

The Style Invitational

Week 529: United We Stanza



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**We the voters have the right
To be happy, safe and free.
(Though if you aren't male and white
You just ain't part of "we.")**

This Week's Contest: Above, the Declaration of Independence is summarized in four rhyming lines of verse. You need to do the same for any famous document, theory, principle or speech. Four lines only, at least one rhyme. First-prize winner gets six sheets of writing paper and matching envelopes lovingly crafted from elephant dung. This was donated to The Style Invitational by Robin Diallo of Malawi.

First Runner-Up wins the tacky but estimable Style Invitational Loser pen. Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get the mildly sought-after Style Invitational bumper sticker. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312 or by e-mail to losers@washpost.com. U.S. mail entries are no longer accepted. Deadline is Monday, Nov. 3. All entries must include the week number of the contest and your name, postal address and telephone number. E-mail entries

must include the week number in the subject field. Contests will be judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published in four weeks. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's contest is by Brendan Beary of Great Mills, Md.

Report from Week 525, in which you were asked to choose a row of three cartoons and explain which one did not belong with the other two.



◆ Third Runner-Up (Panels 3, 6 and 9): **The man in front of the computer terminal hasn't yet learned the dangers of Internet dating.** (Carla Gianni, Takoma Park)

◆ Second Runner-Up (Panels 3, 6, and 9): **While the computer in 3 and the deceased in 9 were both killed by viruses, in Panel 6 it is a giant talking bacterium that is taunting the woman for overeating.** (Debbie Schaefer, Arlington)

◆ First Runner-Up (Panels 1, 4 and 7): **Panel 7 doesn't belong. Particularly on such a screwed-up day—what with the burned breakfast and bad economic news on TV—Carol's flight would surely have been grounded at the approach of flying saucers.** (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

◆ And the winner of the board game based on a new brand of deodorant: (Panels 1, 2 and 3): **This is a trick question. Panel 1 is out because the others involve jobs (bank and Steve). Panel 2 is out because it doesn't involve pop-ups. And Panel 3 is out because it doesn't have anything to do with hot bread.** (Russell Beland, Springfield)

◆ Honorable mentions:

Panels 1, 2 and 3: **While 2 (the robber) and 3 (the Internet identity-theft felon) are both dangerous, clearly 1 doesn't belong, because a faulty toaster that is about to burn down an entire high-rise and kill hundreds of people is much more dangerous than the others.** (Kenneth Gallant, Esq., Little Rock)

Panel 1 doesn't belong, because you can frog-march a thief or a computer hacker, but you can't frog-march a toaster. (Former ambassador Joseph C. Wilson IV, Washington)

(Roy Ashley, Washington)
In 3, a man is looking at microfiche, and in 2 a man commits a deed that is foul, but 1 is neither fiche nor foul. (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

Panels 1, 4 and 7: **All three of these illustrate paradoxes. The woman in 4 is watching cable news on a TV with an antenna. The plane in 7 goes straight despite having only a right-sided engine. It is 1, however, that doesn't belong, because it has TWO paradoxes: Not only has the toaster worked even though it is unplugged, but also the toast has popped even though the lever is still in the down position.** (Steve Fahey, Kensington)

Panels 1, 5 and 9: **The gravedigger doesn't fit. Because a toaster that works while unplugged, and a number, cinq, that "sank" to the bottom of the frame—these are but the absurdities that make bearable a world devoid of meaning, n'est-ce pas? But Death, she comes to us all, inevitable as the fact that everyone in this picture will turn into a rhinoceros.** (Eugene Ionesco, Paris) (Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.)

Panel 5 doesn't belong, because the toaster and the gravedigger are smoking, but the man is sitting in a restaurant in Montgomery County. (Danny Bravman, Potomac)

Panels 2, 5 and 8: **2 is the only panel showing a person who couldn't pop a balloon with his/her nose.** (Jim Reed, Wales, Wis.)

Panels 3, 5 and 7: **Panel 5 doesn't fit. Because while it's got plane ticketing and Web surfing covered, Orbitz hasn't yet figured out how to annoy you when you are reading a book.** (Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.)

Panels 3, 6 and 9: **6 doesn't belong because it does not contain worms.** (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

9 doesn't belong, because it doesn't involve cookies: The guy at the computer is deleting his, while the woman is about to toss hers. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.)

3, because it's not too late to press the escape key. (Milo Sauer, Fairfax)
3 and 6 involve both input and output, but 9 is just about input. (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

Panels 4, 5 and 6: **5 isn't evidence for why Larry King Must be stopped.** (Milo Sauer, Fairfax)

Panels 7, 8 and 9: **7 doesn't belong, because 8 and 9 feature the same person, one in drag.** (Jim Reed, Wales, Wis.)



Richard's Poot Almanac HALLOWEEN SPOOKTACULAR

**3 SHORT
TALES OF
TERROR**
by Richard Thompson

HOUSE OF CREEPING COTTON BALLS
A kindergartner brings home an innocent-seeming class project that comes to life, expanding uncontrollably until the whole house is a heaving mass of cotton balls, glitter & glue!

THE UNCANNY NAP
This lady wakes up from a brief nap to find herself in a parallel universe where cats control all the media! Garfield is twice as ubiquitous & advertising is done with dangly pieces of string!

MALL OF THE DAMNED
A guy goes to the mall to take advantage of a sale on men's pants. But he gets lost & wanders for days! Then he finds a map that says he's in Hell! And all the pants on sale are relaxed fit wide-wale corduroy in "sphagnum green"!

