

218 COLOR NAMES USED IN PALINDROMES

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People who persist for very long in the composition of palindromes sooner or later acquire a good familiarity with the most easily accessible vocabulary available to such writing, and are sometimes moved to remark upon its seeming paucity. In his 1973 book *Palindromes and Anagrams*, for example, Howard W. Bergerson cited the category of color names as an example of the palindromic lexicon's seeming relative poverty, noting that while *red* is readily utilized in palindromes, *blue* is not. (He might have added that the other primary color, *yellow*, is no easier than *blue* to decently palindromize.) And indeed, with the exceptions of *red* and *tan*, color names do seem to be anomalously underrepresented in palindromes; in fact, I don't think that in three decades I have seen more than about a dozen different ones used in published palindromes, including my own.

But this is hardly a necessary state of affairs. Although the most *basic* vocabulary of palindromes may offer little in the way of color names, a great many English words which are not a part of this basic vocabulary, including color names, may nonetheless be worked into in palindromic passages if a particular effort is made to incorporate them. Hence this article, whose uncomplicated object was simply to see how many different dictionary-listed color names I could utilize in decent palindromic passages before I either ran out of such names or else retired exhausted from the fray. In the event, the latter turned out to be more or less the case, as I eventually found that the sheer number of different palindrome-utilizable color names in an unabridged dictionary made a complete cataloging of them an unrealistic goal.

DEFINITIONS AND STANDARDS

Color Names No doubt thousands of terms are used by industry, arts and commerce to identify various color shades, but in this exercise only a small minority of them, those defined as color names by some standard dictionary, are considered. For the purposes of this exercise a "color name" need not be a noun, but may be any part of speech, in any tense or inflection, as long as it is a dictionary-defined indicator of some particular color. Where a color has more than one name, or a color name has more than one spelling, each such name or spelling is considered a distinct color name.

A separate question arises as to whether or not color names which have other meanings in addition to their color meaning should be used only in their color-name sense in these palindromes. Although I've made a strong effort to use them in that sense whenever feasible, I haven't always done so, reasoning that the main object, after all, is simply to demonstrate a given word's susceptibility to palindromization.

Palindrome Standards It seems self-evident to me that an exercise such as this one can have no meaning whatever if its palindromes are not held to some minimal standards; after all, *any* word can easily be "palindromized"—i.e., used in a palindromic passage—if one simply pretends that its reverse is an unfamiliar name of some sort. In this project, the standards adopted are those which govern ordinary written English of publishable quality, with, in addition, bans on such common expedients of palindromic writings as abbreviations, acronyms, non-dictionary contractions and dialectal spellings, as well as a requirement that proper nouns be dictionary-attested names, or at any rate generally familiar ones.

In the lists that follow, the palindromic passages are set off by a larger type size. The color definitions given in parentheses for most of the color names are usually abridgements of their dictionary definitions, and are intended only to give readers a general idea of the nature of the colors they name; color names' full dictionary definitions are generally far more detailed and precise (see end note 1.) In the following, "M-W" stands for *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, "OED" for *Oxford English Dictionary*.

PRIMARY COLORS

red

Red is indeed easily utilized in palindromes—see, e.g., previous *Word Ways* writings by J.A. Lindon (2:22) and Barry Duncan (22:33-4). Though it may thus seem superfluous to present yet another example, here for the sake of the completeness of this collection is a new specimen:

On this day in horse-racing history,

Fresno's red, dumb "mudder," A Derby A Day, bred a red, dumb "mudder" son—Serf!

blue, blues

For long I had supposed that it was impossible to decently palindromize *blue*, but recently I have found two dictionary-attested words that permit it. One of them is *Peul*, the name of a people and language of northern Nigeria, and the other is *Choiseul*, the surname of Duc Étienne François de Choiseul, who was the premier statesman of pre-revolutionary France, as well as being the eponym of one of the Solomon Islands.

After having himself tattooed blue all over in the Peul fashion, suitor makes a devastating discovery:

"Deb, Bo's not a *Peul* belle!" blue Paton sobbed.

As a statesman, Choiseul had the peculiar distinction of having risen to power through the patronage of one of Louis XV's mistresses, Madame de Pompadour, and being dismissed from office by another, Madame du Barry. Clearly, Louis' court must have been rife with intrigue. Here, at an assignation with a scheming Chinese monk from Amalfi, yet another royal mistress, Madame de Trollope, admits to sometimes feeling a wee bit stifled by having always to repress her intense political opinions:

"If, lama fool, rail I may *not*, at a Choiseul," bare Evita noted, "animus I *sum*, in a detonative era! 'Blues?' *I?* Oh!! *Catatony* am I, liar Lo of Amalfi!"

yellow

One can think of various ways to palindromize yellow which seem *almost* acceptable, and perhaps one or more of them may be. Here are three such attempts:

Said Al, "Let's not sob for evil—naw, yellow!—Olley Wanliver of Boston, Stella Dias!"

(The problematic words here are *naw*, *Olley* and *Wanliver*, although on the Internet we do find mention of an Olley—"Olley's Fish Experience, the best fish and chips in South London.")

Ma, is AWOL "Leyden Ned" yellow, as *I* am?

(Best palindromic style, I feel, excludes acronyms, although others may find AWOL acceptable.)

Nona, stop Raja—we two'll eye yellow Tewa jar-pots, anon!

("Two'll," alas, runs afoul of the injunction against non-dictionary contractions. The Tewa, listed in M-W, are a Pueblo Indian people of New Mexico.)

SECONDARY COLORS

green

No, veneer grey Al Potto, Lee's sennet-deified Tennessee lotto player, green, Evon!

orange

No sable, nude, gnar on orange-dun Elba, son!

(I.e., no sable martens on sunny Elbe need fear being summarily deprived of their pelage.)

purple

A wasp sting at a picnic provokes a minister to lapse into strong language:

Stung! “*Oh!*” we yelp; “Rupees! Sennets! Tennessee purple yew! Hognuts!...”

