END PLAY

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You are working a crossword puzzle and the grid shows _EAR. Without an additional clue you would not know whether the missing letter was a B,D,F,G,H,L,N,P,R,S,T or W. All this proves is that many English words have similar constructions with only one letter different, a fact exploited by certain prize puzzle constructors who devise fiendishly clever puzzles which appear to have two or more correct answers. Only by following their tortuous logic can you divine the acceptable solution.

At a recent convention of the National Puzzlers' League, the members were given a challenge based on this principle: take a sentence of three or more words and change the initial letter of each word to another letter so that a new sentence is formed. The example given was PAT HASN'T COME to MAT WASN'T HOME. The puzzlers were warned that their sentences must be more or less grammatical and make some kind of zany sense. In other words, one should be able to suggest a context in which the sentence could be used.

Many entries were received, among which were these:

SAVE GAS - EAT BAKED BEANS
NAVE HAS FAT NAKED DEANS

MY MINISTER NEEDS A DARN FEW COLLARS
BY SINISTER DEEDS I EARN NEW DOLLARS

WYATT EARP KILLED MANY GUNMEN WHO GOT HELL
HYATT CARP FILLED ZANY FUNMEN, THO' NOT WELL

By way of explanation, the convention was meeting in a Hyatt hotel and had been served fish for dinner. The longest sentence - actually, a whole story - contained 27 words:

HE WAS TOLD SHE MIGHT PUNCH, OR HURT HIM WHEN FAT, ILL.
  IF SHE FOUND JAKE'S COUPS DE GRACE (AHEM!) "ILL DONE,"
  SHE HAS YET TO SAY.

WE TA'S HOLD THE LIGHT LUNCH. MR. BURT, TIM, THEN EAT ALL
  OF THE POUND CAKES, SOUPS. WE BRACE THEM: "ALL GONE!"
  THE TA'S GET NO PAY.

Another entry, slightly defective in the last line, was presented as a limerick:

I'LL BET EIGHT OUT OF TEN PUZZLE SEERS
ALL GET TIGHT, BUT IF MEN GUZZLE BEERS -

      PARTY LIFE MAKES SAD FATE,
      TARTY WIFE RAKES BAD MATE,
   ILL MET NIGHT; PUT OFF EN, MUZZLE LEERS.

En is the nom de plume of one of the puzzlers of the NPL. The en-
try which got the most laughs from judges and participants alike,
and which had a unified theme, was:

   RANDY FELLOW WANTS PORN RIGHT NOW!
   CANDY-YELLOW PANTS WORN TIGHT - WOW!

Several other challenges were offered, including the task of tak-
ing a well-known maxim or slogan and changing each initial letter
to form a new sentence. This was a much more difficult task and
fewer entries were received. The best was the following:

   THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPED OVER THE LAZY DOG'S BACK
   SHE, BUICK-GROWN, POX-BUMPED, AVERS HE (HAZY) HOGS HACK

Again, the final line is slightly defective. The meaning of the sen-
tence? "She grew up with Buick cars and shows the marks of small-
pox. She says that he hogs the taxi for himself."

Another challenge involved taking a sentence, changing the sec-
ond letter of each word to form a new sentence, and finally chang-
ing the first letter of each word in the new sentence to create a
third sentence. The example given was BEING SICK'S NOT FUN to
BRING SOCKS, NET FAN to WRING ROCKS? BET CAN. The best response,
involving in turn a last-letter change, a first-letter change, and
a second-letter change, was:

   OH, SAY, CAN YOU SEE
   ON SAD CAY (YON SEA)
   IN BAD WAY, SON, LEA
   IS BED, WHY SIN? LO! Å!

The constructor offered the following translation: "Fatherly ad-
vice: sleep innocently in the meadows and watch the Swedish
river - forget your sordid archipelago."

As the challenges became more complex, the need for interpreta-
tion became correspondingly greater. Entrants were asked to con-
struct as long a list as possible of sentences containing three or
more words with first-letter changes. The longest list had 15:

   BAR OATES, "ZOT!" (censor authoress)
   OAR NATES NOT (don't paddle buttocks)
   MAR TATE'S LOT (vandalize gallery's paintings)
   DAR KATES JOT (patriotic girls take notes)
   AAR SATES SOT (river satisfies drunkard)
   JAR RATES MOT (urn is worth a quip)
   WAR HATES WOT (conflict discourages wisdom)
   FAR DATES DOT (remote girls sprinkle)
   CAR BATES HOT (automobile ebbs warmly)
   PAR YATES GOT (minister golfed well)
   UAR CATES POT (Egyptienne's garden)
   YAR GATES ROT (cute doors putrefy)
   LAR FATES TOT (house gods of destiny reckon)

GAR MATES BOT (fish pairs a larva)
TAR PATE'S COT (put sticky substance on head's bed)

The judges were faced with the problem of picking a winner for this competition, and after much deliberation finally picked the following entry. Although the number of sentences is not as great as in the previous list, a more or less coherent story is cleverly presented as a poem. The work is entitled "Why Egypt is a Desert".

"LATCH HUT; RAYS SEAR!"
"WATCH OUT!" SAYS BEAR.
MATCH NUT NAYS – DEAR!
BATCH, CUT, LAYS NEAR.
CATCH! BUT DAYS, YEAR!
HATCH, RUT, WAYS, REAR.
NATCH, TUT PAYS, HEAR?

"Close the door; it's HOT this morning."
Smokey's grandpa posts a warning.
Sign's ignored. It's arson time!
A pile of wood invites the crime.
It burns for months and what a shame:
Everything goes up in flame.
Of course, the FARO gets the blame.

It should be pointed out that the nom de plume of the author in the NPL is Hot, and Faro is the nom de plume of the judges.

One suspects that only in English could this game reach such spectacular heights, but it would be interesting to try it in other languages. To prime the pump, consider the following French duo:

UN PEU MALADE (slightly ill)
EN FEU, SALADE (the salad's in the fire)

QUERY

The vowel characterization of the word tEmptAtIOn is EAIO. Can anyone find Websterian words with vowel characterizations of EUUO, IUUO, UIUO, UUAU or UUUO, preferably without using the letter Y?

Howard Bergerson is looking for what he calls Old McDonald words (ones with vowel characterization EIEIO). He exhibits the common words perihelion and predilection. A quick check of Webster's Second Edition adds preinflection, reinversion, (p)rediversion, (p)reimpression, semiflexion, (p)reinvention, preintention, redirection, (p)reinspection, medisection, hemisection, sentisection, redissection, prediscretion, semicheviot, semiperiod, and semisection. Any others?