

maze, n.¹

DRAFT REVISION Sept. 2010

Brit. /meɪz/, *U.S.* /meɪz/ Forms: ME **masse**, ME-17 (18- *Eng. regional (west.)*) **mase**, ME- **maze**, 17- **mize** (*Irish English*). [Probably < the same base as **AMAZE** *v.*; further etymology uncertain. It has been suggested that in Old English alongside *amasian* (see **AMAZE** *v.*) an unattested noun **mæs* or **mase* existed, having the present word as its reflex; an unprefixed verb **masian* is also possible (compare **MAZE** *v.*).

A group of North Germanic words have sometimes been regarded as perhaps cognate with this word: Norwegian *mas* exhausting labour, nagging, (in archaic or regional use also whim, fancy, idle chatter), Danish *mas* trouble, bother, Swedish *mas* (archaic) sluggard; also Norwegian *mase* to bustle, fuss about, strive, slave away, reiterate, pester, beg, (reflexive) to wear oneself out, *masast* (regional or archaic) to start to dream, *masog* worn out, Danish *mase* to toil, Swedish *masa* to idle, dawdle, (reflexive, archaic) to bask, sun oneself.]

I. A state of mental confusion, and related senses.

†1. With *the*. [Compare **THE** *adj.* 8a.]

a. Delirium; delusion; disappointment. Obs.

c1300 *Judas Iscariot* 14 in F. J. Furnivall *Early Eng. Poems & Lives Saints* (1862) 107 3e..hit is þe mase, and also hit wole gon. **c1325** (c1300) *Chron. Robert of Gloucester* (Calig. A. 11) (1887) 6585 Wite..alle men..þat it nis bote þe pure mase [*u.r.* masse] eni kinges poer. **c1390** (a1376) **LANGLAND** *Piers Plowman* (Vernon) A. III. 155 Heo ledeþ þe lawe as hire luste and loue-dayes makeþ, þe Mase for a Mene mon, þauþ he mote euere. **c1400** (c1378) **LANGLAND** *Piers Plowman* (Laud) (1869) B. Prol. 196 Better is a litel losse þan a longe sorwe, þe mase amonge vs alle.

b. Worldly, vain, or dissolute amusement or diversion. Obs.

c1350 *How Good Wife taught her Daughter* (Emmanuel) 47 Go þou noȝt to toune, as it were a gase, Fram house to house to seken þe mase. **c1400** (a1376) **LANGLAND** *Piers Plowman* (Trin. Cambr.) A. I. 6 Sest þou þis peple, How besy þei ben about þe mase?

†2. **A delusive fancy; a trick or deception. Obs.**

c1390 **CHAUCER** *Nun's Priest's Tale* 4283 Men dreme alday of owles and of apes And of many a maze. **a1425** (c1385) **CHAUCER** *Troilus & Criseyde* (1987) v. 468 Al this nas but a maze. **c1425** **LYDGATE** *Troyes Bk.* (Augustus A. 4) v. 2559 Al was doon for an ydel maze. **a1500** *King & Hermit* in M. M. Furrow *Ten 15th-cent. Comic Poems* (1985) 264 Hopys þou I wold for a mase Stond in þe myre þer?

3. a. A state of bewilderment; a feeling of amazement or perplexity; (in pl.) confused or puzzled thoughts. Now chiefly in *in a maze*.

In early examples it is uncertain whether *a maze* or *amaze* (**AMAZE** *n.*) is intended.

c1425 **LYDGATE** *Troyes Bk.* (Augustus A. 4) l. 1338 To gape & to loke, as it wer on a mase. **1535** **G. JOYE** *Apol. Tindale* (Arb.) 48 Orels leue the reder as yt were in hys Maze. **1577** **R. HOLINSHED** *Chron.* II. 1775/2 The maze was such, that besides his sonne maister Arthure Gray..not a manne else did follow him. **1595** *Blanchardine & Eglantine* II. xiii. sig. K2^v, The faire Beatrix..stood in a maze. **1631** **T. HEYWOOD** *Fair Maid of West: 2nd Pt.* III. sig. F2, Six, to the maze Of all the rest, were slain. **1653** *Cloria & Narcissus* 274 Admiration stands at a maze. **1666** **J. BUNYAN** *Grace Abounding* (1900) §20. 302 At this I was put to an exceeding Maze. **1722** **W. SEWEL** *Hist. Quakers* (rev. ed.) IV. 147 That he came to a perfect Recovery from his having been in a Maze seems to appear plainly. **1827** **W. TENNANT** *Papistry Storm'd* 136 [He] up the street Rade on...in mickle maze I ween, For fient ae face was to be seen. **1835** **D. WEBSTER** *Orig. Sc. Rhymes* 29 In midst o' my mazes reflection unkind Shew'd the form of a faithless young fair in my mind. **1899** **A. L. SALMON** *West-Country Ballads & Verses* 60 My mind is kind of in a maze. **1913** **D. H. LAWRENCE** *Sons & Lovers* xii. 332 In a maze, he wandered out for a drink. **1935** **L. MANN** *Human Drift* xiii. 103 What madness was in her! She had come here in a maze, without thinking and now she wanted only to turn and run. **1996** **T. P. DOLAN & D. Ó MUIRITHE** *Dial. Forth & Bargy* 27 *Maze*, amazement.