NEUTRAL COLORS

black

Overheard in the freeze-drying room of the Insta-Pet factory:

“Stack, Cal, Byrd’s dry black cats.”

jet (also called jet black: a very dark black)

Thanks to the well-known palindrome I ROAMED UNDER IT AS A TIRED, NUDE MAORI, palindromic Maoris now seem, inevitably if unfairly, typecast as ramblers in the raw. Here, one of them declines to trade his cherished freedom of movement for a steady job in a bric-a-brac factory:

“*Emus?* Sad! I, Debra, *gnu* draw? No Maoris laminate jet animals—I roam onward! (Ungarbed, I’d assume...)”

ebon (black or dark)

“We’re talking with the Masked Midnight Decal Deployer. So, Mr. Deployer, did you first take up your controversial calling as a carefully considered form of conscience-mediated social activism?”

“No! With gin, no bed, a mask, Cal’s decals and Edna’s laced slacks, a mad, ebon night I won!”

sable (heraldic black)

Anile Melba’s *sable*, Melina?

steel (also called steel gray: a dark gray)

Nona, Delia’s steel fleets *sailed*, anon.

gray

No, O Goth! *Aid* a boyar (gray Obadiah) to go on!

grey

Clairvoyant who perceives others’ emotions as colors recounts a disturbing experience:

“I saw, today, a grey of animus, Nina, *manic* in a man! In sum: in a foyer gay, a dot was I...”

greyer

Paid in advance and well lubricated, a cheap detective reports by phone to his client, president Roger Grey of the Sawyers Aging With Dignity Society, on rumors to the effect that certain of the society’s officers who are still apparently dark-haired were once known to be much greyer:

“Roger? Grey *was* Sawyer Gregor, O grey Roger! Grey *was* Sawyer Gregory! (A *greyer* grey was, Roger, grey ale relaye Gregor Sawyer!) Greyer, gay Roger Grey, *was* Sawyer Gregory; ergo, Roger, grey *was* Sawyer Gregor!”

hoar (a grayish white)

Elderly capybara friends meet by chance in a fur bar:

“’Tis,” ululates a capybara, “Hoar-Era O’Hara! By pacas, Eta-Lulu, sit!”

(Capybaras and pacas are large South American rodents.)

hoary

Aging swain to friend:

“Too—ha!—‘hoary’? *Me*, Myra? Oh, a hoot!”

white

A Scottish explorer in Tibet goes out one morning in search of a yeti, finds one, names him “Hwang” in honor of his expedition’s sponsor, and brings him back to camp to meet pals Delle and Hamilton:

“Now I’m a *hero*, mon! Deliver, Delle, yeti Hwang a salad, nachos—och, and a lasagna!” White yelled, reviled no more. “Ham, I *won!*”

Moments later, his colleague Al joins the group, exclaiming:

“Ooh, a *yeti!*” “Hwang,” as Al saw, was lasagna white. “Yahoo!”

OTHER COLORS

acorn (a grayish yellowish brown)

Woman to pestiferous fellow artist:

“Del, pal, limn roc aeries in ne’er-a-care Ennis, Eire!” acorn Milla pled.

(Ennis is the capital city of County Clare, Ireland)

alabaster (a pale yellowish pink to yellowish gray)

Enid, alabaster, frets a balabos: “I *sob!* Al, a baster, frets a baladine!”

(A balabos is a Jewish host or master of a house, and a baladine is a professional dancer—M-W.)

amaranth (a dark reddish purple)

The amaranth is a mythical flower that never fades or dies; poets have anthropomorphized the name:

Did Amaranth, gilded, light Nara, mad id?

(Nara is a former capital of Japan.)

amber

Woman sourly accedes to moody boyfriend’s odd penchant for gazebo-rooftop-sitting:

...So *be*, Zagreb man of fits, stiff on amber gazebos!

anamite (a light grayish olive)

Drape, Tim, an anamite pard.

(The “pard” in question could be either a leopard or a deceased partner.)

anemone ((a pale reddish purple)

No! Reno men are veneer-free *never*, anemone Ron!

annatto; arnatto; anatto (all the same color—a yellowish red or a reddish yellow, depending on the dictionary)

Nana, *no!* Not *tan*, Nan—annatto Nona, Nan! /// O, not *tan*, rat!...Arnatto? No!
/// Ya got tan, Ann? Anatto? Gay!

aqua

On Palau, qadi, pets tepid “aqua” lap, no?

(A qadi is an Islamic religious judge.)

auburn (a reddish brown)

Anile men *rub* uakari nitid—I did it in Irak, auburn Emelina!

(A uakari is a species of South American monkey; *nitid*, in M-W, is an adjective meaning, roughly, “glossy”; and *Iraq* was once spelled *Irak*.)

autumn (a moderate olive brown)

Members of a mutual flagellation society reminisce:

“Recall autumn in ebon, airy Syria—no, Benin!—mutual lacer?”

azure (the heraldic color blue; sky blue)

Ahem! In, Alexi, Peru, zanies irate *yet* arise in azure-pixel animé! Ha!

(“Animé” refers here to the cartoon style, of course, and not to a hardened resin.)

bat (a very slightly greenish iron gray)

Tab, tab “Tab’s Tabs Tab Tab’s Tab Tab”; Tab and Edna, bat bat, bats “Bat Bat’s” bats, bat bat “Bat.”

(That is to say: “Tab, bookmark the article headlined ‘Tab’s Tabloids Tally Tab’s Tab [the soft drink] Bar Debt’; Tab and Edna, whack iron gray, crazy stagecoach robber ‘Bat Bat’s’ crazy, iron gray pet bat ‘Bat.’” All of the various “tab” usages are attested by M-W.)

bay (a reddish brown, said especially of horses)

Overheard at a Middle Eastern racetrack:

“A *bay* nag, O Ham? Add a mahogany aba.”

beaver (also called beaver brown: a grayish brown)

No! “Beaver,” even sides-reversed, is never, Eva, “ebon.”

beige

Adieu, Reg—I ebb, a wan nawab beige...Rue, Ida!

beryl (a light greenish blue)

Able Anne, is *no* lyre beryl on sienna Elba?

bice (also called bice blue or azurite blue: a moderate greenish blue))

Atlas editor to map-tinter:

“...So, Alec, I *ban* a bice Laos!”

bister, bistres (a grayish to yellowish brown)

Tan? No, berets I *bister*, ebon Nat!

