

Entertainment

## Style Invitational Week 1085: Eww-venirs

Ideas for gift shops at various sites, plus the winning and Losing stupid questions



From a Beijing gift shop: An acid-rain globe. (Bob Staake for The Washington Post )



By Pat Myers August 14  [Follow @PatMyersTWP](#)

(Click [here to skip down](#) to the results of Week 1081, our stupid-question contest)

**At a Beijing souvenir stand: An acid-rain globe.** (Mike Gips)

**At the State Department gift shop: A gift bottle of whitewash.** (Elden Carnahan)

**At the Studio 54 gift shop: One of those souvenir spoons, but a really little one.**

(Mike Gips)



(Pat Myers/The Washington Post)

A New York Post article this past May, about the new gift shop at the World Trade Center memorial site — featuring right at Ground Zero such tasteful mementos as a “Darkness Hoodie,” a New York Fire Department dog vest and various toy rescue vehicles — was predictably delicious fodder for a few Loser wags of the [Style Invitational Devotees](#) Facebook group. In a thread stretching through dozens of comments, they took turns speculating on the *worst* souvenirs for the shop, as well as for other hallowed sites.

The Devotees hoped there wasn’t a WTC Jenga and proceeded to become even more tasteless in discussing other memorials, way beyond even the Invite pale (which is set at about the Inner Mongolia of

tastefulness). But Loser Mike Gips suggested a way to salvage the idea: **This week: Suggest a humorous — but NOT horribly tasteless — tchotchke, T-shirt, etc., from a real or imagined gift shop at a particular tourist site**, as in the examples above. You’re free to make your entry funnier by adding a humorous description or comment about it. Can you meet the challenge of being funny without being patently offensive? And what’s offensive? It’s a judgment call, of course, and you got your judge right here. In general, recent tragedies tend to

be rawer than ancient history, and in any case it's not necessary to raise the "too soon?" question at all in your entry. Let's just mention this right off: *The results will be published online Sept. 11.* So the Empress has a nifty idea: **No 9/11.**

Winner gets the [Inkin' Memorial](#), the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a souvenirish Gift Pack: a snow dome of the Titanic (commemorating the snowstorm that sank it?) plus a handsome canvas Titanic tote bag with the White Star Line flag; both donated by Cheryl Davis.

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**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](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or, if you were born in the 19th century, fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Aug. 25; results published Sept. 14 (online Sept. 11). No more than 25 entries per entrant per contest. Include "Week 1085" 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](http://wapo.st/InvRules). This week's honorable-mentions subhead and the alternative headline in the "next week's results" line are both by Chris Doyle. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at [on.fb.me/invdev](http://on.fb.me/invdev), and click "like" on Style Invitational Ink of the Day at [bit.ly/inkofday](http://bit.ly/inkofday).

**Note:** In last week's results of the "McGonagall" poems, the Empress dopily referred to the

famously terrible Mr. McG as an Irishman. He was a Scot. Our apologies to all Irishmen.

**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](http://wapo.st/styleconv).

[And from The Style Invitational four weeks ago . . .](#)

So where should we put the stupid-question results? The winner and Losers of Week 1081

In Week 1081 the Empress asked you to give us some stupid questions that would be even funnier than the sincerely stupid ones on the Yahoo Answers site. As with last week's bad-poetry results, some entries were disqualified for not being stupid enough; the best of these was from Rob Huffman: If NASA could put a man on the moon, why couldn't they make a better fake orange juice than Tang?

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The winner of the Inkin' Memorial

How do you say "Don't claw the sofa" in Siamese? (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.)

2nd place and the breast-shaped milk mug

I don't understand those "take a penny/leave a penny" jars near cash registers. If you take somebody's penny and leave one of your own, then what's the point? (Scott Poyer, Annapolis, Md.)

3rd place

Do these new glasses make my brain look big? — [Rick Perry, Austin](#) (Gary Crockett)

4th place

Why do people argue about which came first: the chicken or the egg? Everyone knows you need a chicken to produce an egg! (Frank Mann, Washington)

Past their d'oh date: honorable mentions

Can I still clap along if I feel like a [room without a ceiling](#)? (Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)

I have a friend who's been blind since birth: how do I describe green to her — sort of like blue, but prettier? (Asher Roth, Broadlands, Va., a First Offender)

Is SPF-50 enough protection for when you're on a tanning bed? (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.)

