

DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

Take-out orders: Winning deletions

BY PAT MYERS

In **Week 1380** we asked the Loser Community to delete one or a block of letters in a word to find something related in the remaining letters. Too many people suggested **Election** — eon — as duration of a campaign season.

4th place:

Build the wall: "Mexico will pay for it." (David Peckarsky, Tucson)

3rd place:

Waistline: How you learned that a glass of zinfandel has more calories than 12 sugar cubes. (Chuck Helwig, Centerville)

2nd place and 'The Moustache Grower's Guide':

Classroom: The gaping difference, it turns out, between a professional elementary school teacher and you. (Jeff Hazle, San Antonio)

And the winner of the Lose Cannon:

Leadership: Service provided to the states by the White House. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Stupendous-INK: Honorable mentions

Antibiotics — they don't actually help in fighting a virus. (Jeff Loren, Seattle)

Crack: If the president does it, it's not a crime. (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase)

Analytical: "I told you I need more time to go over the details!" (Mark Calandra, Wenham, Mass.)

Displeased: What the president's actions have made a lot of Americans. (Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.)

Booster: What many a lifelong Redskins fan has become during the Snyder era. (Raymond Gallucci, Frederick)

Permitence: How the Democrats would have been made to pay if impeachment had succeeded. (Sam Mertens, Silver Spring)

Tyrant: Leader who encourages supporters to "LIBERATE" states whose governors he doesn't like. (Mark Raffman, Reston)

Antiquities: Things men wore around their necks in the days before everyone just gave up and wore pajamas all day long. (Gary Crockett)

Chief of staff: What was left after Trump fired John Kelly. (Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.)

Craftsmanship: "Presenting our new line of particle board furnishings. . . ." (Ben Aronin, Washington)

Disinfectant: How far from your lungs you should keep the Lysol. (Dave Zarrow, Reston; Chris Doyle)

Distance: The Six-Foot Shuffle in the Cereal Aisle (Joanne Free, Clifton, Va.; Pia Palamidessi, Cumberland, Md.)

Egocentric: Like father, like son. (Jesse Frankovich)

Faithful: "Honey, it was just once, and my biological imperative made me do it." (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

Fingernails: Results of stay-at-home French manicures. (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)

Florida man: A soft, tasty treat for alligators. (Duncan Stevens)

Giraffe: An animal composed of irregular parts. (Selma Ellis, Rolling Meadows, Ill.)

Garbage: Where lots of useless junk ends up. (Jeff Hazle)

Grocery shopping: Feeling around the back of the top shelf for any remaining mac and cheese. (Emma Daley, Harrisburg, Pa., a First Offender)

Headache: Sometimes laughter IS the best medicine. (Ben Aronin)

Horoscope: What an astrologer needs to offer for a profitable business. (Raymond Gallucci)

Inject household cleaner: Trump's advice, day by day. (William Kennard, Arlington)

Introversert: Being a couch patriot isn't so hard. (Kathy El-Assal, Middleton, Wis.)

Merge: The most important person in the road, one who's entitled to be first in line. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

Microphone: "I know they asked you the question, Dr. Fauci, but I'll



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

New contest for Week 1384: Of course there are stupid questions!

"Will you hold my face mask for a sec? I have a big sneeze coming on."

"Do you have the peaches flambé for carryout?"

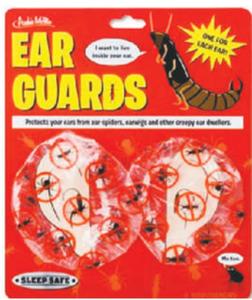
The Style Invitational has been awarding unfabulous prizes for stupid questions since Week 217 in 1997 (one entry that week: "Just where do you get off telling me what to do, Your Honor?" by Elden Carnahan). But surely in recent months, we've developed all new and fascinating varieties. **This week: Give us stupid questions,** especially ones reflecting Our Current Situation. More general ones are welcome, but please no old jokes like why we drive on parkways and park on driveways. Original stupid questions.

Submit up to 25 entries at wapo.st/enter-invite-1384 (no capitals in the Web address). Deadline is Monday, May 25; results will appear June 14 in print, June 11 online.

Winner gets the Lose Cannon, our Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a pair of **Ear Guards**, miniature shower caps that stretch over your ears. Designed expressly for people who are afraid that while they're asleep — or, who knows, in the middle of the day — "ear-spiders, earwigs and other creepy ear dwellers" will take up residence in their ear canals. (Would you call those places auditoriums?) And now, of course, In These Uncertain Times, do YOU want who-knows-what flying down that little auditory funnel? They're from joke-stuff marketer Archie McPhee, and donated by Bill Dorner.

