

## What's my name again?

Written by Curtis Honeycutt, Guest Columnist  
Friday, 10 February 2023 17:36

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Names hold enormous power. I've always been impressed by people who go by names with only one word — Cher, Beyoncé, Prince, Madonna, Bono, Beck, Banksy or Pelé come to mind. These one-word names are called “mononyms.”

Add Plato, Aristotle, Fergie, Fabio, and Coolio, and you're looking at quite the lineup of mononymous people. If you're not singing “mononym” to the Muppet tune of “Mahna Mahna,” you will be by the end of this sentence.

You probably know about pseudonyms. These “pen names,” “noms de plume,” or even “aliases” are the names authors use for a particular purpose. Classic examples include Dr. Seuss, Mark Twain and Mrs. Silence Dogood. Modern examples include Richard Bachmann (Stephen King) and Robert Galbraith (J.K. Rowling).

However, do you know the word for the “given” name of an author who goes by a pseudonym? It's called an “orthonym.” Mark Twain's orthonym (aka his original name) was Samuel Clemens and Dr. Seuss's orthonym was “Theodore Giesel.” While “pseudonym” translates to “false name,” “orthonym” means “true name.”

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In the age of Twitter, Mitt Romney is my favorite example of a digital pseudonym. Back in 2019, it came to light that he had a secret Twitter handle under the name “Pierre Delecto.” First of all, that’s a great name. Secondly, it was a way for Romney to follow presidential campaign politics anonymously and correct news outlets when they didn’t have the full story from the former presidential hopeful.

As Romney started the account in 2011, his digital pseudonym was a well-kept secret for eight years.

Now I need to discuss another type of pseudonym — the stage name. In the entertainment industry, performers want to stand out in a sea of fame-seekers. One great way to do that is with an interesting name.

You probably didn’t know that Jamie Foxx is a stage name for the man with the given name Eric Bishop. Have you ever heard of Robert Zimmerman? You probably know him by his stage name, Bob Dylan. To rattle off a few more stage names, how about Elton John (Reginald Dwight), Marilyn Monroe (Norma Jeane Mortenson), Lady Gaga (Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta), and the greatest actor of all time: Nicolas Cage (Nicholas Coppola).

I don’t have any type of pseudonym or stage name — I like “Curtis Honeycutt.” In case you

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were wondering, my people do not cut honey, although I do subscribe to the axiom that you catch more flies with honey than vinegar. That truism not only passes muster, but it also cuts mustard.

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