# DIVERSIONS

### THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

# Ode dear! The bad poetry from Week 1080

#### **BY PAT MYERS**

Week 1080 was a tribute to the 19th-century Irishman William Topaz McGonagall, thought by many, even in his own time, to be the worst poet in the English language. McGonagall specialized in wildly overwrought musings on some tragedy or other, almost always in shaky meter, strained rhyme and just plain bad writing. So we asked for bad poems about "a modern tragedy" à la McGonagall - and wouldn't you know it, a bunch of them were just too good: They were on silly subjects, true, but they were clever and polished with good rhymes and meter, like these last lines of Nan Reiner's lament for a clogged toilet:

I seek the flush, the filling rush, blue waters sanitizing: Instead I see late parts of me, inexorably rising. I turn my head and flee in dread: I know, too well, what's coming. I'd barter now three years of Law for just one course in Plumbing.

## The winner of the Inkin' Memorial

**On Not Being Invited to Kim and** Kanye's Wedding

I knew it was coming, keeping up's been my passion That special invite from the family Kardashian. When it didn't arrive, as yet another week started, My heart, it was rent, and my soul near departed. So I went to my sister's third wedding in Torrance Instead of that very special one in the city of Florence. And the memory of my sister's party, OMG, how it pales, With the one where my heart was, in the Chateau de Versailles. (Thomas Blain, Burke, a First Offender)

2nd place and the squeeze-a-poop gorilla key chain from the **National Zoo:** The Hello Kitty Disposable **Travel Mug Mishap** Baseball fans have an improbable Liking for souvenir heads that are bobbable.

Recently, Dodgers fans were



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BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

# New contest for Week 1084: Limerixicon XI: Fi-, fo-, go!

Little Junior's a finicky kid, So we keep foods' identities hid With deception and games And exotic-type names -"Calamari" sounds better than "squid." (Brendan Beary, Week 678, 2006)

This week's winning and Losing entries, the results of Week 1080, are masterpieces of Bad Poetry, not only rife with dumb or inappropriately stated subject matter, but often also comically failing to rhyme correctly or stay even close to meter.

The Empress hopes you've had quite enough of that looseness, this cavalier disregard for structure. Because it's time for you cavaliers to saddle up and commence a crisp canter: It's our 11th Limerixicon, our annual tip of the cursor to Oedilf.com, the Omnificent English Dictionary in Limerick Form, as founder Chris Strolin and his band of volunteer writers and editors continue their quest to create one or more limericks featuring every word in the English language, one sliver of the alphabet at a time.

Last August, the 'Dilfers had passed the 80,000 mark as they worked on words beginning fa-; now more than 87,000 have been approved (predicted finish date: Dec. 12, 2043). Let's give them some more material: Supply a humorous, previously unpublished limerick significantly featuring any English word, name or term beginning with "fi-" through "fo-," as in the example above by Brendan Beary, which he submitted as part of a very cool two-man "Limerick Smackdown" with fellow Hall of Fame Loser Chris Doyle. See wapo.st/InviteLim for our fairly strict rules on limerick rhyme and meter (in a nutshell: "perfect" rhyme, and a strong "hickory-dickory-dock" rhythm in Lines 1, 2 and 5; a "dickorydock" in Lines 3 and 4; plus "weak" syllables on either side). See oedilf.com about submitting limericks there after this contest is over.

Winner gets the Inkin' Memorial, the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a talking Pee-wee Herman doll ("What's up? Made you look"; "I know you are, but what am I"), which was awarded to Elden Carnahan for his win of Week 82 in 1994 and regifted to us this year perhaps having been play with long ago by his now-married daughters. It's a little worn - so give it a rest, eBay vultures - and you have to control the string on Pee-wee's back to get discernible words. But what's more important is that his arms move just fine.

