

**maze, n.**

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 n.; further etymology uncertain. It has been suggested that in Old English alongside amasan (see AMAZE n.) an unattested noun *mæs* or *mase* existed, having the present word as its reflex; an unprefixe verb *mæsian* is also possible (compare MAZE v.).

A group of North Germanic words have sometimes been regarded as perhaps cognate with this word: Norwegian mæs exhausting labour, nagging, (in archaic or regional use also whim, fancy, idle chatter), Danish mæs trouble, bother, Swedish massa (archaic) slaggard, also Norwegian mæs to bustle, fuss about, strive, slave away, reiterate, pester, beg, (reflexive) to wear oneself out, massa (regional or archaic) to start to dream, massa worn out, Danish massa 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.]

| c1300 Julia de Icart 14 in F. J. Furnival Early Eng. Poems & Lives Saints (1862) 107 2e...hit is þe mase, and also hit wole gon. | c1325 the (Cron. Robert of Gloucester (Calig. A. 11) (1887) 6585 Wife...alle men. 28 it nis bote þe mase (i.e. mass) eni kinges poer. | c1390 (1376) LANGLAND Piers Plowman (Vernon) A. iii. 155 Heo lede, þe lawe as hire luste and loue-dyves maken. 2e Mase for a Mene mon, þa he mote euere. | c1400 (1378) LANGLAND Piers Plowman (Laud) (1869) B. Pol. 196 Better is a litel losse þæ ong sorne, þe mase amonge vs alle. |

| c1300 CHARTER Nun’s Priest’s Tale 4285 Men dreme alday of owles and of apes And of many a maze. | c1425 (c1385) CHARTER Troits & Créi get (1878) V. 468 All this nas but a maze. | c1425 LYDGATE Troyges Bk. (Augustus A. 4) V. 2559 Al was doen for an ydel maze. | c1500 King & Hermit in M. M. Farrow Ten 15th-cen. Comic Poems (1985) 264 Hoppys pou i wold for a mase Stond in þe myre þere? |

| c1425 LYDGATE Troyges Bk. (Augustus A. 4) I. 1338 To gape & to loke, as it wer on a mase. | c1555 G. JOYE Apol. Tindale (Arb.) 48 Oresle leue the reder as yt were in hiss Maze. | c1577 R. HOLINSHED Chron. II. 1775/2 The maze was such, that besides his sonne maister Arthure Gray...not a mame else did follow him. | c1595 BLANCHARDINE & Eylantine ii. sig. K2, The faire Beautrix...stood in a maze. |

| c1631 T. HEYWOOD Faie Maid of West: 2nd Pt. iii. sig. F2, Six, to the maze Of all the rest, were slain. | c1653 CLORIA & Narcissus 274 Admission stands at a maze. | c1666 J. BUNYAN Grace Abounding (1900) 92/302 At this I was put to an exceeding Maze. | c1702 W. SENTRY Hist. Quakers (rev. ed.) iv. 147 That he came to a perfect Recovery from his having been in a Maze seems to appear plainly. |

| c1727 W. TENNANT Papistry Storm’d 136 (He) up the street Rade on...in mickle maze I was fen. For fient as face was to be seen. | c1852 R. WEBSTER Orig. Sc. Rhymes 29 In midsit o’ my mazes reflection unkind Shew’d the form of a faithless young fair in my mind. | c1889 A. L. SALMON West-Country Ballads & Verses 60 My mind is kind of in a maze. | c1913 D. H. LAWRENCE Sons & Lovers xii. 332 In a mase, he wandered out for a drink. |

| c1933 L. MANN Human Drift xiiii. 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. POLAN & D. O MURRITHE Dial. Forth & Bargy 27 Maze, amazement. |

| c1813 SCOTT Bridal of Triermarn Conc. 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 maze. | (a) (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.
maze-learning

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, with allusion to sense 5.

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 turn to mill; cf. miller’s round n. at MILLER n. Compounds 2.

1598 Br. J. Hall. Virg.Virgil.iavum iv. ii. 25 Some of thy Stallion-race, Their eyes boar'd out, masking the Miller-maze. 1610 H. CROKER Expos. Yst. Prev. Prol. sig. Aiiij. The scripture...is become a maze unto them, in which they wander as in a myst. 1578 H. GRENW. Lamentation sig. C.viii. Leading them in an endless Maze of dyrtie traditions and foolish ceremonies. 1578 J. C. Relation 2nd Voy. Guiana sig. G.4, In the discoverie of Guiana, you may read both of Orendiano...and of Bereroe, with others that have trode this maze, and lost them selues in seeking to find this country. 1605 BACON Of Advancement. Learning ii. sig. Mmi. M, the trauaile therein taken, seemeth to have ben rather in a Maze, then in a way. 1615 H. CROKER Mkm.ii,120. The Labyrinthian Mazes and web of the small arteries. 1646 SIR T. BROWN Pseudodoxia Epidemica t. x. 42 To lose us in this maze of error. 1781 G. CRAWF. Lib. & Hist. 9 Whether 'tis yours to lead the willing mind Through history's mazes, and the turnings find. 1837 B. DESAILLY 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 vii. 74 A tangled maze of bracken and briar. 1916 E. MURR. Voyage 9 The endless trap lay everywhere, and all the roads ran in a maze. 1952 P. BOWLES Let it come Down x. 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.

46. Prob.: a complex, plaisted hairstyle. Obs. rare.

1657 E. LION. True Hist. Barbados 16 Their haiire not shorne...close to their heads; nor in quarters, and mazes, and masses.

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, gobbler 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 J. R. Hist. Cornwall Soc. 31 530 (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 J. BROWN Lett. to Gentlemens & 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. attrb. Psychol. With reference to the use of mazes in the study of intelligence, as maze test, etc.; also maze-running, maze-learning adj.

1921 Lancet 19 Mar. 507/2 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. J. Psychol. Jan. 191 Many maze workers have noted the fact of variability in performance from day to day. 1938 Spectator 8 Aug. 201/1 The obsessionl 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. COPELEY Fig for Fortune 62 Amid these trees, these fruites, these flowerie sweetes Ran in a *Maze-like wile a chrystall streame.*


1868 E. AETHERSTONE *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 sibyline 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.