

DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

Pranks for asking: 'Questionable Journalism'

BY PAT MYERS

In Week 1099, we once again asked you to take any sentence from an article in that week's Washington Posts and make up a question that it could conceivably answer (at least if you are a Duggar-level conceiver):

The winner of the Inkin' Memorial

Sentence from *The Post*: **Will begin to wane on Wednesday night.**
Q. What was the phrase that persuaded the Weather Channel not to hire Elmer Fudd? (Beverly Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

2nd place and the 1958 teen-advice book by Pat Boone:

Negotiations have begun in Baghdad on settling long-standing sectarian disputes.
So, Sisyphus, what have you been up to lately? (Jeff Hazle, Woodbridge)

3rd place
After one hour, they found two fleas.

What was the result when the Secret Service swept the White House for bugs? (Steve Honley, Washington)

4th place
Waves 1 foot on the lower Potomac, 2-3 feet Chesapeake Bay.

What were encouraging signs from the comatose centipede as it was ferried down local waterways in the Coast Guard vessel? (Jeff Shirley, Richmond)

Inquiring hinds: honorable mentions

"It won't be as long as it has been — let me put it that way."
How exactly did Lorena Bobbitt word her threat to her husband? (Steve Honley)

"We're very early in the game."
How do Redskins fans console each other when the team's down 35-0? (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

"Not every turkey escapes the White House."

What was the rejected title of the new History Channel series about presidents who died in office? (Jon Gearhart, Des Moines)

We never know what the big board will decide.

When will the Great and Powerful Two-by-Four destroy Earth? (Bruce Alter, Fairfax Station)

That's a question toymakers ask every year when coming up with new products.

Why do kids always end up playing with the box? (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)

"In the past I would laboriously pare off the hard skin with a vegetable peeler (difficult on a curved surface) or slice it off with a big knife."

What did Julia Child say as a testimonial for Oil of Olay? (Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

Sometimes it takes your family to help you confront hard and embarrassing situations.

Why does thinking about Grandma work so well for teenage boys who are asked to come to the front of the class at an awkward moment? (Danielle Nowlin, Fairfax Station)

Some people have a "low bottom."

What was Marge's excuse for not being able to lose weight? (Steve Honley)

Let's just say that it might make you reconsider your next BLT.

"You don't think our cafe is using the tomatoes that sprouted up in its septic drain field out back, do you?" (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

After less than 30 seconds, he was done, finishing with a flourish of guitar and an "oh, yeah!"

What is a quote from the book "I'm With the Band: Confessions of a Groupie"? (Chris Doyle)

The Navy has a \$96 million reserve fund to cover additional unforeseen costs.

How did the Navy cover the bar bill for a recent congressional oversight visit? (Bruce Alter)

Shhh — it's actually faux and can be reused from year to year.

Why do you splurge on an expensive fruitcake every year for your Christmas party? (Dave Prevar)

He was lonely, hugely lonely.

What's a good opening line for a romance porn novel? (Kevin Dopart, Washington)



New contest for Week 1103: Themes good enough to us

"I've Got You Under My Skin": "Epic Ink"
"I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For": "House Hunters"
"It's All About That Bass": "The Ultimate Fishing Show"
"I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do": "Sister Wives"

The Empress knows better than to doubt the word of Obsessive Loser Jeff Contompasis when he says the Invitational has never done this contest before. "I've finally got a chance to check the Master Contest List," says Jeff of the amazing compilation by Equally Obsessive Loser Elden Carnahan (see bit.ly/invitecontests). "There's never been a **suggest an existing song to be used as the theme for a TV series or program for comic effect** contest."

There is now. It has to be an actual TV show (or Internet TV), past or present, and a real song title. This is, we concede, not the toughest contest we've ever run; a few years ago we had the Loser Community *write whole theme songs* as parodies, which were brilliant (see bit.ly/invite933). But hey, it's the week of Christmas *and* the week of Hanukkah, and even the E doesn't want to be all that Scroogey to her legions of Cratchits. (Until next week, anyway.)

