

Slay Some Earthly Demons XVIII: Remove undefined behavior if there are nonmatching single or double quotes.

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Changes: Remove undefined behavior if there are nonmatching single or double quotes.

Undefined Behavior: An unmatched ‘ or “ character is encountered on a logical source line during tokenization (J.2 (26), N3301). The editor should remove this from the Annex J.2 table.

Analysis: The existing sentence in section 6.4 “If a ‘ or a “ character matches the last category, the behavior is undefined” offers no guidance to implementors and can lead to inconsistent implementations. Unmatched quotes might slip through in some toolchains (e.g. pre-ANSI or legacy toolchains), or emit confusing error messages in others.

Recommendation: A clear rule should be added to the standard that requires every quote to form a valid character-constant or string-literal. This will formally align the C standard with virtually every compiler in widespread use. See the appendix for examples.

Suggested Rewording:

...

6.4 Lexical elements

Syntax

token:

keyword

identifier

constant

string-literal

punctuator

preprocessing-token:

header-name

identifier

pp-number

character-constant

string-literal

punctuator

each universal character name that cannot be one of the above

each non-white-space character that cannot be one of the above

Constraints

Each preprocessing token that is converted to a token shall have the lexical form of a keyword, an identifier, a constant, a string literal, or a punctuator. A single universal character name shall match one of the other preprocessing token categories. Each occurrence of the ‘ or “ character shall begin and end with a valid character-constant or string-literal, respectively, as defined in 6.4.4 and 6.4.5.

Semantics

A token is the minimal lexical element of the language in translation phases 7 and 8 (5.1.1.2). The categories of tokens are: keywords, identifiers, constants, string literals, and punctuators. A preprocessing token is the minimal lexical element of the language in translation phases 3 through 6. The categories of preprocessing tokens are: header names, identifiers, preprocessing numbers, character constants, string literals, punctuators, and both single universal character names as well as single non-white-space characters that do not lexically match the other preprocessing token categories.) ~~If a ' or a " character matches the last category, the behavior is undefined.~~ Preprocessing tokens can be separated by white space; this consists of comments (described later), or white-space characters (space, horizontal tab, new-line, vertical tab, and form-feed), or both. As described in 6.10, in certain circumstances during translation phase 4, white space (or the absence thereof) serves as more than preprocessing token separation. White space may appear within a preprocessing token only as part of a header name or between the quotation characters in a character constant or string literal.

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Acknowledgments: I thank the UB Study group for their helpful comments.

Appendix:

Consider the program below:

```
/* example.c */

#include <stdio.h>

int main(void) {
    char c = 'A;          /* unmatched single-quote */
    char *s = "Hello, world; /* unmatched double-quote */
    (void)c;
    (void)s;
    return 0;
}
```

Compiling on [gcc 6.1](#) we observe the following output:

```
<source>: In function 'main':
<source>:5:14: error: missing terminating ' character
    char c = 'A;          /* unmatched single-quote */
              ^
<source>:5:14: error: missing terminating ' character
    char c = 'A;          /* unmatched single-quote */
              ^~~~~~
<source>:6:5: error: expected expression before 'char'
    char *s = "Hello, world; /* unmatched double-quote */
    ^~~~
<source>:6:15: error: missing terminating " character
    char *s = "Hello, world; /* unmatched double-quote */
              ^
```

```

      ^
<source>:6:15: error: missing terminating " character
    char *s = "Hello, world; /* unmatched double-quote */
              ^~~~~~
<source>:8:11: error: 's' undeclared (first use in this function)
    (void)s;
      ^
<source>:8:11: note: each undeclared identifier is reported only once for
each function it appears in
Compiler returned: 1

```

Compiling on [clang 3.5](#) we observe the following output:

```

<source>:5:14: error: missing terminating ' character [-Werror,-Winvalid-pp-
token]
    char c = 'A;          /* unmatched single-quote */
              ^
<source>:5:14: error: expected expression
<source>:6:15: error: missing terminating '"' character [-Werror,-Winvalid-
pp-token]
    char *s = "Hello, world; /* unmatched double-quote */
              ^
<source>:8:11: error: use of undeclared identifier 's'
    (void)s;
      ^
4 errors generated.
Compiler returned: 1

```

Compiling on [TI C6x gcc 12.4.0](#) we observe the following output:

```

<source>: In function 'main':
<source>:5:14: error: missing terminating ' character
   5 |     char c = 'A;          /* unmatched single-quote */
     |               ^
<source>:5:14: error: missing terminating ' character
   5 |     char c = 'A;          /* unmatched single-quote */
     |               ^~~~~~
<source>:6:5: error: expected expression before 'char'
   6 |     char *s = "Hello, world; /* unmatched double-quote */
     |           ^~~~
<source>:6:15: error: missing terminating " character
   6 |     char *s = "Hello, world; /* unmatched double-quote */
     |               ^
<source>:6:15: error: missing terminating " character
   6 |     char *s = "Hello, world; /* unmatched double-quote */
     |               ^~~~~~
<source>:8:11: error: 's' undeclared (first use in this function)
   8 |     (void)s;
     |           ^

```

<source>:8:11: note: each undeclared identifier is reported only once for each function it appears in
Compiler returned: 1

Compiling on [icc 16.0.3](#) we observe the following output:

```
<source>(5): error: missing closing quote
    char c = 'A;          /* unmatched single-quote */
               ^
```

```
<source>(6): error: expected a ";"
    char *s = "Hello, world; /* unmatched double-quote */
               ^
```

```
<source>(6): error: missing closing quote
    char *s = "Hello, world; /* unmatched double-quote */
               ^
```

```
<source>(8): error: identifier "s" is undefined
    (void)s;
       ^
```

compilation aborted for <source> (code 2)
Compiler returned: 2

Compiling on [msvc 16.1](#) we observe the following output:
example.c

```
<source>(5): error C2001: newline in constant
<source>(5): error C2015: too many characters in constant
<source>(6): error C2143: syntax error: missing ';' before 'type'
<source>(6): error C2001: newline in constant
<source>(7): error C2064: term does not evaluate to a function taking 259
arguments
<source>(7): error C2143: syntax error: missing ')' before 'type'
<source>(7): error C2059: syntax error: ')'
Compiler returned: 2
```