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Bring It On

“What should I get you?”
“What can I bring?”
“Is there anything I can do?”

Such open-ended generosity has the odd effect of creating consternation—but only, Miss Manners has observed, among polite people. Anyone else sees only that relatives, friends and acquaintances are coming forward, of their own free will, to offer presents, contributions and services, so eager to please that they are asking the beneficiaries to dictate the specifics.

Blank checks!
Yet cashing them would require the well-mannered to violate modesty, hospitality and a reluctance to impose upon others. So they murmur bashfully:
“Oh, please don't get me anything—really, I have everything I could possibly want.”
“Just bring yourselves.”
“No, no, we're fine, thanks. I promise I'll call if we need any help.”

Miss Manners notices that people who are unencumbered by those pesky virtues have no such trouble. Instead of shilly-shallying around, they answer the questions at face value:

“What I really need now is not a lot of stuff, but help in paying off some debts.”

“Why don't you make those fancy hors d'oeuvres you had at your party? Or, if you don't have time, you could just bring the liquor. It'll be for somewhere between 30 and 50 people.”

“Well, the house is a mess, and with everything going on, I just haven't been in the mood to clean it.”

It's not that they don't have an urge to be kind to people who are so ready to serve them. It is just that the form this takes is different. People who do not practice social reciprocity (because even these tasks might reasonably be begged of someone for whom one performs comparable ones) argue that they are doing their would-be benefactors a favor by taking them at their word. If those people didn't enjoy giving and serving, they wouldn't have asked. As an added delicacy, this saves the benefactors the onerous task of guessing how best to serve, and the embarrassment of guessing wrong.

If this weren't consideration enough, many would-be beneficiaries are now also saving others the trouble of volunteering by listing demands—whether directly or through Web sites, gift registries and notations on invitations—without waiting to be asked.

This is not good for the etiquette business. It is all very smart to sneer at the notion that it is the thought that counts, brazenly declaring that no, it's the

take that counts. But the whole symbolic basis of exchanging presents, hospitality and favors refers to our longing to be noticed thoughtfully by others.

True, the possibility of error is always there, which is why etiquette allows thoughtfulness to be assisted by sneaky tactics.

If observation fails to suggest what presents might be welcome, it is fair to ask people who are in a better position to observe. So if you don't know what to get your faraway nephew, you ask his parents what his current interests are and whether there is a particular item they might suggest.

Guests are not expected to contribute to other people's dinner parties, so if they want to bring something, it should be flowers, candy or some treat that can be enjoyed by the hosts later.

To offer a service, one should name something specific, such as “There'll be a lot of people calling to ask about the funeral—let me stay and answer the telephone” or “I can take the dog while you're in the hospital” or “I'd like to drop off some meals you can just heat.”

If all of these are rejected, it becomes possible to say, in a tone of fond exasperation, “Well, I want to do something, so you'll have to tell me what.” Only then can the polite beneficiary admit defeat and say, “Well, if you really insist . . .”

Dear Miss Manners:
When on an airplane, where is the proper place to change a baby's diaper? A bathroom, seat area, or ???

Where is “???”?
The cockpit is locked these days, so that is out of the question. Miss Manners will do you the courtesy of assuming that you do not have your eye on the galley from which food is served.

This leaves the seat area, which would disgust everyone for rows around you, and the bathroom, which would then be tied up as others are waiting to use it. The latter is definitely the lesser of the evils. Other passengers may be able to find another bathroom, but they cannot disembark from a cabin that you have turned into one.

Feeling incorrect? E-mail your etiquette questions to Miss Manners (who is distraught that she cannot reply personally) at MissManners@unitedmedia.com or mail to United Media, 200 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016.

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BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

N-S vulnerable

NORTH
♥ J 7 3
♠ J 6 2
♦ A J 10 7 4
♣ Q 6

WEST
♥ K 9 4
♠ Q 9 3
♦ 9 8 3
♣ K 10 7 5

EAST
♥ Q 10 6 5 2
♠ K 10 8 5
♦ 5 2
♣ A 3

SOUTH (D)
♥ A 8
♠ A 7 4
♦ K Q 6
♣ J 9 8 4 2

The bidding:

South West North East
1 NT Pass 3 NT All Pass

Opening lead: ♣ 5

The tournament world is changing. Just as the American Contract Bridge League's three annual North American Championships are open to all, the new European Open Championship, held in Menton on the Riviera in June, attracted players from all over the world. Americans Jeff Meckstroth and Eric Rodwell won the Open Pairs, and a U.S. squad captured the Mixed Teams.

The Mixed Teams produced one of the most remarkable and successful deceptive plays I've ever seen. The declarer was French internationalist Patrick Sussel. He stretched his values to open a “strong” INT, and when North raised trustingly, Sussel found himself at a game contract that was a big underdog.

When West led a club, East took the ace, and Sussel tried to dis-

courage East from shifting to a major suit (which would have beaten 3NT for sure) by following with the four. Sure enough, East assumed West had the missing deuce of clubs and returned the three.

Sussel played . . . the JACK!
Suppose declarer had instead followed with the eight of clubs. West would have surely have placed South with J-9-8-4 and would have shifted to a major suit. As it was, though, West was certain East had started with A-9-8-3-2 and had returned his original fourth-highest club, according to standard defensive methods.

So West took the king of clubs and cashed the 10, expecting to run five clubs. He was mortified when East discarded, and even more so when Sussel claimed his contract with one spade trick, one heart, five diamonds and two clubs.

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Next Week: **Platitude Adjustment**