Winner gets the Inkin' Memorial, the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a little bottle of Pee-Pee Poo-Poo All-Purpose Hand Sanitizer, which was donated to us by Seattle-based Loser Diane Wah on a visit to The Real Washington last weekend and which is a lot like another brand of hand sanitizer we offered as a prize a while back but whose name was deemed insufficiently sanitary for The Style Invitational. And, oh, since we're in the holiday spirit, we'll also give you yet another otherwise identical hand sanitizer: This one's called Dog Slobber — "just a few drops leave hands germ-free and fresh as a damn daisy".

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 designed by Bob Staake: either "The Wit Hit the Fan" or "Hardly Har-Har." 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, Dec. 29; results published Jan. 18 (online Jan. 15). You may submit up to 25 entries per contest. Include "Week 1103" 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. The headline for this week's results is by Chris Doyle; the honorable-mentions subhead is by Tom Witte. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at [on.fb.me/invdev](https://www.facebook.com/invdev).

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

The cost would depend on what is causing the drawers to stick.

Why don't proctologists have a standard fee structure? (Steve Honley)

"The TSA isn't even touching the vast majority of these bags."

What should the TSA spokesman not have said about busloads of nuns crossing the border? (Christopher Lamora, Los Angeles)

"I will make sure there are tissues nearby at all our meetings, and if you let me, I will hold your hand when you cry."

How did President Obama persuade Speaker Boehner to resume debt ceiling negotiations? (Frank Osen)

"My head seemed disconnected from my body."

What's the last thing you remember, Ms. Boleyn? (Beverly Sharp)

Unfortunately, unfair, unnecessary and unwise.

With the success of UNICEF and UNESCO, what other acronyms did the United Nations briefly consider? (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park)

"I had them tear it out while I was standing there."

Chuck Norris, did you just have an appendectomy? (Barbara Turner)

The WHO estimates that nearly 350 million people worldwide have the condition.

What's the current population of Teenage Wasteland? (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

Do you have a matching bath, hand and washcloth?

What was Martha Stewart's first question on arriving in prison? (Frank Osen)

It's divided into five movements, but there's no intermission point.

How would travelers describe a case of Montezuma's Revenge in Guadalajara? (Brendan Beary)

And you can't just whip out your American Express card and walk out with a gilded mirror.

What's your second-biggest complaint about the Obama White House, Mr. Trump? (Frank Osen)

"I'll be darned if the New Year's Eve sequence doesn't get me every time."

Are you so drunk that you can't count down from 10 to 1? (Beverly Sharp)

It's a massive, bulbous, inexplicably sexual thing that droops down from the ceiling and fills the space.

What is the Victoria's Secret advertising display for its revolutionary Ultra-Queen-Size Bra? (Howard Walderman, Columbia)

"We all like the Russians."

What do Vegas oddsmakers say about the battle to control eastern Ukraine? (Mark Raffman, Reston)

Sometimes, there's even some facial-hair-growing.

What do the Nats do well in the playoffs, besides choking? (Mike Gips, Bethesda)

The Wizards failed to thwart dribble penetration.

How were Hogwarts students created? (Jon Gearhart)

So why not?

Why do New Yorkers answer a question with a question? (Bruce Alter)

And Last: He warmed the hearts of millions with a clean comedy style far removed from the sexual innuendo and obscenity-laced jokes popular today.

