

DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

Whichcraft: Questions for baddies

BY PAT MYERS

In **Week 1999** we asked you to pose “**Questions for Terrible People**,” like those in a new book by comedian Wes Hazard — basically a way to demonstrate what a bad person you are. Of course, we were also looking for questions that were funny, and so some of the inking entries ended up ranging wider than such demonstrative badness-taggers as “When you feel resentful of high-performing co-workers, do you fantasize about them dying or getting arrested?”

4th place

It's a rainy day downtown and you're about to lose a cab to a woman, half your age, in skinny jeans, a fur coat and spike heels, racing past you. Do you grab the back of your leg, feigning a pulled hamstring, or do you “accidentally” hip-check her to the ground? (John McCooney, Rehoboth Beach, Del.)

3rd place

Should Metro's board meeting be held on a windy aboveground platform in January, or in a subway car with the AC broken in July? (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

2nd place and the toilet paper roller that plays Trump's voice:

Would you rather be stranded on Mars with nothing to eat but potatoes, or remain on Earth forced to follow a strict no-carb diet? (Robert Schechter, Dix Hills, N.Y.)

And the winner of the Inkin' Memorial:

Would you rather be on the wrong side of a wall, or on the wrong side of history? (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.)

Lesser evils: Honorable mentions

You've been asked to leave the choir because, frankly, you're tone-deaf. Do you tell people that you quit over creative differences or because of the group's mediocrity? (John McCooney)

Have you ever hoped your kid's team would fail to make the playoffs so you could have your weekends back again? (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.)

On a transpacific flight, would you rather sit in front of a shrieking toddler who kicks your seat at odd intervals, or between two flatulent sumo wrestlers who argue loudly in Japanese? (Beverly Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

Would you rather be trapped in an elevator with an excessively amorous porcupine or have a Trump-Clinton rematch in four years? (Todd DeLap, Fairfax, Va.)

Would you rather be unable to scratch an itch or unable to see what is wiggling in the bottom of your sleeping bag? (Nancy Della Rovere, Silver Spring, Md.)

My teenager is consistently surly and rude, and says he wishes I weren't his mother. Would putting him up for adoption be considered rewarding bad behavior? (Hildy Zampella, Falls Church, Va.)

For one year, your TV will only show one thing. Will it be a PBS pledge drive or reruns of “The Apprentice”? (Todd DeLap)

Have you ever faked reaching for the “Door Open” button on the elevator only to “fail” to make it work in time? (Jeff Contompasis)

If you could only choose one absurd exaggeration, would you say you are the least racist person in the world or the most respectful of women? (Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.)

Foodies: You can either save one child from starvation, or be able to eat as much pizza and pasta as you want and never gain weight. (Think about that — it'd be like a lifelong pasta party!) (Annie Sawamura, Rochester, N.Y., a First Offender)

Would you rather make lifesaving drugs available to people at an affordable price, or make that second billion for yourself? Oh, sorry, I guess that's too easy. — M. Shkreli (Duncan Stevens)

Would you rather be Florence Foster Jenkins or her accompanist? (Steve Honley, Washington)



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

New contest for Week 1203: You've got the powers

— **Shape-shifting**
— **X-ray vision**
— **Become many times as large as you are**
— **Become many times as small as you are**
— **Having supersonic speed**
— **Imperviousness to heat or cold**

Here's a contest we've done only once before — 19 years ago. The Empress was reminded of that one recently by Loser Christina Courtney, who happened to have won it. Back then, the E's predecessor, the Czar, asked what you would do if you had power of invisibility, ability to breathe fire, etc. **This week: Tell what you would do if you had one or more of the six magical powers listed above.** Your scenario may run as long as 50 words or it can be much shorter. For inspiration, see the results of Week 258 (March 1998) in this week's Style Conversational column at bit.ly/conv-1203.

Submit entries at this website: bit.ly/enter-invite-1203 (all lowercase).

Winner gets the Inkin' Memorial, the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a fine T-shirt with the legend “Pessimism: It's Probably Not That Great.” Donated by Probably Great Loser Jon Gearhart, and modeled here unhelpfully by Valerie Holt.

Other runners-up win their choice of the yearned-for “This Is Your Brain on Mugs” Loser mug or our Grossery Bag, “I Got a B in Punmanship.” Honorable mentions get one of our lusted-after Loser magnets, “Magnet Dum Laude” or “Falling Jest Short.” First Offenders receive a smelly tree-shaped air “freshener” (FirStink for their first ink). Deadline is Monday night, Dec. 5; results published Dec. 25, if you're not naughty (online Dec. 22). You may submit up to 25 entries per contest. See general contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/InvRules. The headline “Whichcraft” was suggested by both Tom Witte and Jesse Frankovich; the honorable-mentions subhead is by Jon Gearhart. 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 CONVERSATIONALThe Empress's weekly online column, published late Nov. 23, discusses each new contest and set of results. Especially if you plan to enter, check it out at wapo.st/styleconv.



