Words Ending in -Gry

Find three completely different words ending in "-gry."

Aside from "angry" and "hungry" and words derived therefrom, there is no stand-alone word ending in "gry" that is in current usage. Both *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged* and the *Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition* contain the phrase "aggry bead." To find a third word ending in "gry" that is not part of a phrase, you must turn to obsolete words or personal or place names. A list of 130 of these is given at the end of this article.

So, basically, this puzzle has no good answer. Why, then, is it so popular? What follows is a conjecture about the history of this very curious puzzle.

Perhaps someone was browsing through an old dictionary or a book on unusual and interesting words, and came across the word "meagry," meaning meager. Perhaps he or she noticed that this old word had an unusual ending, an ending it shared with only two other words: "angry" and "hungry." Perhaps he or she were inspired to make up a puzzle, and send it to a newspaper columnist or a popular radio show. Perhaps the puzzle was published or broadcast. Perhaps the rest, as they say, is history.

This puzzle first appears in print in Anita Richterman's "Problem Line" column in *Newsday* on May 9, 1975. Several correspondents reported in this article that they had heard the puzzle on the Bob Grant Talk Show on WMCA-AM in New York City. The original form of the puzzle was: There are only three words in the English language, all adjectives, which end in "-gry." Two are "angry" and "hungry"; the third word describes the state of the world today. What is it?

This appears to be the origin of this puzzle. Additional evidence for this hypothesis is found in the correspondence files of Merriam-Webster. These files contain letters to the editors of Merriam-Webster (formerly G. & C. Merriam Co.), publishers of *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* and *Webster's International Dictionary*. These files go back over 100 years. Letters asking for the third word ending in "-gry" do not appear until 1975, but there is a steady stream thereafter.

However, the word "meagry" is not in any current dictionary. Nor are any of the words on the list below. So, people could not find an answer. Nature abhors a vacuum, so people resorted to trick solutions. Thus the modern versions of this puzzle were born. Everyone is confident that the versions they originally heard were the true and correct versions. The plain facts are that there is no good answer, and that there is no one version that is correct. Some of the trick versions are enumerated below.

1. This version only works when spoken: There are three words in English that end in "gree." The first two are "angry" and "hungry," and if you've listened closely, you'll agree that I've already told you the third one.

The answer is "agree." The object is to make the listener think about the letters g-r-y instead of the sound "gree."

2. There are three words in the English language that end in the letters g-r-y. Two are "hungry" and "angry." Everyone knows what the third word means, and everyone uses it every day. What is the third word?

The answer is "energy." The riddle says that the word ends in the letters g-r-y; it says nothing about the order of the letters. Energy is something everyone uses everyday, and everyone probably knows what it means.

3. The "Ask Marilyn" (Marilyn Vos Savant) column in *Parade* magazine on March 9, 1997 featured this spoken version: There are at least three words in the English language that end in g or

y. One of them is "hungry," and another one is "angry." There is a third word, a short one, which you probably say every day. If you are listening carefully to everything I say, you just heard me say it three times. What is it?

The answer is "say." This version depends upon the listener confusing the spoken word "or" and the spoken letter r.

4. There are three words in the English language that end in "gry." Two words that end in "gry" are "hungry" and "angry." Everyone knows what the third word means, and everyone uses them every day. If you listened very carefully, I have already stated to you what the third word is. The three words that solve this riddle are ...?

The answer is the three-word sentence "I am hungry." This version asks for three words that end in "gry," not three words each of which end in "gry."

The remaining versions are a form of meta-puzzle, in the sense that they make no use of the actual letters "gry" themselves, which therefore are a red herring. The red herring only works because there is another puzzle that does use these letters (even though that puzzle has no good answer).

5. On March 28, 1996, one such version was broadcast on WHTZ in New York City during "The Elvis Duran Afternoon Show." The person asking the question was a caller who worked in a beauty salon at a mall somewhere in New Jersey: Think of words ending in "-gry." Angry and hungry are two of them. There are only three words in "the English language." What is the third word? The word is something that everyone uses everyday. If you have listened carefully, I have already told you what it is.

The answer to this version is "language"—the third word in the phrase "the English language." There are quotation marks needed to make this answer correct when the puzzle is printed, but they give away the trick.

6. Angry and hungry are two words in the English language that end in "-gry." "What" is the third word. The word is something that everyone uses everyday. If you have listened carefully, I have already told you what it is.

The answer is "what." But again, the quotation marks spoil the puzzle when it is printed.

