

# PLAYING WITH LETTERS, OR WHAT WAS THE WORLD'S FIRST PALINDROME

*By George Plohn, our linguist in residence*

A **palindrome** by definition is a word, phrase, number, or other sequence of characters which reads the same backward or forward. Allowances may be made for adjustments to capital letters, punctuation, and word dividers.

Famous examples include "A man, a plan, a canal, Panama!", "Amor, Roma", "race car", "stack cats", "step on no pets", "taco cat", "put it up", "Was it a car or a cat I saw?" and "No 'x' in Nixon".

Composing literature in palindromes is an example of constrained writing.

The word "palindrome" was coined by the English playwright Ben Jonson in the 17th century from the Greek roots *palin* (πάλιν: again) and *dromos* (δρόμος: way or direction).

**As for what was the world's first palindrome?**

Here it is: **Madam I'm Adam**