoccupy her for some years first.

By mid-1925, the crossword craze was passé in the US. *The Roanoke World-News*, tongue in cheek, "reported" on January 26 that Roanoke's population of crossword workers had dropped from 49,999 to nine. These playful swipes didn't last long. By mid-1926, even jokes about how passé the crossword was were passé.

Newspapers still ran crosswords, though, and some of their pop-cultural footprint persisted. Blanche Brace's "Four Letters Meaning Exaggerated Liking," a quaint romance in the November 21 *Chicago Tribune*, followed the "solving as synonym for sex" paradigm that had been everywhere a year or two earlier. Sam realizes he must court crossword-loving Anne by writing a crossword himself as a love letter. Anne's own "answer" is found in the one place where she employs boldface to solve it (see right).

A contest-winning party idea from the *Cincinnati Enquirer's* Fashion and Food department was a



Note the emphasis on the most important word in the grid, the answer to the clue "exaggerated liking."

“crossword puzzle porch party” with more or less black-and-white food items. Even this proposal included a caveat for those sick of solving: “To carry out the crossword luncheon idea does not mean one must have a crossword party. It is simply a novel idea for a luncheon...”

First Prize.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE PORCH PARTY.

MENU.

Crossword Puzzle Sandwiches. Ripe Olive and Celery Puzzle Squares. Domino Ice Cream, Hot Chocolate Sauce. Iced Mocha Nectar.	Crossword Salad. Checkerboard Cake. “Black and White” Candy Squares.
--	--

CROSSWORD PUZZLE SANDWICHES.

12 slices white bread. 3 slices whole wheat bread. $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter.	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup peanut butter. 1 tablespoon lemon juice.
--	---

Method.

Cream butter, peanut butter and lemon juice thoroughly; spread this mixture on each one of the slices of bread. Make one pile of bread thus: One white slice, then a dark slice on top, and then three white slices on top of all. Make a second pile thus: Two slices of white bread, then a slice of dark bread on top and then two more white slices of bread on top of all. Make a third pile thus: Four white slices, then one dark slice on top. Press a light weight on top of the three piles for a few minutes; then cut each pile into half-inch slices, cutting down through the piles crosswise. Spread each one of the slices thus formed with creamed butter, then put these slices together again in three piles so that the dark squares come at intervals to make different designs on the end. Press under a light weight until serving time, then cut down each pile crosswise to form a small square sandwich with a design of dark and white bread squares. Serve one or two of these sandwich squares to each guest according to the number of persons to be served.

CROSSWORD SALAD.

2 large heads Iceberg lettuce. 3 ounces cream cheese.	Whipped cream. Blackberry jelly.
---	--

Method.

Remove outside leaves from lettuce and cut the lettuce into six three-fourths-inch slices. Place one slice of lettuce on each salad plate and trim the corners to form a square. Moisten the cheese to a “spreading” consistency with whipped cream, then cover the top of each lettuce square with the cheese mixture. Cut stiff blackberry jelly into half-inch squares and arrange these jelly squares on top of the cheese to form dark and light checkered designs.

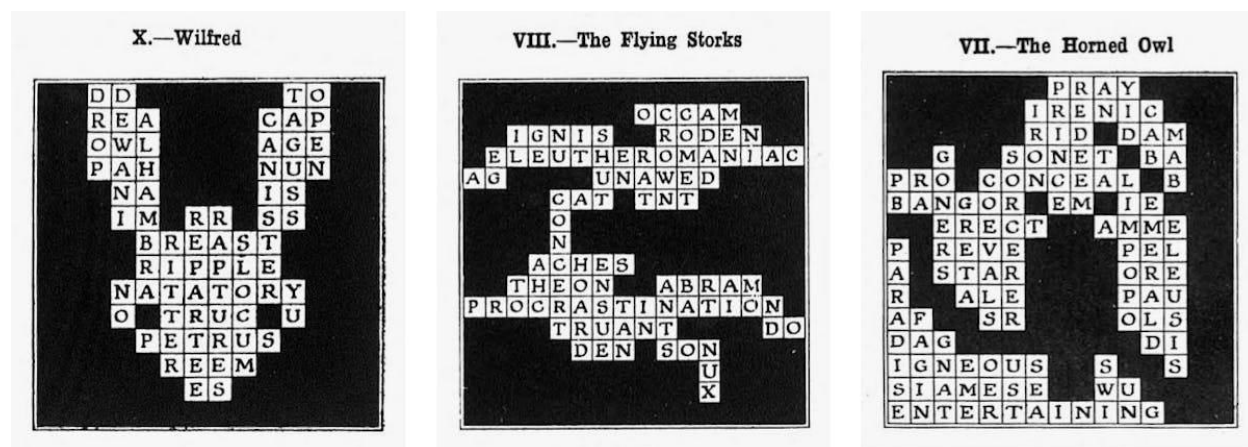
A contemporary party planner's aid.

And with its \$150 contest, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* was the last outlet offering big money for solvers...in the United States.

But across the Atlantic, crossword contests were still big, especially in Britain. R.R. Crosswords via *The Evening Despatch* offered £600 and a grand piano; the Motor Crossword Company offered £100 and a car. Crosswords made frequent fodder for UK radio announcements.

In this parallel crossword market, literary critic and prolific translator Edward Powys Mathers was beginning to thrive. Mathers had translated Syrian and Sanskrit poems and a French version of *1001 Arabian Nights*. In 1924, he composed a crossword with a more indirect style of cluing...for the amusement of friends, not the public.

One of those friends ignored his wishes and supplied it to the *Saturday Westminster*. Mathers' annoyance faded after the *Westminster* persuaded him to produce more under a pseudonym. He did twelve before the *Westminster* folded, most animal-themed, and reprinted them in 1925 as *Word Puzzles in Rhyme: Crosswords for Riper Years*. For his new career, he took the name **Torquemada**, from the first Grand Inquisitor of Spain. Thus began a tradition of "crossword setters," as the UK called them, naming themselves for notorious torturers.



Several of Rosamond Mathers' earliest grid designs.

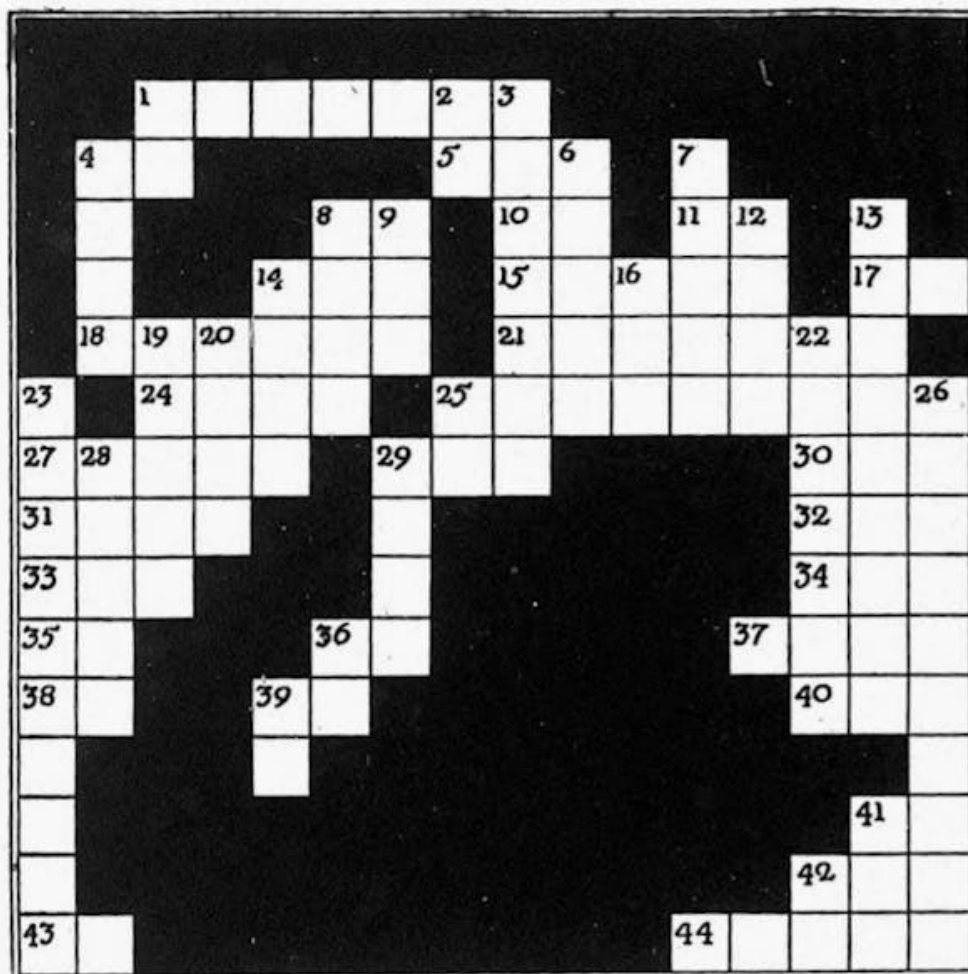
In a sense, Torquemada was actually two people. Edward's wife Rosamond, to whom he dedicated his most romantic translations, built the grids from a list of words he'd selected. Then Edward wrote the clues. As his wife remembered:

I see him sitting cross-legged in bed, with a puzzle in front of him, looking very like a somewhat relaxed Buddha, a cigarette between his fingers and eyes fixed in the distance—until something clicks and, with a contented smile or discontented shrug, he writes on the list in front of him, and ticks off the word in gaily coloured chalk. Or prowling around his shelves in baggy flannel trousers, his shirt open at the neck and sleeves rolled above the elbow, in search of a quotation through which he would lead his solvers to read or reread some favourite in verse or prose. Or sitting at a table in the living room, kitchen or garden, one ankle resting on the other knee, a hand hugging the foot, drawing marginal decorations in vari-coloured chalks while he broods on some uninspiring word.

In 1926, Torquemada's work continued at *The Observer*. Its wider circulation would cement his leadership in the field. During his tenure, *The Observer* crossword would come to be considered the world's hardest. But British solvers *liked* it hard.

The Torquemada of 1926 had a ways to go before he refined his cluing style into the style seen in cryptic crosswords today, but he was already finding creative ways to bedevil solvers. "1578 Spanish book on drugs was this," ran a clue in the first crossword, which also warned that things would get harder from here: "Certain novel features will be introduced by degrees."

V.—The Swan



HORIZONTAL.

1. I am the cross-word setter's base device
For making non-existent words suffice.
4. Initials only—wrote about the strife
'Twixt heart and tongue of neither maid nor wife.

15. A port in France from which a conqueror came. [name.
He was not French, and neither is the
17. Why dine with hate and me, if there are smiles
And kisses on the bill at Eustace Miles?
18. Beside an island which was me
The western wind awoke the sea.

Another of Rosamond's designs, accompanied by Edward's couplet-clues.

CROSSWORD: I.-FEELERS.

By Torquemada.

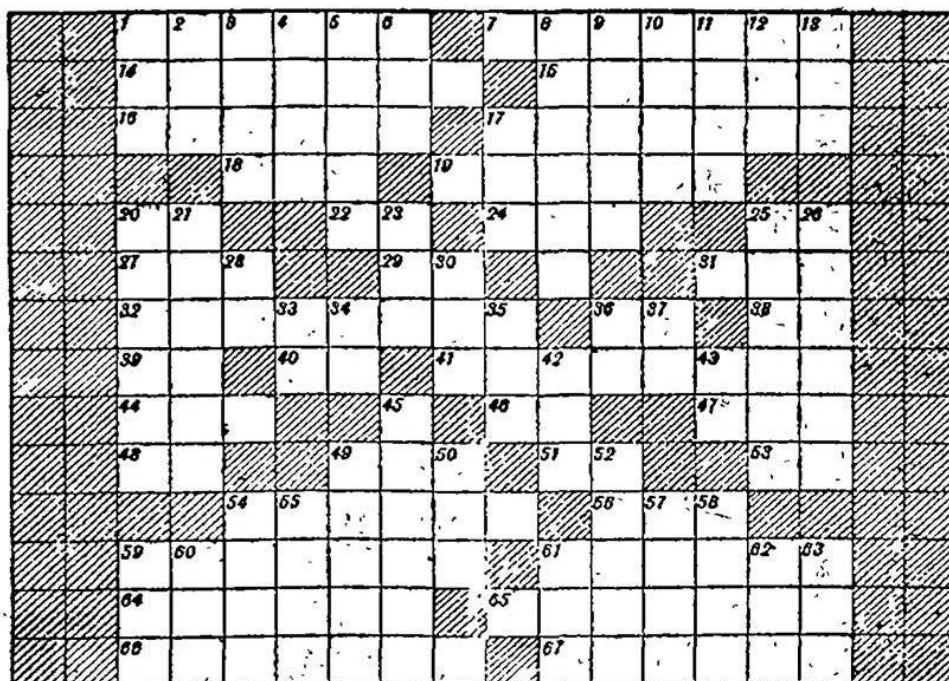
We offer three prizes of Three Guineas, Two Guineas, and One Guinea, for a correct solution of the accompanying Crossword Problem.

