

DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

The game is afoot(note): The nerd-humor winners

BY PAT MYERS

We called Week 1168 Asterisky Business: We asked for jokes whose punch lines required specialized knowledge to get. Whew, there are a lot of erudite people out there, many of whom helpfully offered 200-word explanations of the joke. These, fortunately, are more concise.

4th place

Doc 1: I treated a kid who bruised his patella on some rocks.
Doc 2: What was your diagnosis?
Doc 1: ***Nephrolithiasis!**
*Kidney stones (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.)

3rd place

Why did the farmer get arrested? Because he said he was going to go out and mow down his ***grama**.
*Any of various grasses of the genus *Bouteloua*, often used for pasturage. (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

2nd place and 'The Ultimate North Carolina Quiz Book':

Why did the gerontologist immediately switch his choice after watching the debate? The candidate promised that he would make America not just great, but ***confabulous**.

*Confabulation can occur in certain forms of dementia; the patient has no conception of what is true, and in conversation may invent things. (Kel Nagel, MD, Salisbury, Md.)

And the winner of the Inkin' Memorial

Why were the French tourists in D.C. embarrassed when they took their toddlers to the National Zoo? A. The kids started yelling, ****Seal! Seal!**
*The French word for seal is *phoque*. (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

Lessoterica:

Honorable mentions

Why didn't historians like the movie "Braveheart"?

They found Mel Gibson's performance too ***woaden**.
*Woad, a blue dye derived from *Isatis tinctoria*, would not have been worn as face paint as late as the 13th century. (Jeff Contompassis, Ashburn, Va.)

Why did 1960s singer Mary O'Brien pick a new stage name?
Because ****Pulveratricos** Springfield didn't fit on the marquee.

*Covered with dust. (Jon Gearhart, Des Moines)

"After three dates, he still seems afraid of physical contact. I finally told him: "If you're just going to approach me but never touch me, you can take your ***asymptote** it home."

*In analytic geometry, an asymptote is a line that continually approaches a given curve but never meets it. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

Why did the Greek priest run out of the harvest festival to place bread in his chariot? Because he forgot to ***feed Demeter**.

*The first loaf of bread was always sacrificed to Demeter (de-ME-ter), the goddess of grain. (Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

What did the tritium say to the nuclear reactor on their 12th anniversary? "You ***made** me what I am, and I ***halved** the time of my life."

*Tritium, a product of nuclear fission, undergoes radioactive decay with a half-life of 12 years. (Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)

Why did the princess leave the stable with a hoofprint on her face?

Her fairy godmother had told her to kiss a ***frog!**
*The frog is the wedge of cushioning tissue under a horse's foot. (Sarah Jay, Churchville, Md., a First Offender)

What did the print shop owner tell his queasy employee? "If you're going to throw up, then ***vomit under the 3/em-spaces and run!**"

*A mnemonic used for the order of part of the California Job Case, a storage unit for letterpress type; a 3/em-space was used between words. (Gil Glass, Washington)

Why will your fuddy-duddy composer friend get upset if you invite him over to drink a couple of bottles of vodka with you? He doesn't approve of ***parallel fifths**.

*Parallel fifths — two consecutive



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

New contest for Week 1172: Pieces of 'Pie'

"Sweet perfume for your love? How about this 'Foul Moss With Pink Fat'?"

For me, the day the music died was when my bride told me she had made love with the marching band, all of them.

The Empress doesn't care that she's dating herself to recall picking up and resetting the arm of her Panasonic turntable 2 million times as she painstakingly transcribed the lyrics to Don McLean's "American Pie" from the 1971 album, as her eighth-grade school algebra homework lay undone. (Not that they weren't just as baffling.) This week we offer the latest of several "word bank" contests we've done over the years, mining, among others, the Book of Genesis, Hamlet's soliloquy, the Gettysburg Address and "The Cat in the Hat": **Write a short passage — an observation, a joke, a dialogue, a poem, anything — using only words that appear in the song "American Pie,"** as in the examples above (the first is by Jeff Shirley, who suggested this contest). The lyrics are available all over the Internet; I'd go with the ones at lyrics007.com, which you can reach from this week's Style Conversational column. *One note, though:* McLean's "American Pie" album didn't include a lyric sheet (I didn't hate algebra *that* much) and so: Who "read a book on Marx" — Lenin or Lennon? The context of the song (as well as most Internet lyrics) indicates Lennon, but surely there's a definitive ruling? Well, I found the sheet music, published by Warner Bros. And it says, right there in Verse 2: "Lennin." So you may use either Marx-reader. You may use words in the song only as often as they appear in the lyrics; for instance, the word "down" appears twice, so your passage could include "down" twice. You can't use part of a word as a whole word — don't pluck "with" from "without," for example. You may change capitalization and punctuation however you like.