†b. Used by Scott for: a confusing haze. *Obs.*

1813 **SCOTT** *Bridal of Triermain* Concl. i. 200 When a pilgrim strays, In morning mist or evening maze, Along the mountain lone.

II. A labyrinth, and related senses.

4. a. A structure designed as a puzzle, consisting of a complicated network of winding and interconnecting paths or passages, only one of which is the correct route through; a labyrinth; (occas. in *pl.*) the windings of a labyrinth. Also (as in quot. 1903): a structure comprising two points joined by a single winding line much greater in length than the direct line between the two points.

Large-scale recreational mazes have traditionally been constructed from hedges. More recently, mazes have been used as tools to study human and animal learning and intelligence.

c1430 (c1386) **CHAUCER** *Legend Good Women* 2014 The hous is krynkeled to and fro, And hath so queynte weyes for to go For it is shapen as the mase is wrought. **?a1475** (?a1425) tr. R. Higden *Polychron.* (Harl.) (1865) I. 311 In that yle is also oon of the iiii mases [a1387 J. TREVISA tr. laborintus]. **1534** **T. MORE** *Dialoge of Comfort* II, in *Wks.* 1202/2 They walke round about as it were in a round mase. **1577** **B. GOOGE** tr. C. Heresbach *Fourre Bks. Husbandry* II. f. 66, Roses growyng in borders, and made in a maze. **1600**

SHAKESPEARE *Midsummer Night's Dream* II. i. 99 The quaint Mazes, in the wanton greene, For lacke of tread, are vndistinguishable. **1615** R. BRATHWAIT *Strappado* 104 There doth grow, A groue of fatall Elmes, wherein a maze, Or labyrinth is fram'd. **1762** W. FALCONER *Shipwreck* II. 27 Such arduous toil sage Daedalus endur'd, In mazes self-invented long immur'd. **1835** C. THIRLWALL *Hist. Greece* I. v. 133 He vanquished the monster of the labyrinth, and retraced its mazes. **1836** DICKENS *Sketches by Boz* 2nd Ser. 146 The gordian knot was all very well in its way: so was the maze of Hampton Court: so is the maze at the Beulah Spa. **1901** Amer. *Jrnl. Psychol.* **12** 228 The process of learning the way through this maze is adequately described as a gradual establishment of direct associations by profiting by chance experience. **1903** G. E. JEANS *Murray's Handbk. Lincs.* 222 A maze, called *Julian's Bower*, is cut in the grassy brow of the cliff. **1955** J. P. DONLEAVY *Ginger Man* xx. 229 Hundred acres of it. Boxwood mazes for me to get lost in. **1989** *Weekend Tel.* 20 May p. ix/5, I headed for the maze laid out in 1983 to the prize-winning design of Ian Leitch.

b. In extended use: a complex network of paths or streets; a bewildering mass of things (material or immaterial), in which the individual components are difficult to separate or make out.

In the 16th and 17th centuries often in *to tread a maze*, perh. with allusion to sense 5.

1531 TYNDALE *Expos. Fyrste Epist. Jhon* Prol. sig. Aiiij^v, The scripture..is become a maze unto them, in which they wandre as in a myst. **1542** H. BRINKELOW *Lamentacion* sig. Cviii, Leadyng them in an endlesse Maze of dyrtye tradicyons and folish ceremonies. **1578** *Christian Prayers* 17 To the intent we should not wander any longer vp and down in the mazes of this world. **1596** L. KEYMIS *Relation 2nd Voy. Guiana* sig. G4, In the discouerie of Guiana, you may read both of Oreliano..and of Berreo, with others that haue trode this maze, and lost them selues in seeking to find this countrie. **1605** BACON *Of Aduancem. Learning* II. sig. Mm1, The trauaile therein taken, seemeth to haue ben rather in a Maze, then in a way. **1615** H. CROOKE *Μικροκοσμου γεωγραφια* 15 The Labyrinthæan Mazes and web of the small arteries. **1646** SIR T. BROWNE *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* I. x. 42 *To lose us in this maze of error.* **1781** G. CRABBE *Library* 9 Whether 'tis yours to lead the willing mind Through History's mazes, and the turnings find. **1837** B. DISRAELI *Venetia* IV. ii, They were lost in a delicious maze of metaphor and music. **1849** T. B. MACAULAY *Hist. Eng.* I. iii. 347 Bath was..a maze of only four or five hundred houses. **1872** W. BLACK *Strange Adventures Phaeton* vi. 74 A tangled maze of bracken and briar. **1946** E. MUIR *Voyage* 9 The endless trap lay everywhere, And all the roads ran in a maze Hither and thither, like a web. **1952** P. BOWLES *Let it come Down* xiii. 140 From a maze of inner streets he came out upon the principal thoroughfare. **1994** *Pop. Sci.* Mar. 42/1 Banking by phone has become synonymous with fumbling your way through a maze of push-button choices.