The prizes will be awarded in order to the first three correct solutions opened after the date fixed below for their receipt.

Paste down your completed square on a piece of paper and post to the Editor, THE OBSERVER, 22, Tudor-street, London, E.C.4, with "Crossword-I." marked plainly on the top left-hand corner of the envelope. All solutions must reach THE OBSERVER by first post on Thursday next.

All competitors must accept the Editor's decision as final and legally binding. Legitimate claims for alternative solutions will be considered, though no reasons can be published for or against the judgments passed on them.

This, the first problem, is, as it were, a putting out of feelers from setter to solver, and from solver to setter. A beginning has been made with an unusual number of varied lights; when the taste of competitors has been gauged, problems will be prepared accordingly, and certain novel features will be introduced by degrees.



ACROSS.

1. Point was
7. Crux of "Wrong Box"
14. A poulpe
15. 61 across was
16. Adanson's digitata
17. Cape in Tripoli
18. Greek fire prefix
19. Allow
20. Preposition
23. British Dominion (init.)
24. Plaything
25. Poet of husbandry (init.)
27. Worth half heels
29. In reference to
31. Very, very hard
32. N.H.
36. Indictive of 43
38. Eight-hand (abbrev.)
39. Interjection
40. Jewish ruin
41. Frenzy
44. This in tongue of 5
46. Haves sutor expense
47. Little in 32
48. Wrote "Bury Fair" (init.)
49. My sons were sons of

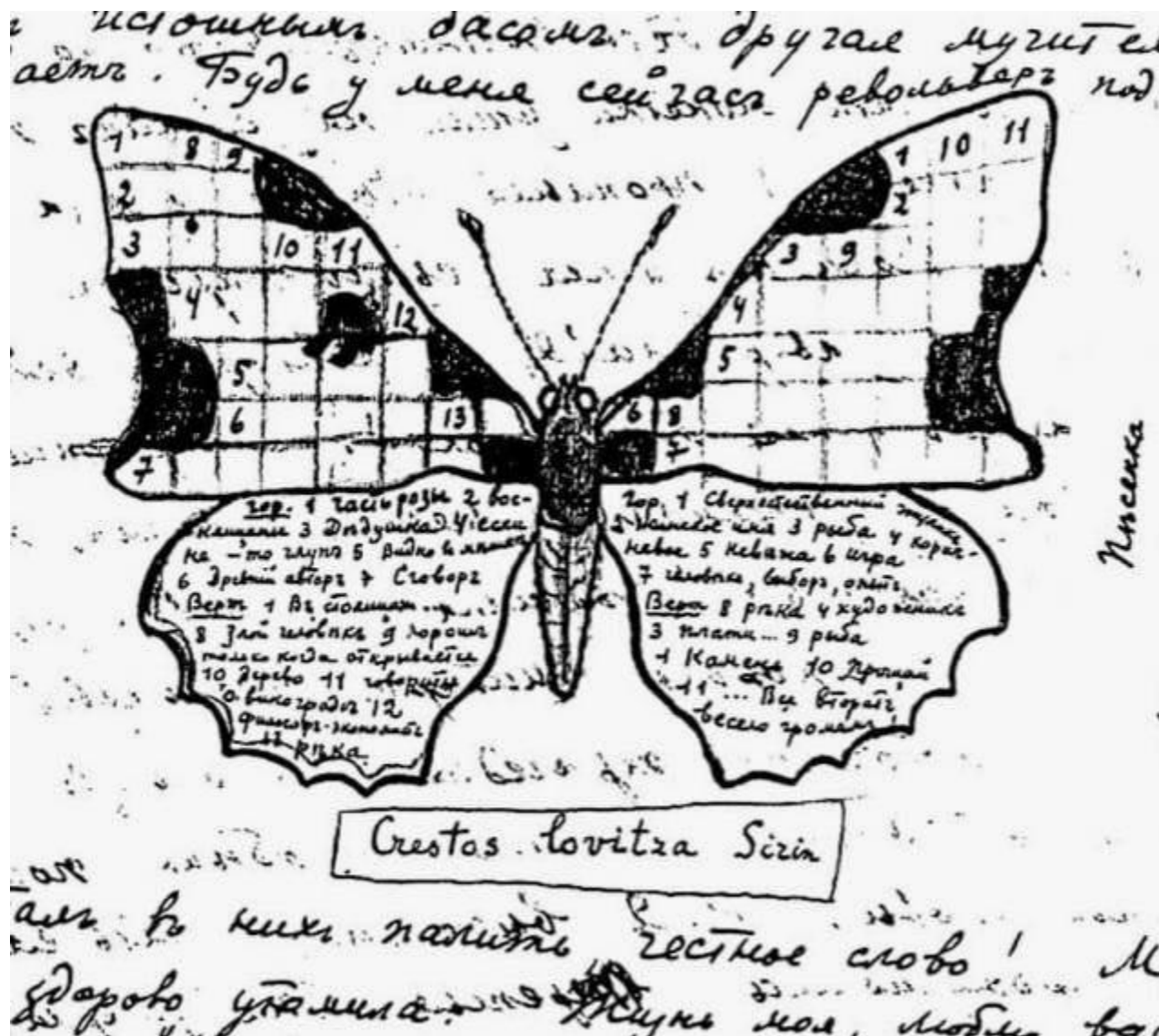
51. Depart
 53. Before steamers
 54. Sudden
 56. Card game
 59. We shatter sleep
 61. Fabulous voyager (pop. spelling)
 64. An Archbishop of York
 65. Recovers
 66. 1578 Spanish book on drugs was this
 67. Lie close in tins
- DOWN.
1. Jemima's father
 2. Higher than kings (anagram)
 3. Halt
 4. Tristram's uncle
 5. Thin in Bordeaux
 6. Best of three games
 8. Should not indulge in 57a.
 9. Inquisitive
 10. Vetch
 11. Arab chief
 12. Excludes some 20s.
 13. Stage paper
 17. Livingstone and Stanley

20. An invertebrate
21. Seville Nights
23. A constellation
25. Contain a window
26. I doubt it
28. Suited to anserine converse
30. 63 is
33. Half a farewell
34. Citation makes me sale
38. Evening when good
39. Prefix of duality
37. Unready part of speech
42. Diary of 53
43. Part of 36 across
45. Downy Roman female
49. Break out
50. Flows into Danube
52. Am elephant
54. Island of Schleswig
55. Brothers-in-business
57. More than one one
58. With 37 on the way
59. Defeated Zerah
60. On London trams
61. Hundredth of yen
62. Kinds of money desirable
63. Dose without circle

The Torquemada series of puzzles begins in earnest.

Two other crosswords of note appeared in Europe that year, one signifying life and love—the other, despair and death.

The first was this butterfly-shaped “krossword” by lepidopterist and famous novelist Vladimir Nabokov, sent to his wife Véra the year he published his first novel, *Mary*. He’d later become the author of *Lolita*, *Pale Fire*, , and other works.



One of Nabokov's lesser-known works.

The most bizarre—and fortunately, unusual—crossword story of the year was the March 4 suicide of Antal Gyula, a 25-year-old waiter in Budapest, Hungary. At the Emke Kávéház (Aero Café), Gyula came in and ordered a coffee just after midnight. He called a number on the cafe’s telephone, repeatedly, but nobody picked up.

About an hour later, the cloakroom attendant heard a bang from the men's room, and a second bang when she opened the door. Inside lay Gyula, pistol in hand, blood gushing from his head and chest, a crossword and suicide note in his pocket.



The site of Gyula's final moments.

Gyula was depressed, unemployed, and now homeless, having been evicted a few days prior. But his note claimed there were more specific reasons for his end and that the crossword would reveal those reasons—and the other parties concerned.

Hungarian police gave up trying to solve it after a month, so we may never know Gyula's last message to the world. And that's the real tragedy of suicide—all those chances to explain or continue one's own story, snuffed out.

Our story will continue in 1927—next issue—with a few notable men and women finding their voices. Be here for that! ■

BOOKSHELF ANAGRAMS

Michael Keith

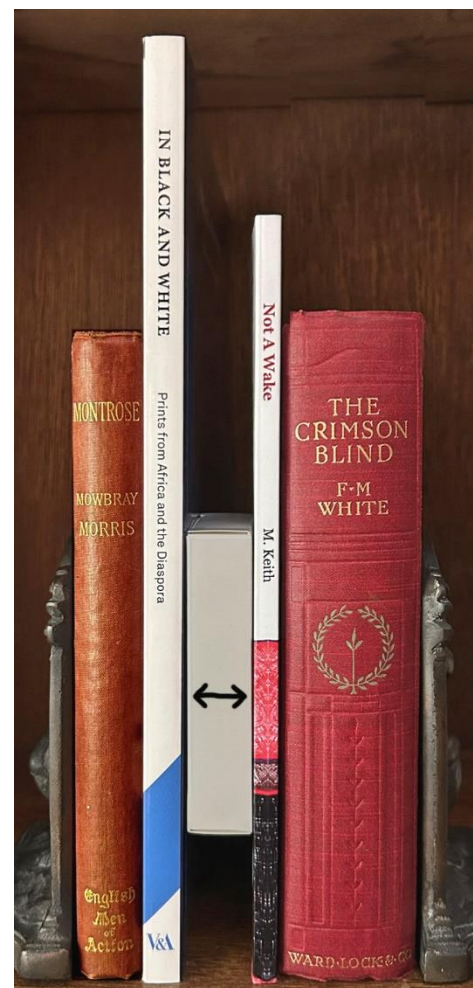
Several recent articles ([1], [2], [3]) have explored the topic of book title anagrams, where the title of one published book is an anagram of another real book. For example, William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is an anagram of Marie Corelli's 1887 novel *Thelma*.

In this article we go in a different direction that leads to several fun challenges. If we express a book title anagram using the notation $A \leftrightarrow B$, where A and B are the two book titles and " $\leftrightarrow$ " means "is an anagram of," like *Hamlet* $\leftrightarrow$ *Thelma*, it's natural to ask if constructions such as $A + B \leftrightarrow C + D$ exist, where A , B , C , and D are all book titles. We'll call this a 2/2 anagram since there are two books on each side of the "equation." The two sides can also be unequal, such as 2/1 ($A + B \leftrightarrow C$) or 3/2 ($A + B + C \leftrightarrow D + E$). We call a multi-book anagram of any size a *bookshelf anagram*, as it is natural to envision the anagram (especially a large one) as two sets of books next to each other on a bookshelf.

A 2/2 example is shown at right, photographed on one of my bookshelves. Spanning more than a century in publication dates, we have (1) *Montrose*, an 1892 biography by Mowbray Morris, (2) *In Black and White*, a 2013 collection of prints from the Victoria and Albert Museum, (3) 2010's *Not a Wake*, and (4) *The Crimson Blind*, a 1905 detective novel by Fred M. White. We only use the book titles for these anagrams, of course (not author names), so the fact that the author of *The Crimson Blind* is WHITE, a word that appears in the title *In Black and White*, is just a remarkable coincidence.

How hard is it to find a multi-book anagram like this, whether small (like 2/2 or 3/3 or 4/4) or large (say 20/20)? This question is closely related to the concept of "support" introduced by Ross Eckler in [4]. When some specific construction is to be made from a subset of n objects, the value of n that just barely allows one solution is known as the *support*, as it provides an estimate of the number of objects needed to support the existence of a solution.