A desert, Sibyl (now as red, Dan, as an adder) saw, only bistres Eda.

boa (also called Nile Green: a pale yellow green) **cacao** (also called antique bronze: a moderate yellowish brown)

“Not a *poa*, cacao Paton! No, nab a boa *baobab*, anon—*not* a poa, cacao Paton!”

(A poa is a grass of the genus Poa.)

bole (also called red ocher, ruddle, or raddle: a moderate reddish brown)

Overheard at a fish market:

“Salome, lob *no* putrid dirt upon bole molas!”

bronze

Shamanist, neither a feel fez nor boy o’ bronze flee far—eh, Tientsin amahs?

(In Scotland, the adjective *feel* or *feil* means “comfortable.”)

brown

Man recounts to child the difficulties endured by Sahara Desert Scrabble players, who seldom have full sets of tiles to play with:

“‘Brown,’ on Sahara sand, Edna-Sara, has no ‘N,’ ‘W’ or ‘B’!”

buff (a moderate orange yellow)

Archaeologists examine potsherds collected at a Bronze Age Ubaid (M-W) site in Mesopotamia:

“Ah, a *pot* top, Di—a buff Ubaid pot top! Aha!”

camel (a color ranging from yellowish-tan to yellowish-brown)

No, let a *lesser* golem a camel ogress elate, Lon!

canary (a light, clear yellow)

Tart *reseda*? Gad, no! No, sib, in a race, Cary ran a *canary* racecar—an Ibis Onondaga Desert Rat!

canna (a dark reddish brown)

An *anana*? Anna canna canna an anana!

(An anana is a penguin; the first “canna” is British dialect for “cannot.”)

caramel (brownish orange to light brown)

“Did, daemon, a caramel gnu jam a jungle maraca?” “No, mead did.”

cardinal (also called cardinal red; a vivid red)

Overheard at the Highlands Bathtub Relays:

“Lad Allan! I’d race in nobbut a tub bonnie cardinal, Lad Al!”

carmine

So—*do* denim racks, Amy, mask carmine dodos?

carnation (formerly, the color of flesh; now, pink or light red)

No, I “tan,” racer, a rare carnation.

carnelian (pinkish red)

Len Lightyear goes for an exercise run, encounters an irascible-looking Aldebaranian life form:

“Ho, Ho!” Never one to gnar abed, Lanai Len raced under a red, nude carnelian—Aldebaran! “Go ten, or even—Oh, oh...”

(Red giant Aldebaran is one of the redder stars in the sky.)

carrot (also called carrot red: a moderate to strong orange)

May Ali, a janitor-raconteur, cruet *no* carrot in a jail? A yam?

Castilian red (a vivid red)

Murderess attempts to frame an innocent woman for her crime, but is tripped up by a forensic expert’s knowledge of nail polish shades:

“Del ran! Gail *had* no madder nail—it’s a Castilian red, Damon!” Dahlia gnarled.

(Madder is a bright red.)

celadon (a pale gray-green)

A point of etiquette to remember, when among the bonobo chimpanzee:

“Nod, Alec, to no bonobo not celadon.”

cerise (a deep cherry red)

No, I desire *cerise*, Dion!

cerulean (a deep blue)

Scottish chef, foraging in the countryside, ponders the question of what main dishes to forage for:

“Do cerulean anole? Crab Barcelona? Nae, lure cod!”

chestnut (reddish or grayish brown)

No stunts, eh, chestnut son?

cinnabar (a bright red)

Al let Sun *grab*, Ann, icy cinnabar gnu Stella?

cinnamon (a light yellowish brown)

Atlas receives some heart-healthy dietary advice from a spice salesman:

“Salt? A *no*, man! Nicer is Ed’s desire—cinnamon, Atlas!”

citron (also called citrine: a grayish greenish yellow)

Man indignantly defends the reputation of his pet rhinoceros:

“Rat! Debora gored no ‘citron Ambonese nob,’ man, *or* ‘Ticonderoga-robed tar’!”

claret (a dark purplish red)

So Maya water alcohol? Oho—claret away, Amos!

cobalt (also called cobalt blue: a greenish blue)

Nel’s tart lab ocelot, “Snag-’Em Megan,” stole cobalt rats, Len!

(She mistook them for fancy hors d’oeuvres.)

cocoa (a moderate brown)

Mao enrolls in an oil-painting class, tries hand at mixing colors:

“Dex! I, Mao, *cocoa* mixed!”

coffee (a moderate brown)

Careless captain of a sailing ship belatedly springs into action:

“Pot Noel’s coffee; radishes—Eh, Sid? A reef? Fo’c’s’le! *On top!*”

(A ship’s forecabin—fo’c’s’le—is usually its crew’s quarters.)

copper (also called copper red: a grayish reddish orange)

The coppersmith’s apprentice, of course, gets all of the nastiest jobs in the shop:

“Del *wards*, I *risk* copper plate-metal prep pocks,” Iris drawled.

coral (a yellowish deep pink)

Whispering overheard during a grade school exam:

“Sal, is coral a *rock*?” “Coral a roc, Silas.”

crimson

Disgruntled buyer of a used Russian space capsule vows revenge on used=capsule dealer:

“Marino’s Mir capsule rows,” swore Lu’s pa, crimson, “I ram!”

cyan

Artistic altercation overheard in an animation studio:

“Nay! Consider Niagara, scene csar, again! Red is *no* cyan!”

(*Csar* is one of the alternative spellings of *tsar* cited in the OED.)

dahlia (a pale violet or amethyst)

Norah's topsail had a “dahlia” spot, Sharon?

dahlia purple (a dark purplish red)

Snippet of dialog from the 1950's horror film, *Revenge of the Food Fish*:

“Ay! Dank cod, dahlia purple, nip spinel Pru! Pail haddock, Nadya!”

(*Spinel* may or may not be a color name; if it is, it's a variable red.)

damask (a grayish-bluish red)

Suppose that King George had foxily taxed the colonists' liquor instead of their tea; would there then have been a Boston *Booze* Party? One wonders...

