

Style Invitational

BY PAT MYERS

Report from Week 957

in which we asked you to write sentences or other passages in which each successive word was longer until the middle and then shrank, or vice versa: We also include today the “You know it’s going to be a bad marriage . . .” jokes from Week 956. Both lists are a bit longer in the online Invite at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational.

THE
WINNER
OF THE
INKER

(10 letters to 3; 3 to 10)

Douchiness checklist: **sprytan, Cartier, fedora, Lexus, vest, “bro.”** You make being nearby utterly horrible. — **Larchmont bellyacher** (*Bird Waring, Larchmont, N.Y.*)

2 Winner of the no-pictures Braille copy of Playboy: (4 to 11 to 4) We’ve found unique pattern: renowned rock-n-roll guitarists continually medicating, carousing, imbibing alcohol = Twenty-Seven Club. (*Matt Monitto, Elon, N.C.*)

3 (1 to 7 to 1) “I do!” she said aloud. Highly dubious, clammy groom said low: “Do I?” (*Doug Delorge, Biddeford, Maine, who last got ink in Week 13 — 1993*)

4 (3 to 7; 7 to 3) “Now y’all might kindly respect Peyton’s little bitty baby bro.” — E. Manning, New York (*Nan Reiner, Alexandria*)

Very close. Cigar? Nope. Honorable mentions

Paul, wacko. Romney, foppish. Gingrich, obnoxious. Santorum, atavist. Result? Obama wins. (*Nan Reiner*)

We met that enemy. Sadly, Pogo, it’s U.S. (*Kevin Dopart, Washington*)

Parties, chicks, booze, long nap, skip class, repeat: College. (*Matt Monitto, Elon College Class of 2014*)

I’m sad. Dear sweet Cousin Whitney; Dionne’s powers didn’t ever see it. (*Ira Allen, Bethesda*)

(Burp!) “Ocean cruise” spells “broad beam.” (*Beverly Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.*)

Sometimes “standing ovation” really means “grumpy patrons speedily departing.” (*Craig Dykstra, Centreville*)

Studying Tinman’s rusted ankle, Toto

looks guilty (besides relieved). (*Kevin Dopart*)

Italian cruise ships head for sea; they often return upright. (*Dave Silberstein, College Park, a First Offender*)

Countdown: Nineteen, sixteen, twelve, eight, WAIT, HEY! six, STOP! . . . seven, eleven, fifteen, fourteen, seventeen . . . (*Lee Giesecke, Annandale*)

Domestic harmony snooze alarm rule: Hit it one time; extra delays outrage bedmates. (*Mark Richardson, Washington*)

Best broad policy: honesty. Marriage success: “Superb dress, dear.” (*Kevin Dopart*)

I’m fat! Love pizza, donuts, sundaes, potatoes, chocolate, enchiladas, SpaghettiOs, griddle-cakes, miscellaneous carbohydrates, sarsaparilla, gingerbread,

milkshakes, deep-fried anything — perhaps Atkins’ diet’s best for me. (*Louise Dodenhoff Hauser, Falls Church*)

Suck-up entry of the week (2 to 11 to 2): Is any life worth living without tackling whimsical conundrums, stimulating vocabulary, enigmatic wordplay? Empress grants these joys for us. (*Neal Starkman, Seattle*)

Anti-suck-up entry of the week (12 to 3 to 12): Experiencing symmetrical perfection requiring wordplay — Empress judges dimly with the IQ of ten, just count stupid letters watching carefully, performing statistical mindlessness. (*Jim Lubell, Mechanicsville, Md.*)

And Last: Oh, you need HUMOR inside winning rhopal sentences? Doltishly counting letters exactly right won’t cut it? (*Amanda Yanovitch, Midlothian, Va.*)

From Week 956: You know it’ll be a bad marriage when. . .

The minister asks if anyone objects to this marriage and God stands up. (*Rob Huffman, Fredericksburg*)

Her wedding gown says, “I’m With Stupid.” (*Beverly Sharp*)

Someone calls you from Match.com and anxiously says, “I really hope we’ve reached you in time.” (*David Ballard, Reston*)

Her wedding dress reveals her tramp stamp. (*Art Grinath, Takoma Park*)

Your fiance has a “Free Scott Peterson” bumper sticker. (*David Kleinbard, Jersey City*)

Her matron of honor is Gloria Allred. (*Mark Welch, Alexandria*)

The groom is about to place the ring on the bride’s finger, and she grabs it saying, “I’ll just do it myself.” (*Judy Blanchard, Novi, Mich.*)

Next week: All’s Weller, or A Har Har Better Thing



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

THIS WEEK’S CONTEST: WEEK 961

The end of our rhops

The Empress did a contest for rhopal sentences, in which each successive word was one letter longer. Then we did one in which each successive word was one letter shorter. Then — as you see in today’s results — we asked for sentences whose words got longer till the middle and then shrank, as well as those that shrank and then grew. And so what’s left: the anti-rhopal, suggested by Loser Craig Dykstra: **Write a funny passage or headline whose words all have the same number of letters**, as in Bob Staake’s not-so-ambitious example above (directions to Bob: “Write something cartoonable”). As in earlier contests, two words joined by a hyphen may serve as a single word or two words; for contractions such as “you’re,” just count the number of letters and ignore the punctuation.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives — because although it’s by no means required, the E has a feeling there might be a few political entries this week — matching little bags of “Democrat Donkey Dung” and “Republican Elephant Dung”: “A little bag of political poop.” They are actually chocolate-covered peanuts. Donated by Dave Prevar.

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorable mentions get a lusted-after Loser magnet. First Offenders get a tree-shaped air “freshener” (FirStink for their first ink). E-mail entries to losers@washpost.com or fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, March 12; results published April 1 (!) (March 30 online). No more than 25 entries per entrant per week. Include “Week 961” 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 washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational. The revised title for next week is by Chris Doyle; the subhead for this week’s honorable mentions is by Gary Crockett. Join the Style Invitational Devotees on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev.



STYLE CONVERSATIONAL Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join us at washingtonpost.com/stylconversational.



BRIDGE 9

POST-HARD-CORE: Vocalist Ross Farrar has the crowd pumped.

POP CD REVIEW

Ceremony ZOO



When Northern California band Ceremony started out in the mid-'00s, it was a straight-edge-inspired hard-core band whose 2006 debut notoriously featured 13 songs in 13 minutes.

Both hard-core and straight-edge had peaked long before, and Ceremony seemed nostalgic for all the things it had missed. Back then, its new disc, “Zoo,” would have been unthinkable, and not

just because its release on Matador, a major-ish indie label, would have been tantamount to selling out back in the day (although the act of selling out is something that, by Ceremony’s time, had also peaked).

“Zoo” retains that (possibly) inadvertent sense of nostalgia, that sense that all the best things that could happen have happened already. It signals Ceremony’s move from hard-core to post-hard-core, which basically means band members occasionally sing instead of yell, and some of their songs have melodies. In other words, it’s pretty drastic.

It’s also terrific, a template for how to grow up without giving in. “All of us move on,” explains lead

singer Ross Farrar, without apology, on the great, comparatively cheerful “Adult.” “We have to give up the things we love sometimes.”

“Zoo” sticks closely to basic post-punk tropes: It has more hooks than chord changes, retains the band’s endearing fondness for Husker Du and the Pixies, and sounds like it was made in Farrar’s parents’ garage. Also intact: Ceremony’s misanthropy, enshrined in twin horrors “Community Service” and “Ordinary People.” Both are the sort of hell-is-other-people broadsides the band used to excel at, proof that adults don’t have to give up everything they love.

— Allison Stewart