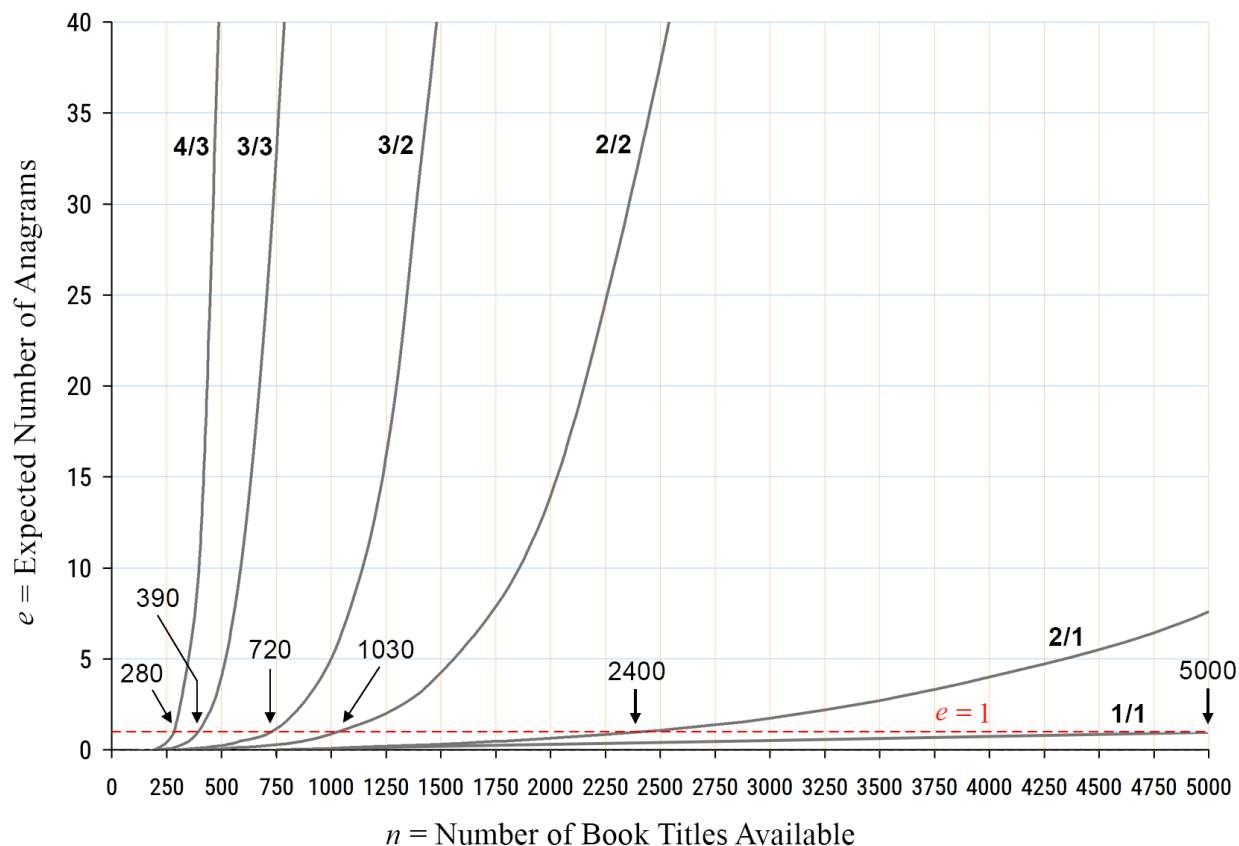
Sometimes it's possible to calculate the support value exactly by combinatoric or probabilistic methods, but often it's not, so an estimate has to suffice. To get a good estimate, we gathered some data using a computer program that performs a bunch of random trials and averages the number of anagrams found in each trial (a technique known as the Monte Carlo method). For small numbers of books on each side of the equation (up to 3/3 or 4/3) it is possible, in a reasonable amount of computer time, to do this *with an exhaustive algorithm for counting all the*



Each book photo in this article shows two anagram-equivalent sets.

constructable anagrams in each trial. So while the resulting estimate has some uncertainty (variance) due to the random nature of the Monte Carlo method, the number of anagrams we find in each trial is exact, so the support value we calculate will be reasonably accurate.

In order to plot curves showing the number of solutions versus n , we created a master list of book titles from which we can randomly select a set of size n for any n . Our master list is a combination of 20,641 book titles from Project Gutenberg (all public-domain books from roughly 1950 or earlier) and 8,506 reasonably well-known modern book titles extracted from some Wikipedia articles (spanning *only* the years 1950 to the present), for a total of 29,147 titles. Here are the results after many Monte Carlo simulations for the six smallest types (1/1, 2/1, 2/2, 3/2, 3/3, 4/3), each curve labeled with its type.



The horizontal axis is n and the vertical axis is how many anagrams were found, on average, after a series of searches using random book-title sets of size n . The vertical axis can also be interpreted as the “expectation” e of how many anagrams one should expect to find in a single exhaustive search for a specific type and a given value of n . Of special note is the x value where each curve crosses the dashed red $e = 1$ line, since that value of x is precisely the support value. Each arrow in the figure is labeled with the support value it points to, which ranges from 5000 for type 1/1 down to 280 for type 4/3.

Observe that larger types have smaller support values, and produce more anagrams, than smaller types, since larger types have access to a bigger set of objects from which to make anagrams. For

example, if $n = 500$ there are 124,750 possible combinations for $A \leftrightarrow B$ (type 1/1) whereas for $A + B \leftrightarrow C + D$ (type 2/2) there are about 7.8 billion choices. Although the larger number of letters on each side of the 2/2 equation, compared to 1/1, reduces the chance that a particular combination of titles will be an anagram, this is more than counterbalanced by the huge increase from 124,750 to 7.8 billion available possibilities.

Using our full list of 29,147 titles, these are the total number of anagrams found by an exhaustive search, for the three smallest types:

1/1:	35
2/1:	1663
2/2:	~1,500,000

Even with a relatively small list of only 29,147 books, the number of available bookshelf anagrams is very large (even for the smallest types) and gets really huge as the type increases. In essence, it's too easy to find bookshelf anagrams with ~30,000 titles available, which leads to the idea of adding some additional constraint to make the challenge more, well, challenging.

Single-Owner Bookshelf Anagrams

One natural constraint is to restrict the pool of available titles to *books owned by a single person*. From the graph on the previous page, we see that the number of books a typical avid reader might have (say, 1000) falls in a nice place on the graph where small anagrams like 2/2 or 3/2 will just barely be possible, while slightly larger ones like 3/3 or 4/3 are more abundant.

I also thought it would be interesting to require that the single owner not be myself, so I asked two separate friends—David and Chris, who live about 3000 miles apart in the U.S.—if they would help by sending me enough photographs of their bookshelves so that I could create a list of titles from the photos. I chose two friends, rather than one, so I could search using each person's books separately. Would I be successful with both sets, or does success depend highly on the pool of titles? To make the task harder, I only asked for about 500 books from each (instead of 1000), which was no problem since both friends reported that they own about 5,000 books! The title list I compiled from David's books has 462 titles, and Chris's list has 476. These two lists will be used for all results in the next few sections.

I first looked for the smallest types for which any anagrams exist. Starting with David's list, I found seven anagrams of type 3/3 (but no smaller ones) and about 100 with type 4/3. Below is my favorite of the 3/3 anagrams (since it includes the rare letter X) and the shortest and longest ones of type 4/3. The longest is almost twice as big as the shortest (100 letters versus 54).

- 3/3 *A State of Heat + Etched In Moonlight + The Elixir* $\leftrightarrow$
Mexico + The Light That Failed + The Onion Eaters
- 4/3 *Famine + Lets + Shosha + Virginia* $\leftrightarrow$ *Irish Families + Ramona + The Green Hat*
- 4/3 *Nature On View + Ramona + Reality Sandwich + The Dead Sea Scrolls* $\leftrightarrow$
Indian Tales + Love, Loss, and What I Wore + The Canary Murder Case

The result with Chris's list was similar, with six of type 3/3. But, amazingly, there's also a single 3/2: *Freakonomics* + *The Puritans* ↔ *Perfection* + *Samoan* + *Turkish*. At right is a photo from Chris of this very special anagram. Astonishingly, it contains two books from the same series—the popular Teach Yourself language books from English publisher Hodder.

It's worth noting that this anagram's well-mixed score (using the minimum-block metric defined in [2]) is fairly high at 87%, as the 23 letters on the right-hand side can be reduced to 20 blocks (P e r f e c t i o n S a m o a n T u r k i s h), giving a score of 20/23.

One of Chris's 3/3 anagrams is

A Stolen Tongue + *Early Short Stories* + *Ibid* ↔
Solutions + *Beards* + *The Oresteian Trilogy*

which is shown using actual books below.

Another 3/3 from Chris that's quite interesting is

Anthropology and Modern Life + *Solutions* + *The Academic Bestiary* ↔
Blott on the Landscape + *Four Comedies* + *Maya History and Religion*

and for at least two reasons: (a) it has an average of 17.7 letters per title, which is the record holder for title length of all the anagrams in this article, and (b) it's got Tom Sharpe!



The amount of time it takes to make each of these exhaustive searches is highly dependent on n , the size of the title pool. For $n \approx 450$, searches up to 3/2 are very fast, while 3/3 takes roughly three minutes and 4/3 (whose code is highly optimized) takes about 15 minutes.

Medium and Large Bookshelf Anagrams

Let's loosely categorize bookshelf anagrams by size, with *small* being 4 books or fewer on each side of the anagram, *medium* being between 5 and 20, and *large* being more than 20. We're able to do an exhaustive search only for small sizes, so we need to craft some kind of non-exhaustive method for larger sizes. The basic idea is to build larger anagrams out of smaller ones, using a modification to our search program that supports "near anagrams."



First, consider what we could do with the vanilla algorithm (without using the near-anagram modification to be described soon). If we run a 4/3 search on a title list with $n \approx 500$ we'll typically get 50 or so anagrams of the form $A + B + C + D \leftrightarrow E + F + G$. Suppose we can find two anagrams in the list of 50 that are "non-crashing" (i.e., the $2 \times 7 = 14$ titles in both anagrams are all different), and let's write the second anagram as $A^* + B^* + C^* + D^* \leftrightarrow E^* + F^* + G^*$. Now reverse the sides of the second equation and combine it with the first equation to get

$$A + B + C + D + E^* + F^* + G^* \leftrightarrow A^* + B^* + C^* + D^* + E + F + G,$$

which is guaranteed to be a perfect 7/7 anagram. We could have *not* reversed the second equation, but then the combined anagram would be 8/6, which is perhaps less elegant than 7/7 (though equally valid). It turns out that it's very likely we can find two non-crashing anagrams out of the ~50 available. In fact, the number of non-crashing 4/3 anagrams in a solution set when $n \approx 500$ is typically 10 or 15. If we were to combine 10 mutually non-crashing solutions (sides-reversing half of them) that would produce an impressively large 35/35 anagram.

However, there's an aesthetic flaw with this approach: the medium or large anagrams it produces are not *atomic*. To explain what this means, first define a *subanagram* of an anagram as a subset of the left side combined with a subset of the right side that together make an anagram. Then an *atomic* anagram is defined as an anagram with no subanagrams. The 7/7 construction described above is obviously not atomic, since each of its 4/3 components is a self-contained anagram, and any anagram that's built by just combining smaller anagrams will always be non-atomic.

We could just be satisfied with non-atomic anagrams, but it seems worthwhile to try and remove this blot on the bookshelf anagram landscape. This is where using near-anagrams comes into play. Instead of searching for 4/3 anagrams of the form

$$A + B + C + D \leftrightarrow E + F + G$$

we can modify our code to also search for equations of the form

$$A + B + C + D \leftrightarrow E + F + G + \varepsilon$$

where ε is some specific string of one or more letters. In this equation $A+B+C+D$ and $E+F+G$ are not anagrams of each other but rather near-anagrams, since $A+B+C+D$ contains all the letters in $E+F+G$ *plus* the extra letters in ε . Note that ε can be placed on either side of the equation, and this flexibility allows us to tweak, to some degree, the number of titles on each side.

Since ε is a constant it has almost no impact on execution time. And as long as ε has mostly common letters, the number of solutions to $A + B + C + D \leftrightarrow E + F + G + \varepsilon$ tends to be in the same ballpark as the number of solutions to $A + B + C + D \leftrightarrow E + F + G$ (more on this later). These two facts mean that near-anagrams are almost as easy to work with as exact anagrams.