“...Damp mud! Murk! Sam Adams' ‘aim,’ as is, is a miasma! Damask rum *dump*? Mad!...”

damson (a medium-to-dark violet)

Lens-shaped, violet-haired casino chanteuse has occasional moments of self-doubt:

“Lentoid, I'm a damson error—Reno's Madam Idiot, Nel!”

dandelion (a brilliant yellow); **hay** (a grayish greenish yellow; cf. *straw*, below)

“Nella? No, Star, Allen oiled *Nadya*!” hay-dandelion Ella rats on Allen.

deer (a grayish yellowish brown)

A very deer deer fled, if passion-ill Illinois sap Fidel freed reedy Reva!

dorado (also called cuir: a light yellowish brown to gold)

Said Adan, “A cod, a rod, a dorado—*Canada*, Dias!”

dove (also called charcoal gray, dove gray, light gunmetal, pelican and pigeon's-neck: a warm gray with a slight purplish or pinkish tint)

Art in a llano! “So did Nola's Anita—no Sarajevo dove!—jar a sonatina salon? Didos on *all*, Anitra?”

drab (a light olive brown)

Disquisition overheard in a tavern:

“Nuts! Pah, 'tis a lie! No ‘bard eras’ are ‘drab,’ O'Neil, as it haps! Tun!”

dun (a slightly brownish dark gray)

I.R.S. branch chief assigns his staff some priority tax tasks:

“Mike, dun Ed...Eve, denude Kim...”

dune (a light grayish olive)

Nah—pets evade dune, nude Dave, Stephan.

ebony, ivory

My hosts quarreling, I push off:

“Malign, ivory nob Enid!” “Rat! Odd dotard in ebony!” Roving, I lam.

ecru (very light brown)

“Selim, sad, regrets your ceded ecru oyster,” Gerda smiles.

email (a moderate bluish green to greenish blue)

No, mad Delia! Men *e-mail* Emelia; men *email* Ed Damon!

emerald

Emery, victim of a discoloring accident in a Tyrian dye factory, is somewhat sensitive about his condition:

“Ma? Is,” Ann asks, “an airy Tyre medlar emerald?” Emery, Tyrian, asks Ann, “As *I* am?”

fawn (a light yellowish brown)

“Del, fawn waffles ‘ailed’—Dias said—Delia’s elf,” Fawn waffled.

flame and **flame red** (two shades of strong reddish orange)

“Sèvres? Boa? No, I’d render Em, Alf, a flame red,” nerd Iona observes.

flesh (a pale orange yellow)

Highly successful stage magician refutes accusation of a jealous rival:

Pure *bosh*, selfish Ty! Mega-mage *myths* I flesh? Sober up!

fox (a yellowish brown)

Gad, Reg! Never *fox* a fax of “Revenger Dag”!

(Despite the ascendancy of *avenger*, *revenger* is still in the dictionary.)

freestone (also called Bath stone or Caen stone: a pale orange yellow); **teal** (a dark greenish blue)

Bride-to-be, in company of bridesmaids and a psychic bridal consultant, decides on the bridesmaids’ outfits’ cloth and color:

“’Tis, Rona, elegant...No! Denim—a *teal*—I name! (*Not*, seer, freestone-manila etamine!)...Don’t *nag*, Eleanor—sit!”

(Manila is a light yellowish brown; etamine is a light cotton or worsted fabric with an open mesh.)

fuchsia (a bright purplish red)

Preoccupied dad to daughter:

“He had a ‘la-di-da-ish’ cuff of fuchsia, did a lad? Ah!...Eh?”

gamboge (an orange yellow)

Sailor, transported by a cyclone to Oz, asks a chatty witch how he might manage to meet the Wizard, receives this puzzling reply:

“Meet? See, gob, mages *I* woo (ten, one time—yah! Aye, mite, *none* too wise!) gamboge esteem...”

(If you thought that she should have said *magi* instead of *mages*, you’re confusing a mage with a magus.)

garnet (a dark red)

Ah, Sarge, I often rag Eva! “Hiya, sis!” I say. “*I* have garnet foie gras!” Ha!

gazelle (a grayish to yellowish brown)

Nat saw tan—was Giza *gazelle*, Nelle? Zagazig, saw Nat, was *tan*!

(Site of the Great Pyramid, Giza is not far from the city of Zagazig in Egypt.)

ginger (a strong brown)

And now, here is Ana’s “Ode to an Io Moth on a Midnight Mural”:

An alarum!
Ah, a moth—
Ginger autogiro in Io rig!
O “Tuareg Night,”
Omaha mural!

~ Ana

Gobelin (also called Gobelin blue: a grayish blue)

An equatorial marsh, at night, is seldom silent:

Nile bogs yawl, anon, a cerise-desire canon always gobelin...

(M-W lists *yawl* as a variety of *yowl*.)

gold

A seafood restaurant’s rival’s owner feels logo envy:

“Dias, an *oleo-gold lobster* raged in snide Garret’s bold logo!” Elona said.

golden

Smug, Ned logs golden gums.

goldenrod (a vivid, strong yellow)

Though the palindromic phrase *goldenrod-adorned log* was probably known to wordplayers of the late 19th century, we moderns can go them one better with elaborations of *goldenrod-adorned logologists*:

A drunken palindromist at a logologists’ convention loudly announces his decision to retire for the evening:

“I may go... Logologists, I *go*! Lo, goldenrod-adorned logologists, I GO!... Logo-logy am I...”

grape (also called plum purple: a dark violet)

Pro golfer Septimus wonders why his game has gone south:

“Was I—Sep!—an ace par golfer ere, Flo, grape *canapés* I saw?”

grège (an olive gray)

No, besieger, grège is ebon!

gridelin (a dark purplish red)

Old-time explorer recalls a moving memorial service on the upper Nile:

“Gnus’d gnawed as Edie’d sung a Nile dirge, ‘Grab a Barge Gridelin.’ ‘Agnus Dei, de Sade,’ Wang’d sung...”