7. This version is usually stated with certain words capitalized, for no apparent reason but historical accident: There are three words in the English language that end in "-gry." ONE is angry and the other is hungry. Every ONE knows what the third ONE means and what it stands for. Every ONE uses them every day. And if you listened carefully I've given you the third word. What is it?

The answer is "three," the third word in the paragraph. The rest of the paragraph is a red herring.

Here is the list of obsolete words, phrases and names (see the end of the list for the meaning of the references in brackets).

This list was gathered from the following articles:

George H. Scheetz, In Goodly Gree: With Goodwill, *Word Ways* 22:3 (Nov. 1989)
Murray R. Pearce, Who's Flaithbhertach MacLoingry?, *Word Ways* 23:1 (Feb. 1990)
Harry B. Partridge, Gypsy Hobby Gry, *Word Ways* 23:1 (Feb. 1990)
A. Ross Eckler, -Gry Words in the OED, *Word Ways* 25:4 (Nov. 1992)
Darryl Francis, Some New -Gry Words, *Word Ways* 30:3 (Aug. 1997)

References: Many references are of the form [Source:volume:page] or [Source:page]. They are listed after the -gry words.

affect-hungry [OED (see "sado-masochism")]
aggry [OED:1:182;W2;W3]
Agry [OED (see "snappily")]
Agry Dagh (Mount Agry) [EB11]
ahungry [OED:1:194; FW;W2]
air-hungry [OED (see "Tel Avivian")]
angry [OED; FW;W2;W3]
anhungry [OED:1:332;W2]
Badagry [Johnston; EB11; OED (see "Dahoman")]
Ballingry [Bartholomew:40; CLG:151; RD:164, pl.49]
begry [OED:1:770,767]
bewgry [OED:1:1160]
boroughmongry [OED (see "boroughmonger")]
bowgry [OED:1:1160]
braggry [OED:1:1047]
Bugry [TIG]
Chockpugry [Worcester]
Cogry [BBC]
cony-gry [OED:2:956]
conyngry [OED:2:956]
cottagry [OED (see "cottagery")]
Croftangry [DFC, as "Chrystal Croftangry"; OED (see "way")]
diamond-hungry [OED (see "Lorelei")]
dog-hungry [W2]
dogge-hungry [OED (see "canine")]
Dshagry [Stieler]
Dzagry [Andree]
eard-hungry [CED (see "yird"); CSD]
Echanuggry [Century:103–104, on inset map, Key 104 M 2]
Egry [France;TIG]
euer-angry [OED (see "ever")]
ever-angry [W2]
fenegry [OED (see "fenugreek")]
fire-angry [W2]
Gagry [EB11]
girl-hungry [OED (see "girl")]
gonagry [OED (see "gonagra")]
gry (from Latin gry) [OED:4/2:475;W2]
gry (from Romany grai) [W2]
haegry [EDD (see "hagery")]
half-angry [W2]
hangry [OED:1:329]
heart-angry [W2]
heart-hungry [W2]
higry pigry [OED:5/1:285]
hogry [EDD (see "huggerie"); CSD]
hogrymogry [EDD (see "huggerie"); CSD (as "hogry-mogry")]
hongry [OED:5/1:459; EDD:3:282]
hound-hungry [OED (see "hound")]
houngry [OED (see "minx")]
huggrymuggry [EDD (see "huggerie"); CSD (as "huggry-muggry")]
hund-hungry [OED (see "hound")]
hungry [OED; FW;W2;W3]
Hungry Bungry [Daily Illini, in ad for The Giraffe, Spring 1976]
hwngry [OED (see "quart")]
iggry [OED]
Jagry [EB11]
job-hungry [OED (see "gadget")]
kaingry [EDD (see "caingy")]
land-hungry [OED;W2]
Langry [TIG;Times]
leather-hungry [OED]
ledderhungry [OED (see "leather")]
life-hungry [OED (see "music")]
Lisnagry [Bartholomew:489]
losengry [OED (see "losengery")]
MacLoingry [Phillips (as "Flaithbhertach MacLoingry")]
mad-angry [OED:6/2:14]
mad-hungry [OED:6/2:14]
magry [OED:6/2:36, 6/2:247–48]
malgry [OED:6/2:247]
man-hungry [OED]
managry [OED (see "managery")]
mannagry [OED (see "managery")]
Margry [Indians (see "Pierre Margry" in bibliog., v.2, p.1204)]
maugry [OED:6/2:247–48]
mawgry [OED:6/2:247]
meagry [OED:6/2:267]
meat-hungry [W2; OED (see "meat")]
menagry [OED (see "managery")]
messagry [OED]
music-hungry [OED (see "music")]
nangry [OED]
overangry [RH1; RH2]
Pelegry [CE (in main index as "Raymond de Pelegry")]
Pingry [Bio-Base; HPS:293–94, 120–21]
Podagry [OED;W2 (below the line)]
Pongry [Andree (Supplement, p.572)]

