

# ONOMATOPOEIA: THE DAILY GRIND

A. ROSS ECKLER

Morristown, New Jersey

This is the second of two articles on the onomatopoeia of words for sounds produced by inanimate objects; the first article appeared in the May 1991 *Word Ways*. In that article, a taxonomy was developed relating the pitch and loudness of a sound to the vowel of the word representing it, and the duration to the initial and final consonants (or consonant clusters). The article restricted itself to sounds associated with accidental bumps, bangs or falls of solid objects (both human and inanimate), including the deliberate collisions of war and sport, and the related sounds of friction and breakage.

In contrast, this article restricts itself to sounds associated with

- \* liquids and gases
- \* daily life (motors, telephones, sirens, switches and the like)
- \* bodily noises other than vocalizations (snores, sneezes, coughs, kisses, chewing, etc.)

To finish off, a selection of highly-unlikely sounds is given such as SHOOF (a loose shirt falling about one's ears while one is standing on one's head) and FOOM (all the leaves of a tree drop off simultaneously). Most of the examples are taken from comic strips appearing between Mar 1988 and Mar 1992.

I add to the earlier taxonomy the following consonant interpretations:

final R Z: buzzing or whirring sounds  
 initial S F, final S F: air escaping under pressure  
 initial PL SPL: objects falling in liquids (or semi-solids)  
 second-syllable LE: sound of extended duration

As before, the comic strips from which the sounds were taken are identified with one-letter codes (see appendix).

## LIQUID (OR SEMI-SOLID) HITS SOLID OBJECT

head hit by raindrop PLINK li by snowball SPLAT hjl WHAP c  
 SMACK c DOOF g by water GOOSH g SPLOTSH q by pie FFFFFFFFWOPP h  
 SPLAT g SPLUT g by mustard SPLOIT g by ketchup SPLOOT l by ice cream  
 cone SPLAT k by vegetables SPLUT KONG BLAT g by food SPLAT kgi  
 SPLOT g SPLUT gi SPLOP y PLOP h by bird droppings SPLUT h by tomatoes  
 SPLAT ge  
 wet mop hits dog SCHLOP g

pie hits wall SPLAT g egg hits wall SPLAT o food flung SPLUT y FLING k  
 BLUB i throw soup on table SPLAT h throw hash in bowl PLOP l food  
 dish dumped in bed SPLOP g  
 egg falls, breaks SPLOOSH t apple hits ground SPLAT b gas slops on  
 floor SPLAT d

#### SOLID FORCIBLY STRIKES (FALLS IN) LIQUID

man falls in outhouse pit SPLOOSH g in water SPLOSH n SPLASH o box  
 lid falls in water SPLASH s snake dives in water SPLASH b gold fish  
 dives into tank SPLOOP o pack falls in water PLOONK c golf ball falls  
 in water SPLASH b big rock thrown in water SPELUNK c newspaper thrown  
 in puddle PLOP SPLUSH t truck hits puddle SPLU-USH t  
 head falls in food dish SPLAT SPLUT SPLOT g fist hits plate of food  
 SPLOT g bat hits meatball SPLAT e wet ball hits catcher's mitt  
 SPLORSH b SPLORK b galoshes in snow GALOSH c

#### AGITATED LIQUIDS (POURS, DRIPS)

privy topples SPLAT b food tray falls on floor SPLAT s water-filled  
 balloon bursts SPLOIT g hair curler GURGLE k wave onto beach SLOOSH g  
 pour coffee KA-PLOP d pump gas GLUG t food down sewer SLURP o pour  
 gas from can GLUG d hard rain GOOSH g watering can FOOSH s  
 flush toilet FOOSH d FLUSH c KASWOOSH c paper down toilet SPLOOSH k  
 run faucet hard WHOOSH d FWOOSH c shower head WHOOSH d reduced-flow  
 shower head PWIT d plumbing sounds GLUG DRIP BLOOP FLUMP i  
 dripping ice cream DRIP l roof leak DRIP o faucet drip BLIP m water  
 drips PLIP PLOP d DRIP s glue from tube PLOP l  
 blow bubbles in water B-B-B-B-B-B g drink last juice through a straw  
 SLOR-SLOR-SLOR-SLOR SLORRREERRRRK-K-K g sip through straw SLOOK g  
 SLURP k SIP g SLURPPP c SZIPPP h elephant blows through trunk SPLASH o  
 perfume bottle SQUIRT k plant mister SQUIRT g squirt gun SQUIRT i  
 water sprinkler FISSSS ZIT ZIT ZIT ZIT g KLIK KLIK t leak under  
 pressure FOOSH s  
 man swimming SPLISH SPLASH o man kicks puddle SPLISH SPLOOSH s man  
 jumps in puddle SPLASH l