Alas, this little gem uses prohibited non-dictionary contractions. Here’s a cleaned-up, if comparatively pallid, substitute:

“Now, Seton, Nile dirges—oral lays, semi-messy, all—arose; gridelin notes won...”

gull (a slightly yellowish gray); **gulled** (i.e., colored something gull)

We’ll lug gulled Otto; Del, lug gull Lew!

We’ll lug Gulliver, Eve—nag ululating Nita! Lu, lug an ever-evil lug, gull Lew!

heliotrope (a reddish lavender)

“Heliotrope—resined Seine genies, Denise, report *oil*, eh?...”

hellebore red (a moderate purplish red)

“I’m a hellebore red rum-murderer, O belle? Ha! *Am* I?”

henna (a reddish brown)

Anne, Hannah saw Enola *alone* wash Anna henna!

indigo (also called indigo blue: a dark grayish blue)

O god...If born a dog, I’d *nip* indigo Dan, Rob!...Fido! Go!!

iron red (a dark red)

No, iron red Omani rat *Satan*, Eda, made Nat a star in “A Modern Orion.”

jade (also called jade green: a light bluish green)

Eris traded Ajax a jade dart, sire!

jaune (a brilliant yellow)

Star won—never a jaune menu ajar, even now! Rats!

khaki (a light yellowish brown)

Editor of the *National Tabloid* evaluates proposed front-page headlines for the next issue:

“K.O. ‘ALIENS POTTED EMUS,’ Erik...Ah! ‘KHAKI RESUMED, E.T. TOPS,’ Niela? *OK!*”

lake (a dark red)

Oh? Oleg, in Topeka, laded a *lake* pot, Nigel? Oho! ///

A god, a lek, a lake rued? Eureka! Lake Ladoga!

lapis lazuli (a deep azure blue)

“No grog”? I—*Luz*, Al!—sip a lapis lazuli “gorgon!”

lavender (a pale purple)

O, *no* revered Neva ladies use, Ida, lavender—ever! O, no!

lemon (also called lemon yellow; a brilliant greenish yellow) **melon** (a strong yellowish pink)

“No lemon, koala? OK, no melon!” (Overheard at the zoo.)

“No lemon, ogre, ergo no melon!” (Overheard in a fairy tale.)

“No mead, no lemon-ogre—ergo, no melon-daemon!” (Overheard at a fantasy camp.)

lilac (moderate purple to light grayish pink)

Ma, is a Cali lyre *very* lilac—as *I* am?

lime

“GAD, DEL! I’M SLIME LIME! *LIME*, DELLEY!” lime Emil yelled.

“Emil, Emil, Emil...” smiled Dag.

liver (also called liver brown, autumn oak: a grayish reddish brown)

Reviled also, Slade: liver!

lobelia (a strong bluish violet)

Quack medical advice for victims of a deadly virus disease:

“A lobelia-red yam—or a taro!—may derail ebola!”

loutre (also called otter: a dark grayish-yellowish brown)

“Har! Ashe’s tun-taps are ‘*vertu*’?” old loutre Vera spat; “Nuts, eh, Sarah?”

madder (also called Turkey red: a bright to a moderate red)

The infamous last words of a notorious punster:

“No, ah, *red*, Damon? No *madder*!! Ha! On—”

madder red (also called English red, crowshay red and Forest of Dean red: a dark reddish orange)

Aram’s anise, madder red, nets tender red dames in Asmara. ///

Isis’s anise, madder red, nets tender red dames in Assisi.

madder rose (also called casino pink, madder lake, madder pink and rose madder: a purplish red)

Makeup man Ira is advised to apply red blush to Sara’s girls before they start getting testy:

“Red dames, Ira, rise! Madder rose mad Sara’s dames, or red dames, Ira, rise madder!”

mahogany (also called mahogany red or mahogany brown: a reddish brown; see also *bay*, above)

Woman fills in the “worst fault” space on a computerized dating form:

“I, mahogany Nita-May, am a *tiny nag*...” (Oh, *am I!*)

manila (a light yellowish brown)

“Sir, is Rum rum *legal* in a manila gel?” murmurs Iris.

(Actually, of the two islands and one town that I am aware of named “Rum,” none seem to have anything to do with fermented sugarcane.)

maroon (a dull dark red to purplish red)

Noticing that the little girl in the seat across the aisle is holding heavily-swaddled doll baby, I inquire about it in a joking fashion, only to receive a kick in the shin for my gaucheness:

“Wot is it, albino? Or a maroon?” I blat. “Is it—Ow!”

(*Wot*, like *ow*, is in M-W, labeled a substandard variety of *what*.)

Mars red (also called totem: a dark reddish orange)

“Red? Nicer!... If I’m a—a ‘Mars red’ now,” wonders Rama, “am I Fire? Cinder?...”

mauve (a pale bluish-purple)

Passage from a romance novel:

“Was it on racy Viti Levu, amah, a mauve-lit Ivy Carnot I saw?”

(Viti Levu is the largest of the Fiji Islands)

meline (a greenish yellow)

No lemon, sir is *too* meline; soot, sir, *is* too senile; moot, sir, is *no* melon!

merle (a bluish gray mottled with black); **perse** (a grayish blue)

Ella’s ales *repel*, remedial Eda, fossa-lass of Adelaide, merle-perse La Salle?

(A fossa is a large cat-like civet.)

midnight (a blackish blue)

Starving writer, in dire need of ink, trades his natal dignity for a pot of message:

“O, Selina! Lentoid, in a fetor, with gin dim, for a jar of midnight I wrote fan “Idiot Nel” a line—so!”

mignonette (a grayish green)

When green-haired Serafina asks him why a cabinet door won’t close, her husband, who has picked up some handyman jargon from watching “This Old House,” thinks for a moment and replies,

“A reset tenon gimps a hasp, mignonette Sera.”

mimosa (a pale yellow)

Teenager fixating on a supposed hallmark of her personality:

“Mim, Mia! I’m mim, Mia—*so* mim, Mia, I’m *mimosa*! I’m mim, Mia, I’m *mim!*”

mouse (also called beige gray or mouse gray; an olive gray)

Overheard while passing by the Rand-McNally Company:

“Di, Dino’s made Suomi mouse-damson!” “I did?”