pottingry [OED:7/2:1195; Jamieson:3:532]
power-hungry [OED (see "power")]
profit-hungry [OED (see "profit")]
puggry [OED:8/1:1573; FW; W2]
pugry [OED:8/1:1574]
red-angry [OED (see "sanguineous")]
rungry [EDD:5:188]
scavengry [OED (in 1715 quote under "scavengery")]
Schtschigry [LG/1:2045; OSN:97]
Seagry [TIG; EB11]
Segry [Johnston; Andree]
self-angry [W2]
selfe-angry [OED (see "self-")]
sensation-hungry [OED (see "sensation")]
sex-angry [OED (see "sex")]
sex-hungry [OED (see "cave")]
Shchigry [CLG:1747; Johnson:594; OSN:97,206; Times:185,pl.45]
shiggry [EDD]
Shtchigry [LG/1:2045; LG/2:1701]
Shtshigry [Lipp]
sight-hungry [OED (see "sight")]
skugry [OED:9/2:156, 9/1:297; Jamieson:4:266]
Sygry [Andree]
Tangry [France]
Tchangry [Johnson:594; LG/1:435,1117]
Tchigry [Johnson:594]
tear-angry [W2]
th'angry [OED (see "shot-free")]
tike-hungry [CSD]
Tingry [France; EB11 (under "Princesse de Tingry"); OED (see "parquet")]
toggry [Simmonds (as "Toggry," but all entries are capitalized)]
ulgry [Smith:24–25]
unangry [OED; W2]
vergry [OED:12/1:123]
Vigry [CLG:2090]
vngry [OED (see "wretch")]
war-hungry [OED (see "war")]
Wigry [CLG:2090; NAP:xxxix; Times:220, pl.62; WA:948]
wind-hungry [W2]
yeard-hungry [CED (see "yird")]
yerd-hungry [CED (see "yird"); OED]
yird-hungry [CED (see "yird")]
Ymagry [OED:1:1009 (col. 3, 1st "boss" verb), (variant of "imagery")]

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CSD = *Chambers Scots Dictionary*. 1971 reprint of 1911 edition.
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EB11 = *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed.
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LG/2 = *Lippincott's New Gazetteer: ...* 1906.

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W2 = *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language, Second Edition, Unabridged.* 1934.
W3 = *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged*. 1961.
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c

c—longest common head 'n' tail centered on letter c (1)—longest common palindrome centered on letter c (1)—longest common word with typewriter letters from bottom row (1-t)

caaba—uncommon word with lowest letter sum for length 5 (8-t)—*from the Islamic shrine in Mecca*

cabbage—common word with lowest letter sum for length 7 (21)—longest common word spelled with piano notes (7-t)

cabbaged—longest uncommon word spelled with piano notes (8-t)—*stolen*

cabbagehead—uncommon word with lowest letter sum for length 11 (39)—*stupid person*

cabbageheads—uncommon word with lowest letter sum for length 12 (58)

cabled—highest ratio of consecutive alphabetic letters to length for a common word (0.83-t)

cacafugo—see "acacetin"—*braggart*

cachaca—uncommon word with lowest letter sum for length 7 (20)—*Brazilian rum*

cad—shortest common word with last letter next in alphabet after first for letter c (3-t)

caeca—longest uncommon head 'n' tail centered on letter e (5-t)—*cavities open at one end*

caesious—shortest uncommon word containing each vowel once in order (8)—*dark blue*

calcium hydrogen sulfite—phrase with the lowest ratio length to number of different letters for length 22 (1.29)—*disinfectant*

calcium hydrogen sulfites—phrase with the lowest ratio length to number of different letters for length 23 (1.35)

calliopes—longest common alternade [clips & aloe] (9-t)

callous—example of homophones differing by letter o [callus]

callus—see "callous"

calpullec—example of a plural that ends with letter c—*Aztec clan*

calycal—longest uncommon head 'n' tail centered on letter y (7)—*cup shaped*

canal—longest sum pair with common words [canal → doom] (5-t)