Other runners-up win their choice of our "For Best Results, Pour Into Top End" Loser Mug or our "Whole Fools" Grocery Bag. Honorable mentions get one of our lusted-after Loser magnets, "Too-Weak Notice" or "Certificate of (de) Merit." First Offenders receive only a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). See general contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/InvRules. This contest is based on a suggestion by Loser Dan Helming. The headline "Take-Out Orders" is by Jon Gearhart; William Kennard wrote the honorable-mentions subhead. Join the Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev. "Like" the Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at bit.ly/inkoftheday; follow @StyleInvite on Twitter.

The Style Conversational: The Empress's weekly online column reviews each new contest and set of results; this week it features the Invite's Stupid Questions of Yesteryear. Check out this week's Convo at wapo.st/convo1384.



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A mask doesn't cover your ears, right? This week's second prize.

take all the science ones from here." (Erika Ettin, Washington)

Midwife: Right now, the person I fear is going to deliver my baby. (Drew Bennett, West Plains, Mo.)

Parliament: "No, you DON'T get to vote on when it's your bedtime!" (Beverly Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

Pestilence: Unresponsiveness to a raging infection. (Ann Martin, Brentwood)

Pickpocketing: Social distance is problematic when you're doing this. (Gary Crockett)

Pomptus: A word with no known or apparent meaning, like "covfefe." (Chris Doyle)

Potato fungus: A blight that can ruin a country. (Kevin Dopart)

Popcorn: A guilty pleasure involving watching videos at home. (Tom Witte)

Pragmatism and compromise: What the president really wants from his advisers. (Frank Mann, Washington)

Propaganda: VERY WEAK and clumsy animal that we only think is cute because of the TERRIBLE Chinese government. Many are

saying it caused the coronavirus! — D.J.T. (Duncan Stevens)

Protest: Someone who demands the right to endanger others while endangering others. (Amanda Yanovitch, Midlothian, Va.)

Rectal: Stuart's piano performance wasn't just bad. It was. . . . (Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

Sarcasm: Yes, that IS what he said he was with his medical recommendations. (Michelle Christophorou, London)

Something: A tune you don't know all the words to, like your state song. "Something something something, Maryland my Maryland." (Eric Nelkin, Silver Spring)

Speaker of the house: Just because I'm the only other person here doesn't mean I always want to listen to you. (Emma Daley)

Sunblock: What your day will do if you use SPF 2. (Mark Calandra)

Trump: Alas, the shelves are empty. (Rivka Liss-Levinson, Washington)

Window: Where your newlywed neighbors really ought to hang some curtains. (Danielle Nowlin, Fairfax Station)

Zoom meeting: When your cat blithely jumps onto your laptop during the weekly staff briefing. (John Bunyan, Cincinnati)

And Last: Pathology: The dismal science of figuring out which toilet jokes the Empress will think are funny. (Ira Allen, Bethesda)

And Even Last: Empowered taskmistress: Kind of like Nurse Ratched, but not as sweet. (Steve Smith, Potomac)

Still running — deadline Monday night, May 18: our Questionable Journalism contest. See wapo.st/invite1383.