(*Suomi* is the Finns’ idiosyncratic name for Finland.)

murrey (a dark purplish red; mulberry); **walnut** (a slightly reddish brown)

In a murder trial, the defendant’s lawyers confer to decide on a defense; some argue for a diminished capacity defense (i.e., the devil—as in Demon Rum—made him do it):

“Dias, *no* man is ‘sordid’; ‘evil’ is a murrey-walnut *tun*, lawyer! *Rum*, as I live, did Ross in!” Amon said.

musteline (a tawny brown)

In exchange for being allowed to practice against forklifts, sumos often work for free in warehouses:

“So many dynamos—so *many*, Den! I let sumos lade taled Nassau quass, and, elated, also musteline dynamos—*so many dynamos!*”

(*Taled* here meaning “counted.”)

myrtle (a bluish-tinged dark green)

Truck no myrtle peltry, monk Curt!

nacarat (a vivid red)

Mother tells young daughter that her sister may fill in her coloring book as she pleases:

“No, Sib; Tara *can* nacarat bison.”

navy

Navy my van, Nat—to no gill ill I go! Not tan—*navy* my van!”

(A gill or Gill, according to M-W, is a girl.)

neva green (a strong yellow green)

A *veneer* gave Nel a pan a pale neva green, Eva?

Nikko (also called China blue: a grayish to moderate blue)

Experimenting with hot paint, art student sets off small explosion in studio. Required to stay after to clean up the mess, student complains of cruel and unusual punishment. Instructor begs to differ:

“No; I *tag* it, sufflating, Nikko-wokking nit Alf, ‘fustigation.’”

(To “sufflate” is to blow up, and to “fustigate” is to severely criticize—M-W.)

Nile (also called Nile green, eau de Nile, and boa: a pale yellow green)

I’d *exile* feline, live-on-a-canoe, vile, Nile Felix, Edi.

Nile green (a pale yellow green)

Stop! Ne’er gel in Nineveh, even in Nile green pots!

nutmeg (also called dark beaver: a grayish to moderate brown)

Nutmeg, sis, is Isis' "gem" tun?

nutria (an olive gray)

Said Anita, "No, Syd, don't *sit!* Open-air tuna *tar* Omani Sulu's inamorata, nutria nepotist Noddy Sonatina-Dias!"

ocher (also spelled ochre: a dark yellow)

Child is reprimanded for using a crayon to enhance one of her classicist cousin's pair of marble busts of the two Zenos (of Elea and of Citium):

"Ay, not *one* Zeno! Never—eh, coz?—ocher even *one* Zeno, Tonya!"

olive (a dark yellow-green)

Creepy, olive-garbed dentist drones on to speechless patient:

"Evil, Osiris tips—spit, sir—is olive..."

olive drab (a grayish brown)

No "bard evil," O Saharan Ara, has olive drab on!

otter (also called otter brown: a dark grayish yellowish brown)

Woman berates a friend for her lack of intellectual curiosity:

"...So *do* nap, Edna! *Scorn* obese, otter Omaha amorettoes, ebon rocs and... epanodos!"

(Epanodos is a rhetorical device; see end note 2.)

pansy (a strong violet)

Emily, snap Tonya; say, "Not pansy—lime!"

paprika (a strong reddish orange)

Al let a fakir, Papa, paprika Fat Ella?

pavonine (also called peacock or peacock blue: a moderate greenish blue)

In a group therapy session, chronic nightmare sufferers describe their harrowing visions:

"I, madam? I saw *live* dairymen, *in ova*—pavonine, myriad, *evil!* Was I mad? *Am I?*"

peacock (also called pavonine or peacock blue: a moderate greenish blue)

"Del, Ward *evaded* 'Atlas Mo's' peacock coca-Epsom salt ade," Dave drawled.

pearl (a very pale grayish white with a bluish tinge)

"Del, pearl a pal!" Rae pled.

pink

May a yam skink *nip* pink Nik's Maya yam!

platinum (a light metallic gray)

Actor Paul Muni is disappointed to learn that a Central American platinum mine he has invested in has yielded only talpatate (M-W), a low-grade volcanic ash soil:

Said Muni, “Talpatate, eh? Shee! Ta-ta, *platinum*, Dias!”

puce (a brownish purple)

Do not pass puce cups, sap, to nod!

(I.e., don’t chug red wine as a sleep aid.)

raddle (also called ruddle, red ocher or bole: a moderate reddish brown)

Ed raged, “Li *held* dark-raddle Hildegarde!”

raisin (a dark purplish red)

Dennis, I armor—free Belinda’s sad Nile beer from raisin Ned!

rat (a shade of olive gray)

Weighty question raised by the animated film *Ratatouille*:

May a rat rat tartar a yam?

raven (a violet black)

Sometimes, Melba wonders why she even bothers with the university’s poetry club:

“...Too *facile*, Melba! ‘*Far over the Neva rasps a raven...*’? Eh, Trevor, a fable melic afoot!...”

raw sienna (a reddish to yellowish brown)

Anne is warning, “I *lamed* a general—a renegade malign—in raw sienna!”

reseda (greenish white)

Mo made serval Olav *reseda*, Mom!

Romany (a reddish blackish blue)

Nona *was* a “myna more Romany,” Ma saw anon.

rose (a moderate purplish red)

Sora poet’s famous epigram:

“A rose, soras, is a rose sora’s, is a rose sora.”

