

Spelling poems published in Spelling Progress Bulletin (SPB)

[SPB March 1961](#) Item 11.

English Rime Words, by *Helen Bowyer*.

For the most part, they fall into three classes:

1. Eye rimes like "have" and "gave".
2. Ear rimes like "vigor" and "trigger".
3. Eye and ear rimes like "metal" and "petal".

[These three classes have real words. Other poems show homonyms i.e. correctly spelt words in the wrong places, or words which could reasonably be spelt like words used earlier.]

The following couplets have eye rimes. Notice what happens when they are read aloud.

Diver River, by *Helen Bowyer*.

I wish you were
Along with us here,
Hale and limber as we are,
Glad and gay and free from care;
You would love it here, I know
With the Spring upon us now.
Everything we need we have
And, oh, the precious hours we save
For the things we really love,
But for which we vainly strove,
Pressured by the noisy rush
Of the city's whirl and push.
Oh come, dear friend, do come
Here with us to make your home.

The Hired Man, by *Anon*.

Our hired man named Job
Has got a pleasant job,
The meadow grass to mow
And stow it in the mow.
At work he takes the lead,
He does not fear cold lead,
Nor is he moved to tears
When his clothing tears.
A book that he had read
He handed me to read.
He spends much time in reading
When not at home in Reading.

[Also in [SPB Summer 1976](#) before Item 6]

The homographs in the above would be eliminated by fonetic spelling.

[SPB December 1961](#) Item 10.

Werse Verse, by *Bennett Cerf*.

The wind was rough
And cold and blough.
She kept her hands within her mough.

It chilled her through,
Her nose turned blough,
And still the squal the faster flough—

And yet, although
There was no snough,
The weather was a cruel fough.

It made her cough,
Please do not scough,
She coughed until her hat blough ough.

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[SPB June 1961](#) Item 8.

THESE ENGLISH WORDS OF OURS, by *Helen Bowyer*

TAWL TALES FROM OALD TRENCHES.

But I one-der, my dear Kernal,
That you dont publish the jolonel
That you wrote in the infirnal
Days of World War One,
With shot and shell alighting
On the page that you were ryinging
And a rat or two abighting
At your pen.

You myt make a lot of dough
From yure royalties and sew
Could peh up awl yue oh
Around thease parts
And ewer credit, now at zero
Would zoom from heer to Clear Row
And ewe'd bee again the herough
Of aul hearts.

Soe at it, migh dere Cournel
Get busy on that gernal
That yew roat in the infolonel
Days of Were-ld Wore Won,
With schott and shell a-lye-ting
On the peige that yooh were weighting
And a rat or tew a-buy-ting
At yoor pen.

[SPB December 1961](#) Item 17

The Outcry of Professor Ann T. Quarian

against all this impious meddling with the orthography of our sacred mother tongue.

When Adam listed all the words
With which he named the beasts and birds,
Did he spell them *hors and donki*,
Elefant, jiraf and munki?

Where in Gospel or Epistle
Does it drop the *t* of *thistle*
The *b* of *lamb*, the *k* of *knaves*
Or turn our fathers in their graves
With *hoo* and *doo* and *yoo*?

Not if Holy Writ be true,
Not if Paul and Peter knew

Helen Bowyer

[SPB October 1962](#) Item 15

The last verse of **And now Professor O. Howe Erudight**

I stand for long accepted use,
For limb and climb, for juice and goose,
For vein and reign, demesne and seine,
For campaign, champagne, window-pane,
For firm and worm, for fizz and quiz,
In short for spelling as it is.
What's good enough for me and you,
Is good enough for Johnny, too.

Helen Bowyer

[SPB March 1962](#) Item 10.

THE WORM AT THE ROOT by *Helen Bowyer*

I write of an unwitting lot
Of parents, teachers and what not
Who tolerate the spelling in our schools,
Who frustrate their little Johnny
With *sunk* and *monk* and *money*,
With *whose* and *shoes* and *news* and *rules*
and *ghouls*.

Though they know that education
In an alphabetic nation
Demands a quick and sure ability to read,
They waste his unreturning time
On *limb* and *climb* and *hymn* and *rhyme*,
His memory on *home* and *comb* and *roam*
and
cede and *knead*

They know the mounting frequency
Of juvenile delinquency
(The casual murder of a mother
Or some such little other peccadillo as we
read of every day)
Stems largely from poor Mike and Maisie
Who simply couldn't jump the crazy
Gulf between our orthographic *look* and *say*

And YET
Well, there's oceans more to tell,
But I'll end my doggerell
With, "Let's summon our good sense, if any,
To respell *scent*, *meant* and *many*,
In the "one-sound-one-sign," order
Which just across our southern border,
Blesses Spanish from Tijuana, to Chile's
farthest shore."

