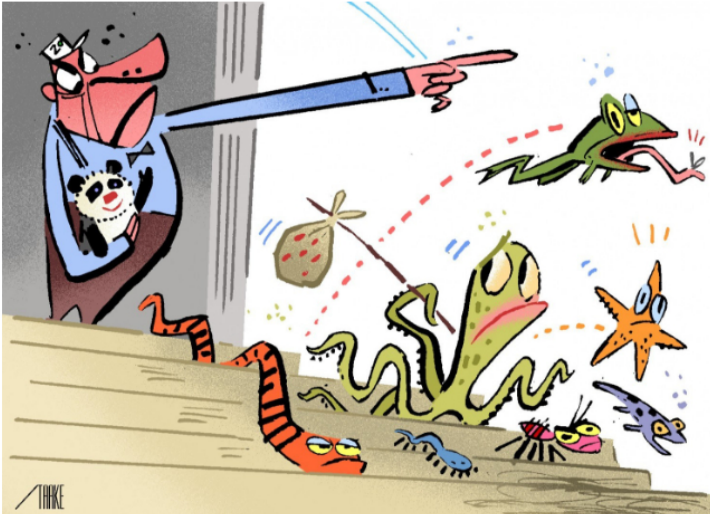




Entertainment

# Style Invitational Week 1080: The dactyls and the terror



The eviction of invertebrates from the National Zoo: the subject of Gene Weingarten's tragically bad poem, the example for Week 1080. (Bob Staake for The Washington Post)

By **Pat Myers**, Style Invitational editor  
July 10, 2014

(Click [here to skip down](#) to the results of our double-dactyl contest from Week 1076.)

## New contest for Week 1080: McGonagall with the wind

*To the Zoo, on a Cowardly, Profit-Driven Decision*

**Alas, the zoo is closing the exhibit of invertebrates  
(Little animals that live on plankton and frankfurter bits).**

**Now where can we go to see coral and octopuses?**

**Fie on thee, zookeepers. You are spineless wusses.** — Gene Weingarten, inspired by the “poetry” of W.T. McGonagall






The Empress was recently alerted to the oeuvre — emphasis on the *oeuuuu* — of William Topaz McGonagall, a 19th-century Scotsman whose mawkish, clumsy odes on various tragic subjects prompted audiences to throw rotten fish at him, and today earns him such superlatives as “writer of the worst poetry in the English language,” in the words of a Web site devoted to his life and, uh, creations (see [bit.ly/mcgonagall](http://bit.ly/mcgonagall)). Such as this stanza from “The Execution of James Graham, Marquis of Montrose”:

*After partaking of a hearty breakfast, he commenced his toilet,  
Which, in his greatest trouble, he seldom did forget.  
And while in the act of combing his hair,  
He was visited by the Clerk Register, who made him stare.*

Not surprisingly, such wordcraft inspired Washington Post Doggerel Laureate Gene Weingarten to pen the tragic ode above, on the occasion of



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...and the same frustration to put the single one above, on the occasion of the closing of the National Zoo's Invertebrate House. And inspired us to ask you to out-McGonagall McGonagall: **This week: Memorialize a modern "tragedy" in a poem burdened with hilariously overwrought verse; lame, forced rhymes; and painfully uneven meter.** While the work of the real McG typically drones on for a dozen verses, we think you can get the badness across in **one verse of no more than eight lines.**

Winner gets the [Inkin' Memorial](#), the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives, in keeping with the quality of the verse that will earn it, a miniature key fob of an [itty-bitty rubber gorilla](#): You squeeze it and a little brown bubble of "poop" emerges from the mini-butt; let it relax and the poop-bubble returns inside the ape. A National Zoo souvenir donated by Loser Andrea Kelly.



The world's easiest-to-clean-up gorilla poop — just unsqueeze and it goes back inside the gorilla. This little key fob is second prize in Week 1080 of the Invitational. (Pat Myers)

**Other runners-up** win their choice of a yearned-for [Loser Mug](#) or the ardently desired "Whole Fools" [Grossery Bag](#). Honorable mentions get a lusted-after Loser magnet, either the [Po' Wit Laureate](#) or [Puns of Steel](#). First Offenders receive a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" ([FirStink](#) for their first ink). E-mail entries to [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or, if you were born in the 19th century, fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, July 21; results published Aug. 10 (online Aug. 7). No more than 25 entries per entrant per contest. Include "Week 1080." in your e-mail subject line or it

might be ignored as spam. Include your real name, postal address and phone number with your entry. See contest rules and guidelines at [wapo.st/InvRules](http://wapo.st/InvRules). This week's honorable-mentions subhead is by Danielle Nowlin; the alternative headline for the "next week's contest" line is by Jeff Contompasis; "Six-Hooters" is by Nan Reiner. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at [on.fb.me/invdev](https://on.fb.me/invdev), and click "like" on Style Invitational Ink of the Day at [bit.ly/inkofday](http://bit.ly/inkofday).