#### EXPLOSIONS, ESCAPING GAS

thunder and lightning BOOM ce CRAACK c ZOT b KABOOM c CRACK CRASH i  
 volcano RUMBLE FOOM b  
 military explosions: grenade BOOM e gun BKOWWW x BLAM cjt POW g  
 BANG ut BANG-G t BAM e machine gun RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT RAT-A-TAT-TAT-  
 TAT j RAT-TAT-TAT-T t RAT-A-TAT-TAT e keg of gunpowder BOOM h cannon  
 BOOM BAM e tank artillery BLAM e artillery shell BOOM e KA-BOOM d  
 bomb BOOM t flame thrower WHOOSH e rocket launcher FOOM e  
 fireworks POW KAPANG SSSHHHHH BAM i BOOM is  
 auto tire BLAM l can POW c trick cigarette BOOM k flashbulb POOF co  
 FLASH s charcoal lighter ignites FOOM y acetylene torch WFFFFFFFFFFFF y  
 propane torch PZZZ-T t  
 TV set fails PFFFT t light burns out PF-F-T-T t overworked hand cal-  
 culator gives up POW g  
 soap bubble bursts BIP c bubble gum pops SNAP c POW c  
 spray can PSSST o PSHHHHH g shaving canister FOOSH d open soda can  
 FZZT d POP SSSSSS m POOSH i open champagne bottle POP FFIZZZZZZZZ b



telephone switchboard RING BEEP k phone busy signal BZZZ t off-hook  
 signal BZZZ t recording signal BEEP i intercom signal BZZZ e  
 bathroom scale DING s beeper BEEP eu fax machine BEEP k radiation  
 detector PEEP j electric timer BING k RINGG c DING g video  
 game ZAP s BEEP s BIP s ZAP PING WHIRRRRRR WHACKA e  
 ice cream truck DING DONG u DING DINGA LING LINGA m taximeter KLUNK  
 DING s snack cart bell DING o  
 bells on jester's hat JINGLE h sleigh bells JINGLE b DINGLE g fire  
 bell CLANG q DING t DING s handbell CLUNKA CLANK t DING l BONG b  
 BING k New Year's BONG u grandfather chimes BONNNNNG l school  
 bell RINNGGGG c  
 siren REEEEEEEEEEEEE WOOP s WEEEO v on motorcycle RRROOWWRR o smoke  
 alarm WOO-OP W-P-P W-WOO WOO-OOP t WOOP i FTWEEEEEEEEEE x SCREE... y  
 B-BEEEP BEEEP-P BE-EEEP t  
 train horn BLURRT y bus horn HONK BEEP p car horn HONK bflt BEEP bo  
 HON-NK H-HONK-K HONK-A H-HONK HONK-K HONK-K-K H-HON-NK HON-N-N-K-K-  
 HON-N-K H-HON-N-K NOHKA B-BEEP t AU-OOGA s rubber squeeze horn HONK p  
 duck call HONK o QUACK b  
 referee whistle PHWEET e TWEET b blow air into whistle FFFFFF g whistle  
 THWEET b  
 party horn HONK g BLAT g trumpet HONK o

#### CLICKING (AND SNAPPING) NOISES

TV switch (including remote) CLICK bcdgiklprst CLIK di CLIC i internal  
 TV channel TINK s  
 telephone hang-up CLICK glmtz CLIK l telephone pushbutton tones BEEP  
 BOOP c touch-tone buttons TAP k answer recording terminates BIP d  
 clock TICK gw TICK TOCK g TIC i TIC-TOK-TOC t turn off alarm DONK g  
 push button BOINK c button on console CLICK f  
 light switch CLICK gjk CLIK d light pull-chain CLICK k  
 typewriter keyboard TIC m TICKA-TICK t PLIK e CLICKETY e PLICK e  
 type slowly PECK e calculator keyboard TAP k computer keyboard TAP d  
 CLICK CLICKETY i CLIKKITY CLIK d terminal response BEEP s  
 toaster TIKKA z TIC l bread pops out ZOOP b BLUT g WHAM l BWOING c  
 shut padlock SNAP r set bolts on door KLIK SKLAKK KLATCH x door latch  
 CLICK gjt lock door CLIK d key turned in lock CLICK LOCK l CLK m  
 CLICK e doorknob jiggled RATTLE t  
 unsnap ski bindings SNAP b unsnap restraining harness SNAP s  
 voting booth lever CLICK m cigarette lighter CLICK d electric blanket  
 switch CLICK t slide-changer CLICK l camera shutter CLICK cfgklos  
 SNAP gk KLIK t CLIK d set stopwatch CLICK g lawn sprinkler KLIK t  
 knitting needles CLICK g swing-ball "reaction" game CLACK s comple-  
 tion of microwave cycle BING k turn-signal indicator CLICK i rewind  
 cassette stops POINK s CLICK e car seat back adjustment CLICK CHUNK g  
 pull out pin to start balloon inflator POINK s trigger on gun CLK q  
 CLICK gjt<sup>w</sup> CLACK w  
 "walk" signal turns CLICK t traffic light KLIK t checkwriter printer  
 TIK a electronic cash register CLIK-K t hospital bed control CLICK g  
 shake out blanket WHIP g close drapes SHOINK g window shade runs up  
 too fast FWIP g remove suction-cup arrow POP h operate salad shooter  
 PHOOT PHUT j fishing reel WHIRRRRRRRR y beanie propellor THBBPTHPPTH  
 THBBTPHBB THBBPTBTHP c