Do you ask "But how begin it?"
I will show you in a minute,
If your interest holds out a few lines more.

[SPB Summer 1966](#) Item 10.

Then... Why? by *Helen Bowyer*

See here, *gh*, d'you understand
There's not a speech sound in this land,
Or this whole English world of ours
Which needs that fake digraph of yours.

Other digraphs one can say —
Chin and *shin* and *thin* and *they*
But what do you articulate
In *height* and *might* and *freight* and *weight*

And when you oust the *f* from *rough*
Laugh and *cough* and *slough* and *tough*,
What do you do but worsen more,
Spellings bad enough before?

Then, tacking yourself on to *though*,
Through and *thorough*, *bough* and *dough*,
You waste not only space and ink,
You train our Johnnies not to think,
Than which there is no greater wrong,
Can be inflicted on our young.

[SPB Fall 1964](#) before Item 4.

When the English tongue we speak,
Why is 'break' not rhymed with 'freak'?
Will you tell me why its true
We say 'sew' but likewise 'new'?

from *Rhymes without Reason*. The **full version** was written by Lord Cromer, published in the Spectator of August 9th, 1902, and quoted in a Pioneer, a Pamphlet and other Bulletins.

[See Poems online:](#)

An Apologetic Parody, by Evelyn F. Boehm,

Oh, dear, dear, what can the matter be?
Deer, deer, hwot can the matter bee?
Dere, dere, whaht can the matter bea?
Joey can't spell worth a dime!

I asked him to write me a list for our shopping.
The list he did right, sent my intellect flopping.
I scarcely could read it the way he wrote it,
It was so distressingly bad,
It woz sew distressingly bad!

The wurds that he rote, I skairsley coud reed them,
The wae that he roat them, I wish you'd hav sean them,
They wer so distresingly bad!
They wur so destrsingly bad!

He listed some bier to bring hohm two his father,
A suite chalklit bar too bring four his brother,
Sum sole for the kat, a bown for the dog,
Some seed for the bird, some fead for the hawg,
Then shugar and sawlt, kawfee and tee,
He rote down in order to get them four me.
Along with biskits and bred for hiz brekfest and mign.

Oh! I tel yu our Joey can't spel wurth a digm!
Owe, dear, dear, what can the matter be?
Deer, deer, wot can the matter bee?
Dere, dere, waht kan the matter bea?
Joey can't spel wirth a deim!

Professor P. Dantick's Dictum on Spelling, (as caught by this arrant reformer, *H.B.*)

Sacred is the *b* in *limb*,
Hallowed is the *n* in *hymn*,
Sanctified the *k* in *knot*,
The *gh* in *laugh* and *thought*,
Consecrate the *g* in *gem*,
The *ph* in *phone* and *phlegm*,
Yet there be irreverent meddlers
From Bernard Shaw to ice-cream pedlars,
Who would respell even *busy*
Just to line it up with *dizzy*.
Who'd e'en contest the right of *who*
To start itself with *w*,

And would chop the final *e*'s
From *give* and *have* and *please* and *freeze*.

WHY?

They claim the shocking frequency
Of juvenile delinquency
Stems largely from poor Mat and Milly
Who simply cannot get the silly
Inconsistency of *whole*,
With *knoll* and *goal* and *bowl* and *soul*....

STUFF AND NONSENSE! FIDDLESTICKS!

(Helen Bowyer)

Where in 1776
Were there lads behind the bars
For purloining motor cars,
For smashing neon lights with rocks,
Or shop-lifting nylon socks?
Yet they were faced with *cruel* and *ghoul*
(Those of them who went to school).
Not for them did some screwball
Respell *fall* and *haul* and *shawl*;
How much harm had *one*, *son*, *nun*,
Done to young George Washington?

