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The Style Invitational

By the Empress

Style Invitational Week 1069: Big thoughts, little words; plus more from recent contests



Bob Staake for The Washington Post

By Pat Myers, Published: April 22 | Updated: Thursday, April 24, 5:00 PM

New contest for Week 1069:

It's a small, small word

The Style Invitational

The Style Invitational is The Post's weekly humor/wordplay contest, serving up since 1993 an irreverent mix of highbrow and lowbrow -- haughty and potty -- in genres ranging from neologisms to cartoon captions to elaborate song parodies. A new contest appears at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational every Friday.

Archive

Style Conversational E-mail

There is a name for people Who use big words a lot

But you won't find it in these lines —

For on the list it's not.

It's undeniable that the Empress — along with the Invitational itself — has been known to gravitate toward the sesquipedalian. But we like things plain and simple, too. As long as they're clever and funny.

Fifty-four-time Loser Ben Aronin recently showed us a cartoon from Randall Munroe's nerdily insightful Web comic "XKCD." Headlined "US Space Team's Up

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Live Discussions

There are no discussions scheduled today.

Weekly schedule, past shows

Going Out Guide

Best Bets



(Pat Myers) - A souvenir snow dome from that winter wonderland San Francisco, complete with cable car (it moves) and a presumably chilly mermaid. It's this week's second prize.



Best news photos of the week

A look at some of our favorite images of the past week.

Going Out Guide

Looking for things to do?

Select one or more criteria to search

- Anything
- Anytime
- Anywhere in D.C. area
- Kid-friendly
- Free admission

Get ideas

Goer Five, it's a blueprint-like drawing of the Saturn V rocket, surrounded with explanatory labels. But in a highly un-technical-diagram manner, every word of every label has been taken from a list of "the ten hundred words people use most often": Thus, one tank is described as containing "more breathing-type air," while another has "more funny voice air."

Ben correctly smelled Invite contest, noting that the Losers had recently outpenned a roomful of monkeys while using the words from Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" speech. So this week: **Write a humorous poem of no more than eight lines – it doesn't have to rhyme – using only the top 1,000 words** on Wiktionary.org's list of the most common among 20 million words found in movie and TV scripts. **See the list at bit.ly/invite-1000words.**

You may use a word more than once; and you may add "-s," "-ed" or "ing" to a word. You may not combine two or more of the words into a single word. (You can check your work by just typing into the search bar on the list page and seeing where each word falls on the list, or you can use the nifty tool at splasho.com/upgoer6.

Wait, there's more! It's obviously more of a challenge to use less of the list: **The Empress will award a runner-up-level prize to the inking entry whose least common word is highest on the list;** in the example above, by Washington Post Doggerel Laureate Gene Weingarten, the lowest-ranked word is "list," at 919. If you want to be considered, include that rank number with your entry. It still has to be good and funny enough to get ink.

Winner gets the [Inkin' Memorial](#), the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the

official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives an [excellent little souvenir snow dome](#) from oh-so-snowy San Francisco, donated by Recidivist Prize Donor Cheryl Davis; it contains a little cable car that slides back and forth in the snow when you tip the dome, and, not least, it is topped by a perky mermaid who is not wearing her merbra.

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, either the [Po' Wit Laureate](#) or [Puns of Steel](#). 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, May 5; results

- Best Bets for this weekend
- Best brunches
- Best Ethiopian
- Best burgers
- Best soccer bars

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Wireless Solves Parking Nightmare

published May 25 (online May 22). No more than 25 entries per entrant per week. Include "Week 1069" 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. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev, and click "like" on Style Invitational Ink of the Day at bit.ly/inkofday.

Ole Misc.: The Empress went off this week to progress through her overseas dominions, so this week's column was done in advance. This week we share more honorable mentions from a few recent weeks.

Week 1062: Poems from the headlines

Md. police chief unwittingly quotes joke article while testifying against decriminalization:

Beware this noxious Killer Weed!" the sheriff blustered, lyrical,
Without a clue the article he quoted was satirical.
Some quick research and he'd have known. But did he bother? Nope.
So here's to you, Annapolis! You gave us one straight dope. (Nan Reiner, Alexandria, Va.)