^ **The Style Conversational** The Empress's weekly online column discusses each new contest and set of results. Especially if you plan to enter, check it out at [wapo.st/styleconv](http://wapo.st/styleconv).

[And from The Style Invitational four weeks ago . . .](#)

## SIX-HOOTERS: WEEK 1076's WINNING DOUBLE DACTYLS

The double dactyl, a verse form invented just a few decades ago, has [all sorts of rules](#): It has to be eight short lines; one of the lines has to be a six-syllable word; one has to include someone's name; and most important, it has to be in dactylic (DUM-da-da) meter. As in today's inking entries, the best of a stampede of a thousand or so galloping submissions.

### The winner of the Inkin' Memorial:

Higgledy piggedly,  
**Ken Cuccinelli**, the  
Gubernatorial  
Aspirant found

Preoccupation with  
Transvaginalia  
Wasn't, as strategies  
Go, ultra sound. (Jeremy Horowitz, Washington, a First Offender)

### 2nd place

and the "*Manneken Pis*" snow dome from Brussels:

Abraca dabraca,  
Poor **Lois Lerner** has  
Lost all her e-mails — oh,  
Where could they be?

Why does the IRS  
Incomprehensibly  
Never lose track of what's  
Owed them from me? (Beverly Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

### 3rd place

Higgledy piggedly,  
**Philippa Middleton**  
("Pippa," Kate's sister): it's  
Clear to deduce

How you upstaged royal  
Connubiality:  
She had the train, but you  
Had the caboose.  
(Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.)

### 4th place

Hairily scarily  
**Donald the Trump** thinks we  
Don't get enough of a  
View of his fame.

On all his buildings is  
Egocentricity.  
Vandals should tear down the  
"T" from his name.  
(Rick Haynes, Boynton Beach, Fla.)

### LOSERY BLUESERY: HONORABLE MENTIONS

Honkaway Broncoway  
**Orenthal Simpson**, who  
Bungled a burglary,  
Wound up in jail.

There, from inside of his  
Impenitentiary,  
Sits right on top of the  
Real killer's tail.  
(Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)

*Upcoming Anniversaries*  
Crashity splashity,  
**Edward M. Kennedy**

Drove off a bridge span in  
Mid-'69.

(Armstrong and Aldrin were  
Coincidentally  
Manning the Eagle and  
Landed just fine).  
(Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.)

Dandily, scandally  
**Lerner's** computer is  
Suddenly missing some  
E-mails, Boo-hoo!

Ryan has dared to say  
"Impossibility!"  
Next year will Ryan get  
Audited, too? (Claire Keeler, Manassas, Va., a First Offender)

Votery dotery  
**Eric I. Cantor** was  
Beaten by Tea Party  
Favorite Brat,

Proving that primaries  
Representational  
Often exclude from the  
Ring the wrong hat.  
(Sam Gwynn, Beaumont, Tex., a First Offender)

Fiddledy, Diddledy,  
**Cantor** said smugly, "Oh,  
he's just a nothing. I'll  
Trounce him — no fears."

Then oh so startlingly,  
incomprehensibly,  
Folks on his home grounds had  
Other idears. (Bill Willcox, Washington, whose only other previous Invite  
ink was a poem in Week 393, 2001)

Paleo, naileo  
**Ogg the Neanderthal**  
Mated with humans, our  
DNA states.

Given the evident  
Heterospecieity,  
Stone Agers must have been  
Hard up for dates.  
(Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.)

Nearical spherical  
**Buckminster Fuller**, he  
Never had need for a  
Brush or a comb.

Egg-headed wizard who  
Rectangle-phobically  
Touted to all that there's  
No place like dome.  
(Kevin Dobart, Washington)

Hiltony wiltony,  
Shooting the president,  
**John Hinckley Jr.** thought,  
"Jodie will beam!"

Warped and deluded, the  
Heterosexual  
Gunman had missed she was  
Not on his team.  
(Christopher Lamora, Los Angeles)

Ruefully; truefully?  
**Eleanor Roosevelt,**  
Asked by her spouse, when their  
Coupling turned sham,

To be discreet in her  
"Extracurriculars":  
"Franklin, my dear, I just  
Don't give a damn."  
(Nan Reiner, Alexandria, Va.)