No, the quirks of *yours* and *ours*
Did but nurture his young powers;
Who can say what contribution
To our coming revolution,
Climb and *rhyme* may not have made,
Dozen, *cousin* not have paid?
"But," say these pestiferous cranks,
(Some, mind you, from our own ranks)
"Never mind the Washingtons,
The Adamsses and Jeffersons,
But turn your eyes upon the lad
Who finds the vowels of *said*, *laid*, *plaid*
Beyond his skill to tell apart,
(Along with *hear* and *heard* and *heart*)
There's not a peril to this nation
Greater than the detestation

We create in him for school
By making him look such a fool.
'Tis to assuage his ego pang
He joins up with some alley gang
And takes out his humiliation
In thievery and depredation,
But did we but reform our spelling,"
They babble on, "There's just no telling,..."

BAH!!

Let profs who hold forth in this vein
Straightway pack their bags for Spain,
Or some such dull phonemic shore
Where our vowels in pour, soar, door
Monotonously spell like for.
And leave to us who glory in
Our English wealth of homonym
The job of teaching to our young
The spelling of their mother tongue.
We'll write another book or two
Explicating *you*, *blew*, *shoe*,
And call another conference
To justify on *rinse*, *since*, *scents*
Or do some more profound research
Upon the why of *birch*, *perch*, *church*....

— If this won't bring young Mat to tee,
'Twas God who made him and not we.

[SPB Spring 1965](#) Item 7.

Verbs, (by one perturbed)

A verb's the worst thing in the world
For me to learn aright
I study till I have it all,
I think, all fast and tight.

But when the teacher calls on me,
And I stand up to recite,
I can't make any sense of it,
And never get it right.

You try give the parts of verbs
And say *see*, *saw* and *seen*.
But when you give the parts of *be*,
You can't say *be*, *baw*, *been*.

If Johnny gives the parts of *go*,
And says *go*, *went* and *gone*,
It doesn't help a bit with *grow*.
You can't say *grow*, *grent*, *grown*.

The parts of *take* you're very sure
Are *take*, *took*, *taken*.
Yet *bake* seems very wrong, somehow,
As *bake* and *book* and *bacon*.

Now *do*, *did*, *done*, sounds very well
And so do *eat*, *ate*, *eaten*,
But *moo*, *mid*, *mun*, is very queer
And so is *cheat*, *chate*, *cheaten*.

It's worse than partial payments,
You never get it right,
And then the fellows laugh at you
When it's your turn to recite.

If ever I a grammar make,
There shall be some sense to it.
And if *bit* and *bite* are proper,
So shall these be *fight* and *fit*.

from the *Desk Drawer Anthology's* Port of Missing Authors (authors who couldn't be found)

Our Wealth of English Homonyms, by *Helen Bowyer*.

Owe that eye mite bee that be
Winging hur weigh oar the see,
Oar the waives sew bright and blew,
With the fishes glinting threw,
Sea-ing pour-poises at play,
Here-ing the see-hoarses nay,

Passing I-lands green and fare,
With myrrh-mades on them hear and their,
And sumtimes sea a killer whale
Cinque a wore-ship with it's tale.
Owe that eye mite bee as free
Two go winging ore the see!

Phoney Phonetics, by *Vivian Buchan**

*Reprinted from *Educational Horizons*

One reason why I cannot spell.
Although I learned the rules quite well.
Is that some words like *coup* and *through*
Sound just like *threw* and *flue* and *Who*;
When oo is never spelled the same,
The duice becomes a guessing game;

And then I ponder over *though*,
Is it spelled so, or, *throw*, or *beau*?
And *bough* is never *bow*, it's *bow*,
I mean the *bow* that sounds like *plow*,
And not the *bow* that sounds like *row* —
The *row* that is pronounced like *roe*.

I wonder, too why *rough* and *tough*,
That sound the same as *gruff* and *muff*,
Are spelled like *bough* and *though*, for they
Are both pronounced a different way.
And why can't I spell *trough* and *cough*
The same as I do *scoff* or *golf*?

Why isn't *drought* spelled just like *route*?
Or *doubt* or *pout* or *sauerkraut*?
When words all sound so much the same
To change the spelling seems a shame.
There is no sense - see, sounds like *cents*
In making such a difference

Between the sight and sound of words,
Each spelling rule that undergirds
The way a word should look will fail
And often prove to no avail
Because exceptions will negate
The truth of what the rule may state

So though I try, I still despair
And moan and mutter, "It's not fair
That I'm held up to ridicule
And made to look like such a fool,
When it's the spelling that's at fault.
Let's call this nonsense to a halt."

The Hired Man, by *Anon Y. Mous*

Our hired man named Job
Has got a pleasant job,
The meadow grass to mow
And stow it in the now.
At work he takes the lead,
He does not fear cold lead,

Nor is he moved to tears
When his clothing tears.
A book he had read,
He handed me to read.
He spends much time in reading
When not at home in Reading.