There are many different ways to use near-anagrams as building blocks to make a large anagram that's atomic. We'll just describe two methods.

Method 1: Two sets of ε 's that cancel out (but only if all are present)

As a concrete example, let's make an atomic 14/14 by combining four near-anagram 4/3's. Each 4/3 is of the form

$$A_i + B_i + C_i + D_i \leftrightarrow E_i + F_i + G_i + \varepsilon_i$$

where $i = 1$ to 4. To simplify what follows, define $L_i = A_i + B_i + C_i + D_i$ (titles on the left side) and $R_i = E_i + F_i + G_i$ (titles on the right). The equation above can be written as

$$L_i \leftrightarrow R_i + \varepsilon_i.$$

Now swap the left and right sides of the $i=3$ and $i=4$ equations and combine all four equations:

$$L_1 + L_2 + R_3 + \varepsilon_3 + R_4 + \varepsilon_4 \leftrightarrow R_1 + \varepsilon_1 + R_2 + \varepsilon_2 + L_3 + L_4.$$

Let a_1, a_2 , and a_3 be three different letters of the alphabet and choose the values of the ε_i to be $\varepsilon_1 = a_1$, $\varepsilon_2 = a_2 a_3$, $\varepsilon_3 = a_1 a_2$, and $\varepsilon_4 = a_3$. Now replace each ε with its actual letters

$$L_1 + L_2 + (R_3 + a_1 a_2) + (R_4 + a_3) \leftrightarrow (R_1 + a_1) + (R_2 + a_2 a_3) + L_3 + L_4 \quad (\text{eq. 1})$$

and we see that the collections of a 's on the left and right sides are the same (one each of a_1, a_2 , and a_3) so they cancel out, leaving the perfect anagram

$$L_1 + L_2 + R_3 + R_4 \leftrightarrow R_1 + R_2 + L_3 + L_4.$$

Because of the way we've grouped the a 's ($a_1 a_2$ and a_3 on the left side, a_1 and $a_2 a_3$ on the right), we can't remove any of the 4/3's (with their associated a 's) from equation 1 above and still have an anagram, because then the a 's don't fully cancel out. So our final combined anagram is atomic, except for the rare situation in which the L 's and R 's themselves contain a subanagram. If that happens, we can change the ε 's or the component 4/3's and try again.

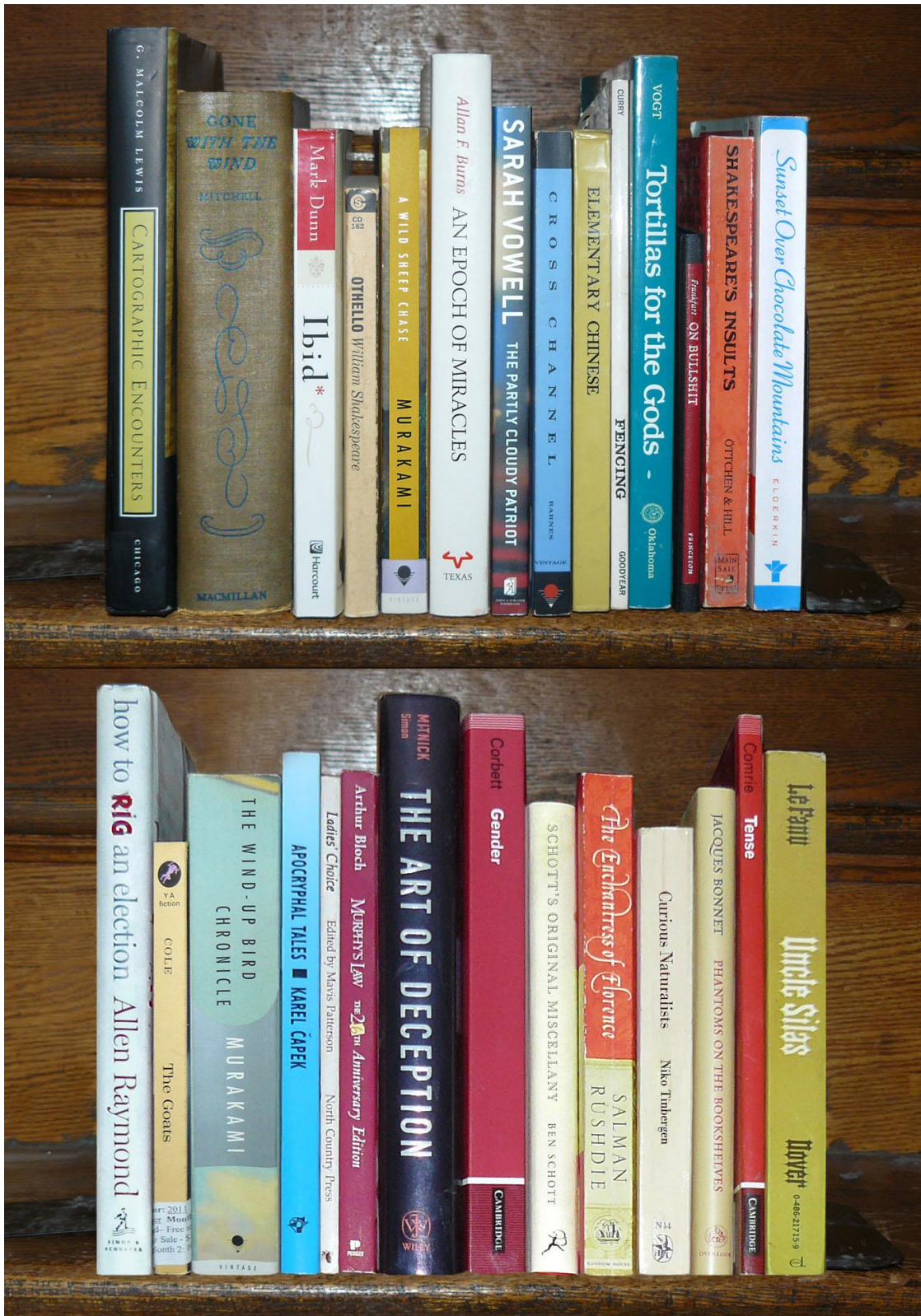
In general, we can combine k anagrams for some $k \geq 3$. The subscripts on the a 's can be grouped as shown in the table below to produce atomic anagrams for each k , and it should be obvious how to continue the pattern for larger k . The red and black numbers on each row are those that go on the left and right sides of the equation.

k	ε_1	ε_2	ε_3	ε_4	ε_5	ε_6
3	1	2	12			
4	1	23	12	3		
5	1	23	4	12	34	
6	1	23	45	12	34	5

We haven't said exactly which letters the a_i are. For $i = 1, 2, 3, \dots$ we assign them roughly in decreasing letter frequency order: ETAOINSHRDLU... or something similar. The heat-map table below illustrates the fact stated earlier, that setting ε to any one or two of these common letters results in a reasonable number of near-anagrams (compared to the number of "pure" anagrams where ε is not present). In this table "." represents no letter, and each box gives the number of 4/3 anagrams when ε is the combination of the letters in the corresponding row and column

Some Medium and Large Examples

Our first medium example is this 14/14 from Chris's books, created using Method 1.



Additional (optional) logic was used to deliberately steer this anagram towards longer titles, as this makes the anagram somewhat more pleasing than one with short titles. The average book title length here is 15.3 letters; the titles are shown below for easier reading.

*Cartographic Encounters + Gone With The Wind + Ibid + Othello +
A Wild Sheep Chase + An Epoch of Miracles + The Partly Cloudy Patriot +
Cross Channel + Elementary Chinese + Fencing + Tortillas for the Gods +
On Bullshit + Shakespeare's Insults + Sunset Over Chocolate Mountains*

↔

*How to Rig An Election + The Goats + The Wind-up Bird Chronicle
+ Apocryphal Tales + Ladies' Choice + Murphy's Law + The Art of Deception
+ Gender + Schott's Original Miscellany + The Enchantress of Florence
+ Curious Naturalists + Phantoms on the Bookshelves + Tense + Uncle Silas*

An extra constraint that's interesting and challenging is to require that a bookshelf anagram (left and right sides combined) be a *heterolog*. By analogy with a heterogram (a word with no repeated letters), a heterolog is a text with no repeated words. This is a non-trivial restriction since book titles often employ common small words such as A, THE, IN, OF, ON, TO, or AND. But with a little extra effort we were able to create this 13/13 heterolog using Chris's list. Six of the seven small words mentioned above appear, but only once each (as required).

*Bad Science + Home +
Mandarin Primer + Bulgarian +
Lost Languages + Gender +
Miracle Mongers + Ideology +
Obedience To Authority + Solutions
Cross Channel + Easy Thai +
Enterprises Of Great Pith And Moment*

↔

*Beginner's Dari + Middlemarch +
Once Upon A Time + Giles Goat-Boy +
Molecular Genetics + Naturisme +
On The Road + General Biology +
Cantonese + Myth-Informed +
Dinosaurs + English Traits +
Eastern Approaches*

For a medium-sized bookshelf anagram using David's books, we decided to add a different, even harder, constraint: that the set of book titles on each side of the equation must be a pangram. This is not easy, mostly due to the rarest letters in the alphabet, J, Q, X, and Z. In David's list of 462 titles there are only 21, 3, 11, and 4 books, respectively, containing these letters.

The methods described so far were not able to find a ~15/15 anagram that's also a pangram, so we had to use some new tricks. We first created a 9/9 set of books that just by luck happened to contain all letters of the alphabet except J and X. We then noticed that one of David's titles, *Charles James Fox*, contains both J and X, and used that as the basis for finishing the pangram, aided by computer but also with some manual tweaks. Here's the final 13/13 pangram anagram:

*A Singular Man + Bar Mitzvah +
Here Lies + Lava Lane +
Mexico + Penrod + Raquela +
Saint Joan + The Charmed Life +
The Folding Cliffs + The Sea For Sam +
The Sun King + You're Welcome to Ulster*

↔

*A Cellarful of Noise + Balthazar +
Chaos + Charles James Fox +
Giant + Lady, Wilt Thou Love Me? +
Maus I + Nuni + Poems +
Sequences + The Dark River +
The Gentleman from Indiana + The Reef Girl*

Since our algorithms are not tuned at all toward producing pangrams, it is possible that a smaller one than this exists using David's set of books.

What's the smallest pangrammatic bookshelf anagram that can be constructed using *any* existing book titles? The 6/5 example below, whose books can all be found on Amazon, was created by hand. Readers are encouraged to improve on this effort by reducing the number of titles and/or reducing the number of letters (this example has 36 letters on each side). Book titles that are deliberately pangrammatic (yes, at least one such book exists!) should, of course, be avoided.

<i>Schwarzkopf</i> (R. Parrish, 1991)		<i>Waveforms</i> (H. Tilton, 1986)
<i>Meadows</i> (C. Lloyd, 2004)		<i>Jackdaws</i> (K. Follett, 2006)
<i>Boxing</i> (Naval Inst., 2023)		<i>Biology</i> (McGraw-Hill textbook)
<i>Iraq</i> (Bradt Travel, 2022)	↔	<i>Quartz</i> (R. Gale, 2015)
<i>July</i> (N. Pyland, 2025)		<i>Sphinx</i> (R. Cook, 1983)
<i>Vast</i> (L. Nagata, 2010)		

To end this section, here's an extra-large bookshelf anagram (102/101) using David's books. Altogether it contains 203 titles, which is 44% of the 462 available titles in his list.