How come Roberto Gómez Bolaños never got any ink in the Style Invitational? (Roy Ashley, Washington)

Still running — deadline Monday night: Our contest for a niche radio station. See bit.ly/invite1102

POST PUZZLER

No. 246

BY TODD MCCLARY EDITED BY PETER GORDON • FIREBALLCROSSWORDS.COM

ACROSS

1 Inclement
4 Breakfast order
15 Country music's _____ Young Band
16 Cold weather phenomenon
17 Pair in rummy?
18 Oscar nominee for "The Heartbreak Kid"
19 Ancient unit based on a thousand marching paces
21 Monastery figures
22 They may be dependent
23 Target Field player
25 Author of "The Outsiders"
26 Outlet for a drill?
30 "No Country for Old Men" character Chigurh
31 Crony of Costanza and Kramer

DOWN

32 Pipe blockage
33 Movie pizzeria with a Wall of Fame featuring Italian-Americans
34 Square
35 Peak of perfection
36 Sonnet preposition
37 RSS feed sources
38 Accompanied a bard, perhaps
39 Floral specialist
41 Life may not offer it
42 Hydraulic device in a repair shop
43 Kneecap, e.g.
44 Stress lines?
47 Minor penalty
49 Eowyn portrayed in two "Lord of the Rings" installments
51 Add up to
52 Garbage chute destination in old buildings

ACROSS

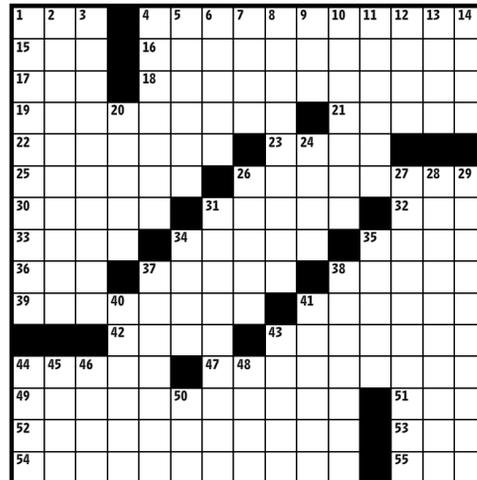
53 "Sports Jeopardy!" host Patrick
54 Overseas brewing practice
55 FlightView info, briefly

DOWN

1 Shot accompaniment, perhaps
2 "Joanie Loves Chachi" co-star
3 Breaks down
4 Premieres, date-wise
5 Surveyors' assistants
6 _____ lamp (signaling device)
7 Get perfectly right
8 Voicemail recordings

9 Jardín del Edén woman
10 Kicks
11 Cosmopolitan
12 Scavenger hunt score
13 Pilgrim portrayed in a 2010 film
14 Univ. directory listings
20 Some repos
24 Creeper cousin
26 Falsely convey
27 Craftsman's edge
28 Response to something funny
29 Brink of sanity
31 Oversize computer applications, informally
34 Arab leader?

35 Features of many religious portraits
37 _____ of Tarth (female warrior in "Game of Thrones")
38 Steve Martin comedy in which Sarah Jessica Parker plays SanDeE*
40 Putative language family that includes Uzbek
41 Slide whistle part
43 "Same here"
44 Produce, as a sound
45 Boring workplace
46 Aquarian performer
48 Wander aimlessly
50 Van _____ Waals forces



Answer to last week, No. 245

P R A I R I E D A W N P E P
E V A L O N G O R I A O R O
P E R S O N A L I T Y L I L
A R P M E D E A S P I C Y
A B E S G A U C H E
A B R O A D G R A Y N E S S
B R I N M O I R E T E T
L O V E A N D M A R R I A G E
E K E N A S A L S P A R
S E R R A T E D L I B E L S
E N D A L L F I N N
A B A T E P I L E S B A M
M O N C H I C A G O H O P E
E N C T I M E R E L E A S E
N E E S T A T E S E C R E T

HOROSCOPE

BY JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY | DEC. 21: This year you may find yourself choosing between risk and security. Others might be surprised by this sudden change. If you are single, strap on your seat belt as you climb on the roller coaster of love. You may meet someone who gives you a case of the butterflies. Take your time before making a commitment. If you are attached, your significant other runs with the moment and enjoys your changeability. Plan a special vacation together, and you will nurture this tie.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

You'll give that extra oomph to whatever you do right now. Use the daylight hours to finish up any holiday errands. Make time to visit a friend.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