The homographs in the above would be eliminated by the adoption of a system of fonetic spelling.
Do you know of any other interesting poems?

[SPB Fall 1966](#) before Item 10.

Eye Rhymes, by *Helen Bowyer*

Bear and dear
Share, I fear
The pointless deceptivness
Of there and here.

Some and home
Tomb and comb,
Sin against the tongue
Like from and whom.

Howl and bowl
Foul and soul,
Mislead the ear
Like doll and toll.

Give and dive
Live and thrive,
Bewilder the moppet
Of six or five.

Love and hove
Dove and strove
Sound no more alike
Than glove and cove.

Pew and sew
Do and go
Fail expectation
Like now and slow.

Laid and said
Must be read
As if they rhymed
With neighed and Ned.

[SPB Fall 1966](#) before Item 10.

My Bonnie

My Bonnie lives over the ocean
My Bonnie flies over the sea
My Bonnie has perpetual mocean
She has St. Vitus's dance, you sea.

[SPB Spring 1967](#) before Item 8.

On Deaf Ears

It seems to me, my dear old c,
There's just one place for you to be,
And that place is in combination
With the *h* of *church*, *chin*, *chasten*,
Rich and *which* and *much* and *touch*,
Teach and scores of others *such*,
But when it comes to *cent*, *recess*,
You usurp the role of *s*
And when you head up *cow* and *cat*
It's *k* who should be doing that;
As for your silly *lick* and *pick*,
They'd be no worse as *picc* and *likk*,
So list to me, my dear old *c*
And stay right where you ought to be.

Helen Bowyer

Reprinted from *Elementary English*, vol. XLIII, No. 8, Dec. 1966

Scenes on a Playground - English Orthography Illustrated.

**A letter addressed to: John Sharp, Friends' School, Park Lane, Croydon, 7th Mar. 1844.
John Smith, Akworth Yorkshire, from the library of Sir James Pitman, K.B.E.**

'Twas a fine winters day — their breakfast was done
And the boys were disposed to enjoy some good fone;
Sam Sprightly observed, "'tis but just ½ past eight
"and there's more time for play than when breakfast is leight,
"and so I'll agree that so cold is the morning,
"We'll keep ourselves warm at a game of stag worning;
"I'm Stag" — with his hand in his waistcoat he's off,
And his playmates are dodging him round the pump-troff.
Sam's active but still their alertness is such
That 'twas not very soon ere one he could tuch.
The captive's afrailed with jokes, buffets laughter
By a host of blithe boys quickly follows aughter.
But joined hand in hand their forces are double;
Nor for jokes or for buffeting care they a bouble.
All's activity now, for high is the sport,
Reinforcements arrive from the shed & shed-cort.
More are caught & their places they straightway assign
At the middle or end of the lengthening lign.
To break it some push with both shoulder and thigh,
But so firm is the hold that vainly they trigh;
Oh! 'tis broken at last, now scamper the whole
To escape their pursuers & get to the gole.
All are caught now but one of the juvenile hosts
And he, a proud hero, vain-gloriously bosts,
But hark! the clock's striking & then by the rules
They must quickly collect for their several schules.
We'll leave them awhile at their books & their sums
And join them again when the afternoon cums.

Now dinner is over — "Sam Sprightly," says he,
"Let us form a good party for cricket at thre;"
Says Joseph, "I wish you'd begin it at two,
"For after our dinner I've nothing to dwo."
But Thomas would rather 'twere fixed an hour later
Because he's on duty as dinning room water;
And so they agreed to meet punctual at four,
On the green just in front of No. 1 dour,
& they thought they should muster not less than a scour.
Sam goes on recruit, "Will thou join us my hearty?"
"Yes" says Richard. "I'll gladly make one of the pearty."
"And William must join, he's a capital bowler,"
"He'll have finished his work by that time as bed-rowler."
"Come Joseph, thou'll join" - but Joseph languidly said,
"I can't for I've got such a pain in my haid,
"I think I should find myself better in baid."
"There's Alfred", says Sam, "I know he will choose."
He said he was sorry the pleasure to loose,
But he was appointed to black the boy's shoose.
They next ask a boy of more sober demeanour,
But he too's in office - they call him knife-cleanour,
"Well Jim thou'll go with us." "No, asking thy pardon,