## POST PUZZLER

# No. 227

BY DOUG PETERSON EDITED BY PETER GORDON • FIREBALLCROSSWORDS.COM

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#### HOROSCOPE

#### BY JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY | AUG. 10: You are unusually lucky this year, as it is the first year of a new fortune cycle. If you are single, don't stay away from all the people gathering around you; instead, socialize, and you will meet someone of interest. If you are attached, you often disagree with your sweetie. You have the same issues, just different solutions. Try walking in your significant other's shoes.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) The full moon may test your diplomatic skills. You don't need everyone to agree with you, but you might like some semblance of peace. Zero in on your priorities and desires.

about what you think and what you want. You'll also need to be sure of this person's terms

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) It might feel as if you have some additional weight on your shoulders from someone who is challenging you. If you want to stay in and take the day for yourself, do. In fact, it might be an excellent idea.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) Speak your mind, and share more of what you are thinking. You might not understand where someone

booing,

Though the team avoided losing. What turned them into such grouches Was being given vouchers Exchangeable for one Hello Kitty Disposable mug, which is pretty disappointing. (Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

#### **3rd place** Whenst Eldrick?

Thy dimpled orb did once flyeth true Nestling on yon dewy, verdant acreage Yet now, pesky holes, they do your ball eschew As errant putts yield to steamyeared rage. Could it be o'er now, toothless Tiger W.? For a barn's broad side fears not your barrage. (Jeff Shirley, Richmond)

## 4th place

**Tragedy in Brazil** A terrible thing has happened in Rio de Janeiro That attracted a lot more attention than the proverbial fall of a sparrow. And that is, the World Cup was not won by Brazil, Which, in that vast extremely large country, didn't sit well. The U.S. of America didn't win it either. Which upset most of us who live here, including our leader. Instead, the coveted Cup was won by Germany. Criminv! (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

# No scan do: honorable mentions

**Train Delay** Here we sit on the motionless Metros,

Trying to get to see the Nats-O's. Oh, great – the lights just went off, In the dark someone went cough. To add to my wrath/gloom, Now I have to go to the bathroom. If by Metro we are kept delayin', They'll call the game on account of the train. (Jonathan Greene, Ellicott City, Md., a First Offender)

#### **NPR Cancels My Favorite Show**

My soul is in a position of prostration I remain heartbroken over the cancellation of "Talk of the Nation" TOTN was an acronym that I

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 or, if you were born in the 19th century, fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Aug. 18; results published Sept. 7 (online Sept. 4). No more than 25 entries per entrant per contest. Include "Week 1084" 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. This week's honorable-mentions subhead is by Chris Doyle. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev, and click "like" on Style Invitational Ink of the Day at bit.ly/inkofday.

**•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/stylecony.

adored But now from the lovely theme music I am, and we all are, unmoored The callers would phone in In hopes of speaking with Neal Conan The super info and topics; on Wednesdays was "Political Junkie" Now this universe (from the radio) will get no smarter; we are a mass of dial-spinning flunky. (Sandy

#### Moran, Santa Rosa, Calif.) **The Fall of Eric Cantor**

Of all sad tales of song or pen, I think the saddest happened on June 10, 2014, when I could no longer bring home the bacon.l Because I lost my primary to some guy who teaches at Randolph-Macon. No more am I House majority leader! Now I just hang around and refill the bird feeder, Even though no one was better at blasting Obama over some petty spat! How could the voters of my district

have wanted a bigger Brat? (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.) Ode to Odes

Fair poesy, alas, you're now archaic: You're way down there on the charts with Aramaic. Once anapests and iambs were ubiquitous But now poets write any ol' way, and it's ridiculous!

Their "rhymes" could make you cry (like chopping onions); Their metric feet are suffering from bunions. I wish I'd been around in days of Milton,

'Cause poets these days sound more like Paris Hilton. (Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.; this was almost disqualified for the excellent "bunions" line)

#### Not Quite 'Modern,' but . . . The Titanic hit an iceberg, and lots

of people died. People drowned, and those who didn't cried. It was cold in the water, which isn't very funny. And then there's that Céline Dion song that Kept going on and on like the Energizer Bunny. (Christopher Lamora, Los Angeles)

