

DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

So where should we put the stupid-question results?

BY PAT MYERS

In Week 1081 the Empress asked you to give us some stupid questions that would be even funnier than the sincerely stupid ones on the Yahoo Answers site. As with last week's bad-poetry results, some entries were disqualified for not being stupid enough; the best of these was from Rob Huffman: If NASA could put a man on the moon, why couldn't they make a better fake orange juice than Tang?

The winner of the Inkin' Memorial

How do you say "Don't claw the sofa" in Siamese? (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase)

2nd place and the breast-shaped milk mug

I don't understand those "take a penny/leave a penny" jars near cash registers. If you take somebody's penny and leave one of your own, then what's the point? (Scott Poyer, Annapolis)

3rd place

Do these new glasses make my brain look big? — Rick Perry, Austin (Gary Crockett)

4th place

Why do people argue about which came first: the chicken or the egg? Everyone knows you need a chicken to produce an egg! (Frank Mann, Washington)

Past their d'oh date: honorable mentions

Can I still clap along if I feel like a room without a ceiling? (Mark Raffman, Reston)

I have a friend who's been blind since birth: how do I describe green to her — sort of like blue, but prettier? (Asher Roth, Broadlands, Va., a First Offender)

Is SPF-50 enough protection for when you're on a tanning bed? (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.)

I'm a vegetarian, so I wondered if I need to take that bloody thing out of green olives. (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

What's with this letter from my bank saying there's no money in my checking account? I still have LOTS of checks in my checkbook! (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

When the Soviet Union went back to being Russia, did the people have to learn how to speak Russian again after being Soviets all those years? (Irene Plotzer, Wilmington, Del.)

Can I save twice as much on my car insurance if I take 30 minutes? (Mark Raffman)

I know chicken fingers are really made from the toes, since, duh, chickens don't have fingers. But where do the nuggets come from? Is it the stuff they... ew, is that even sanitary? (Gregory Koch, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.)

Was Johns Hopkins University named for twins? (Gary F. Suggars, Baltimore, a First Offender)

Remember Patty Hearst's kidnappers? I know they freed her, but what I want to know is did they ever liberate Symbia, or was it taken over by another country? (Mike Duffy, Butte, Mont.)

Why would two years of damning e-mail simply disappear? (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)

My prescription bottle says, "Do not operate heavy machinery." Will Obamacare pay for someone to do my laundry? (Robyn Carlson, Keyser, W.Va.)

How do all my neighbors get their dogs to poop in their Washington Post bags? I can never get the timing right with Ginger. Does anyone else have this problem, or is it just cockapops? (Ivars Kuskevics, Takoma Park)

Where I drive into the parking garage at work, a bar hangs down that says "Clearance 6'8". It would be a lot higher without the bar — why don't they just take it down? (Charlene Fischer Jehle, Ocean View, Del., a First Offender)

Can anyone tell me where Nota Republic is? I can't find it on a map and I need to go there before the bank takes my car. (Mike Ostapiej, Mount Pleasant, S.C.)

If your life flashes before your eyes when you're dying, well, suppose you did a whole lot of stuff — will it be a really long flash, or it just doesn't get all the way through, or what? (Steve Honley, Washington)

I want to see "A Christmas Carol" at Ford's Theatre, but do you really



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

New contest for Week 1085: Eww-venirs: Ideas for gift shops

At a Beijing souvenir stand: An acid-rain globe. (Mike Gips)
At the State Department gift shop: A gift bottle of whitewash. (Elden Carnahan)
At the Studio 54 gift shop: One of those souvenir spoons, but a really little one. (Mike Gips)

A New York Post article this past May, about the new gift shop at the World Trade Center memorial site — featuring right at Ground Zero such tasteful mementos as a "Darkness Hoodie," a New York Fire Department dog vest and various toy rescue vehicles — was predictably delicious fodder for a few Loser wags of the Style Invitational Devotees Facebook group. In a thread stretching through dozens of comments, they took turns speculating on the *worst* souvenirs for the shop, as well as for other hallowed sites.

The Devotees hoped there wasn't a WTC Jenga and proceeded to become even more tasteless in discussing other memorials, way beyond even the Invite pale (which is set at about the Inner Mongolia of tastefulness). But Loser Mike Gips suggested a way to salvage the idea: **This week: Suggest a humorous — but NOT horribly tasteless — tchotchke, T-shirt, etc., from a real or imagined gift shop at a particular tourist site, as in the examples above.** You're free to make your entry funnier by adding a humorous description or comment about it. Can you meet the challenge of being funny without being patently offensive? What's offensive? To start: In general, recent tragedies tend to be rawer than ancient history, and in any case it's not necessary to raise the "too soon?" question at all in your entry. Let's just mention this right off: *The results will be published online Sept. 11.* So the Empress has a nifty idea: **No 9/11.**

Winner gets the Inkin' Memorial, the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a souvenir Gift Pack: a snow dome of the Titanic (commemorating the snowstorm that sank it?), plus a handsome canvas Titanic tote bag with the White Star Line flag; both donated by Cheryl Davis.