"I'd rather by far go and work in the garden,
 "For there we get pay - perhaps a nice root,
 "Or what I like better - a handful of froot.
 "So you'll not enlist me - I'm not a rectoot."
 "There's Charles." but alas! poor unfortunate wight,
 He's confined to the lodge, - he regretted it quight.
 Tho' Frank's a long lesson of grammar to learn,
 He'll set it aside not to miss such a tearn;
 Some join in the party - but some are too busy.
 One does not like cricket, it makes him so dusy.
 But now there's enough - so says Sam, "Now my boys,
 "Just listen to me - don't make such a noys;
 "The High field's the place - & I do not despair
 "If the teachers we ask, they will let us play thair,
 "So while I get the bats & the ball I propose,
 "That Alfred or Richard or somebody gose,
 "And presents our request - making this a condition,
 "We'll all be good boys if they grant us permission.
 "Here's the ball & the bats - just look what a beauty.
 "Well Taff, what reply from the master on deauty?"
 "Oh! granted" - "That's right - that is capital news;
 "Indeed I knew well they would never refews."
 So now they're at play - and I think you've enough
 Of such spelling, such rhyiming, such whimsical stough,
 And therefore lest you gained from my verse should inveigh,
 I'll bid you farewell, leaving them to their pleigh.

[SPB Summer 1968](#) Item 9

Who's to blame? by *E. E. Arctier* Excerpts

"Oh, you English-speaking people
 With your seize and tease and steeple
 With your you and who and glue
 And your two and shoe and flew,

Continue with your whom and tomb
Gloom and plume and even rheum.
 Torment your little Tom and Terry
 With your misspelled bomb and bury
 With your go and foe and dough
 And your sew and tow and know.
 Keep on mixing up your c's
 With your s's and your Z's,

Come and dumb and home and foam
Torn and warn and tomb and comb,
Sir and purr and fur and myrrh

Keep on mixing up your j's
 With your g's, your o's with a's,
 Perplex your college Jim and Sybil
 With your paradigm and quibble,

And still we keep our eye and guy
 Our much and touch our whole and bowl
 Our flower and your, our coal and soul

E.E.A.

Competition Results.

1. From Mr. John Haggis of Tewin Wood, Herts,

Why not hie thee to Crichton and Mackay's and buy their Guide to Cairo and the Isle of Wight,
comprising byeways in Hendaye and worm's-eye views of the Eiffel Tower and the Heights of
Thermopylae?

2. From Mr. P. H. Horner, Education Dept., Rolle College, Exmouth, Devon.

HOW DOES THE REVEREND OUGH PRONOUNCE HIS NAME?

It must be rather rough
to be addressed as Reverend Ough.
Or do you politely cough
and say, 'No, I pronounce it Ough'?
Yet if you lived in Slough
you'd be known as Reverend Ough.
While the priest by Irish lough
is addressed as Father Ough.
But I rather think it, though,
that you're simply known as Ough.
Still, I think I've said enough
Mr. Oh, Ow, Ock or Uff.

3. From Miss Helen Bowyer, Los Angeles, California, USA.

That Dear Ph.

Phaster, phaster pflecks the phoam,
Pharther, pharther phrom my home,
Phlying phishes, phirs apleam,
Over there ... to lepht ... to right,
A seacow with her calph in phlight,
While phull ahead phour dolphins play,
Phantastically phleet and gay.
And pharther ophph, is that a whale
Phlipping up his phearphul tail?
Oh, my phirst phoray o'er the sea,
How phabulous you pheel to me!
Phlashing up phrom the Gulph stream.

[SPB Summer 1969](#) before Item 5

There was a man named David Byrd
Whose courage rose when he was stirred;
Thus all his friends to him referred
As quite first class, not second or third.
Then one day David gave his word

To join a pal whose name was Ferd.
And though it all seems quite absurd,
Some dreadful thing must have occurred.
For nothing more was ever heard
Of David Byrd and his pal Ferd.

Faith M. Daltry

[SPB Fall 1969](#) before Item 2.

Romance

When day is done and work is o'er
And homeward turn my feet once more,
Amid the city's ceaseless roar,
I come to you.

You never speak and yet I know
(Ah, yes, your eyes have told me so —)
You'd have me tarry ere I go.
Is that not true?

I linger for a moment, then
I join the rushing swarm of men,
And, yes, I know we'll meet again
Another night.

No words have ever passed between
Us two, yet I know what you mean,
And always wait till you turn green,
Oh, traffic light.

From the *Ports of Missing Authors*.
