



Entertainment

## Style Invitational Week 1133: 'Hew ready? Poems even the rhythm-deaf can write

A contest for clerihews, and the winning verses featuring spelling bee words



Suffering fools: The muses for this week's sample clerihew. (Bob Staake for The Washington Post)

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By Pat Myers July 16 [Follow @PatMyersTWP](#)

(Click [here to skip down](#) to the results of Week 1129, our contest for poems using spelling bee words.)

**Not one but two football players, C.J. Wilson and Jason Pierre-Paul,  
Lost fingers playing, but not playing ball.  
They cost themselves plenty because they were jerks  
With fireworks.**

While judging the contest whose results run today, the Empress waded through a mire of verses (not the ones that got ink, of course) that seemed to *want* to have a meter, some recognizable rhythm, but instead went floundering around like a team of draft horses that started galumphing into each other within their traces. But the ever-resourceful E did not despair: Why not *use* our abundant resources of bad meter for a poetry genre that embraces it? Hence our second-ever contest for clerihews, our first since 1995. Named for its inventor, the British humorist Edmund Clerihew Bentley (1875-1956), **a clerihew is a humorous four-line rhyming poem about a person whose name is mentioned in the first line; in fact, the name must be at the end of that line (or constitute the whole line) so that it has to rhyme with something. The rhyme structure (and we don't want ["lazy" rhymes](#)) is AABB: the first line rhymes with the second, the third with the fourth.** While the rhymes have to be valid, the meter can be off, as in the example above by [Gene Weingarten](#), who as a passionate New York Giants fan is passionately angry at Jason Pierre-Paul. You may use either fictional or real people, and the Empress tends to favor subjects who've been in the news recently, though she's made many exceptions for the oldies.

Winner gets the [Inkin' Memorial](#), the Lincoln statue bobble head. Second place — in a salute to E.C. Bentley — receives another in our Cup Size series, this one marginally more printable: It's a U.K. [souvenir shot glass](#) featuring a pair of voluptuous glass breasts barely covered by a flag-

motif bikini top. Call it a Union Jill. Donated by Style Invitational Devotee Ellen Goldlust.



Just right for a nip of British gin: This shot glass is this week's second prize. (Pat Myers/The Washington Post)

**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 designed by Bob Staake: either "[The Wit Hit the Fan](#)" or "[Hardly Har-Har.](#)" 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 night, July 27; results published Aug. 16 (online Aug. 13). You may submit up to 25 entries per contest.

Include "Week 1133" 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). The headline for this week's results is by Chris Doyle; the honorable-mentions subhead was sent in by both Nan Reiner and William Kennard. A cleriheW contest was suggested by both David Smith and Michael Greene. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at [on.fb.me/invdev](https://on.fb.me/invdev). "Like" the Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at [bit.ly/inkofday](http://bit.ly/inkofday).

**The Style Conversational:** The Empress's weekly online column, published late Thursday afternoon, discusses each new contest and set of results. Especially if you plan to enter (she'll share the results of the Invite's first cleriheW contest), check it out at [wapo.st/styleconv](http://wapo.st/styleconv).

[And the results of the Style Invitational contest posted four weeks ago . . .](#)

## **A SPELL OF BARD LUCK: THE RESULTS OF WEEK 1129**

In [Week 1129](#) we put up a list of 50 stumpers from this year's National Spelling Bee and asked

for short poems featuring them. Many Loserbards noted that “epithalamium” has that ONE-two-three, TWO-two-three meter — a double dactyl; this week’s Inkin’ Memorial winner is the best of them, in its knitted-highbrow/lowbrow glory.

4th place:

**HIPPOCREPIFORM**, *horseshoe-shaped*

Dear John: While stuff that’s hippocrepiform  
is sometimes known to take the world by storm—  
the playground swing, the basic yoga pose,  
the seam that joins the legs of pantyhose,  
the handle of the hanging kitchen spoon,  
the “C,” the horseshoe (duh!), the crescent moon—  
the truth, my darling, is that your appendage  
was better when it had a lot less ... bendage.

(Melissa Balmain, Rochester, N.Y.)

3rd place:

**HOOROOSH**, *a wild, hurried or excited state or situation*

**Under D.C., (as sung by Sebastian the Crab from “The Little Mermaid,” and on [a video by the writer](#))**

[WMATA](#), dey always pleadin’; dey beg me to take de train.

Now I goin’ to miss my meetin’; de subway is late again.

We trudge down into de station ’cause de escalator broke.

De Center of Operation: hooroosh as we fill wid smoke!

Under D.C., under D.C.! Endin’ location: your destination, or destiny?

Cellphone no good in subway car. What do I need dis hassle far?

I’m not a goober; I’m callin’ Uber. Under D.C. (Nan Reiner, Alexandria, Va.)