From Sea to Sea + The Nagas + My People + De Profundis + Beast and Man in India + Tarantula + Dreams of Glory + The Ginger Man + The Ireland Reader + Joan of Arc + The Road To Redemption + Tales of The Gold Rush + Babbitt + History of England + Lincoln Addresses + Prisoners of Hope + The Tears Might Cease + The Fiddler in Barly + Nineteen Eighty-Four + In Re Alger Hiss + Down All The Days + The Bonesetter's Daughter + Sargent Watercolors + Tolkien + Humboldt's Gift + New Irish Comedies + Trials of Oscar Wilde + Shosha + Civilisation + Ben Hur + The Fair God + Famine + The Rejected Lovers + Leila + A State of Heat + Actions and Reactions + The Elixir + Causality + Son of Oscar Wilde + The Breast + Take It Easy + The Canterbury Tales + Swift Sword + Some Prefer Nettles + But Gently Day + Woman Wanted + Between the Flags + Black Sun + Annie + Last Minstrel + Lady, Wilt Thou Love Me? + Irish Fairy Tales + The Lonely Girl + I Met A Man + The Red City + The Onion Eaters + Ramona + Fergus + Our Crowd + Lady Chatterly's Lover + The Coup + This Is My Beloved + The Girl In A Swing + The Drunken Forest + In Moonlight + The Cruel Coast + Portraits of Places + The Darkening Meadows + Grand Prix + Lady Baltimore + The Barrier + A Tree Grows In Brooklyn + Free Air + Irish Families + Blue Juniata + Lava Lane + The Middle Span + Casualties of Peace + The DemiGods + Penrod + A Choice of Kipling's Verse + Children of Lir + The English Religious Drama + Our Nation's Flag + Rudyard Kipling + The Countrywoman + Leonard Cohen + Pride Before The Fall + The Annotated Shakespeare + The Beatles + The Flight of Youth + Kenneth Callahan + Alcoa: An American Enterprise + Low Company + A Servant of Many Masters + Chaos + Revenge of the Lawn + Guy Anderson + De Alfonse Tennis + Radio Round-Ups + The Native Moment + Mutiny on the Bounty

↔

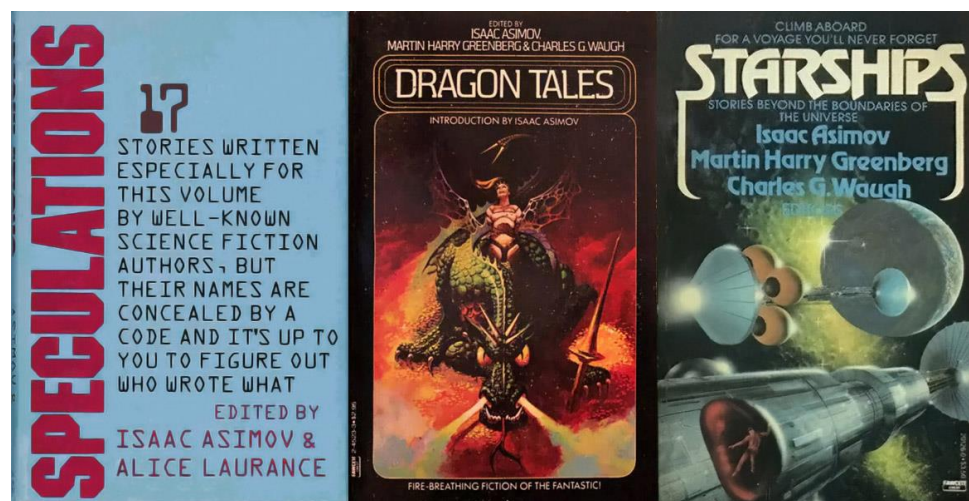
Freedom Road + Abaft The Funnel + The Golden Bowl + The Living Sea + Robert Frost + A Pagan Place + The Silver Horde + The Promise Of Space + Fathers + Coastal Retreats + Cold Heaven + The Love Object + Indian Art In America + Legs + The Children of Dynmouth + My Life as a Man + My Country + All About The Beatles + Mountolive + Ah Well And To You Also + I Am Mary Dunne + The Writer's Art + Saint Joan + Charlotte's Web + The Stubborn Season + The Wonderful Country + Escape From Saigon + Ship of Fools + The Richest Place On Earth + The War of Atonement + The Orchid + The Modern Portrait Gallery + All The King's Men + Rewards and Fairies + Energy Future + Life's Handicap + A Singular Man + Yes and No Stories + And Ladies Of The Club + Clearing The Air + Departmental Ditties + The Hour-Glass + Six Days of War + Options + Skiing Simplified + The Reason For The Pelican + The Siege of Youth + The Day's Work + Stella Fregelius + Coloring Without Borders

+ *A Waiting Game* + *The Green Pastures* + *Sebastian* + *Intimations* + *The Presidency* + *International Textile Design* + *Peter Kindred* + *Van Gogh* + *My Life* + *Elmer Gantry* + *Seven Short PLays* + *In Sicily* + *Land And Sea Tales* + *Letters From The Raven* + *Black's Guide To Ireland* + *Cousin Jane* + *Hail And Farewell* + *The Doctor's Dilemma* + *Indian Tales* + *Only Fifty Years Ago* + *The Road Ahead* + *The Noonday Demon* + *Darkness At Noon* + *How Could You* + *Sean* + *Delta West* + *The Silmarillion* + *Drop Dead* + *Silverhill* + *Told in the Huts* + *Black Robe* + *Young Fu* + *Refiner's Fire* + *The Married Man* + *The Bridges of Madison Country* + *Nuni* + *The Northwest* + *Twenty Years A-Growing* + *The Black Arrow* + *Ten North Frederick* + *Salome* + *Reaches of Heaven* + *Life and Literature* + *Discretions* + *Straight Herblock* + *American Notes* + *Cease Firing* + *Mia* + *Bompop* + *The Sleeping Beauty* + *Rebel At Large*

Single-Author Bookshelf Anagrams

Here's a different challenge: instead of using books from a single owner, how about books by a single *author*? (We are not, of course, going to insist on these also having a single owner!) To do this we'll need to choose an author who's written a sufficient number of titles (500 or so).

After considering several candidates we decided to go with prolific writer (of science fiction and other genres) Isaac Asimov. We assembled a set of 393 Asimov titles and first searched for small types. The smallest ones that exist are 3/3, of which there are two. One is shown below.



Note that *Giant Dinosaurs* is one book in a set called *The Library of Dinosaurs*; we've dimmed the rest of the set to make *Giant Dinosaurs* stand out.

A set of 393 titles is a bit small, so we were not able to construct any really big examples, but here's the largest one we were able to create, a 13/13 of Asimov titles:

<i>Beginnings</i> + <i>Cosmic Knights</i> +	<i>ABC's of Space</i> + <i>Atlantis</i> +
<i>Creations</i> + <i>Earth: Our Home Base</i> +	<i>Atom</i> + <i>Breakthroughs in Science</i> +
<i>Encounters</i> + <i>Fantastic Voyage</i> +	<i>Curses</i> + <i>Foundation's Edge</i> +
<i>Foundation and Earth</i> + <i>Limericks</i> + ↔	<i>Mythology And The Universe</i> +
<i>Travels Through Time</i> + <i>Nemesis</i> +	<i>Our Solar System</i> + <i>Space Garbage</i> +
<i>Races and People</i> + <i>Young Ghosts</i> +	<i>The Moon</i> + <i>The Neutrino</i> +
<i>The Human Body</i>	<i>The Roving Mind</i> + <i>Thinking Machines</i>

The word “Foundation” appears on both sides, which is not ideal, but Asimov's *Foundation* series is one of his most admired works, so we think it isn't *too* inelegant to have two books from that series in the anagram. ■

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ONELOOK, WE'RE HOOKED: THE DOUG BEEFERMAN INTERVIEW

T Campbell

This journal's wordplay studies often owe something to the online resources of [OneLook](#) and rhyming dictionary [RhymeZone](#). This issue's "Modern Chronograms" is only the latest piece that would've been impossible without OneLook's tools. Doug Beeferman, through the company Datamuse, has made both those sites what they are. We discussed AI, the user base, and the past and future of Beeferman's online creations.

T Campbell: Are you working from home, or do you work at an office?

Doug Beeferman: I sometimes say I'm semi-retired. I was working at tech companies until 2015. Then I retired from the corporate world but took a part-time job with the MIT Media Lab and in Cambridge, and I have a lot of friends and family in Boston. I live with my husband in San Francisco, but I go back to Boston four or five times a year to engage with the job, and I also work remotely for it when I'm here. But it's just a part-time thing, like 25% of my time. The rest of the time I spend on Datamuse. All the word stuff.



One of Doug's profile pictures.

T: Which is what we're here to talk about. The company had its roots in the mid-Nineties, in the very early internet. I envy you and your father for understanding so quickly how important most of this stuff was going to be.

Doug: I'm first and foremost a computer scientist and programmer. I was at the University of Illinois in the early Nineties, where the first *graphical* web browser, Mosaic, was made. So I was in an environment where the Web was brand new. Technically, the Web originated in '89 with Tim Berners-Lee, but it only started to take off in '92-'93. And it was all the rage in Illinois, where I went to school. So I've just been fascinated by it from the beginning.

RhymeZone grew out of a side project in grad school, thirty years ago exactly in 2026. We didn't commercialize it until 2000. So I don't know whether to say it's 30 years old or 26. But both that and OneLook are old, old websites.

T: RhymeZone was your baby right from the start. That was where it began, right?

Doug: Oh, yeah. I sold it to Merriam-Webster as of three years ago, but RhymeZone was my baby, my creation. OneLook was not my baby. That was started, also in 1996, by a fellow named Robert Ware. I became pen pals with Robert because I had some mailing list and a

few other word-related websites. Bob and I would chat. He had just started OneLook, and it was indexing dictionaries, so he was indexing some of my sites. He was retired and interested in moving on, and I ended up buying the site from him in 2002. He unfortunately passed away a few years later.

The Faster Finder
(246625 words in 50 dictionaries now indexed)

Please answer survey: ["How do you say Internet"](#). [Survey Results](#)

Search For a Word in a Dictionary/Glossary

Enter word/term:

HINTS: Adding an asterisk wildcard in the word/term expands the dictionary/glossary search. For example, either "tomo*ow" or "tomor*" will find "tomorrow". You may limit the initial dictionary/glossary search by selecting specific dictionaries/glossaries below. A search is automatically expanded, if no match for the word/term is found.

1. Computer/Internet Dictionaries
2. Science Dictionaries
3. Medical Dictionaries
4. Technological Dictionaries
5. Business Dictionaries
6. Sports Dictionaries
7. Religion Dictionaries
8. Acronym Dictionaries
9. General Dictionaries

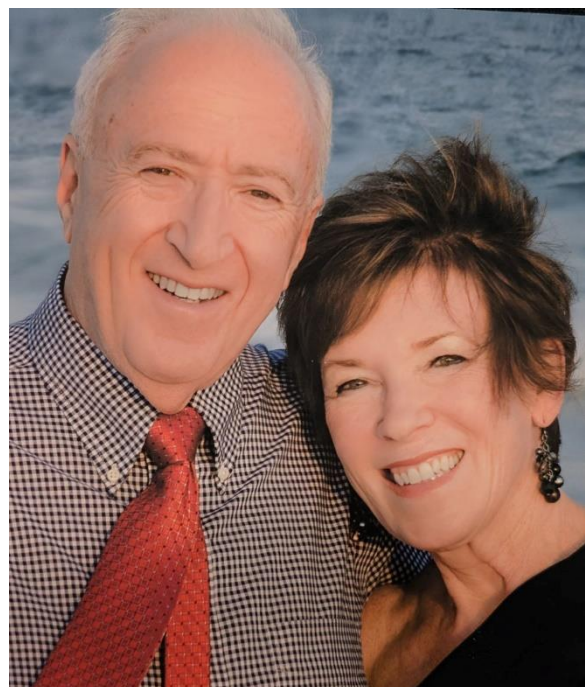
OneLook as it existed in 1996.

Even though I created RhymeZone and not OneLook, OneLook, of the two, has always been a bit dearer to my heart. Over the decades, I've added a bunch of features to it, like a thesaurus and reverse search, and now it's become a playground for all my word-related projects and ideas.

T: I know your father, Harvey, was involved with the management of both those sites. Were you in tandem from the start?

Doug: My dad was a chemical engineering manager, and his company fell to a hostile takeover. He found himself out of a job and decided to retire early, even though it wasn't clear if he could make it work. But he was into finance, doing some day trading.

I had created RhymeZone—although, in the Nineties, it was called the Semantic Rhyming Dictionary—and when we decided to commercialize that, I needed help with the business side, which he knew. From his perspective, he came out of retirement, and we incorporated a company in 2000, just as a vehicle to commercialize RhymeZone. We acquired OneLook two years later.



He became involved in the operations and editing of OneLook for quite a while, and all throughout, was answering all the support emails for both sites and also doing the books and all the business stuff. By the time Merriam-Webster approached us to buy RhymeZone in 2023, his health was fading, and he was gonna retire again.

Harvey Beeferman, here seen with wife Eileen McHenry.