Bacon app for the iPhone:

You're zonked because you stayed out late — your sleep is like a coma;
Then suddenly you're waking to a fabulous aroma!
And next, the sound of sizzling — all thoughts of sleep have flown;
But then your stomach growls and says, "It's just your stupid phone." (Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

Box of gold coins discovered:

Out walking dogs, some couple found
A gold-filled strongbox on the ground;
My dog walks, too, yield something strong,
But my dog's doing it all wrong. (Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

Thousands of people post their own versions of "Let It Go":

You hear that tune from "Frozen"—it starts off nice and low.
"Hey, I could sing that song!" you think. "I'll make a video!
Click 'post' and I'll be famous!" At least that's what you dream,
You'll surely equal Ms. Menzel (and top Adele Dazeem).
But you're not first to think that you should sing that song onstage:
A million screechy takes already howl from YouTube's page.
Another cover of this song? The world may not survive it,
So please: Rethink your dream of fame, and "Let It Go" in private. (Danielle Nowlin, Woodbridge, Va.)

Bitcoin is seen as an ephemeral currency

In the past, money's value was judged with our teeth;
We bit coins to confirm they were real.
But a bitcoin's just data, no gold underneath;
Bitten bits don't make much of a meal. (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.)

Girls diet to create "thigh gap":

This body shape's clearly unwise,
But it's skinniness many girls prize.
They're the teens, it appears,
Who have gaps 'tween their ears
Just as wide as the gaps 'tween their thighs.
(Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

Remains of Europe's largest dinosaur discovered in Portugal:

Many million years ago, way back in times Jurassic,
There lived a Torvosaurus, and his grumpiness was classic.

He weighed five tons, had four-inch teeth — he wasn't like the others;
A carnivore, he loved to eat his wimpy vegan brothers.
They've found this dino's embryo, but who will have the nerve?
The guy who tries to clone him could wind up as an hors d'oeuvre. (Beverley Sharp)

Week 1063: Compare 2 items from a list of 16

The polar vortex and the Arizona legislature: Both can cause suffering with their extreme dips. (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.)

The Arizona legislature and XL jeggings: One occupies the Valley of the Sun; the other accentuates the valley of sin. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.)

A Fleetwood Mac reunion and the Arizona legislature: Although both are old and white, only the Mac says it's okay to go your own way. (Rob Huffman, Fredericksburg, Va.)

Adele Dazeem and a Sochi hotel: Both evoke memories of Johns that didn't do their job. (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.; Jeff Covell, Arlington, Va.)

West African fufu and the Human Barbie: The fufu can be described as doughlike yam. Human Barbie can be described as "Yo, like damn!" (Mike Gips, Bethesda, Md.)

Week 1064: If a moment in history were different

1 million-2 million years ago: What if *Homo erectus* had never flourished? High school anthropology classes would certainly be less amusing. (Jeff Contompasis)

3500 B.C.: If the wheel had not been invented, then Pat Sajak would just be another weird guy to Vanna White. (Edmund Conti, Raleigh, N.C.)

551 B.C.: What if Confucius had been born mute? There would be nothing inside your fortune cookie. (Beverley Sharp)

1513: If Ponce de Leon had found the Fountain of Youth in Florida, then most of the people who live there today would look a lot better in swimsuits. (Mark Raffman)

1585: After a historic event, Elizabeth I is no longer the "Virgin Queen." Sir Walter Raleigh, in a fit of jealousy, calls the New World land he claimed not Virginia but Nicotinia, after his new passion. (Barnaby Roberts, Reedville, Va.)

1752: If Benjamin Franklin had decided that flying a kite in a storm really was pretty stupid thing to do, then wedding DJs would be stuck playing the Steam-Powered Slide. (Todd DeLap, Fairfax, Va.)

1881: What if the construction of the Panama Canal had never started? First, today's environmentalists would bemoan the wasted fuel from shipping around South America and insist that a shorter route be cut through pristine jungle. Second, the world would be bereft of one of its greatest palindromes. (Jeff Contompasis)

Week 1065: Change an "A-and-B" phrase and describe the result

Down and thirty: Having an early midlife crisis. (Neal Starkman, Seattle)

Pluck and cover: Instructions from "The Book of Simple Thanksgiving Recipes."
(Howard Walderman, Columbia, Md.)

Get up and glow: What you should do if you get knocked down by a nuclear bomb.
(Beverley Sharp)

Lover and done with: A one-night stand. (Beverley Sharp)

Rice and 'shine: Must-haves at an Appalachian wedding. (Larry Gray, Union Bridge, Md.)

Rump and coke: Two components of rap videos. (Mike Ostapiej, Mount Pleasant, S.C.)

Bed and butter: The only scene remembered from "Last Tango in Paris." (Jeff Covel)

Alive and, well . . . : Some days are just like that. (Frank Osen)

Still running — deadline Monday night: Our "If I were . . ." contest. See bit.ly/invite1068.

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