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Entertainment

Style Invitational Week 1084: Fi-, fo- ... go! It's Limerixicon XI

Plus the winning bad poems from our McGonagall contest



Perhaps it's not the best demonstration of the term "finicky," but we like the exquisite balance of the tentacle. (Bob Staake for The Washington Post)

By **Pat Myers**, Style Invitational editor
August 7, 2014

(Click [here to skip down](#) to the bad-poetry results of Week 1080)

**Little Junior's a finicky kid,
So we keep foods' identities hid
With deception and games
And exotic-type names —
"Calamari" sounds better than "squid."**

(Brendan Beary, Week 678, 2006)





This week's winning and Losing Style Invitational entries, the results of Week 1080, are masterpieces of Bad Poetry, not only rife with dumb or inappropriately stated subject matter, but often also comically failing to rhyme correctly or stay even close to meter.

The Empress hopes you've had quite enough of that looseness, this cavalier disregard for structure. Because it's time for you cavaliers to saddle up and commence a crisp canter: It's our 11th Limerixicon, our annual tip of the cursor to [OEDILF.com](#), the Omnificent English Dictionary in Limerick Form, as founder Chris Strolin and his band of volunteer writers and editors continue their quest to create one or more limericks featuring every word in the English language, one sliver of the alphabet at a time.

Last August, the 'Dilfers had passed the 80,000 mark as they worked on



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words beginning fa-; now more than 87,000 have been approved (predicted finish date: Dec. 12, 2043). Let's give them some more material: **Supply a humorous, previously unpublished limerick significantly featuring any English word, name or term beginning with "fi-" through "fo-,"** as in the example above by Brendan Beary, which he submitted as part of a very cool two-man "[Limerick Smackdown](#)" with fellow Hall of Fame Loser Chris Doyle. See [wapo.st/InviteLim](#) for our fairly strict rules on limerick rhyme and meter (in a nutshell: "perfect" rhyme, and a strong "hickory-dickory-dock" rhythm in Lines 1, 2 and 5; a "dickory-dock" in Lines 3 and 4; plus "weak" syllables on either side). See [OEDILF.com](#) about submitting limericks there after this contest is over.

Winner gets the [Inkin' Memorial](#), the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a [talking Pee-wee Herman doll](#) ("What's up? Made you look"; "I know you are, but what am I"), which was awarded to Elden Carnahan for his win of Week 82 in 1994, and regifted to us this year, perhaps having been played with long ago by his now-married daughters. It's a little worn — so give it a rest, eBay vultures — and you have to control the string on Pee-wee's back to get discernible words. But what's more important is that his arms move just fine.

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, Aug. 18; results published Sept. 7 (online Sept. 4). No more than 25 entries per entrant per contest. Include "Week 1084" 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](#) . This week's honorable-mentions subhead is by Chris Doyle; the alternative headline in the "next week's results" line is by Jeff Contompasis. 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](#).

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](#) .

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

Ode dear! The bad poetry of Week 1080

Week 1080 was a tribute to the 19th-century-Irishman Scotsman* William Topaz McGonagall, thought by many, even in his own time, to be the worst poet in the English language. McGonagall specialized in wildly overwrought musings on some tragedy or other, almost always in shaky meter, strained rhyme and just plain bad writing. So we asked for bad poems about "a modern tragedy" à la McGonagall — and wouldn't you know it, a bunch of them were just too *good*: They were on silly subjects, true, but they were clever and polished with good rhymes and meter, like these last lines of Nan Reiner's lament for a clogged toilet:

I seek the flush, the filling rush, blue waters sanitizing;
Instead I see late parts of me, inexorably rising.

I turn my head and flee in dread: I know, too well, what's coming.
I'd barter now three years of Law for just one course in Plumbing.

**The Empress's embarrassing slip was reported to her attention by reader*

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Clark Irwin of Alexandria, Va., who noted her error thus:
The wretched poet McGonagall was no Irishman, but a SCOT.
It's a distinction any factchecker ought
in a passing fit of sobriety to have caught
if only his or her services had been sought.