L.A. TIMES SUNDAY PUZZLE

EDITED BY RICH NORRIS AND JOYCE NICHOLS LEWIS

"ILLEGAL TENDER" By ADAM VINCENT	83 "What are you gonna do about it?"	114 Self-referential "Don't you think?"	16 Main cast of "Parasite," e.g.	46 Time Person of the Year et al.	83 '60s protest gp.
ACROSS	84 Put on	115 Fizzy prefix	17 Discarded old PCs, say	49 Compressed file format	84 Big bores
1 "Please stay"	85 Should really	116 Flyers' org.	20 Finer-tipped	51 Accounts	85 Special guest, perhaps
7 Fallopian tube neighbor	87 Paper money?	117 Witherspoon of "Wild"	23 Well-intentioned humanitarian	52 Ski slope apparel	86 Like many Cubist paintings
12 ___ Beta Kappa	89 Type of drum or dance	118 African pest	28 Like a bairn	53 Stuff oneself silly	87 Fair-hiring inits.
15 Just peachy, in old slang	90 Cassock wearer	DOWN	29 Fried foods, vis-à-vis baked ones	54 Connection	88 "___ me!"
18 Tool for winter fishing	92 Long, long time	1 '70s music genre	32 Georgia airport code	55 Pet control aids	89 Bolivian bungalow
19 "I swear!"	93 Heavenly body?	2 Pie slices, often	33 Dash in a spice rack?	59 Tavern mugful	91 Sorta cousin
20 Royal problem?	94 Bear in Baja	3 Water and air, e.g.	35 Word rarely used without "lar"	63 Tina Fey's boss on "30 Rock"	95 Former fillies
21 Superhero sound effect	95 Seder staple	4 Peter the Great, e.g.	36 Living symbol of happiness	65 Devices made largely obsolete by smartphones	96 More than enough
22 Mad money?	97 Pres. when Sputnik was launched	5 Strategy	37 State tree of Massachusetts	66 NFL ref's review aid	97 "___ We Almost Have It All"
24 Lingerie brand	100 Bad money?	6 Be indebted to	38 No-nonsense	68 Multinational hotel chain	98 Mildly annoyed cries
25 Chapter in history	103 Hindu teacher	7 As expected	40 Underserved punishments	71 Understand	99 Unnering words?
26 Close-knit team	105 Fumble in the Jungle setting	8 Battery count	41 Rely heavily on	74 Like many La Scala productions	101 Swear words?
27 Navel type	107 Celtic Sea land, to the IOC	9 Jai	42 Hermanos, primas, etcétera	77 Bookkeeper's book	102 River through Orsk
28 Grant money?	108 Hard end?	10 Ancient mariner's story, e.g.	43 Ballet-inspired workout method	78 Ovarian hormone	103 Pump, e.g.
30 Takes too much, briefly	109 Smart money?	11 Positive answer	44 Off-mispunctuated word	80 Rent	104 Aftermath
31 The OED's 21,728, e.g.	111 Wonderland drink	12 Besties			106 "Zip—Doo-Dah—"
33 Australian rockers ___ at Work	112 "I would consider ___ honor"	13 Runner's ___			109 Home of many 2010s refugees: Abbr.
34 Shoot for	113 Backwoods type	14 Unfavorably			110 Magician's source of surprises
35 Voice below soprano		15 Feature of club nights for comic wannabes			
36 French toppers					
39 NFL pass rushers, as a unit					
40 Hot money?					
45 They're used for emphasis					
47 Olympian Bolt					
48 Bit of info					
49 Nasty type					
50 Social media pic that may go viral					
51 Intrinsically					
52 Ransom money?					
56 Amtrak track					
57 Talk Like a Pirate Day word					
58 Undoing					
60 "What else could it be?!"					
61 Go head to head					
62 From sunup to sundown					
64 Afterwords					
67 Greek goddess of wisdom					
69 Hawaiian staple					
70 Gamer's complaint					
72 Arrived at, as a conclusion					
73 BuzzFeed reaction button					
75 Wears on					
76 Old money?					
79 Dishes out incautiously					
81 Sister of Rachel					
82 Mercedes-Benz sedan line					

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Answers to last week's puzzle below.

HOROSCOPE

BY MADALYN ASLAN

HAPPY BIRTHDAY | May 17: Outspoken and intense, you go all the way this year. Beware of being too hard on yourself. It is a frustrating but ultimately successful year for your project. If single, you prefer to play solo, but you meet someone who you can trust, and then it is up to you. If attached, you are not easy, but you give joy to your partner, who makes you too laugh with giddiness. Cancer is as attached as you.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
Today you stir up the status quo just to relieve the tedium of daily life. You will be enthused and motivated. You feel better than you have in a while.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
Healing is likely to occur through meditation and worship. You assimilate new ideas and make wise decisions. Make the most of private, quiet time. A creative project could begin to take form while you are enjoying a solitary walk.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
Group activities are rewarding; others have confidence in you. Ask for help with a cherished goal. Others go out of their way to please you. You will develop immediate rapport with new acquaintances.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
Your working environment is sociable and friendly today. Use creative ideas and add a touch of beauty to professional duties. Do not indulge in casual gossip. Loyalties are changing and work politics are especially volatile.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
Music and art from other lands uplift you. It is easy to become friends with those from a different background. Writing and study bring pleasure. It is a good time to enroll in courses and seminars for the summer.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
Today finds you doing research work. Your skills as a detective are sharp, and a mystery is solved. Partners are generous if you need a loan. Invested or inherited resources add to your income.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
You will be concerned about fairness and propriety. Be patient if dealing with government offices or

politicians. Background research and documentation will win them over to your point of view. Take time off to spend with your partner.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
Be patient with those who have not had your educational and other advantages. Someone could be difficult. A helper or assistant talks about moving on. Create neatness and order in your surroundings. Pets are the perfect companions, bringing love and joy.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
You will feel loved and cherished today. Experiment with handicrafts. Creative ideas are at a peak. You will enjoy the company of children and teenagers, too. You are ready to begin a party.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan 19)
Find peace within. There can be external stress or uncertainty in the environment. Ignore controversy and get to know a new acquaintance much better before sharing private details with them.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
You will use words in a clever, convincing way. Be patient with a neighbor or sibling. You will feel the urge to travel a little. A new vehicle, perhaps a bicycle, fits the bill.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
There is a need for more security. You will think hard about adding to your income and acquiring new possessions. Resist the temptation to argue about money with loved ones. The stress it might create is not worthwhile.

Answers to last week's puzzle.

G	A	L	A	H	A	D		P	A	R	R	O	T		A	R	A	B	I	C
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