Winner gets the Inkin' Memorial, the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place gets a handsome, tall ceramic mug depicting Rosie the Riveter — no, wait, it's Princess Leia depicting Rosie the Riveter. Who would also rock in the Rebel Alliance. Donated by Brendan Beary.

Other runners-up win their choice of a yearned-for Loser Mug, the older-model "This Is Your Brain on Mugs" mug or a vintage Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get one of our lusted-over Loser magnets, "Magnet Dum Laude" or "Falling Jest Short." First Offenders receive a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). Email entries to losers@washpost.com. Deadline is Monday night, May 2; results published May 22 (online May 19). You may submit up to 25 entries per contest. Include "Week 1172" in your email 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 Jon Gearhart; the honorable-mentions subhead was submitted by both Kevin Dopart and Chris Doyle. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev. "Like" the Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at bit.ly/inkofday; follow @StyleInvite on Twitter.

THE 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.



Coffee and buns: Princess Leia does Rosie the Riveter on this week's second prize.

chords of intervals five notes apart — were long frowned upon in classical music. (Duncan Stevens)

Einstein's Mama is so huge that **her waist is a *straight line**.

*Einstein hypothesized that space was curved, so that after traveling a HUGE distance, a straight line might meet itself. (Edward Gordon, Austin)

Why were sportswriters shocked when Adrian Peterson put up stats of 4 fumbles, sixty-two yards rushing, and no touchdowns?

Because it's not ***AP style!**
*Per the Associated Press Stylebook, numbers under 10 should be spelled out, numbers 10 and above are written in numerals, and the serial comma is not used.

(Dallas Baker, Arlington, a First Offender)

A grisly sight in the corridor at Springfield Elementary: There

was a dismembered human foot labeled "video," a hand marked "videre," an ear labeled "vidi" and a nose marked "visus." "But who is the victim?" gasped Mrs. Krabappel.

The Latin teacher whispered, "It's Mr. Skinner — those are **principal parts**."

*The labels are the principal parts (or verb forms) of the Latin *video*, "I see." (Latin teacher Ann Martin, Falls Church)

At a recent summit, Angela Merkel leaned over to Barack Obama and suggested they share a private hot-tub rendezvous. The president whispered back, "Your place or mine?" Just then, Michelle Obama walked by and gave them both a dirty look. At which point Merkel passed Obama a note: **"My *Bad."**
**Bad* is a German word for "spa." (Mark Raffman)

Why did the exchange student from Athens think his fraternity would have pay toilets?

Because the frat was ***Pi Pi Phi**.
*The modern Greek pronunciation of "pi pi phi" is "pee pee fee." (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

More nerdy honorable mentions in the online Invite at bit.ly/invite1172.

Still running — deadline Monday, April 25: Our contest for song "taigaters." See bit.ly/invite1171.

SUNDAY CHALLENGE

BY RANDOLPH ROSS © 2016 CROSSYNERGY SYNDICATE LLC

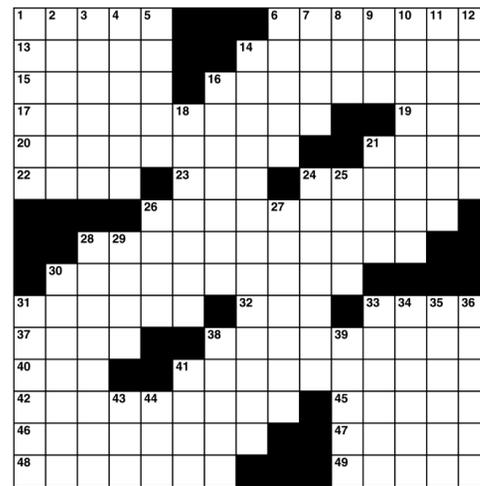
ACROSS
1 Watchdog org.?
6 Gets weak in the knees
13 Ribbon holder
14 High-and-mighty
15 "Beetle Bailey" character
16 Hit unexpectedly
17 Butts in
19 High crime, for short?
20 Like Spandex
21 Of two minds
22 Attends
23 Course list abbr.
24 Desert plants
26 Drinks often packed in school lunches
28 Cause controversy

DOWN
1 Birthplace of Francis

2 Hits bottom?
3 Ellen's mate
4 Penetrating
5 On the ball
6 The Green Hornet's real first name
7 Some servers
8 One way to ship
9 Metric wts.
10 Stuck at the airport, perhaps
11 Has strong legs
12 Bud holders?

