

The Washington Post

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Style Invitational Week 1030: That cinquain feeling

By [Pat Myers](#), Published: July 18

If a
Tree falls in the
Woods and no one's around,
Does it make a sound? Listen close:
"Oh [expletive]."
(Joseph Romm, *Week 167, 1996*)

For only the second time ever, the Style Invitational showcases the cinquain, a form of poetry you might have last encountered as an elementary school language arts assignment. The form seems to have been invented almost exactly 100 years ago by one Adelaide Crapsey, whose own cinquains were lauded by the Czar, the Empress's predecessor, as "the most effete and vomitacious versifications, poems so ickily precious and pretentious they make haiku look like Kipling." Sample: "Keep thou/ Thy tearless watch/ All night but when blue-dawn/ Breathes on the silver moon, then weep!/ Then weep!" It's a shame that the form hasn't been named for her in tribute.

As in the example above by 342-time Loser and now Famous Climate Change Activist Joseph Romm, a Style Invitational cinquain will not be ickily precious and pretentious. **This week: Write a clever cinquain. The five-line form is straightforward: first line, two syllables; second line, four syllables; third line, six; fourth line, eight; fifth line, two.** Besides needing to be original and printable, there are no other restrictions. You may add a title.

Winner gets [the Inkin' Memorial](#), the Lincoln-statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives, perhaps appropriately for this week's genre, [Pukin' Paul](#), a little solar-power bobblehead whose head bobbles incessantly into and out of a little plastic toilet; it's like having a stomach-turning GIF on your windowsill. Donated by Nan Reiner.

Other runners-up win their choice of a yearned-for [Loser Mug](#) or the ardently desired [Grossery Bag](#). Honorable mentions get a lusted-after [Loser magnet](#). First Offenders receive a smelly, tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). E-mail entries to losers@washpost.com or fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, July 29; results published Aug. 18 (online Aug. 15). No more than 25 entries per entrant per week. Include "Week 1030" 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/inviterules. The subhead for this week's honorable mentions is by Mark Richardson; the alternative headline for the "next week's results" line is by Chris Doyle.. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev.

Report from Week 1026

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in which we asked for "if . . ."/"you might be . . ." jokes in the five categories shown below. Lots of great one-liners; we should have room for more of them next week as well.

The winner of the Inkin' Memorial:

You might be spending too much time at work . . . if your daughter has an annual Bring Daddy to Home Day. (*Chuck Smith, Woodbridge, Va.*)

2. Winner of the [beanie with noodly tubes bursting out of it](#): You might be humor-impaired . . . if you think Marx Brothers movies are metaphors for the struggle of the proletariat to throw off the yoke of oppression from the bourgeoisie. (*Art Grinath, Takoma Park, Md.*)

3. You might need to do some shopping . . . if your newest outfit has a "Made in U.S.A." label. (*Michael Greene, Alexandria, Va.*)

4. If you can't wait to get home and kiss her and hold her and run your fingers through her soft, luxuriant hair, you might be too much of a cat person. (*Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.*)

A might short: honorable mentions

YOU MIGHT BE SPENDING TOO MUCH TIME AT WORK . . .

. . . if your kids refer to you as "that other guy who sleeps next to Mommy." (*Kevin Dopart, Washington*)

. . . if you have to check your computer to find out whether the hands on your watch are pointing to 7 a.m. or 7 p.m. (*Elden Carnahan, Laurel, Md.*)

. . . if you ask your kid, "How's school?" and she says, "I'm not allowed to talk to strangers." (*Denise Sudell, Cheverly; Beverley Sharp*)

. . . if you come home and reflexively flash your ID badge — and the person at the door checks it. (*Seth Tucker, Washington*)

. . . if the office cleaning lady has a honey-do list for you. (*Jim Stiles, Rockville, Md., a First Offender*)

. . . if at Christmastime, your family wears sticky tags that say "Hello! My Name Is . . ." (*Michele Uhler, Fort Washington, Md.*)

. . . if you refer to weekends as "uninterrupted productivity time." (*Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.*)

. . . if your husband has changed your ringtone to [that Gotye song](#). (*Danielle Nowlin, Woodbridge, Va.*)

. . . Wait a minute! There's no such thing as spending too much time at work in D.C. (*John Kupiec, Fairfax, Va.*)

YOU MIGHT NEED TO DO SOME SHOPPING . . .