## RADIOS, MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

objectionable radio music TA-RAH-H TA-TAH-H-H DUM-DE-DUM t POP ROCK  
 BADOOLA BLAM l hard rock music THUNKA i  
 trumpet HONK g xylophone PLINK s guitar DOING SPROING i PLINK m  
 electric guitar ZOOM ZOOOOM SLAP WHUPA TUNK d  
 drums RAP RAPPA DAP DAPPA RAT-TAT-T-T TAT-T RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT WHAM-M  
 BRRUMM-TUM TUM RICKA-TICKA t THUMPA s

## BODILY NOISES

eating CHOMP eghiko GULP gho SLURP gho SNORT g CRUNCH jk MUNCH gj  
 GOBBLE g SNARF g SMUNCH h eat fast RRGHHMPHFFG g  
 eat cream puff MOOSH MUMMPH MOOMPH b soup SLURP bm BLUB MPPH GLUB j  
 paper MUNCH CHOKE b rock CRUNCH g lunch-counter top KARRUNCH b  
 candy CRUNCH g sugar CRUNCH c apple CHOMP y bottle CRUNCH h cereal  
 CRUNCH l carrot MUNGH CRUNCH g piano leg CRUNCH t wood CHOMP GNAW  
 MUNCH s potato chips CRUNCH r mashed potatoes CRUNCH g pizza  
 CRUNCH i  
 animal eating dog CHOMP kh MUNCH st CRUNCH htu GOBBLE h SMUNCH t  
 GULP g SLURP iu SNAP t CHOMP p fish bites CHOMP c  
 eat food off spoon GMBK k  
 stomach rumbles RUMBLE e SLOSH m GROWLL g GRUMBLE k GURGLE h  
 creaking joints CREAK nly CRACK gy SNAP POP g  
 heart (through stethoscope) PUM PUM BAM BAM e  
 laugh HEH HEE HOO HAR SNORK HO b  
 drink SLURP bdg GLUG bc GULP l LAP b  
 animal drink (dog) LAP b  
 sucking frosting off cake SLURP g noodles SLURP l cheese off lasagna  
 SLUUUCK g crumbs off floor SUCK g through straw SLOOK g SLURP k  
 SIP g SLURRPP c SZIPPP h last juice through straw SLOR-SLOR-SLOR-SLOR  
 SLORRREERRRRK-K-K g baby bottle GLUG hi ZOOK t  
 salivating animal dog SHLUP SMACK u dog licks cat SLUUURRP SLURP SLURK  
 SLOORP LICK g man licks cake box SLURP e  
 kiss PECK jl SMACK eil KISS chlm SMAK ep SMOOCH g  
 spit (clear throat) THPPT l PTUI b NNNGKGGK HOCCHHHH PTOOEY c PITTUWEE g  
 spit out coffee PFFFF e SPOOT g PTUI h spit out pacifier THOO s  
 Bronx cheer PLLLLL-T l PBPBPPBPBT q THBPTB PBTB c vibrate lips with  
 finger BIBBLE i  
 snap finger SNAP ot  
 shortness of breath PUFF-P-PUFF P-PUFF PUFF-F PUFF t PANT k  
 strain to lift weights HUPUNNNNNGGG g  
 belch BURRRRRRRRRRRRP g URP h BURP e BU-URRPP c BURRRRRRRRP g dog BURP h  
 blow air FWOOSH s FOOF g POOF p WHEEZE s WHOOF WHOOOOF WOOSH m  
 blow bubbles in water B-B-B-B-B-B g candles on cake FOOF gq feather  
 FOOF g through bean shooter PHOOT g  
 blow nose SNERK SNORK b HONK blw PHWONK q SNIFFLE HONK SNIFF s  
 snore (in addition to ZZZ..) SKNX-X l Z-NORE t BZZZZZZ SNORT e SNRRRK m  
 ZZZZZNARK q ZRONKNRKLNRK q sleep noises ZZGAAK ZZZZZZGAK u ZZ MMP  
 BGZ GNZ HEE HEE ZZZ NUK NUK WOO NK c dog snore SNORE k YOWLEE GRIND  
 SNORT e  
 breathe through nose SNORTPH SNORTPHG SNOPTH j  
 cry SNIFF lns SOB l  
 sneeze HASHOOIE b KBTHCHH c cough BORK-K BORK-A KOFF gt COFF e COUGH l