Today, Datamuse is still a company, technically, but there's no revenue anymore. Without my dad, it's very hard for me to do the business side of it. But fortunately, I can just operate it as a hobby project. It's pretty inexpensive to run. So that's what I've been doing since his death [in 2024].



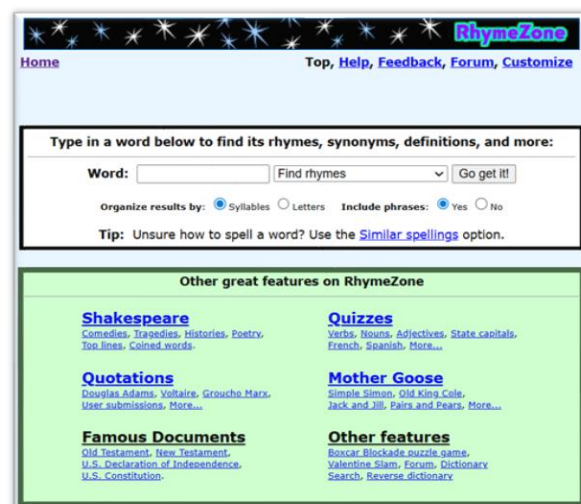
T: So Datamuse has been exploring lexical ideas through these sites.

Doug: The name is a portmanteau with four parts: *use*, *muse*, *amuse*, and then *data* slides into that. It has goals of building tools that analyze data, that provide entertainment. That's the *amuse* inspiration. It helps creativity, that's the *muse*, and then its utility, that's the *use*. So that was the idea from the outset. I imagined there would be more stuff than

RhymeZone. OneLook was a natural fit, just because I was so interested in what Bob had been doing. I was fascinated by the Web and how people at the time were creating glossaries online. All the major dictionaries were there by 2002, but there were also a lot of hobbyists, experts in, say, golf creating a golf glossary. And so OneLook was all about organizing all of the lexicographic efforts on the internet and so, so that, yeah, so OneLook and RhymeZone complemented each other.

T: I have mostly been paying attention to OneLook and RhymeZone as a consumer. Are there other concerns of Datamuse that would complete the picture?

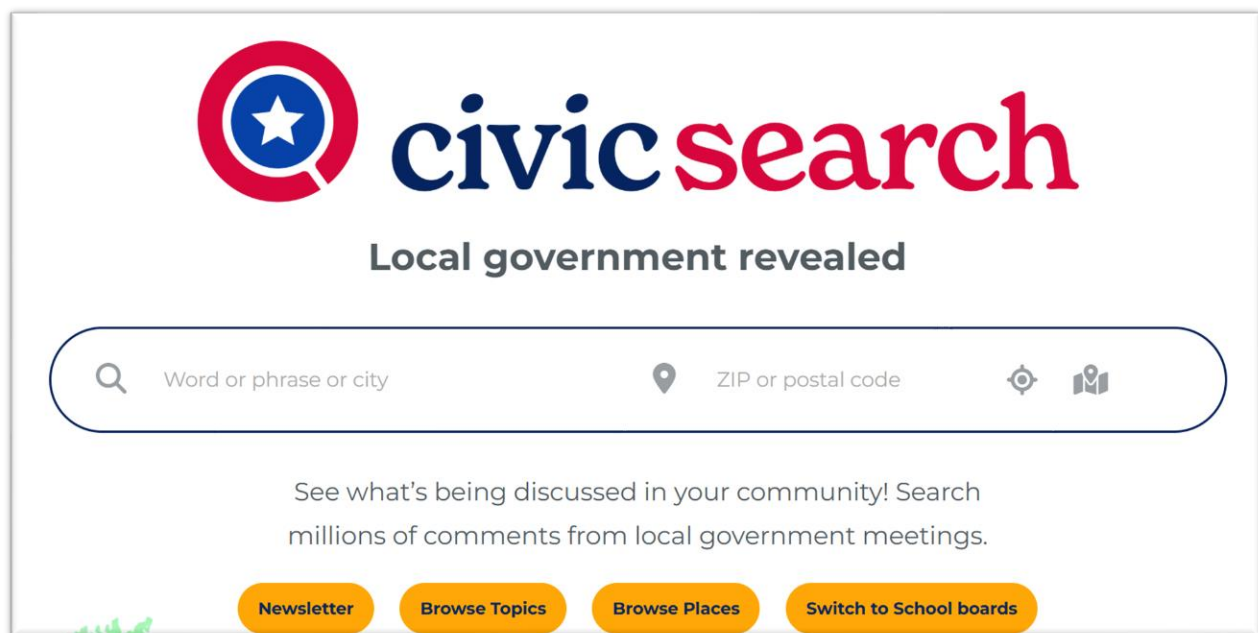
Doug: I didn't develop anything else under the Datamuse umbrella, because I had day jobs I was never imagining. In hindsight, I could have done it, but I always had other jobs. I was working at Google from 2004 to



OneLook and RhymeZone as they existed in 2005.

2011. During that time, I could not, as a matter of policy, work on the projects. My dad was basically the full-time employee then.

After working at Google and then another company, I made the Datamuse API, this word-finding tool developers can use as part of word games. You can make your own little word tools, hundreds of different little uses. I released that in 2015, then I worked on what became OneLook Thesaurus. More recently, I've built [CivicSearch](#), which is completely unrelated to dictionaries. I'm all over the place, but the unifying theme is organizing linguistic information. CivicSearch is a search engine for transcripts. So it's not completely unrelated. That's a Datamuse product.



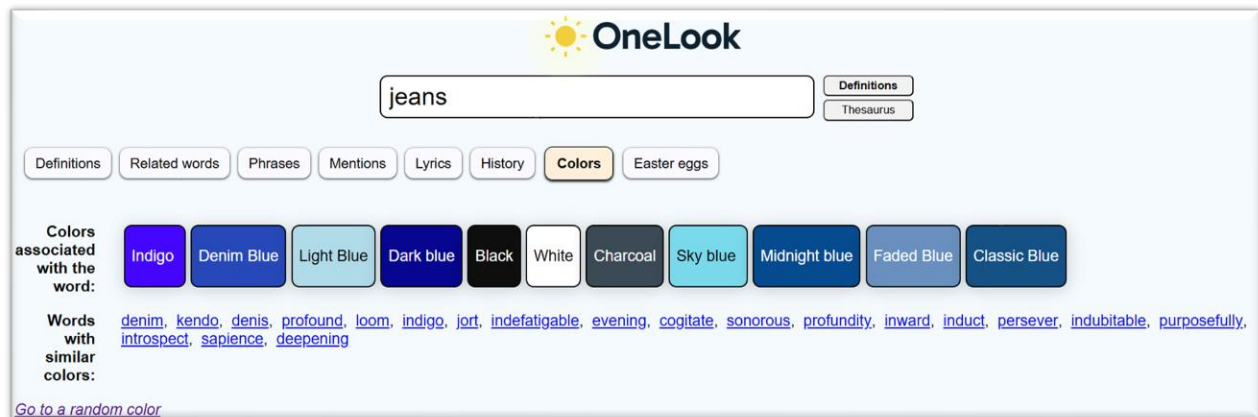
CivicSearch today, a recent Beeferman creation.

Since my father's death, I'm no longer thinking of Datamuse as an entity that needs to grow or make money. I might even wind down the corporate part of it and turn it nonprofit. Soon, it's going to be more trouble to maintain it as a corporation, probably, than it's worth. Never say never: I might monetize. RhymeZone was ad-monetized. OneLook was for a long time, too. But I decided I'd rather not be part of the ad economy if I can avoid it.

T: When they disappeared, I had this vague impression the site looked cleaner somehow. It took me a few minutes to deduce what was missing.

Doug: I'm not morally opposed to banner ads on the Web. At Google, I worked on some of the technologies adjacent to it. I don't consider it the highest evil in the world. But let's just say it's not something users ask for. Most of these tools are intended to be brainstorming tools, and ads get in the way of that. So, yeah, I would like to never put ads back up on any website. But I can't say for sure that I won't. We'll see what the future holds.

T: The features you've been rolling out—there's a lot! Microdefinitions, name info...the colors feature. I thought that was interesting, especially since it ties into the general lexical purpose of OneLook. Not every word gets assigned to color, but more words than you would expect get assigned to color.



OneLook's modern "color" feature.

Doug: I think a lot of the features arise from curiosity. There's so much interesting corpus information out there. I work a lot with Project Gutenberg data, the archive of like 50-60,000 out-of-copyright books. That's a great resource for a programmer. I look at it and I'm like, *Oh, I can run through that data and figure out all sorts of interesting things!* What adjectives do people tend to pair with each noun? That was a feature I was updating right before this call. It's similar with colors. I didn't know if the color thing would be useful to anyone. I still don't know if it is. But utility was not so much the motivation. The motive is my own curiosity. And other people have reported it's fun to explore.

Ironically, despite running these word sites, I'm not a very good writer myself. If I'm looking for descriptive imagery, I often want to find unusual colors, but I don't quite know how to access them. There's any number of color finding tools on the Web, but none that focus on the words used to describe the colors and words that those colors describe. The term *color thesaurus* has been used before as an organized index of color names. But there was nothing that would help me go from like an object like, say, a spruce tree, and tell me what its shades of green are. We're at version 1 of the feature right now. I expect that over time, it will improve.

T: I know it's tough for some creators to maintain their pace, but that's the beauty of creating services. There might be a version two down the line, but until then, version one will continue to entertain tomorrow as it does today.

Doug: Although it can become outdated, in that it's important to stay up to date with current slang, for example, so you need to rerun something regularly. But yeah. The creativity comes in the program, which creates a database of some kind, but once it is

created, it does hold its value pretty well, like a RhymeZone. It's crazy. That database-driven content that was computed once in 1996, I updated it every few years, but it's straightforward to compute rhymes from data. It's nice to have slang and updated vocabulary, so you do want to keep it fresh, but if you don't, it's not going to matter that much.

T: How much is OneLook used in AI development at this point? Do you get people asking to train on your data?

Doug: Oh, I see, I thought you were gonna ask, "How much do I use AI in OneLook?"

T: We'll get to that next.

Doug: This is a problem everyone who maintains any halfway popular website is experiencing now: AI-based scrapers that are programmatically hitting all the URLs on your website. OneLook has an open URL space. You can make any query to the thesaurus, right, and it will write some answer. You can get any query to the dictionary search, and it'll try to do something. And so as a result, websites in that category and search engines are very vulnerable right now, because there's tons of these scrapers hitting millions of times a day trying to suck data down to train models. I don't know if anyone is training on OneLook data. I don't think OneLook's been specifically targeted, I think it's just collateral damage.

Too much of my day is spent trying to make sure the site stays up. It serves maybe a million unique human users a month, as far as I can tell. But it serves many, many more bots, maybe 95% of its bytes are bots. You can't tell them apart anymore, and that's the problem. The bots are very, very good at disguising themselves. And these aren't bots from the major AI companies, like OpenAI and such: those bots identify themselves. It's this long tail of startups and random companies from all over the world, just companies trying to suck up the entire internet. It's an existential problem for a lot of sites.

T: Which I've seen in some other contexts. But you have turned some of these newer developments to your advantage.

Doug: I have a complicated relationship with AI. In grad school, I worked on language modeling for voice recognition, and that was the same "language model" you hear in *large language model*. But it was a very different, much more primitive technology in the Nineties. I'm very interested in AI and language, even before ChatGPT, and OneLook has always used AI.

I get emails asking if I use it, and I don't even know how to answer that. I mean, the answer is definitely yes, but the meaning of AI to the public now is a specific kind of generative AI, the thing ChatGPT does. But it used to mean something much broader than that, and I've always used corpus analytics and statistical, predictive models built on corpus data since I've had this thesaurus and reverse dictionary feature. So if you call that AI, then yes.