(A sora is a small rail found in marshes.)

rose morn (also called peach bloom: a moderate yellowish pink)

Disburden Rome, sordid rose morn Ed—rub Sid!

rose nude (a grayish yellowish pink to brownish pink)

Was it reseda bog, rose nude dunes or, gob, a desert I saw?

rose-red (rose red is a deep, slightly bluish red)

No, Gar, *Adelia* failed, ere sordid, rose-red Elia failed Aragon.

rosetan (also called pearl blush: a brownish pink)

Nona's repaid—Nat's ordered rosetan diapers anon.

rosier

The palindrome DO NOT START AT RATS TO NOD, as Hamlet might have phrased it to an intoxicated friend:

“To nod—to so start—at rats, O sot, do not! (To ‘nod’—to rosier err?) Ere *I* so rot, do not! To nod—to so start—at rats, O sot, do not!”

rosy

Ay! A Mysore eyesore sore *was*, I saw, “Erose Rose” Yee, rosy Maya!

royal purple (a deep bluish purple)

Nella! Noel! Pru! Play, or dab a bad royal purple on Allen!

ruby (a dark red)

O color ruby my baby—my burro Loco!

ruddle (also called raddle, red ocher or bole: a moderate reddish brown)

Pay? *Nab* ruddle I will! If fat, son, I'm a tiff-fit ami! No staff ill *I* wield, Durban yap!

ruddy (red, reddish); **ruddier**

I *saw*, Evita, ruddy Syd—durative was I!

Nona, Nora Nelder saw Reid Durward, guns snug, draw; ruddier was “Red Len” Aron, anon...

russet (a yellowish or reddish brown); **sienna** (a reddish brown)

“Anne is sienna, Tess; Ursula-Lu's *russet*.” “Anne is *sienna*?”

rust (a strong brown)

Beloved but now kaput family robot is laid reverently to rest in a barrel of used crankcase oil:

“He won't—surely, Kyle!—rust *now*, eh?”

saffron (an orangeish yellow)

Friend defends dyspeptic music critic to irate musicians; composer Carl Orff's name is mentioned:

O, no, Bret's no “malign Orff-assassin,” Ron—*or* Nissa's “saffron Gila monster,” Bono!

sage (a grayish yellow green); **saxe** (a grayish blue)

Meanwhile, back at Rand-McNally:

“No! *Vegas saxe, Texas sage, Von!*”

salmon (a pale yellowish red)

A modern-era physician misdiagnoses a case of vampire parasitism as spider- or snakebite:

“A venom, lass—torrid, and a sad nadir!—rots salmon Eva!”

sard or **sardine** (a reddish brown)

So Nedra’s “Siena” mane is *sard*, Enos?

Told a mixed-up mytho-historical tale, child wonders how it came out:

“O *did*, Enid, Rasputin knit up sardine Dido?”

sepia (a brownish gray to dark olive brown)

O *so*, Shea? I, “pest-ridden Nat,” tanned “dirt sepia,” eh? So!...*So!*

Sèvres (also called Sèvres blue: a strong, slightly reddish blue)

Sèvres is likely unique among six-letter color names in that it is also a reversal word; this is a property useful in a key word if, say, one wishes to construct a fully first-letter-alliterative palindrome:

Self-fan Sara’s secret sesses’ sensuousness, sassy satrap Sonya states, serve sere,
Sèvres, set-at, say-no Sparta Sy’s sass-sensuousnesses—sesterces *Sara* snaffles!

(Sesses or cesses are taxes, in Britain. *Snaffle* is assigned several meanings in M.W, one of which is to obtain by devious or irregular means, and another of which is to snap up. The sesterce was an ancient monetary unit.)

Siena (also called Venetian red: a strong reddish brown. Not to be confused with sienna—see *russet*.)

Said Rod, “Indeed insane *is* Siena, snide Ed Nidor, Dias.”

sil (also called orange ocher: a moderate orange yellow)

Schoolgirls compare their most-desired desserts:

“*Stollen*, snob? No, bliss is sil bonbons, Nel—*lots!*”

(*Stollen* is a sweet yeast bread containing fruit and nuts.)

sistine (a pale blue)

The dey gets some bad news from his receptionist:

“Dey Den, it’s Isis’ sis Sissi—sistine-dyed.”

slate (a dark purplish gray)

“No. Slate,” Ma sided, “is metal, son.”

smalt (a moderate blue)

It wasn’t so much this ridiculous paint punishment for trying to leave as it was Al’s grating new habit of referring to himself in the third person on the reality show that really got Garret’s goat:

“Al lets *not* lamster rage live, on a canorous Saba babassu *or* on a canoe, vile Garret!
Smalt on, Stella!”

(A lamster is one who lams, a canorous sound is one suggestive of melody or song, Saba is an island off South America and a babassu is a Brazilian palm, according to M-W.)

solferino (a vivid purplish pink)

Not *we*, Neila! Tan, drab *bison* ire Flo's solferino sib, bard Natalie Newton!

sorrel (a brownish orange to light brown)

Accused of aiding the enemy, the hapless Renfield, Count Dracula's lackey, tries to brazen it out:

"Ah! I'm a 'sorrel bat-stabler,' Rosa, am I? Ha!"

stammel (also called stammelcolor: an obsolete name for a bright red)

You know that you're getting on a bit when you learn that your shade was long ago discontinued:

"Lem, Mat's *old!* Lo, *stammel!*"

straw (a pale yellow)

"Straw hair unaired," Baroness Evi gnarled ere Del rang, "gives, senor, Abderian Uriah warts!"

(“Abderian” is a no doubt Abderian synonym for “foolish”—M-W.)

sulfur (also spelled “sulphur”: a brilliant or light greenish yellow)

Bathtub-fixing plumber, fighting the flu, gets medical advice from chatty customer:

"Tub wonk, I cite melic Ecrú Flu-Stopper Prep—*pot sulfur*, Cecil! Emetic, I know, but..."

sumac (a strong yellowish brown)

Sumac is another reversal word, but a *sumac/Camus* palindrome seemed a bit too obvious, so instead:

Al lets Warden Nik scam *us*, too; lots to loot, sumac, skinned-raw Stella?

tan

"Nat!" said Ann, "Nadia's *tan!*" /// "Nat's *tan*, Nan?" "Nat's *tan.*"

tangerine (a moderate to vivid reddish orange)

Mad, Edna; *some* men ire gnats, ergo evil alive, ogres, tangerine memos and Edam!

taupe (a dark brownish gray)

Lose pua—too taupe, Sol!