Jerkily, twerkily,  
Hannah Montana, her  
Old alter ego, must  
Be all aghast:

**Miley**, who's older now,  
Nymphomaniacally  
Gyrates and strips off this  
Part of her past.  
(David Franks, Greenland, Ark.)

Miracle-pyrrical,  
**Jesus of Nazareth**  
Feeding five thousand: two  
Fish and some bread.

"Such a proceeding is  
Uneconomical."  
Bakers and fishermen  
Hastily said.  
(Hugh Thirlway, The Hague)

Slimmery-flimmery,  
**Mehmet C. Oz, MD,**  
Flogs coffee extract as  
Fat-burning fuel,

Senators recommend,  
Hyper-emphatically,  
That he be labeled a  
Great Weight Loss Tool.  
(Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

Hoitily-toitily,  
**Benedict Cumberbatch**  
(Cherished by fans as an  
Arrogant sleuth)

Mines the attractions of

Sociopathically  
Keeping his coolness while  
Ditching his couth.  
(Susan McLean, Iowa City, Iowa, a First Offender)

Jumpity bumpity,  
**George Herbert Walker Bush**  
Strapped on a parachute,  
Took a big leap;

Nobody told him most  
Nonagenarians  
Celebrate 90 by  
Falling asleep. (Beverley Sharp)

Iggity wiggity,  
**Pallas Athena**, the  
Goddess of wisdom, and  
Also the arts,

Shows up in sculpture with  
Impeccability.  
(Not so with Venus, who's  
Missing some parts.) (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

Rahmical cahmical  
**Mayor Emanuel**,  
Running Chicago, does  
Not like disputes.

Talks to his enemies  
Dactylogically,  
Flashing his famous four-  
Finger salutes. (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

Hippity hoppity,  
**Nouri al-Maliki**  
Heads up a country that's  
Ready to crack.

Islamists carving up  
Mesopotamia.  
Nouri is stuck in a  
Hard place, Iraq. (Beryl Benderly, Washington)

Haqeri 'Raqeri  
**Nouri al-Maliki**  
Baghdadi chieftain who  
Said, "I'm the man."

Lost in a battle that's  
Hyper-sectarian,  
We'll ask, "Where is he?" and  
He'll say: "I-ran." (Mark Raffman)

Monstery bonstery  
**Bolaji Badejo**,  
Creature in "Alien,"  
Scared us a lot;

Who'd want to mess with that  
Extraterrestrial?

Which thought should Ripley's be?  
Leave it, or not? (Brendan Beary)

Higgelton piggelton  
Pastor **Jim Jones** was an  
Egomaniacal,  
Sick puppeteer.

Mass suicide, though, is  
No laughing matter. So  
Don't get your hopes up — there's  
No punch line here.  
(Niels Hoven, San Francisco)

Humpery bumpery  
**Kim West/Kardashian**  
First got attention for  
Exploits in bed

Still her big ass brings her  
Marketability  
(No, not her tuchus! The  
one that she wed). (Danielle Nowlin, Woodbridge, Va.)

Fly-mama, my-mama,  
**Your Mama's** uglier  
Than a baboon or a  
Dirty dead rat,

Plus she resembles an  
Even-toed ungulate  
(Artiodactyla).  
Also, she's fat. (Robert Schechter, Dix Hills, N.Y.)

Higgledy piggedly,  
**Andriy Deshchytsia,**  
Pol from Ukraine, isn't  
One to stand mute;

[Calls Putin "d---head,"](#) and  
Undiplomatically,  
We laugh along and say,  
"Odessa hoot." (Brendan Beary)

**And Last:**  
Pattily-scattily,  
**Empress** of Washington  
(Like Queen Victoria)  
Wasn't amused.

Spurning my humor, she  
Unjustifiably  
Binned all my entries — why  
Wasn't I choosed?  
(Brian Allgar, Paris)

**Still running — deadline Monday night: Our contest for questions that have rhyming answers. See [bit.ly/invitewk1079](http://bit.ly/invitewk1079).**

Next week's results: **Time Marches Swiftly**, or **Adverbial Abuse**, our contest for "Tom Swifty" jokes. See [bit.ly/invite1077](http://bit.ly/invite1077).



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### Pat Myers

Pat Myers is editor and judge of The Style Invitational, The Washington Post's page for clever, edgy humor and wordplay. In the role since December 2003, she has posted and judged more than 700 contests. She also writes the weekly Style Conversational column and runs the Style Invitational Devotees page on Facebook. [Follow](#)

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