HAAACK g general coughs and sneezes SNIFFLE SNORFLE SNIFF UG KOFF ACK  
 HACK GLIG BLECK s  
 hiccough HICCUP u  
 yawn YAAAAAAWVN g  
 garble YAKAKAKAKA l  
 choking THPPT j PBTBT c nausea AAA-K UK-K ERP t BARRRFF c RAALLPH s  
 tremble with cold B-R-R m chattering teeth CHATTER h  
 false teeth CHAKA y grind teeth GRINDD e brush teeth BRUSH g snap  
 jaws like a shark SNAP c  
 make noise with armpit FERK b  
 hangover headache THUMP n  
 bag of waters ruptures SPLOSH s  
 dog's tail swats ground SSSHLUP THLUP m

## FAST-MOVING OBJECTS

car VA ROOM e ZIP Z-ZOOM Z-ZIP ZI-I-I-PT ZIP-P ZOOOM t VOOM j ZOOM nt  
 pitched ball WHOOSH b  
 fast cat ZINNG g SHOOM g ZIP g WHOOSH g dog PHOOM o breaking sound  
 barrier BOOM u spinning like a top WHIRRRR g  
 fast fish ZIP b flying fish SWISH o fast wolf ZIP g  
 person ZOOM ahoy VARRRRRRRROOOOOMMMMM b ZIP gt WHOOSH lg WOOSH o  
 bullet ZING j pine cone ZINGGG c stone ZING s mudball WHIZZ j tennis  
 ball ZOOM y snowball WHIFF WHIFFFFF c food WIZZEW ZWOSH WISH y  
 falling airplane FOOM j dodge ball SHOOM s  
 body thrown through air THWASSK n SWOOP WHOOSH s arm throwing hard  
 WHIPP c  
 file folder whipped out of file Z-ZIP t toilet paper spin off reel  
 WHIZZZ c

## UNLIKELY SOUNDS

loose shirt falls around one's ears while standing on head SHOOF c  
 paper bag placed over one's head SHWOOP c  
 bullet hits flea PING g  
 muscle in cat's tail pops up BWOIK g  
 wall of guilt falls SHOOM s  
 muscle spasm while dozing SPLANG g  
 eyes bug out in surprise or terror BWOING j  
 pushed-in bulge of fat on midriff springs out again BOINK k  
 cat drops his pot belly on a mouse WHUMP g  
 transmogrifier changes boy into something else ZAP c UFO HMMMMMMMM  
 prehistoric beast breaks through ground RRRRRRRRIPPPPPPPPPPPPP b  
 person vanishes in puff of smoke POOF s FFTT c  
 bug's footsteps (to person with hangover) THUD j  
 dusting furniture FLICK FLICKA FLAP WIPE m  
 plant wilts from bad air DROOP g  
 flower petals trap unwary bee SLAM b  
 leaves all fall simultaneously off a tree FOOM y  
 snowflake strikes bird's tongue BONK p  
 clam sprouts legs ZZIP b clam gargles OGGLE OGGLE b clam shuts CLOMP b  
 hermit crab suddenly shuts SNAP g  
 flower emerges from ground SPROING b  
 stretched ant eater tongue vibrates TWANG b ant eater tongue shoots out,  
 catches fly ZOT b ant eater tongue slices anthill ZZZZIPP b ant eater

snout taps ground like blind man's cane TAP b  
 shove baby bottle into baby's mouth THPT k  
 pick Christmas light off of tree POINK s pick a fern PLICK g  
 woodchuck pushes up through layer of dirt POOK b  
 extract olive from jar POONK l  
 card ejected from cash machine SPLORP b  
 "trouble" spots on globe explode POW b  
 one's shadow falls from the wall to the ground FLUMP b  
 penis on anatomically-correct doll springs up SPROING THWAT d  
 Spiderman deploys webbing THWIPP x

## APPENDIX

a Agatha Krumm b B.C. c Calvin and Hobbes d Doonesbury e Beetle  
 Bailey f The Far Side g Garfield h Hagar i Hi and Lois j Bloom  
 Country k Cathy l Blondie m Momma n Andy Capp o Moose p Peanuts  
 q Pogo r Tiger s Safe Havens t They'll Do It Every Time u Marmaduke  
 v Gasoline Alley w Toles (editorial cartoons) x Spiderman y Grammy  
 z Ziggy

*OBoy!**Morice*