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. 25; results published Sept. 14 (online Sept. 11). No more than 25 entries per entrant per contest. Include "Week 1085" 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.

Note: In last week's results of the "McGonagall" poems, the Empress dopily referred to the famously terrible Mr. McG as an Irishman. He was a Scot. Our apologies to all Irishmen.

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.

think it's safe? I heard they had a bad incident there. (Rob Wolf, Gaithersburg)

Has anyone brought a stepladder up Mount Everest to set a new record? (Duncan Stevens, Vienna)

Is it insensitive to tell light-bulb jokes to a blind person? (Dave Letizia, Alexandria)

If I take several pills at once for different problems, how does my stomach know where to send each one? (Kel Nagel, Salisbury, Md.)

My neighbor got a shiatsu massage chair — why would anyone buy special equipment just to rub the belly of a hairy little dog? (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park)

Why do people sing "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," when they're already at the ballgame? (John Kupiec, Fairfax)



PAT MYERS/THE WASHINGTON POST

A night to misremember — it was snowing, I think: This week's second prizes.

Shouldn't Fiber One cereal be called Fiber Two? (William Kennard, Arlington)

Why are there no seats at bus stops that have "No Standing" signs right on the pole? (John McCooey, Rehoboth Beach, Del.)

Since dogs can hear sounds humans can't, might they be talking to us, but we just can't hear them? (Warren Tanabe, Annapolis)

If you get abducted and probed by an alien, and it doesn't use protection, can you get AIDS? (Josh Feldblyum, Philadelphia)

Where can I buy a cheap defibrillator? It's really kind of urgent. (Gregory Koch)

How can you tell a male hurricane from a female? (Bird Waring, Larchmont, N.Y.)

The Eggland's Best package advertises "Vegetarian Fed Hens." Does that mean the hens are fed by vegetarians, or are they fed vegetarians instead? (Jeff Contompasis)

If our government owes all this debt, why doesn't it just make more money — I mean, hello, it OWNS A MINT. (Fred Gray, Springfield, a First Offender)

Where does The Style Invitational get its jokes from? Is it the Internet? I bet it is, because sometimes I see the same stuff there that's in the Invitational. (Luther Jett, Washington Grove, a First Offender)

Still running — deadline Monday night: Our annual Limerixicon limerick contest. See bit.ly/invite1084.