2nd place and the books “Nature’s Nether Regions” and “Art of the Fart”:

**CIBARIAL**, *referring to food*

My passions are cibarial  
From breakfast time till bed.  
Advisers actuarial  
Predict I'll soon be dead.  
"I love my weight!" I tell them straight,  
And advocate they try it:  
If thin is man's intended state.  
Then why is "die" in "diet"?  
(Stephen Gold, Glasgow, Scotland)

And the winner of the Inkin' Memorial:

**EPITHALAMIUM** (EP-i-tha-LAME-ium), *a song composed for a wedding*

Higgledy piggledy  
Iggy Azalea  
Rocks out her wedding to  
Nick in July,  
Rapping her vows in an  
Epithalamium:  
"Beg for it, baby, from  
[I-G-G-Y.](#)"  
(Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

Spelling B-pluses: honorable mentions

**MINHAG** (MIN-hog), *Jewish custom that has developed over time rather than being decreed*

At my Seder there's no paschal lamb,  
As Reform as can be? That I am!  
So my family minhag:  
A fat "it's no sin" hog!

Want a slice of my Passover ham? (Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)

**COLLUTORIUM**, *mouthwash*

A man went inside an emporium

And purchased some cheap collutorium.

Unlike Listerine,

This was eau de latrine.

He's listed today In Memoriam. (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

**EPITHALAMIUM**, *a wedding song*

Blubbery glubbery,

Edith of Downton was

Left at the altar, her

Heart full of gloom;

Quickly they wrote a new

Epithalamium —

Guess what they titled it?

“There Goes the Groom.” (Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

Stephen's believin'! Plus

Anthony Kennedy,

Sonia, Elena, and

Ruth Bader G.:

SCOTUS is singing the

Epithalamium

Nature composed for my

Partner and me! (Nan Reiner)

**SCYTALE** (either “sittily” or “sightly”), *a coded message written on a strip of leather, then decoded when wrapped around a pole*

Spartans found it worked so prettily:

Secret writing with a scytale.

They would wind long strips of leather

Round a staff; when put together,

Staff and strips bore information.

So “scytale,” in my translation,

In terms of how it does the trick,

Is simply this: a memory stick. (Hugh Thirlway, The Hague)

For this message (I'll ask you politely)

Please wrap it around the stick tightly;

If it's loose on the staff,

The receiver will laugh.

“I can't read this — it's much too un-scytale.”

(Ann Martin, Falls Church, Va.)

**SAMADHI** (sa-MAH-di), *a state of intense concentration*

A yogi's meditation has him

Feeling an orgasmic spasm

In an out-of-body trance.

Oh, what a samadhi-pants!

(Chris Doyle)

**MAMALIGA** (mama-leega), *a Romanian cornmeal dish*

When I first heard “mamaliga,” I almost felt a rush!

I thought it sounded sexual, but now I know that's mush. (Howard Walderman, Columbia, Md.)

**COCOZELLE** (coco-zelly), *a zucchini-like squash*

The doctor was astonished;

His patient he admonished:

“Cocozelle is delish

Sliced or diced, served with fish.”

So tell me truthfully, my dear,

How'd this one get up your rear?" (Lois Bartis, MD, McLean, Va., a First Offender)

**TARTAREAN** (either "tarta-RE-an" or "tar-TAIR-ean"), *hellish*

It figures: When you hardly ever floss—  
a wicked lapse, in your hygienist's view,  
because it boosts your risk of dental loss—  
and then she scrapes your plaque and scours your goo  
to save you from a grin that's European,  
the torture's positively tartarean. (Melissa Balmain)

In Hades, the pit most tartarean's  
Reserved for pedantic grammarians. (Chris Doyle)

**EPHELIDES** (e-FELL-e-deez), *freckles*

A fella sees  
Penelope's  
Ephelides.  
"The hell a' dese? Some yella fleas?  
Let's quell-a these —  
Umbrella, please!"  
(Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.)

**VESPIARY**, *a nest of wasps*

Persons should be very wary  
Getting near a vespiary.  
Do not denigrate the wasp:  
It can put you in the hosp.  
(Mae Scanlan)

**ACRITARCH**, *a kind of small fossil*



Hark, hark! The acritarch  
At Heaven's gate sings;  
Been waiting here three million years,  
Three million falls and springs.  
It's time for you to let me in  
To join your works colossal.  
If your eye is on the sparrow,  
Then it should be on this fossil.  
(Edmund Conti, Raleigh, N.C.)

**PORWIGLE**, *a tadpole*

(Sung to "[Titwillow](#)" by Gilbert and Sullivan)

I stuck some bait on a little brass hook  
Porwige, porwige, porwige.  
Big eyes, a mouth, a tiny tail shook  
Porwige, porwige, porwige  
Baby frog hatchlings are ugly as I,  
Slimy, fat commas to throw when I "fly"  
But it also describes a tight dress on a guy:  
Poor wiggle, poor wiggle, poor wiggle. (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park, Md.)

**HIPPOCREPIFORM**, *horseshoe-shaped*

The hourglass — a figure that most males find appealing;  
But pear-shapes, with protruding hips, for some evoke more feeling.  
I love the hippocrepiforms, so flaunt 'em if you got 'em  
Round and bulging at the top and open at the bottom. (Rob Cohen, Potomac, Md.)

**Still running — deadline Monday night: our contest for bogus history trivia. See [bit.ly/invite1132](http://bit.ly/invite1132).**

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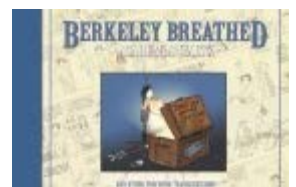
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