

Right Answers

I am not a great enthusiast of puzzles (unlike my husband, the cryptic crossword whiz) but a recent issue of *Scientific America Mind* caught my attention in an airport shop the other day and after reading the articles I came to the back section entitled "Head Games" with a series of word puzzles. So after solving an eight letter word from a box by moving clockwise or counterclockwise really quickly, I confidently moved on to the next one which listed two series of four words:

Cattle Candle Wonder Capstan

Always Hamburger Chair Bend

The task was to identify which word in the second line goes best with the words in the first line.

Try it.

My choice was Always, - on the basis that it was a two syllable word like the other two syllable words in the top line.

But that isn't the correct answer according to the Mensa Puzzler. His choice (or hers - because the first name is Abbie) is Hamburger because the first three letters make a word as do the first three letters of each word in the top row.

Hmmm. I'm prepared to admit that the Mensa answer is a bit smarter and more interesting. But does that make mine wrong?

Now that I'm on the downward slope of the three score and ten, I can be philosophical about such things - after all I'm not trying an SAT test to get into college. But it is a small and gnawing example of how a supposedly right answer isn't the only answer. How many persons have been found wanting in such a process and missed getting into college, missed getting the job, and missed feeling that their solutions and answers have value?

If the game had been - How many creative solutions can you come up with to this question? - and if that were the paradigm - instead of the one right answer - think how much further ahead we would be? There is plenty of time to evaluate and weigh the answers when you have a lot of them. How many answers never see the light of day because we look for only one.