PAT MYERS/THE WASHINGTON POST

Happy faces are so Pre-November: Really, you think you have a chance to win this shirt?

You're a man and your house is haunted. Would you rather have your mother's ghost watching everything you do, or your father's ghost, always crying out, “That's not how a man does it; be a man!” (Roger Dalrymple, Gettysburg, Pa.)

For your Monday morning business meeting, would you rather have accidentally downed an Oxycodone or a Viagra? (Dan Helming, Maplewood, N.J.)

Would you rather have Donald Trump's hair or Donald Trump's skin tone? (Jesse Frankovich)

For a full minute, would you rather listen to a rant by someone with an opposite political view, or repeatedly smash your head on your desk? (Note: you are not allowed to do both.) (Jeff Contompasis)

In a bargain with Satan, the funny anecdote you submitted to Reader's Digest in 1982 will finally be published, but for the rest of your life you must shout out incorrect “Jeopardy!” answers at TV screens in airport bars. (Sandy Moran, Santa Rosa, Calif.)

Instagram Introspection:

You're reposting a picture from the weekend of you and your friend.

Do you choose the pre-drinking one where you have a slight double chin, or the one from later where you look excellent but your best friend has spilled beer on her shirt and looks like she's lactating? (Annie Sawamura)

Would you accept an offer to become a movie star even if you knew you would never get another role? What if the movie were “Jackass 3”? (Duncan Stevens)

A genie gives you one wish! However, he says that if he can't grant the wish, he'll do the opposite. What do you wish for (besides a different genie)? (Neal Starkman, Seattle)

If you were trapped in a desert with your worst enemy and you had a canteen with just enough water for only one of you to survive, would you silently drink the water by yourself, out of sight, or would you do so in his face while taunting him with your decision? (Robert Schechter)

Would you rather watch the “Yanni at the Acropolis” videocassette twice in three days with your mother, or attend a book club meeting at Red Lobster with that same mother, at which the novel being discussed is “50 Shades of Grey” — but there are bottomless baskets of cheesy biscuits? (Sandy Moran)

If you could have dinner with either Hillary or Donald, why would you? (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

And Last: Would you make a crude joke at someone else's expense if you had an outside shot at winning a 21-cent refrigerator magnet? (Jesse Frankovich)

Still running — deadline also Dec. 5: Our contest for song parodies that express some kind of hope. See bit.ly/invite1202.

SUNDAY CHALLENGE

BY ALAN ARBESFELD © 2016 CROSSYENERGY SYNDICATE LLC

ACROSS	36 Concession closer?	2 Flatter excessively	18 Proceed	41 What something that doesn't figure makes
1 Underworld character	37 Jennings who won the first Best Actor Oscar	3 “I’ll believe that when I see it!”	23 Len Deighton's “The ___ File”	42 Follow a dietitian's advice
8 Lock-picking implement	38 Comparably lovable	4 Fix firmly (var.)	25 1951 Polo Grounds hero Bobby	43 Overly optimistic
15 Joy who raised Elsa	41 Cozy one	5 Verb ending?	29 Very wide shoe spec	46 “Contact” acronym
16 Mexican fare	44 Product prototypes	6 Kind	31 “___ ain't broke ...”	50 Where Alcoholics Anonymous was founded
17 Requirement for many scanned forms	45 Do ___ (perform alone)	7 Close to home, in a way	33 Former Sanyo competitor	52 Minneapolis suburb
19 Soothing succulent	47 Chinese “way”	8 Save, as for a rainy day	35 React to a punch, perhaps	54 Miss Trueheart of “Dick Tracy”
20 “What'd I tell you!”	48 Inexperienced	9 Gazelle, at times	38 Biblical name thought to mean “father of many”	56 Comic actor Cole of “Angie Tribeca” and “black-ish”
21 Game with a 32-card deck	49 Fills to the gills	10 Expert finish?	39 Main route?	59 Avril Lavigne's “Sk8er ___”
22 Architect intimately connected to Barcelona	51 “Phooey!”	11 Range components (abbr.)	40 “Orphan Black” star Maslany	60 Monk's title
24 Motionless	53 Plenty	12 Epitome of versatility		
26 Kipling's “Follow Me ___”	55 Falsified, as a check	13 Name synonymous with dictatorships		
27 French connections	57 Broad valley	14 Like a falcon of fiction		
28 Concealed	58 Crazy notion			
30 Vinyl players	61 “Yadda, yadda, yadda”			
32 Tightened, as a baseball glove	62 Earliest time			
34 Blasphemous	63 Loggins' 1970s singing partner			
	64 How crowds move			
	DOWN			
	1 Dugout VIP			