5. A winding or intricate movement, as in a dance. Also in *pl.*: the characteristic twisting movements of a hare. Quot. 1598 refers to the circular movement of a horse pulling round a capstan to turn a mill; cf. *miller's round n.* at MILLER *n.*¹ Compounds 2.

1598 BP. J. HALL *Virgidemiarum* IV. iii. 25 Some of thy Stallion-race, Their eyes boar'd out, masking the Millers-maze. **1610** *Histriomastix* III. 232 The world doth turn a maze in giddy round. **1637** B. JONSON *Vision of Delight* 224 in *Wks.* (1640) III, In curious knots and mazes so The Spring at first was taught to go. **1713** POPE *Windsor-Forest* 6 To Plains with well-breath'd Beagles we repair, And trace the Mazes of the circling Hare. **1742** E. YOUNG *Complaint* IX. 9 Dancing, with the rest, the giddy Maze, Where Disappointment smiles at Hope's Career. **1834** *Pearl & Lit. Gaz.* 2 Aug. 209/3 Their faces glowing with the exercise they had just taken in springing 'the light fantastic toe' to the music of the son of Crispin, through the winding mazes of a 'four reel'. **1903** *Eng. Dial. Dict.* IV. 65/1 The whirling of a top, when it is so swift as to escape the eye, and the top seems motionless, is called by boys a maze. **1972** G. E. EVANS & D. THOMSON *Leaping Hare* xv. 207 The hare's mazes, its purposeful twistings and turnings, have been much admired.

‡6. *Prob.*: a complex, plaited hairstyle. *Obs. rare.*

1657 R. LIGON *True Hist. Barbados* 16 Their haire not shorne..close to their heads; nor in quarters, and mases.

COMPOUNDS

C1. maze game n. any of various games (now usually played on a computer), requiring the player to negotiate a maze; also *fig.*

1967 *Amer. Lit.* **38** 577 Our culture had been trapped in the *maze-game of what-do-you-like. **1985** *Eng. Today* Apr. 29/1 Maze games are now a generic type, to be contrasted with cockpit games, invader games, gobbling games and other species. **1991** *ACE* Feb. 64/1 An overhead maze game—just you, lots of locked doors and hidden keys, and literally hundreds of hungry 'things'.

Maze-Monday n. *Eng. regional (Cornwall)* now *hist.* the Monday after pay day at a mine (see quot. 1903).

1888 *Jrnl. Royal Statist. Soc.* **51** 530 (*note*) Two strikes at the Devon Great Consols Mine, one in resistance..to the reintroduction of the five-weekly..month..and the other in opposition to the abolition of '*Maze-Monday,' as the Monday following the pay-day was termed. **1903** *Eng. Dial. Dict.* IV. 65/1 [Cornwall] *Maze-Monday*..taken as a holiday, but on which a man will do his 'little churs' at home.

‡**Maze-Sunday n.** *Eng. regional (Devon)* *Obs. rare* a particular Sunday set apart for feasting.

1700 T. BROWN *Lett. to Gentlemen & Ladies* in *Wks.* (1708) III. 102, I arrived at Exon... The next Day being Sunday, call'd by the Natives of this Country *Maze-Sunday, (and indeed not without some Reason, for the People look'd as if they were gallied) I was wak'd by [etc.].

C2. attrib. Psychol. With reference to the use of mazes in the study of intelligence, as *maze test*, etc.; also *maze-running*, *maze-learning* adjs.

1921 *Lancet* 19 Mar. 597/2 The..Porteous maze tests which, testing as they do the foresight, the capacity to plan, the practical judgment and concentration of the child, supply a marked lack of the Binet scale. **1940** *Brit. Jrnl. Psychol.* Jan. 191 Many maze workers have noted the fact of variability in performance from day to day. **1958** *Spectator* 8 Aug. 201/1 The obsessional maze-running experiments of the American rat-psychologists. **1992** S. ROSE *Making of Memory* (BNC) 230 This effect had been

shown previously with more traditional maze-learning tasks.

DERIVATIVES

'**mazelike** *adj.* and *adv.*

1596 A. COPLEY *Fig for Fortune* 62 Amid these trees, these fruites, these flowerie sweetes Ran in a *Maze-like wile a chrystall streame. **1605** J. SYLVESTER tr. G. de S. Du Bartas *Deuine Weekes & Wks.* II. ii. 494 The Maze-like Meane, that turnes and wends so faire. **1868** E. ATHERSTONE *Fall of Nineveh* (ed. 2) II. XXI. 177 Dara, with hand untiring, from the harp Called breathing tones, and maze-like harmonies. **1894** W. PATER *Gaston de Latour* (1896) ii. 35 Its maze-like crypt, centering in the shrine of the sibylline Notre-Dame. **1904** *Westm. Gaz.* 15 Mar. 1/3, I looked down on to rows of clipped, regular, hornbeam hedges, with grass paths between them, maze-like. **1979** *Dædalus* Summer 12 More impressive..is the endemic and systematic character of public hypocrisy and its mazelike inescapability.