. . . if your last meal was lemon rinds sauted in ketchup with a side of pickled ginger. (*Doug Hamilton, College Park, Md.*)

. . . if all your Jockeys have, beside the official "convenience slot," five or six other equally serviceable apertures. (*Rob Huffman, Fredericksburg, Va.*)

. . . if the pit stains on your T-shirts are starting to form stalactites. (*Stephen Dudzik, Olney, Md.*)

. . . if your underwear ends up in the dryer lint screen. (*Dave Prevar, Annapolis, Md.*)

. . . if the 7-Eleven won't serve you unless you remove your shirt and shoes. (*Robert Falk, Takoma Park, Md., a First Offender*)

. . . if what you thought was a jar of guacamole is labeled "Miracle Whip." (*Trevor Kerr, Chesapeake, Va.*)

. . . if your current credit rating is "Presumed Dead." (*John Glenn, Tyler, Tex.*)

. . . when you can't wash your toilet paper one more time. (*Bryan Mitra, Salinas, Calif., a First Offender*)

You might "need" to do some shopping if you are my wife, and today is not the Apocalypse. (*Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.*)

YOU MIGHT BE TOO MUCH OF A CAT PERSON . . .

. . . if you interrupt a PowerPoint presentation by batting at the red dot on the screen. (*Ellen Ryan, Rockville, Md.*)

. . . if your cat gets the Fancy Feast and your children get the kibble. (*Peter Jenkins, Bethesda, Md.*)

. . . if, while receiving affection from a loved one, you suddenly bite her hand and kick at her. (*Jason Russo, Annandale, Va.*)

. . . if you had your cat's first hairball bronzed. (*Phyllis Reinhard, East Fallowfield, Pa.; Page D. Styles, Warrenton, Va., a First Offender*)

. . . if you prowl around all night, poop in the neighbor's flower bed and scratch on the door at 4 a.m. to be let in. Or you might just be a drunk. (*Rob Huffman*)

. . . if you take along some of Muffin's shed hair to Macy's, to make sure the color matches the outfit. (*Jill Fosse, University Park, Md., a First Offender*)

. YOU MIGHT WANT TO CUT BACK ON THE COFFEE . . .

. . . if you get restless halfway through one of Usain Bolt's races. (*Jeff Hazle, Woodbridge, Va.*)

. . . if washing down your Dexedrine with 5-Hour Energy doesn't do the trick without a double espresso chaser. (*Rachel Bernhardt, Silver Spring, Md.*)

. . . if you walk into Starbucks and everyone turns and yells, "Norm!" (*Seth Tucker; John Glenn*)

. . . if you watched "Man of Steel" and were unable to get to sleep. (*Mark Raffman*)

. . . if Juan Valdez calls you up and says, "Amigo, we need to talk." (*David Ballard, Reston*)

. . . if when you draw a straight line it comes out looking like Jack Lew's signature. (*Danielle Nowlin*)

. . . if people hold on to you for exercise. (*Dan Steinbrocker, Los Angeles*)

You might want to cut back on the coffee if even Ma Mi Microsoft Word gave up trying to auto-correct you. (*Jeanette Donovan, Alexandria, Va., a First Offender*)

YOU MIGHT BE HUMOR-IMPAIRED . . .

. . . if you've ever said, "Wait, doesn't Costello understand that the first baseman's actual name is Who?" (*Robert Schechter, Dix Hills, N.Y.*)

. . . if you quit reading the Onion because of the depressing headlines. (*Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.*)

- . . . if you thought "[Airplane!](#)" was the worst disaster movie ever. (*Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.*)
- . . . if you've never understood why Curly tolerated such abuse from his brother. (*Neal Starkman, Seattle*)
- . . . if you consider [PeopleOfWalmart.com](#) to be a poignant photo journal of Middle America. (*Kevin Dopart*)
- . . . if you actually took Henny Youngman's wife. (*Jeff Shirley, Richmond; Robert Schechter*)
- . . . if you reject the dehumanizing label "humor-impaired" and insist on being called "a person with a humor impairment" (a condition that is not something to joke about anyway). (*Steve Edw. Friedman, Washington*)

Still running — deadline Monday night: our contest for song parodies about movies. See bit.ly/invite1029.

See the Empress's online column [The Style Conversational](#) (published late Thursday) , in which she discusses today's new contest and results along with news about the Loser Community — and you can vote for your favorite among the inking entries, since you no doubt figured the Empress chose the wrong winner. If you'd like an e-mail notification each week when the Invitational and Conversational are posted online, write to the Empress at losers@washpost.com (note that in the subject line) and she'll add you to the mailing list. And on Facebook, join the far more lively group [Style Invitational Devotees](#) and chime in there.

Next week's results: The Ins and Outs of Buildings, or Architectural Di-Jests, our contest to give matching names to pairs of building features, as in men's and ladies' rooms.

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