Answer to last week

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HOROSCOPE

BY JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! Nov. 27: This year you might be quieter about your feelings than you normally are. Those who are authentic in their caring will see this as a period of tremendous growth for you; they will understand. If you are single, the person you choose to be with right now is likely to be a great time. If you are attached, the two of you are in a process of changing. Mutual respect and openness will recalibrate your bond. Scorpio reads you cold.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) You'll want to make the first move to call someone special; however, this person might decide to surprise you by reaching out to you before you can even pick up the phone.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) You don't mind some controversy here and there. As a result, there are many interesting people in your life. Be social and head out to a favorite outdoor spot.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) You have a tendency to overthink and be extremely practical. You might have a desire to do some work today. A partner could try to start a mini-revolution because of some recent uproar. Avoid getting involved, if you can.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) You could be at a point where your frustration needs an outlet. Go fishing or ice skating, or choose some other sport that would relax you.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

You might be too focused on a family member or a home project. Decorating could be part of the plan for many of you, whereas recuperation will be on the agenda for others.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) An invitation to the movies will be so enticing that you might decide to throw a holiday-related chore to the wind. Many of you will be relieved to greet a change of pace. Know your time constraints, especially if you are trying to squeeze a lot in.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) You might not be able to handle a personal matter the same way you have in the past. Let go of the issue for now. Assess your expenditures for the coming month. Making a budget and keeping it will define your mood for the next few weeks.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) Others see you as someone who is focused on organization. Can you imagine the reaction when you decide to let go of some of this self-discipline? A facet of your personality is likely to connect with a wild friend or family member.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) Take some personal time, far away from your daily life. A little escape here and there will give you a break from your thoughts and help you relax.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) Your vision of possibilities for what you expect from someone could be surprising. Your sense of humor emerges when you see this person's reaction. Your laughter and fun-loving nature will encourage a conversation.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) You'll want to have a long-overdue discussion, but other demands could come into play. Someone might drop by unexpectedly. As a result, you'll probably feel a need to postpone your plans for another day.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) You have a way about you that encourages others to give some thought to many possibilities. Your imagination is a gift to others, because it allows you to help them travel into uncharted territory.

Bipolar friend wants a wedding invite

Ask Amy

AMY DICKINSON

have changed over the years. She was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in our early 20s and will not take medication or go to counseling. Maria prefers to self-medicate with drugs. She's never been one to accept consequences for her actions.

My fiancé strongly dislikes Maria and has no desire to be friends with her. After three opportunities to make a positive impression on him, she failed spectacularly at what was her final shot, when she lied about some drug paraphernalia to a group of people at a party, making scapegoats out of us. She casually told us about it later, as though we were supposed to just laugh it off.

We were deeply insulted and disrespected. That was more than three years ago, and we haven't gotten together since. Now, we're putting together our wedding guest list. Maria messaged me on social media, saying she assumes she's going to get an invitation. I haven't responded.

I don't intend to allow her to attend against my fiancé's wishes and my better judgment.

My head tells me honesty is best, but I'm worried that if I tell

her she's not invited and why, it could send her into a major depressive low and she may hurt herself. Or she may go the other direction and explode at us and harass us. I don't want to ignore the issue, and I don't want to lie to her, so I'm wondering if you and your readers might have any advice on how to let her down gently, but honestly. I want to see her healthy and happy and successful, and I feel great joy for her when something good happens in her life.

Uneasy Friend in the West

Uneasy Friend in the West: Your friend carries substantial challenges through life. It is deeply unfortunate that she does not get help. After three years of not seeing her, are you certain that her behavior hasn't changed? Have you given her opportunities to behave differently?

If you're convinced that you don't want her at your wedding, you will have to be truthful, honest, respectful and compassionate when you deliver the news. Her personal challenges should not hold you hostage. If you genuinely believe that she might hurt herself, enlist a mutual friend or family member of hers to help her through this.

Dear Amy: I agree with people who reflect the idea that

Christmas gifts are out of hand.

Family gift exchanges when everyone is older and with their own families can be a total waste of time and money.

I was the first in my family to suggest an end to this task. I suggested that the best thing we can do is to be together as a family and share our time. In addition to letting everyone off the hook, I wanted to demonstrate to our children that this is the true meaning of the holidays.

We still do the gift thing within our own families, but when the larger group gets together it is about the family. It has proved to be wonderful and fulfilling.

Happy Holidays, Everyone!

Happy Holidays: I am 100 percent behind this idea.

You and your children will see, especially after some older family members are gone, that memories of these holiday experiences are precious and that they last long after the last material gift has been lost, broken, tossed or donated.

Amy's column appears seven days a week at washingtonpost.com/advice. Write to askamy@amydickinson.com or Amy Dickinson, Tribune Content Agency, 16650 Westgrove Dr., Suite 175, Addison, Tex. 75001. You can also follow her @askingamy.

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