14 One of our brightest stars
16 Cause of an itch
18 Marriage and mass
21 Prepare for takeoff
24 Fast
25 Postpunk genre
26 Raspberry
27 With gusto
28 Trailed
29 KOA patron
30 Kentucky player

31 Brazilian city on the Amazon delta
33 "Watch out!"
34 Pax
35 Aleve alternative
36 They can be imperfect
38 Old school ladies
39 Flight support
41 Everglades deposit
43 Social suffix
44 Apt. ad abbr.



Answer to last week

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

HOROSCOPE

BY JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY | April 24: This year you break patterns and are able to relate a lot more closely to different individuals. If you are single, you won't settle for anything but an intimate relationship, yet you realize that this request might not be reasonable on the first few dates. Don't blow off a potential sweetie over this. If you are attached, you suddenly seem to be able to relate to your sweetie. Sagittarius understands more about you than you realize.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

You express a strong sense of direction, as you know what you want to achieve. You have your drive and vision working together. If you can, make calls to someone at a distance whom you care about.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

A discussion could become easier between you and someone else if you have only the two of you in a room together. Be aware of the level of anger you might be swallowing and how this suppressed feeling seems to be coloring your conversations.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

You might want to handle a personal situation early on. Others will go along with your wishes for the sake of peace. Make sure they are really okay with your choices; otherwise, there could be a problem at the last minute.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

You might be exhausted from recent demands. Take some time for yourself before something happens or someone tries to distract you. Some much-needed personal time will do you good.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

You might want to understand what is happening behind the scenes with a child. This person isn't as transparent as you would like. Assume that it's nothing of importance, and remain positive.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

You'll feel as if you have heard and done enough for a while. Opting for some downtime close to home would be smart. In any case, you need some time to re-energize as well. Make this a lazy day at home.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

You could be tired and withdrawn. How you see a personal matter could change radically once you have a discussion with a certain person. Don't push them too hard by asking intrusive questions.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

You could be in a situation where you want to be heard loud and clear; however, other matters fuz up your day. You'll opt to pay bills before heading out the door.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

You'll re-energize as you rarely do. If a child becomes mouthy, you'll make it clear that his or her rudeness is unacceptable. Read between the lines with a frustrated person, as he or she often has a great plan and strong drive.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

What goes up must come down. After a few intense days, don't be surprised to find that you could be out of sorts. Understand that these feelings are the result of the past few days. Indulge in a nap or two.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

You could be in the mood to get out with your friends. You have been diligent about getting everything done that you've needed to. It might be a little late to start your weekend, but proceed as if this is Friday.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

Others look to you for suggestions and a change of direction. You are able to meet someone else's demand, which could be good for you in the long run. When money becomes an issue, support yourself in what you deem is fair; you probably will get it.

Why do parents of sons come second?

Ask Amy

AMY DICKINSON

Dear Amy: Being a mother to boys is tough! Why is it that having male children puts us in second

place all the time?

I have three sons and get very sad when it comes to the holidays. Why is it that daughters-in-law feel that their side of the family is more important than their husband's side of the family?

There have been numerous occasions when we don't get to see our sons and grandchildren because the other side comes first.

Do they think that their family loves them more or has worked harder to bring them up than the parents of boys? These are the same women who, when dating, were always around and could not have been nicer. The only exceptions I have seen are when the parent of the girls is not in the picture, either due to distance, death or estrangement.

Sad Mom

Sad Mom: I agree that this is a real phenomenon, and I will try to explain it. Daughters-in-law are oriented toward their

families of birth — not necessarily to punish their husbands' parents but because they have known their own parents for their whole lives.

This orientation toward their own parents and its impact on the couple starts with the wedding and continues through pregnancies and births of their children. Men are often marginalized during these important life events, and their parents are also pushed aside. Traditionally, the wife/mother controls the children's schedules. Because the woman's mother has been intimately involved in the kids' lives from the start, there is a bond between them that the new mother fosters and values.

I don't think any of this is fair, but it seems to be the default position of many families. However, if your sons work hard to be involved fathers and sons, building close and loving relationships with their children and with you, then they will advocate for the children to spend time with their folks.

This balance is shifting as the "traditionally" assigned roles of parents changes (thank

goodness), but it might take a generation for parents of sons to see the impact of this change.

Dear Amy: You responded to "Worried in Wisconsin" about the possible consequences of her older husband choosing to fix their roof.

I fell years ago installing Christmas lights and never went back up. I got lucky and landed in a large azalea bush. A friend in Las Vegas fell this year and nearly died. He is still in recovery. Please warn your readers again!

Lucky

Lucky: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the No. 1 leading cause of injury death in Americans over 65 is "unintentional fall." None of the more than 25,000 people who died in 2013 intended to fall, or die of a fall, and yet the statistics are clear.

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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