#### Team Loser's Tragic Loss in the **Washington Post Hunt**

A picture of Massachusetts was all that was needed To send the winning text and have victory to us ceded. What a day it would have been to have some winning Losers But those who write for fun, you see, are not the quickest movers. (Jennifer Dickey, Silver Spring)

More honorable mentions in the online Invite at bit.ly/invite1084

Still running – deadline Monday night: Our contest for humorous phone apps. See bit.ly/invite1083.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) You are unusually tense and might decide to blow off some steam with a hard game of racquetball or by swimming some laps. You may have a disagreement with a respected relative or friend.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) Your energy will be in sync with a dear friend. You might decide to take off together and explore a fair or flea market. In fact, taking a drive out of your immediate environment can make all the difference

CANCER (June 21-July 22) Make sure that someone you are dealing with financially is clear

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) A loved one might make a request that starts to feel like a demand. Don't make this a big deal; just handle it. Try not to lay all your cards on the table right now.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) You might need some time to manage a work responsibility as you have a hankering to get a project done. Savor the sense of satisfaction you gain once you are finished

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) You might decide to practice some of your flirtation skills on a loved one or a person of interest. Friends will surround you and let you know that they have your back if you decide to take a risk.

else is coming from. Work on being more empathetic.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) You might want to approach a money matter differently. You are unlikely to see eye to eye with someone at the moment. Tonight, treat a friend to dinner.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) You have a tendency to attract a lot of suggestions, though you don't always make use of them. Today will be different. Tonight, accept a much-coveted invitation.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) Take some personal time and create a fulfilling day for yourself. You tend to feel obligated to go along with others' plans. Use this day to indulge yourself. What a nice change!

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# Being courteous at the office

Dear Readers: Your questions and dilemmas never

cover their mouths for the sake of the rest of us? Mr. Sniffles

## Disease-spreading aside, I find the worst part of this problem is

the fact that you don't seem to think your colleague is adult enough to be able to handle a simple request from you. Even if he isn't adult enough, you need to proceed as if he is. Short of installing a sneeze guard over your cubby or wearing a surgical mask, what if you spoke to or e-mailed your officemate: "I can tell you're so sick, but now I'm afraid I'm getting it. Could you do me a favor and make sure to cover your mouth whenever you sneeze or cough?"

This news might be best delivered along with a box of tissues. (February 2004)

**Dear Amy: I recently had** *a* business meeting with a noticeably overweight person. He was going to pull a file from a different office and get back with me. I then said this: "Sounds great, just get back to me after you waddle up to ...." I was not sure if I was using "waddle" in an offhand way or whether it was an unconscious reference to how he walked.

I felt terrible, so I followed a friend's advice and sent him a brief card apologizing for my comments and that I had not meant to draw attention to his weight.

Another friend said I should not have sent the card, as it just drew attention to a slip-up that was best forgotten and would not have changed the incident or  $the \, embarrassment \, it \, caused.$  So who is correct?

Flummoxed

I don't know if there is any "correct" way to gracefully pull your foot out of your mouth, but I know what most people do they do nothing and then just avoid the victim for the next 40 years or so. So good for you for trying to clean this up.

But now I'm worried that you're tempted to apologize for your apology. Please don't. You've done enough. (September 2003)

Amy's column appears seven days a week at www.washingtonpost.com/ advice. Write to Amy Dickinson at askamy@tribune.com or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, III. 60611.

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Ask Amy AMY DICKINSON

take a holiday, but occasionally I must. This year I'm spending a week pursuing a rigorous summertime schedule of minigolf, water slides and go-kart racing. This week's "best of"

columns come from deep within the Ask Amy vault. Like a softserve twisty cone, they are sometimes even more enjoyable as a second helping.

Dear Amy: I have been trying to shake a cold for weeks. I have co-workers who have been fighting the same thing I've been fighting. I'm sure we're simply giving it back and forth to each other.

But what do you do when a coworker is constantly coughing in your face without covering his/her mouth? Our desks face each other, and we are face to face for hours each day.

I find it impolite, but there's truly no way to say something without sounding like a jerk. I realize that sometimes

you still have to come into the

can't people who are coughing

office when you're sick. But