And I have been using generative AI too. You might have noticed the colors tab and names tab have a section which tries to summarize how authors are using the words. I'm careful to always use it in a context in which there's citations to the primary source material, to minimize the chance of hallucinations. And I always try to label the uses of AI. But I'm not against using these language models. The thing they do well is finding associations

Associations

People tend to hear "James" and picture a solid, traditional, almost regal name—biblical apostles, King James and his Bible, dependable "good guys" like Captain James Kirk or NBA star LeBron James—so it often connotes reliability, intelligence, formality, and quiet authority, plus a touch of suave adventure thanks to James Bond. It can also evoke creativity (author James Joyce, director James Cameron) or friendliness via the casual nicknames Jim/Jimmy. On the flip side, its very popularity can make it seem plain, conventional, even dull; some think of stern old-fashioned dads, colonial figures, or rigid formality. Negative flashes arise from outlaws and villains such as Jesse James, Jim Crow laws, mass-shooter James Holmes, or the Twilight antagonist James, so the name can occasionally carry hints of rebellion, trouble, or a dark historical legacy. Overall, "James" balances a generally respected, classic image with sporadic associations of banal commonness or notorious namesakes. [AI-generated]

An AI-generated section of a "Name Search" on today's OneLook.

between words. For a brainstorming tool that is about finding associations between words, to not use language models in 2026 would be a missed opportunity. You can use language models to do amazing things in word discovery that were not possible only two or three years ago. I want to take advantage of that in an ethical way as much as I can.

T: It is something we all wrestle with. I do think citations help. They provide a degree of transparency to the whole thing.

Doug: It's interesting. Merriam-Webster's perspective is different from mine at Datamuse. They would never allow any AI-generated anything on their site. They're very, very much about vetting facts and making sure. With RhymeZone, I had to peel some of the features back, and those features ended up on OneLook.

I'm not trying to be Merriam-Webster. I obviously respect facts and knowledge, but my tools are brainstorming tools and often fulfill tasks for which there is no objectively right answer. I don't want to ever print the wrong definition for a word, but I would be okay with errors in, say, the color summary that maybe Merriam-Webster would not be okay with. I'd rather cast a wide net.

T: There's a certain point where a free association exercise becomes more important than strict accuracy, at least in brainstorming. Without knowing the reason behind it, I noticed one day that RhymeZone no longer offered the "sort by meaning" feature.

Doug: That's probably one of the things that had to go. There was some degradation of the functions offered by RhymeZone after the sale. But I think they did an okay job. They redesigned the site, they made it accessible, they added a lot of user interface polish that I just wasn't ever going to get to.

T: It does have a few new bells and whistles, and I still use it when I'm composing song lyrics or poems. I've got a project I've been eyeing that's going to rely on that.

You've been in correspondence with a number of interesting people over the years. What are some of the applications they've found for OneLook features that surprised you?

Doug: Early on, OneLook got a lot of traction with medical transcriptionists. People who would transcribe recordings of doctors' notes. They would use OneLook, which includes a lot of medical dictionaries, so it has the rarest conditions you can imagine. So they would use it to find the correct spellings of the terms they were hearing. My dad and I thought of developing something we called MedLook, a special-purpose health IT type thing to help medical transcriptionists. But I ended up realizing that's not actually my passion in life.

We also heard from brand namers and brand marketers, a whole industry of people, as you probably know, who come up with names of products and corporations.

In fact, they had a naming conference here in San Francisco a few months ago. I unfortunately was out of town. But there's still a vibrant community of them and medical transcriptionists, and of course, the cruciverbalist community. I am a crossword novice. My husband and I do the *New York Times* crossword puzzle every day, but he does it for the entire week. I do it up to Wednesday, because I just can't do Thursday and beyond.

The crossword puzzle constructors back in the day would use OneLook's wild card features. They were fairly unique. So it was a way for them to find fill. I think these days they still use OneLook, but there are better tools out there for much of it. I corresponded with some crossword puzzle constructors over the years, but I'm not very knowledgeable in it myself.

Writers of historical fiction like some features which speak to *when* words were used. You can get a graph of the years the word was in common use, so there's a small community of people who use those features for finding the period-appropriate words to use for things. And the one I was most excited about was the aphasia community, people with a specific kind of lexical retrieval deficit. The National Aphasia Association highlighted the reverse dictionary in OneLook as a tool a lot of aphasics were using. So I was excited to engage with that community.

Now, though, ChatGPT and AI have made a lot of the special-purpose tools I created unnecessary. You can do the entire reverse dictionary task of like, "Find me the word that means x," which was unique on OneLook for like, 15-16 years, but no more. Maybe there was no other site that did it well. But now, ChatGPT does it so well. If you type *Ringling in the ears, what's the word for that?* You get *tinnitus*. Not only that, but you can add *in the style of this poet*. It's so much more flexible to use AI to do some of the tasks that I made very specific features to do. So I would say the usage of those tools is waning somewhat. Some people still prefer the OneLook interfaces, because it provides not just one answer, but hundreds of possible answers that you can then sort and search and filter.

Also, people use it to cheat at Wordle and Scrabble, but, as they say, you're only cheating yourself.

T: I have to confess I use it when I am attempting to solve a cryptic crossword. I use it for lots of my nerdy word exercises, but that's the usage I feel like I have most in common with other people.

Doug: Yeah, I think I noticed historically, like Sunday mornings, there'd be a large spike in those wildcard queries. I feel like that's people doing the *New York Times* crossword puzzle.

T: Sunday is a ritual in my household. That's when I'll do it on Zoom with my father.

Doug: It's Wordle for me. My dad and I and his wife and my brother, we would check in with each other on Wordle every day. I think Wordle served this amazing connective function for millions of people. My dad's gone, but we maintain that text message thread. I think we're afraid to stop, so the three of us remaining still do it every day.

T: Sometimes, the words we're filling in in the crossword puzzle will trigger some memory, or some point of discussion that I would not have thought to have with my dad for any other reason.

Doug: That's a design story I can use in creating new word games. I collect stories like that, because I'm trying to think, *How can we create word games that have more human contact, that encourage that sharing?*

T: Beats social media. The algorithm doesn't reward anything over a certain word length.

Doug: It really doesn't. It doesn't reward anything thoughtful or nuanced. So yeah, I agree with you about social media, and I'm not on it anymore, except for, curiously, LinkedIn. But yeah, the one problem is without social media, I don't know how to promote. Starting a newsletter, it's hard to get subscribers, and every newsletter out there seems to post to social media, and so it's a flywheel for getting more subscribers. I guess I just had to decide early on that I didn't care how many subscribers there were.

T: Given that OneLook and RhymeZone are diverging now, have you given thought to putting a rhyming feature into OneLook?

Doug: A noncompete prevents me from building RhymeZone again, but that doesn't preclude cross-referencing the rhymes. RhymeZone is still indexed by and linked from OneLook. It's not a thing many people on OneLook use, most users are not there for that reason, so I haven't prioritized it. I haven't been thinking about rhymes for a couple of years—except for a thing I'm working on now, a Spanish-language version of OneLook and rhymes done together. I'm building that out now. It's called [Rimar.io](https://rimar.io).



Rimar.io, one of Beeferman's newer projects.

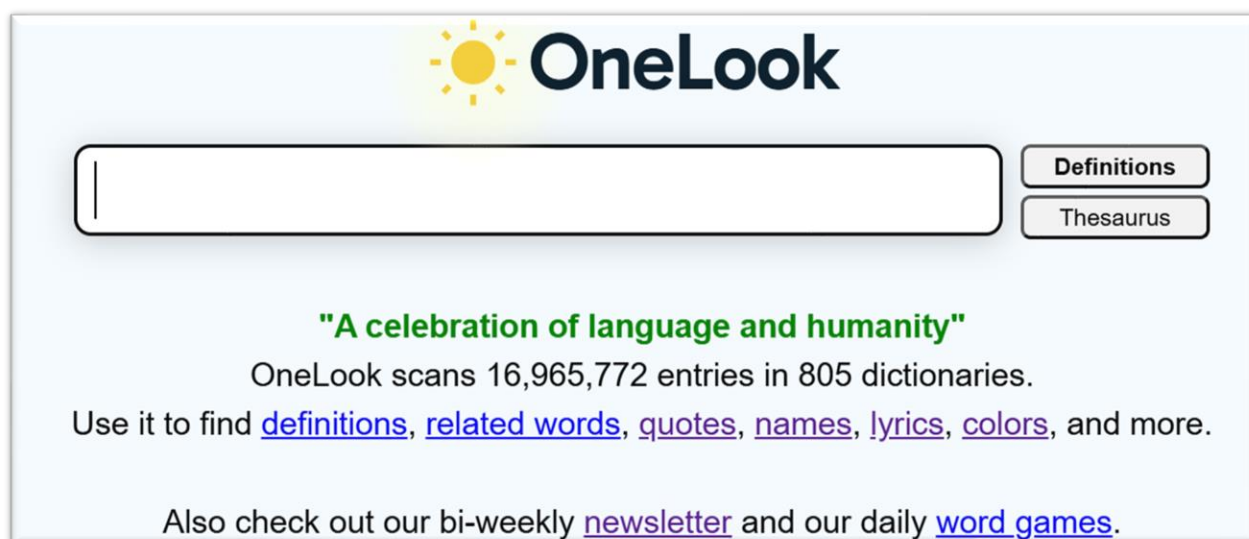
It's existed since 2017, but I've only recently put serious time into it. In the Spanish context, I'm allowed to do whatever I want. That will be my version of the best integration of all these features. I think my long-term plan, had I not sold RhymeZone, was going to be to merge everything into OneLook, or maybe vice versa, just come up with a universal brainstorming interface. I'm not able to do that in English, so I became interested in Spanish. I don't speak Spanish myself, but I'm learning, and I became interested over the past year in making good brainstorming tools available to Spanish writers and poets. You should see some more stuff along those lines from me later this year.

T: So that's what you're working on now.

Doug: Yeah. Also, this is the thirtieth birthday of OneLook, so my plan is a bunch of visual and data refreshes of different kinds. And that will take all year to do.

T: A worthy thirtieth anniversary, then.

Doug: Yeah. ■



OneLook today. Cleaner than ever.

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.

"Star Anagram Detection and Classification" by Jason Parker and Dan Barker came out in *Recreational Mathematics Magazine*, Volume 12 (2025): Issue 20 (June 2025), <https://reference-global.com/article/10.2478/rmm-2025-0002?tab=download>. It had some interesting findings about the visual rendering of anagrams, and I considered running it within the *Journal's* pages. However, Darryl Francis found a couple of issues with Parker and Barker's methodology; you can read his notes at <https://tcampbell.substack.com/p/star-sequel>. The *Journal* may revisit this concept at a later date.

In Miriam Brown's "Brown Family Wordplay" (2020). *Final Projects*, 45, https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/wfa_finalprojects/45, Brown analyzes her own family's personal system of in-jokes and wordplay from a folkloric perspective.

Pedro Amorim Favaro's "Writing jokes in film form: the style of Zucker, Abrahams & Zucker as influenced by wordplay," <https://repositorio.ufsc.br/handle/123456789/272046>, analyzes the comedic and cinematic style of three wordplay-grounded filmmakers.

What goes into the names of all those Pokémon? Find out at Rountheera, T., Chaiyasuk, I., & Rountheera, W. (2026). "The Art of Naming Pokémon: Morphological Creativity in English Translation." *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, 19(1), 173–197. <https://doi.org/10.70730/YCLE6696>

Distractives are the linguistic aspects of a puzzle that *aren't* clues. Understanding these is a big part of understanding how puzzles work. Luthfie Arguby Purnomo and Lukfianka Sanjaya Purnama published "Distractives: Framing-Based Linguistic Markers that Distract Players from Solving In-Game Puzzles in Role-Playing Video Games" in *Cognitive Studies* 25 (2025), <https://journals.ispan.edu.pl/index.php/cs-ec/en/article/view/cs.3473>.

Minute Cryptic: Over 160 Wordplay Puzzles to Decipher, Unlock, and Untangle by Angas Tiernan and Liam Runnalls represents a new, more bite-sized approach to the puzzling techniques found in a cryptic crossword. ■

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. ■

CONTRIBUTORS

Matthew Abate, Ph.D., is an Applied Mathematician living in Jersey City, NJ. He enjoys creating self-referential art, puzzles, and wordplay. Matt is the author of “Autograms” (Issue #4 of TJoW), “Puzzle Poetry” (Issue #5), “Goof-Offs” (Issue #7), “Headbutts” (Issue #8), and “Handstands” (Issue #9), as well as “Wellfleet, MA,” which appears in this issue. For updates and new puzzles check out his personal site: <https://mattabate.com/>.

T Campbell has written many experimental works, including long-running webcomics series (*Fans*, *Cool Cat Studio*, *Rip and Teri*, *Penny and Aggie*, *Gilded 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.

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 *Acronymania* (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).

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.