A loved one might be set on monopolizing your plans. The real issue will be figuring out how to let this person down gently. Only you can answer that question.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

Others seem to jump right in and join you, whether you want the company or not. You will turn this situation into a positive experience with your gregarious personality.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

Clear out as much as you can during the daylight hours. Catching up on news might bring some surprises. Tonight, revel in the holiday spirit.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

A child or loved one may invite you on an adventure. You might not be able to hold yourself back. This trip will be fun, as long as you can chill out and go with the flow.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

Go at a slower pace in the morning. You'll need to keep up with the increasingly demanding pace of the next few days. If you don't have an opening for some personal time, make one.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

Make calls, run errands and clear out as much as you can. Join a friend for a late brunch if possible. His or her energy will make you feel alive.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

Indulge yourself a little as you finish up your holiday errands. Your shopping might involve buying yourself something each

time you buy someone else a gift. Keep your receipts!

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

Though you might prefer it to be different, others probably take their cues from you. Just let it be. Your interest may turn elsewhere by midafternoon. You will have an opportunity to run out and finish some holiday errands.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

Use the daylight hours for any key matter that you need to take care of. You can vanish for only so long without getting too much flak from others. By late afternoon, you may find that your family demands your presence.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

Whether or not you say yes to an invitation, you will be surrounded by friends. You won't be able to resist the appeal of a fun get-together.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

You naturally seem to shoulder a lot of responsibilities. It may take you a long time to clear out what you must do, but eventually you will get where you want to be. Throw yourself into the holiday festivities. It's time to visit with friends.

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Waiting for the Grinch's heart to grow

Ask Amy

AMY DICKINSON

Dear Amy: How do you deal with family over the holidays?

I have one out-of-state cousin who is the Grinch, and he's going to be staying with us. He thinks, "If I buy you a \$50 gift, you buy me a \$50 gift."

I think you buy what you can afford and not expect anything in return. If someone gives you a gift, then great; if not, then great! I am only a receptionist and cannot afford lavish/expensive gifts for everyone.

I get my other cousins \$2 lottery tickets and that's it. Now I feel like if I do that for him, he will cry to our grandma or, worse, say something on Christmas morning!

We are all adults now and I feel like we are in eighth grade! Any advice for dealing with him? This is bringing unwanted dread and anxiety when I should be excited and happy during the holidays. I think he forgot the true meaning of Christmas.

HO HO HO

If your cousin really is the Grinch, then won't it be fun to see his heart grow three sizes larger once he realizes the true

meaning of Christmas?

You could help him get there by providing a fun holiday-rich environment in your home, with fresh-baked cookies, music, etc. Do NOT alter your giving out of fear of his reaction. If he gives you a larger gift, thank him kindly. Tell yourself that your gift to him is in the family fellowship you'll share.

You can probably count on him to respond poorly to all of your efforts, but that's when you need to remind yourself of the true meaning of Christmas, which is to be generous, loving, celebratory and, ultimately, forgiving. Don't let him ruin the holiday for you, but let his Grinchiness steer you toward your own epiphany.

Dear Amy: At 88 years of age, I am the last remaining child of a family of nine children. My health is fair, and my income is sufficient.

My problem is that I have 35 nieces and nephews (all in another state) who are starting to marry. They are kindly extending invitations to me. I have sent a financial gift to four weddings, but if I continue at this pace I'll be broke.

How do I stop this

"graciously"? They do love their aunt.

Auntie Em the Great

You do not need to send cash gifts to marrying couples. You should come up with something less expensive and more personal as a "statement" gift from you.

You are the only surviving sibling from a huge family. I assume you have some wonderful photos on hand. A thoughtful and fun idea would be to find an old photo of the marrying person's parent as a young person, or a photo of all of you young siblings together. Photos are very easy to copy these days, and if you enclose one in a card with a thoughtful note, your nieces and nephews will be very appreciative, I'm sure.

Being an aunt is a great joy. Treasure these relationships without letting them break the bank.

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.

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