

# REFRACTORY RHYMES

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In the February 1976 *Word Ways*, Maxey Brooke defines **rhyme** as "the identity in sound, of the accented vowels of words, usually the last one accented, and of all consonantal and vowel sounds following, with a difference in the sound of the consonants immediately preceding the accented vowels." **Masculine rhymes** have the final syllable accented, **feminine rhymes** have the penultimate syllable accented; and **triple rhymes** have the third-from-last syllable accented. Rhymes with the following consonants somewhat different are called **vowel rhyme** or **assonance**; rhymes with identical consonant sounds but slightly different vowel sounds are called **off rhyme**, **sour rhyme**, **analyzed rhyme** or **consonance**.

**Refractory rhymes**, or rhymeless words, involve the relatively unexplored area of word pronunciation (as opposed to word spelling). As such, they offer opportunities to distinguish true logology from mere word puzzling. For example, at least one recently-published word puzzle book states that there are two rhymeless words in English: ORANGE and SILVER. Actually, there are thousands of rhymeless English words, but *Word Ways* readers know of rhymes for ORANGE and SILVER.

Refractory rhymes are the subject of a chapter in Charles C. Bombaugh's Oddities and Curiosities of Words and Literature (Dover 1961 reprint of 1890). In addition, several articles in *Word Ways* have discussed this subject:

- In February 1975, Ralph Beaman discussed historical references and classical refractory rhymes. Ralph cited several rhymes for these classical cases, including SPORANGE for ORANGE and CHILVER for SILVER, although many of the rhymes are mosaic (or multi-word) phrases. James Roberts (November 1975) challenged him to rhyme OBLIGE; Ralph obliged in February 1976 with phrases like ELIJAH KNEW / OBLIGE A JEW.
- In the November 1976 Poets' Corner, Milton Bass suggested rhymes for various pronunciations of ORANGE.
- In the August 1980 Kickshaws, Howard Bergerson noted that there are probably many rhymeless words for feminine (and higher) rhymes. He opined that one-syllable rhymeless words are rarer, and listed 55. Jay Ames (May 1981) provided rhymes for TUFTS, LAIRDS, BEARDS and JINXES.
- In the August 1988 Poets' Corner, Kay Haugaard rhymed CIRCLE with JERK'LL.

On the following page is a list of allegedly rhymeless words from these and other sources. A rhyming word is given for each,

although in many cases the rhyme is assonance. Unless otherwise indicated, all words occur in Merriam-Webster's Third New International Dictionary as an uncapitalized, unpunctuated, bold-faced entry or an inflected form thereof. The following abbreviations are used in the list:

NI3 = Merriam-Webster's Third New International Dictionary  
 NI2 = Merriam-Webster's New International Dictionary, 2nd Edition  
 RHD = Random House Unabridged Dictionary  
 + slang, foreign, obsolete, dialectical, etc. word

Howard Bergerson's list contains several inflected forms for certain words. These entries have been compressed by giving a rhyme that is the same part of speech, and therefore has rhyming inflected forms.

The author and editor welcome improvements to this list.

Word	Rhyme	Assonance
AITCH	BRACHE (NI2+), TAICH (NI2+)	NAISH
ANGRY	UNANGRY (NI2+)	AGGRY
ANGST		LANX
BEARDS	WEIRDS	
BREADTH		DEATH
BULB		PULP
CARPET	CHARPIT	
CHIMNEY	TIMNE, POLYMN (NI2+)	
CUSP	WUSP (NI2)	BUST
DEPTH		STEPED
EIGHTH		FAITH
ELSE		BELTS
EXIT	DIREXIT (RHD+)	SEXIST
FIENDS	TEINDS, PIENDS	
FILCHED	HILCHED (NI3+), MILCHED (NI2)	ZILCH
FILTH	SFILTH, TILTH	
FIFTH		DRIFT
FILM	PILM (NI3+)	KILN
FLUXED	LUXED (NI3+), MUXED (NI3+)	DUCKED
GLIMPSED		RINSED
GOSPEL		HOSTILE
GULF		PULSE
JINXED	OUTMINXED (?)	BLINKED
LEASHED	NICHED, TWEESHT (NI2+)	
LIQUID		WICKED
MOLLUSK		SMALLEST
MOUTHED	SOUTHED	
MONTH		GRUMPH
MULCTS		BULKS
MULCHED	GULCHED (NI3+)	BULGED
NINTH		PINT
OBLIGE		BIDES
OOMPH	SUMPH (NI3+)	
ORANGE	SPORANGE	

PINT	JINT (NI2+)	BIND
POEM	PHLOEM, PROEM	
PREGNANT	REGNANT	
PURPLE	CURPLE (NI3+), HIRPLE (NI3+)	
PUSS	SCHUSS	
RHYTHM	SMITHAM	
SCALDS	BALDS, CAULDS (NI3+), FAULDS (NI3+)	
SCARCE	CLAIRCE (NI2), HAIRSE (NI2+)	CARES
SCULPTS		GULPS
SILVER	CHILVER (NI3+)	
SIXTH		KICKS
SPIRIT	SQUIRET (NI2+)	
TENTH	NTH	BENT
TSETSE	BARONETCY, INTERMEZZI	
TUFT	YUFT	
TWELFTH		HEALTH
WIDOW	KIDDO	
WIDTH		BRIDGE
WINDOW	INDO, LINDO	
WOLF		BULLS

### QUERY

*Dmitri Borgmann's mention of HONORIFICABILITUDINITY in his posthumous article in the August 1990 Word Ways has prompted Peter Newby to raise an interesting point of logological superlative study. He notes that that particular word was quoted in an 1801 issue of The Spirit of the Public Journal as being "the very longest word in our language" and STRENGTH and STRAIGHT as being "the longest monosyllables". Newby is keen to know if any reader of Word Ways is aware of an earlier citation of an investigation into any aspect of English language record-breakers.*