POST PUZZLER

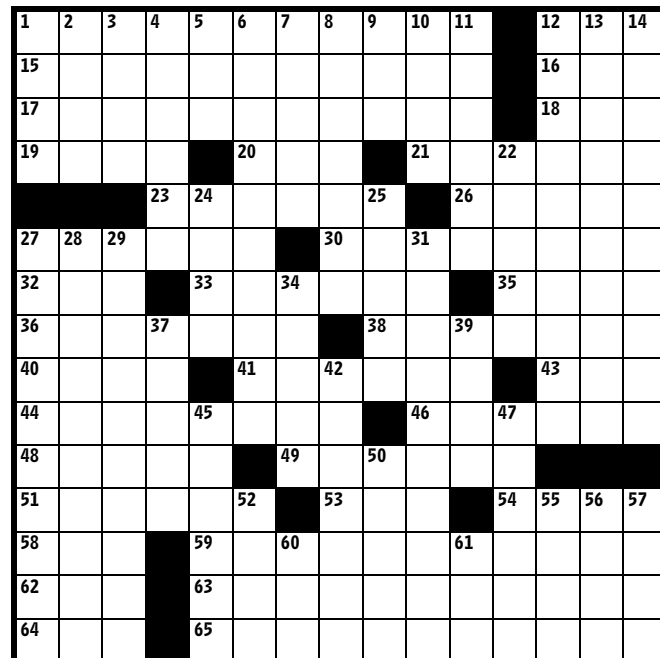
No. 228

BY TODD MCCLARY EDITED BY PETER GORDON • FIREBALLCROSSWORDS.COM

ACROSS	35 It may be heard on the NPR show "The Thistle & Shamrock"	63 Female member of a moving company?	10 Marks in the 70s	39 Borax victims
1 Entrance requirement for some clubs	36 Secures	64 Linebacker Mauauluga	11 Eponym of a gymnastics flip	42 Counts, e.g.
12 Crane enclosure	38 CSI facilities	65 Latecomer's request	12 Mobile electronics stat	47 Route 66 novelty lodgings
15 Stream for surfers	40 "Rock Swings" singer		13 Browser feature	50 Pertinent, in law
16 Certain triglyceride transporter, for short	41 Helps through a basketball hoop		14 Physical components	52 Rita Award winner Roberts
17 Program for viewing PDFs	43 Common military decoration, briefly		22 "Kiss the Girl" girl	55 Breakout teen phenomenon?
18 Emcee's introductory patter?	44 Not well-positioned		24 Stretches (out)	56 Arabian Peninsula metropolis
19 Tiara wearer	46 Bank runners?		25 Hospital areas	57 In ____ (cross)
20 Semipro sports org. whose logo shows a player with a crosse	48 Flicked, as a cigar		27 Tropical twister?	60 Room on a plane
21 Food court chain with stromboli	49 Service vehicle?		28 By some measure	61 Its first tweet was "We can neither confirm nor deny that this is our first tweet"
23 Orange half?	51 Olivier's replacement in the "Clash of the Titans" remake		29 "In My Time" memoirist	
26 Practically ordered?	53 Nutrition fig.		31 Source for many a political writer	
27 2009 World Series MVP Matsui	54 "¿Qué ____?"		34 "The Secret of Roan ____" (1994 film)	
30 Most offensive	58 iReport ailer		37 Juicer's veggies	
32 Pricy sushi selection	59 Diminishing environmental concern			
33 Citizenship seeker	62 Legal conclusion?			

Answer to last week, No. 227

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HOROSCOPE

BY JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY | AUG. 17: This year you reach out to others more often. In fact, your sensitivity to those in your immediate environment will be high. You naturally add a lot to others' lives. You also have entered a new life cycle. If you are single, you might meet someone quite special. Enjoy the few single days you have left! If you are attached, the two of you manifest an important mutual goal. You both are unusually excited about life. Others enjoy how open you are as a couple.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
 Check out an investment. Only make a decision after you thoroughly research the matter. You may be surprised by others' feedback.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
 With the moon in your sign, your vibrations have a magical quality that calls to others. You might not be prepared for all this popularity. Get used to being appreciated.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
 Make it okay to feel a bit off today. In fact, you might want to screen your calls. As the sun sets, your energy may change.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
 Friends might invite you to join them for brunch. A dreamy quality will surround you. Be careful, as your mind is working overtime, and you

might wear yourself out.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
 You will be in charge of organizing others today. Your social skills will be most appreciated. You might not get to relax until later in the afternoon.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
 Catch up on others' news. You may be making quite a few long-distance calls. Plan to meet a friend halfway in the near future and spend some quality time together.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
 Keep your schedule focused on one particular person who means a lot to you. To have this relationship flourish, you'll need plenty of one-on-one time together. You are very different people who are able to appreciate and respect each other.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

Others will seek you out to the extent that you might not even have time to read the Sunday paper. You might want to screen your calls. If you want to invite someone to join you, then feel free to do so.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
 You might need to complete a project this afternoon. You will be surprised at how much you'll want to loosen up and socialize.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
 Your earthiness makes others feel at home and your sensitivity adds to others' comfort. No one will feel challenged by you if you play it low-key.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
 Don't fight a desire to stay home. Curl up with a good book or take a snooze if you'd like. Thankfully, this need will not always be this strong.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
 Consider how much you have heard about a certain situation. Today, the chatter seems to continue, and you are likely to hear some intriguing facts and insights. You may be taken aback by someone's defiance.

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Workplace racist jokes unwelcome

Ask Amy

AMY DICKINSON

there.

Dear Amy: I work in a small office at my church. I like my job a lot and would like to stay

your pastor. Be prepared with specific examples. Your pastor should handle this as a confidential workplace and pastoral matter, not as a confrontation within the congregation.

Dear Amy: I live on a wonderful street with my husband and two children. We love our street and everybody that lives on it.

First, you should state to this co-worker, "Really, please stop making these offensive comments. None of this is funny, so please stop."

Then you must speak with

Dear Amy: I live on a wonderful street with my husband and two children. We love our street and everybody that lives on it.

Our next-door neighbors have a privacy fence surrounding a portion of their back yard. The bottom half of one of the panels is broken off, and it's big enough for my daughter or the neighbors' children to kneel on the ground and put their face up to the fence.

Sounds crazy, but this has become an intrusive problem. We have had company over, dinners outside, and a lot of playtime interrupted by their children. Either they stare at us while we're playing or eating, or they call my daughter to the fence constantly and order her around (she's younger than they are). These kids even call over to us from the fence and invite themselves over! Sometimes we don't even want to go outside when we know these kids are out and will come over to the

fence. I would love to fix the fence or put a board over the broken piece, but it is not our fence and it is not on our property. What should we do?

Frustrated in my Back Yard

In a world gone mad, I take some comfort in the idea that your domestic life is being ruined by children peering through a broken fence. Life must otherwise be very tranquil for this to qualify as an unsolvable problem.

These are your neighbors. You say you are close to them. Here's the first thing you do (use your "outside voice"): "Kids — KNOCK IT OFF. Get away from the fence, please. You're driving us bonkers."

The second thing you do is to say to the parents: "Could you do us a favor and repair your fence in the back? The kids are playing Tom Sawyer back there and driving us crazy. I'd be happy to repair it myself, if you want."

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, Ill. 60611.