

## THE CHAOS / DE CHAOS

*"The Chaos" is a poem demonstrating the irregularity of English spelling and pronunciation. Written by the Dutch writer, traveller, and teacher Gerard Nolst Trenité (1870–1946) under the pseudonym of Charivarius, it includes about 800 examples of irregular spelling/utterance. Trenité wrote several versions of The Chaos in the course of his life, this is but one of them (edited, to boot).*

Dearest creature in Creation,	Typhoid; measles, topsails, aisles;	When you say correctly croquet;
Studying English pronunciation,	Exiles, similes, reviles;	Rounded, wounded; grieve and sieve;
I will teach you in my verse	Wholly, holly; signal, signing;	Friend and fiend; alive and live;
Sounds like corpse, corps, horse and worse.	Thames; examining, combining;	Liberty, library; heave and heaven;
It will keep you, Susy, busy,	Scholar, vicar and cigar,	Rachel, ache, moustache; eleven.
Make your head with heat grow dizzy;	Solar, mica, war and far.	We say hallowed, but allowed;
Tear in eye your dress you'll tear.	<i>[From "desire": desirable— admirable from "admire";</i>	People, leopard; towed, but vowed
So shall I! Oh, hear my prayer,	<i>Lumber, plumber; bier but brier;</i>	Mark the difference, moreover,
Pray, console your loving poet,	<i>Chatham, brougham; renown but known,</i>	Between mover, plover, Dover,
Make my coat look new, dear, sew it?	<i>Knowledge; done, but gone and tone,</i>	Leeches, breeches; wise, precise;
Just compare heart, beard and heard,	<i>One, anemone; Balmoral;</i>	Chalice but police and lice.
Dies and diet, lord and word,	<i>Kitchen, lichen; laundry, laurel;</i>	Camel; constable, unstable;
Sword and sward, retain and Britain,	<i>Gertrude, German; wind and mind;</i>	Principle, disciple; label;
(Mind the latter, how it's written!)	<i>Scene, Melpomene, mankind;</i>	Petal, penal and canal;
Made has not the sound of bade,	<i>Tortoise, turquoise, chamois-leather,</i>	Wait, surmise, plait, promise; pal.
Say—said, pay—paid, laid, but plaid.	<i>Reading, Reading, heathen, heather.</i>	Suit, suite, run, circuit, conduit
Now I surely will not plague you	<i>This phonetic labyrinth</i>	Rime with "shirk it" and "beyond it",
With such words as vague and ague,	<i>Gives moss, gross, brook, brooch, ninth, plinth.</i>	But it is not hard to tell,
But be careful how you speak,	<i>Billet does not end like ballet;</i>	Why it's pall, mall, but Pall Mall.
Say break, steak, but bleak and streak,	<i>Bouquet, wallet, mallet, chalet;</i>	Muscle, muscular; gaol; iron;
Previous, precious; fuchsia, via;	<i>Blood and flood are not like food,</i>	Timber, climber; bullion, lion,
Pipe, snipe, recipe and choir,	<i>Nor is mould like should and would.</i>	Worm and storm; chaise, chaos, chair;
Cloven, oven; how and low;	<i>Banquet is not nearly parquet,</i>	Senator, spectator, mayor.
Script, receipt; shoe, poem, toe,	<i>Which is said to rime with "darky".]</i>	Ivy, privy; famous, clamour
Hear me say, devoid of trickery:	Viscous, viscount; load and broad;	And enamour rime with "hammer."
Daughter, laughter and Terpsichore,	Toward, to forward, to reward,	Pussy, hussy and possess.
	And your pronunciation's O.K.	Desert, but dessert, address.
		Golf, wolf; countenance; lieutenants

Hoist, in lieu of flags, left pennants.

River, rival; tomb, bomb, comb;

Doll and roll and some and home.

Stranger does not rime with anger,

Neither does devour with clangour.

Soul, but foul and gaunt, but aunt;

[*Font, front, wont; want, grand, and, grant,*

*Shoes, goes, does.*[1]) *Now first say: finger,*

*And then: singer, ginger, linger.*

*Real, zeal; mauve, gauze and gauge;*

*Marriage, foliage, mirage, age.*

*Query does not rime with very,*

*Nor does fury sound like bury.*

*Dost, lost, post and doth, cloth, loth;*

*Job, Job, blossom, bosom, oath.*

*Though the difference seems little,*

*We say actual, but victual,*

*Seat, sweat, chaste, caste; Leigh, eight, height;*

*Put, nut; granite, but unite.*

*Reefer does not rime with "deafers,"*

*Feoffer does, and zephyr, heifer.*

*Dull, bull; Geoffrey, George; ate, late;*

*Hint, pint; senate, but sedate;*

*Scenic, Arabic, pacific;*

*Science, conscience, scientific;*

*Tour, but our, and succour, four;*

*Gas, alas and Arkansas!*

*Sea, idea, guinea, area,*

*Psalm; Maria, but malaria;*

*Youth, south, southern; cleanse and clean;*

*Doctrine, turpentine, marine.*

*Compare alien with Italian,*

*Dandelion with battalion,*

*Sally with ally; yea, ye,*

*Eye, I, ay, aye, whey, key, quay!*

*Say aver, but ever, fever,*

*Neither, leisure, skein, receiver.*

*Never guess—it is not safe;*

*We say calves, valves, half, but Ralf!*

*Heron; granary, canary;*

*Crevice, and device, and eyrie;*

*Face but preface, but efface,*

*Phlegm, phlegmatic; ass, glass, bass;*

*Large, but target, gin, give, verging;*

*Ought, out, joust and scour, but scouring;]*

Ear, but earn; and wear and tear

Do not rime with "here", but "ere".

Seven is right, but so is even;

Hyphen, roughen, nephew, Stephen;

Monkey, donkey; clerk and jerk;

Asp, grasp, wasp; and cork and work.

Pronunciation—think of psyche!—

Is a paling, stout and spikey;

Won't it make you lose your wits,

Writing "groats" and saying groats?

It's a dark abyss or tunnel,

Strewn with stones, like rowlock,  
gunwale,

Islington and Isle of Wight,

Housewife, verdict and indict!

Don't you think so, reader, rather,

Saying lather, bather, father?

Finally: which rimes with "enough,"

Though, through, plough, cough,  
hough, or tough?

Hiccough has the sound of "cup".....

My advice is—give it up!