Charles Montpetit has authored several books for [children](#) and [young adults](#) in Quebec. He writes:

I've never constructed a crossword puzzle in my life, and don't have the first idea about how those newfangled grid-making software thingies work. But back in 2024, when fellow Canadian solver Elise Corbin put out a [call](#) for mini grids that can be "tiled" like one's bathroom floor, I thought I could give this a go. But since the tiling in *my* bathroom is based on four different units, that complicated things a tiny bit...

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.

Lori Wike is a musician and writer based in Salt Lake City, Utah. Her work has been published in the *Popogrou Anthology*, *Reflections*, *The Book of Penteract*, and *Seen as Read*, and her first full-length puzzle poetry book *Jump Search* was published by Penteract Press in 2023. Her writings can also be found in the journals *Word Ways*, *Anamorphoseis*, *InVisibleCulture*, *aswirl*, and *The Journal of Wordplay*. She is principal bassoon of the Utah Symphony and teaches at the University of Utah, Westminster University, and Festival Napa Valley. ■

ANSWERS

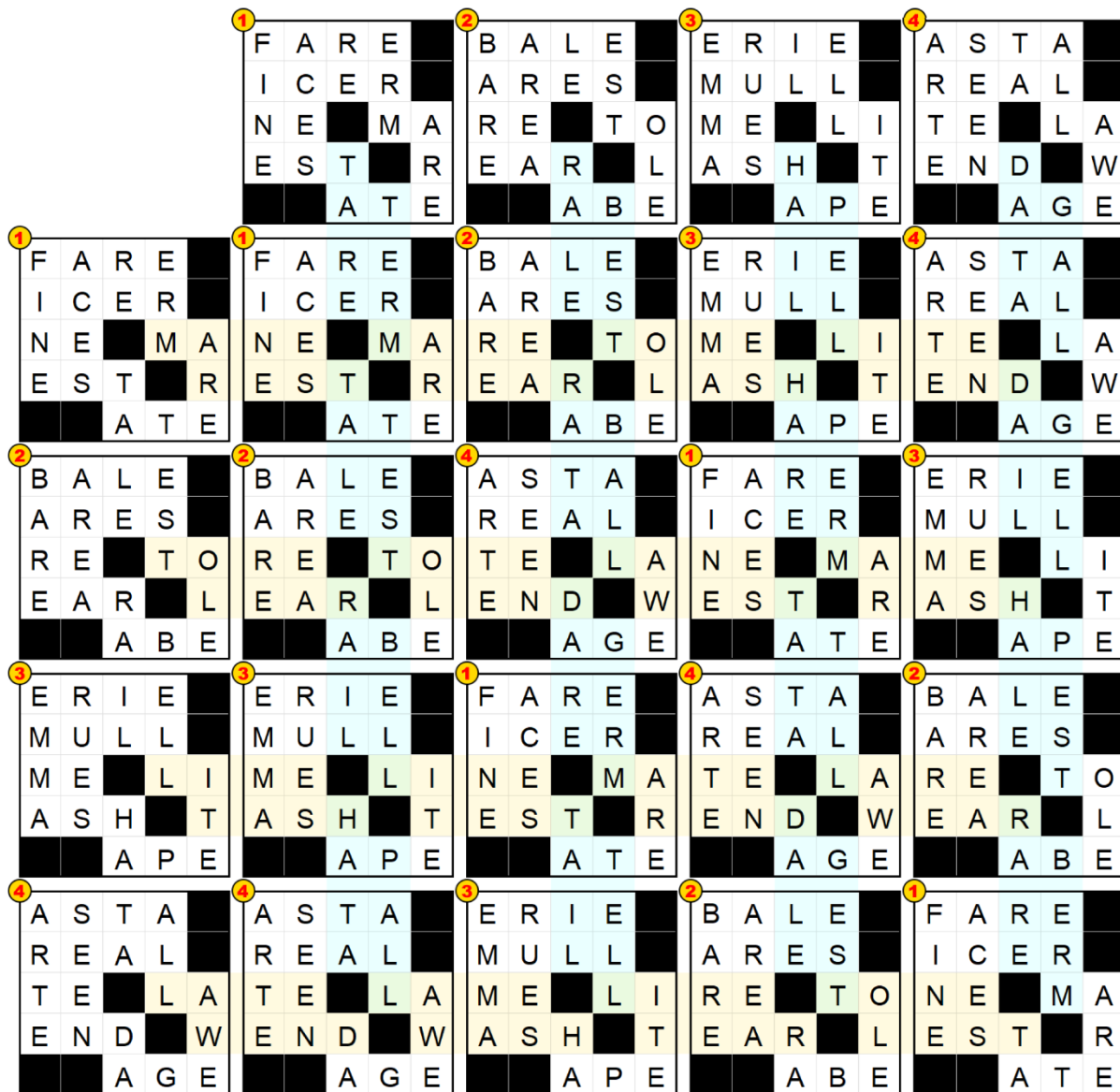
The Wellfleet Game:

Puzzle 1:	Early Washington foe?	Ch <u>er</u> ry t <u>ree</u> (ERR)
Puzzle 2:	Regular spot to find housemates?	Co <u>mm</u> on r <u>oo</u> m (MMO)
Puzzle 3:	One under the covers?	F <u>itt</u> ed sh <u>ee</u> t (TTE)
Puzzle 4:	Group that's waiting to happen?	S <u>lee</u> per c <u>el</u> l (LEE)
Puzzle 5:	Succumbed to tiredness	F <u>ell</u> as <u>lee</u> p (ELL)
Puzzle 6:	Keg, maybe	Be <u>er</u> ba <u>rr</u> el (EER)
Puzzle 7:	Grapes classification in the produce aisle	S <u>ee</u> d <u>less</u> (SEE)
Puzzle 8:	Seesaw	Te <u>et</u> er-to <u>tt</u> er (EET)
Puzzle 9:	Epic weakness?	Ach <u>il</u> les h <u>ee</u> l (LLE)
Puzzle 10:	It might contain a planner, folders or assignments	Tr <u>app</u> er K <u>ee</u> per (PPE)
Puzzle 11:	Last Stuart monarch	Qu <u>ee</u> n A <u>nn</u> e (EEN)

Misnomers:

1. Wood.
2. November.
3. Albert. When he came to the throne in 1936, he respected the wish of Queen Victoria that no future king should ever be called Albert.
4. From the Roman *caesus*, "the cut one," not from Julius Caesar.
5. One hundred and sixteen years, from 1337 to 1453.
6. Thirty years, of course, 1618-1648. I trust you didn't think that I was trying to trick you!

Tiling Minis:



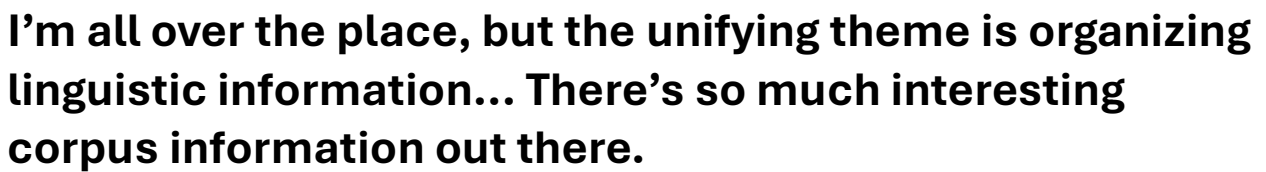
Modern Chronograms:

- 1900. Max Planck introduces quantum theory
- 1901. An explosion in black-and-white photography.
- 1902. *A Trip to the Moon*, pioneering film.
- 1903. Wright Brothers' first flight
- 1904. The first perfect game of the modern baseball era
- 1905. The bloody climax of the first Russian Revolution
- 1906. Mega-shock moves Big-Sur
- 1907. The origin of the Federal Reserve
- 1908. The explosive popularity of the automobile

- 1909. The successful mission to the North Pole
- 1910. The beginning of the Mexican Revolution
- 1911. The Xinhai Revolution ends China's last dynasty
- 1912. The sinking of the Titanic.
- 1913. The IRS founded
- 1914. World War I begins
- 1915. The sinking of the *Lusitania*
- 1916. Tank warfare
- 1917. The second, Marxist Russian Revolution
- 1918. The flu epidemic
- 1919. The Eighteenth Amendment makes booze illegal
- 1920. Women gain the right to vote in America
- 1921. Tulsa race massacre
- 1922. Exhuming King Tut
- 1923. The failed Beer Hall Putsch
- 1924. Hubble discovers other galaxies
- 1925. The Scopes monkey trial
- 1926. First liquid-fueled rocket launch
- 1927. Lindbergh crosses the Atlantic
- 1928. Discovery of penicillin
- 1929. Stock crash
- 1930. *Mickey Mouse* comic strip
- 1931. Al Capone jailed
- 1932. Japanese prime minister assassinated
- 1933. Prohibition reversed
- 1934. Night of the Long Knives
- 1935. *Monopoly* board game introduced
- 1936. The politically fraught 1936 Olympics
- 1937. The *Hindenburg* disaster
- 1938. Germany annexes Austria
- 1939. World War II officially begins
- 1940. Germany defeats French army, marches into Paris
- 1941. Pearl Harbor
- 1942. Allies halt Axis advances
- 1943. The Battle of Stalingrad's bloody conclusion
- 1944. D-Day
- 1945. Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and V-J Day
- 1946. The Baby Boom begins
- 1947. Breaking the sound barrier
- 1948. Beginning of the Berlin Wall
- 1949. Mao Zedong rises to power with a more agrarian form of communism
- 1950. Rise of McCarthyism
- 1951. Introduction of color TV
- 1952. Elizabeth II's reign begins

1953. DNA's structure discovered
1954. "Separate but equal" ruling
1955. Rosa Parks
1956. Motorcars assemble over interstate
1957. Sputnik
1958. *GiGi* (inexplicably) popular at the movies (it was a different time)
1959. The Dalai Lama exiled
1960. Kennedy's boyish charm wins him the presidency
1961. Yuri Gagarin becomes the world's first astronaut
1962. Cuban Missile Crisis
1963. Kennedy's death
1964. Civil Rights Act
1965. Voting Rights Act
1966. Vietnam War intensifies
1967. *Loving v. Virginia*
1968. Martin Luther King's death
1969. First man on the moon
1970. Apollo 13
1971. Elimination of the gold standard
1972. Watergate break-in
1973. Rise of the home PC
1974. Nixon resigns amid Watergate scandal
1975. Vietnam war ends
1976. Mars rover sends back first images from Martian surface
1977. *Star Wars* introduces the age of the mega-blockbuster
1978. President Carter mediates Israeli-Egyptian peace
1979. Iranian revolution
1980. United States boycotts the Russia-hosted Olympic Games
1981. Charles and Diana's wedding
1982. Michael Jackson becomes highest-paid entertainer ever
1983. U.S. invasion of Grenada, birth of the internet
1984. Macintosh, miners' strike, politics shifts toward lowering taxes
1985. Reagan-Gorbachev talks begin
1986. Chernobyl, Challenger
1987. Iran-Contra scandal
1988. USSR leaves Afghanistan
1989. Fall of the Berlin Wall, Exxon-Valdez scandal
1990. The Hubble telescope
1991. Second Gulf War
1992. Rodney King beating, resulting riots
1993. World Trade Center bombing
1994. Birth of Amazon
1995. The O.J. Simpson trial
1996. Mad cow disease

1997. Birth of Google
1998. Monica Lewinsky scandal
1999. The birth of the euro
2000. Dot-com crash
2001. 9/11
2002. Expansion of the European Union
2003. Mapping the human genome
2004. Sumatra tsunami
2005. Founding of YouTube
2006. Founding of Twitter
2007. iPhone launch
2008. Obama elected
2009. Guantanamo Bay controversy, Sotomayor appointed to Supreme Court, Iranian election, rise of sexting
2010. The Affordable Care Act
2011. Death of Osama bin Laden
2012. Higgs boson discovery
2013. Xi Jinping elected prime minister
2014. Musab bin Umair mosque massacre
2015. Gay marriage made legal
2016. Trump elected president
2017. Las Vegas shooting
2018. #MeToo
2019. "Brexit tax"
2020. Coronavirus
2021. 1/6
2022. Ukraine war begins
2023. Explosion of ChatGPT, other AI services
2024. China overtakes the U.S. as exporter
2025. Longest-ever government shutdown (yet...)



—Doug Beeferman