I'm a vegetarian, so I wondered if I need to take that bloody thing out of green olives. (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

What's with this letter from my bank saying there's no money in my checking account? I still have LOTS of checks in my checkbook! (Art Grinath, Takoma Park, Md.)

When the Soviet Union went back to being Russia, did the people have to learn how to speak Russian again after being Soviets all those years? (Irene Plotzker, Wilmington, Del.)

Can I save twice as much on my car insurance if I take 30 minutes? (Mark Raffman)

I know chicken fingers are really made from the toes, since, duh, chickens don't have fingers. But where do the nuggets come from? Is it the stuff they . . . ew, is that even sanitary? (Gregory Koch, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.)

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Was Johns Hopkins University named for twins? (Gary F. Suggars, Baltimore, a First Offender)

Remember Patty Hearst's kidnappers? I know they freed her, but what I want to know is did they ever liberate [Symbia](#), or was it taken over by another country? (Mike Duffy, Butte, Mont.)

Why would [two years of damning e-mail](#) simply disappear? (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.)

My prescription bottle says, "Do not operate heavy machinery." Will Obamacare pay for someone to do my laundry? (Robyn Carlson, Keyser, W.Va.)

How do all my neighbors get their dogs to poop into their Washington Post bags? I can never get the timing right with Ginger. Does anyone else have this problem, or is it just cockapoos? (Ivars Kuskevics, Takoma Park, Md.)

Where I drive into the parking garage at work, a bar hangs down that says "Clearance 6'8". It would be a lot higher without the bar. Why don't they just take it down? (Charlene Fischer Jehle, Ocean View, Del., a First Offender)

Can anyone tell me where Nota Republic is? I can't find it on a map and I need to go there before the bank takes my car. (Mike Ostapiej, Mount Pleasant, S.C.)

If your life flashes before your eyes when you're dying, well, suppose you did a whole lot of stuff — will it be a really long flash, or it just doesn't get all the way through, or what? (Steve Honley, Washington)

I want to see "A Christmas Carol" at Ford's Theatre, but do you really think it's safe? I heard they had a bad incident there. (Rob Wolf, Gaithersburg, Md.)

Has anyone brought a stepladder up Mount Everest to set a new record? (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

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Is it insensitive to tell light-bulb jokes to a blind person? (Dave Letizia, Alexandria, Va.)

If I take several pills at once for different problems, how does my stomach know where to send each one? (Kel Nagel, Salisbury, Md.)

My neighbor got a shiatsu massage chair — why would anyone buy special equipment just to rub the belly of a hairy little dog? (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park, Md.)

Why do people sing “Take Me Out to the Ball Game,” when they’re already at the ballgame? (John Kupiec, Fairfax, Va.)

Shouldn’t Fiber One cereal be called Fiber Two? (William Kennard, Arlington, Va.)

Why are there no seats at bus stops that have “No Standing” signs right on the pole? (John McCooey, Rehoboth Beach, Del.)

Since dogs can hear sounds humans can’t, might they be talking to us, but we just can’t hear them? (Warren Tanabe, Annapolis, Md.)

If you get abducted and probed by an alien, and it doesn’t use protection, can you get AIDS? (Josh Feldblyum, Philadelphia)

Where can I buy a cheap defibrillator? It’s really kind of urgent. (Gregory Koch)

How can you tell a male hurricane from a female? (Bird Waring, Larchmont, N.Y.)

The Egglund’s Best package advertises “Vegetarian Fed Hens.” Does that mean the hens are fed by vegetarians, or are they fed vegetarians instead? (Jeff Contompassis)

If our government owes all this debt, why doesn’t it just make more money — I mean, hello, it OWNS A MINT. (Fred Gray, Springfield, Va., a First Offender)

Where does The Style Invitational get its jokes from? Is it the Internet? I bet it is, because

sometimes I see the same stuff there that's in the Invitational. (Luther Jett, Washington Grove, Md., a First Offender)

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**Still running — deadline Monday night: Our annual Limerixicon limerick contest. See [bit.ly/invite1084](http://bit.ly/invite1084).**

**Next week: Band on the Pun, or LollapaLosers, our contest to slightly alter the name of a band or music performer and describe the result. See [bit.ly/invite1082](http://bit.ly/invite1082).**

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