

A WORD  
BY ANY OTHER NAME

*A Dramatic Reading*

*By*  
*Val Cheatham*

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*A Word by Any Other Name*

- 2 -

## A WORD BY ANY OTHER NAME

*Written by Val Cheatham.*

*Researched by Valerhy Harmon*

In this dramatic reading, four narrators (*Can be adapted to more.*) give us a fascinating look at many of the beautiful, colorful, musical words that are thrown into the melting pot that makes up the English language. A WORD BY ANY OTHER NAME tells how peoples' names and ideas become such common parts of speech we don't even think about them.

The narrators can be either male or female. Narrator #4 offers a bit of comic relief and this should be considered when parts are assigned or chosen.

*A Word by Any Other Name*

- 3 -

#1 Words ...  
#2 They name,  
#3 They show action,  
#4 They describe,  
#1 They modify,  
#2 They indicate relationships -  
#4 BANG!  
#3 - or just plain noise.  
#1 The English language contains  
one-half million words!  
#2 The grunts, groans, and grouses  
of a multitude of people.  
#3 Speaking a myriad of languages.  
#4 Many stay the same for centuries.  
#1 Others change meanings almost overnight.  
#2 Without words we could not communicate,  
  
#3 Command,  
#4 Teach,  
#1 Ask questions.  
#2 Without words we could not think.  
#3 Or-  
#4 Wait! If we can't think without words, how could  
we have thought up words in the first place ...? Or  
is this one of those "which came first, the chicken  
or the egg" puzzles?  
#3 Neither. It was simply a statement to think about.  
#4 But-  
#3 So, think about it.  
#1 The truth is, words evolved slowly, a very few at a  
time.  
#2 From the intimate and nurturing: Mama, Dada, eat  
and drink;  
#3 to identification and awe: lightning, thunder-  
#4 tornado! RUN!  
#1 But, we are not here to tell the history of words.  
#2 We want only to explain a small segment,  
#3 a group that came to be, simply because of a  
person's name.

*A Word by Any Other Name*

- 4 -

- #4 Yes, words made up from someone's name.  
#1 The most logical, of course, are inventions that bear the inventor's name:
- #2 Bowie knife,  
#3 Colt revolver,  
#4 Dewey Decimal System,  
#1 Diesel engine,  
#2 Eiffle tower,  
#3 Ferris wheel,  
#4 Franklin stove,  
#1 Gatling gun,  
#2 Petri dish,  
#3 Phillips screwdriver,  
#4 Pullman car,  
#1 Mason jar,  
#2 Montessori method,  
#3 Molotov cocktail -  
#4 which is not a drink but a bomb -  
#1 Morgan horse,  
#2 Morse code,  
#3 Yale lock,  
#4 And the Saxophone, named after the Belgian inventor, A. J. Sax!
- #1 Right!  
#4 Or the Sousaphone, named after John Phillips Sousa, the famous bandmaster and composer who suggested its form.  
#1 Right again!
- #4 And the telephone, named after ...  
#1 Wrong, the telephone was invented by Alexander Graham Bell.  
#4 Why didn't they name it the Bellophone?  
#2 Because that name was already taken  
#3 by something loud and interrupting.  
#4 (*Shrugs shoulders and feigns, "Me?"*)  
#1 Other inventions are known by a single name:  
#2 Braille - raised dots for blind to read;

*A Word by Any Other Name*

- 5 -

#3 derringer - small, short-barreled pistol;  
#4 doily - delicate napkin or lace mat under a dish;  
#1 guillotine - instrument for beheading;  
#2 shrapnel - bombshell filled with small metal pieces;  
#3 spinet - small upright piano;  
#4 Stetson - cowboy hat with broad brim and soft crown;  
#1 Winchester - repeating rifle;  
#2 Zeppelin - lighter-than-air ship with a light metal frame.  
#3 It is also logical how the names of discoverers got applied to their discoveries.  
#4 In electricity alone we have amps, volts, and watts.  
#1 To measure we have the Richter scale, the Plimsol mark, and the Geiger counter.  
#2 We use Mach to tell us how fast jets and rockets travel compared to the speed of sound.  
#3 For time we have the Julian and Gregorian calendars.  
#4 To calculate temperature we do it in degrees of Fahrenheit and Kelvin.  
#1 There are angstroms to determine the length of light waves  
#2 and langleys to measure solar radiation.  
  
#3 Clothing give us  
#4 cardigan sweaters,  
#1 chesterfield topcoats,  
#2 raglan sleeves,  
#3 mackintosh raincoats,  
#4 Spencer waistcoats,  
#1 plus bloomers, leotards, and havelocks.  
#4 Havelocks?  
#2 Cloth attached to the back of a cap to protect the neck  
from the sun.

*A Word by Any Other Name*

- 6 -

- #2 And don't forget the Sam Brown belt, a diagonal strap  
across a military uniform to help carry the weight of a sword or pistol.
- #4 How about the Van Allen belt?
- #3 No, that's not clothing, but a discovery.
- #1 Often those who make discoveries, have their names applied to that discovery.
- #2 Such as Haley's Comet;
- #3 Grave's, Parkinson's, Hanson's, Hodgkin's Huntington's and Potts disease.
- #4 We pasteurize milk;
- #1 take the Hippocratic oath;
- #2 do the Heimlich maneuver;
- #3 practice the Lamaze method;
- #4 or have a Pap smear.
- #1 In fact, sometimes all one has to do is report on someone else's discovery.
- #2 America was named after a map maker,
- #3 Amerigo Vespucci, (a mare ee go ves poot chee) who depicted Columbus's great discovery.
- #4 Amerigo Vespucci (a mare ee go ves poot chee)? Do you mean to say if we had used his last name rather than his first, we would be the United States of Vespucci (yes poot chee a)?
- #1 Yes, and proud of it!
- #2 Parts of the body named after people are:
- #3 Fallopian and Eustachian tubes,
- #4 plus the Island of Langerhans.
- #1 Many flowers and plants are named after people:
- #2 zinnia,
- #3 zoysia,
- #4 magnolia,
- #1 forsythia,
- #2 gardenia,
- #3 poinsettia,

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