(Pua hemp is used to make cordage.)

tawny (a brownish orange to light brown)

Snatch of dialogue from a crime novel:

"Murder," notes Delia. "Madelyn watered Ed *ere* tawny Leda mailed Seton red rum."

teak (also called teak brown or sienna brown: a moderate brown)

Grave robbers winnow the less valuable artifacts from their haul:

"Bah! A nail o' teak—Aetolian, Ahab?"

(Aetolia was a district of ancient Greece.)

tenné (also called tenney or tenny: the heraldic color orange or orange-tawny)

“Delia? Wanna tenné jennet?” Anna wailed.

(*Wanna* is recognized as a word by some online dictionaries.)

terra-cotta (a brownish orange)

Allen, reward a terra-cotta cat to carreta-drawer Nella!

titian (a reddish to golden brown)

This, after her hairdresser had assured her that the change would be too subtle to be readily noticed:

“Riah’s *hair!* Delia! Ted! Lana! It—it’s *titian*,” Al detailed Riah’s hair.

topaz (a translucent yellow)

Nan’s fellow mineral prospector can scarcely contain his excitement at her find:

“*Topaz*, Nan? O bonanza pot...”

ultramarine (a dark blue)

“No, Len, *I ram Art*,” Lu yammered, ired, “*not nob Axel!* Alex, a *bon ton-derider*—Em—may ultramarine Lon.”

umber (a dark dusky brown)

“Solemn, obese Zagreb!” muses Salome Rome. “Not ‘stiff,’ its tone; more ‘molasses’—umber gazes, ebon melos...”

(A melos is the succession of notes constituting a melody.)

verdet (also called verdigris or verdigris green: a moderate yellow green)

Ah, so rat Ted reveres sere, verdet taros! Ha!

vermilion or **vermillion** (a bright yellowish red)

Husband, in kitchen, to silent wife:

“*Emus*,” said Eli, vermilion, “in *oil?* I’m reviled, I assume?” ///

No! “Ill”>? I’m *revived*, O devi vermillion!

vert (heraldic green)

Did I, Trevor, rub a burro vert? I did.

violet (reddish blue)

Pastel, O Ivy, Reva, a *very* violet sap!

viridian (a bluish green)

Of the 50 daughters of Danaüs—the Danaïds—49, by the order of their father, decapitated their husbands on their common wedding night. Riveter Rosa is just the opposite—she *attaches* heads to supermarket statues of the Jolly Green Giant (with whom she has begun to chat as she works):

“Si—no Danaïd, I *rivet* a pate, viridian Adonis!”

SUMMARY

At the outset of this project I greatly underestimated the number of color names—both those that are decently palindromizable and those that seem not to be—that are to be found randomly distributed throughout an unabridged dictionary such as M-W, and I eventually realized that a complete listing would be impractical—it was a project in itself just to *find* the relevant names. (Is there a master list of all dictionary-recognized color names anywhere?) Still, I did find, I think, perhaps three-fifths of the palindromizable color names residing in M-W, including, I would say, most of the more common ones. Besides *yellow*, some of the more familiar color names that I wasn't able to decently palindromize were *aquamarine*, *magenta*, *ochre*, *sapphire*, *scarlet*, *silver* and *turquoise*.

For the convenience of any who might wish to carry on with this project, here is an alphabetical listing of all of the 218 color names palindromized in this article:

acorn, alabaster, amaranth, amber, anemone, anatto, annato, aqua, arnatto, auburn, autumn, azure, bat, bay, beaver, beige, beryl, bice, bister, bistres, black, blue, blues, boa, bole, bronze, brown, buff, cacao, camel, canary, canna, caramel, cardinal, carmine, carnation, carnelian, carrot, Castilian red, celadon, cerise, cerulean, chestnut, cinnabar, cinnamon, citron, claret, cobalt, cocoa, coffee, copper, coral, crimson, cyan, dahlia, dahlia purple, damask, damson, dandelion, deer, dorado, dove, drab, dun, dune, ebon, ebony, ecru, email, emerald, fawn, flame, flame red, flesh, fox, freestone, fuchsia, gamboge, garnet, gazelle, ginger, Gobelin, gold, golden, goldenrod, grape, gray, green, grège, grey, greyer, gridelin, gull, gulled, hay, heliotrope, hellebore red, henna, hoar, hoary, indigo, iron red, ivory, jade, jaune, jet, khaki, lake, lapis lazuli, lavender, lemon, lilac, lime, liver, lobelia, loutre, madder, madder red, madder rose, mahogany, manila, maroon, Mars red, mauve, meline, melon, merle, midnight, mignonette, mimosa, mouse, murrey, musteline, myrtle, nacarat, navy, neva green, Nikko, Nile, Nile green, nutmeg, nutria, ocher, olive, olive drab, orange, otter, pansy, paprika, pavonine, peacock, pearl, perse, pink, platinum, puce, purple, raddle, raisin, rat, raven, raw sienna, red, reseda, Romany, rose, rose morn, rose nude, rose-red, rosetan, rosier, rosy, royal purple, ruby, ruddier, ruddle, ruddy, russet, rust, sable, saffron, sage, salmon, sard, sardine, sepia, Sèvres, Siena, sienna, sil, sistine, slate, smalt, solferino, sorrel, stammel, steel, straw, tan, tangerine, taupe, tawny, teak, teal, tenné, terra-cotta, titian, topaz, ultramarine, umber, verdet, vermilion, vermillion, vert, violet, viridian, walnut, white

Attempted but not counted: yellow

END NOTES

1) A typical example of a full color name definition in M-W is this one for *flame red*: “a strong reddish orange that is redder and slightly duller than poppy, redder and slightly paler than paprika, redder and deeper than flame, and redder and deeper than average coral red.” And what might be M-W's authority for its very precise color name definitions? Its prefatory material doesn't say—perhaps it's a trade secret.

2) (from *otter*) Epanodos is an ancient rhetorical device in which the parts of a sentence or clause are repeated in reverse order to emphasize a point. An Internet dictionary cites this example from Milton:

O more exceeding love, or law more just?
Just law indeed, but more exceeding love.

Carried to an extreme, the use of epanodos could obviously sometimes result in the creation of a word-unit palindrome:

More exceeding love, or law more just?
Just more law? Or, love exceeding, more?