The winner of the Inkin' Memorial:

On Not Being Invited to Kim and Kanye's Wedding

I knew it was coming, keeping up's been my passion
That special invite from the family Kardashian.
When it didn't arrive, as yet another week started,
My heart, it was rent, and my soul near departed.
So I went to my sister's third wedding in Torrance
Instead of that very special one in the city of Florence.
And the memory of my sister's party, OMG, how it pales,
With the one where my heart was, in the Chateau de Versailles.
(Thomas Blain, Burke, Va., a First Offender)

2nd place and the squeeze-a-poop gorilla key chain from the National Zoo:

The Hello Kitty Disposable Travel Mug Mishap

Baseball fans have an improbable
Liking for souvenir heads that are bobbable.
Recently, Dodgers fans were booing,
Though the team avoided losing.
What turned them into such grouches
Was being given vouchers
Exchangeable for one Hello Kitty
Disposable mug, which is pretty disappointing.
(Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

3rd place

Whenst Eldrick?

Thy dimpled orb did once flyeth true
Nestling on yon dewy, verdant acreage
Yet now, pesky holes, they do your ball eschew
As errant putts yield to steamy-eared rage.
Could it be o'er now, toothless Tiger W.?
For a barn's broad side fears not your barrage.
(Jeff Shirley, Richmond)

4th place

Tragedy in Brazil

A terrible thing has happened in Rio de Janeiro
That attracted a lot more attention than the proverbial fall of a sparrow.
And that is, the World Cup was not won by Brazil,
Which, in that vast extremely large country, didn't sit well.
The U.S. of America didn't win it either,
Which upset most of us who live here, including our leader.
Instead, the coveted Cup was won by Germany.
Criminy!
(Mae Scanlan, Washington)

No scan do: honorable mentions

W I N N E R

Train Delay

Here we sit on the motionless Metros,
Trying to get to see the Nats-O's.
Oh, great — the lights just went off,
In the dark someone went cough.
To add to my wrath/gloom,
Now I have to go to the bathroom.
If by Metro we are kept delayin',
They'll call the game on account of the train.
(Jonathan Greene, Ellicott City, Md., a First Offender)

NPR Cancels My Favorite Show

My soul is in a position of prostration
I remain heartbroken over the cancellation of "Talk of the Nation"
TOTN was an acronym that I adored
But now from the lovely theme music I am, and we all are, unmoored
The callers would phone in
In hopes of speaking with Neal Conan
The super info and topics; on Wednesdays was "Political Junkie"
Now this universe (from the radio) will get no smarter; we are a mass of dial-
spinning flunky.
(Sandy Moran, Santa Rosa, Calif.)

On Discovering There Are No Condiments at the Cookout

O, poor, naked hot dog, with nothing to embellish it!
No ketchup, no mustard. I do not relish it.
(Frank Osen)

The Fall of Eric Cantor

Of all sad tales of song or pen,
I think the saddest happened on June 10, 2014, when
I could no longer bring home the bacon,
Because I lost my primary to some guy who teaches at Randolph-Macon.
No more am I House majority leader!
Now I just hang around and refill the bird feeder,
Even though no one was better at blasting Obama over some petty spat!
How could the voters of my district have wanted a bigger Brat?
(Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

Ode to Odes

Fair poesy, alas, you're now archaic;
You're way down there on the charts with Aramaic.
Once anapests and iambs were ubiquitous,
But now poets write any ol' way, and it's ridiculous!
Their "rhymes" could make you cry (like chopping onions);
Their metric feet are suffering from bunions.
I wish I'd been around in days of Milton,
'Cause poets these days sound more like Paris Hilton.
(Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.; this was almost disqualified for the
excellent "bunions" line)

Not Quite 'Modern,' but . . .

The Titanic hit an iceberg, and lots of people died.
People drowned, and those who didn't cried.
It was cold in the water, which isn't very funny.
And then there's that Céline Dion song that
Kept going on and on like the Energizer Bunny.
(Christopher Lamora, Los Angeles)

The Stolen TSHermesK Mishmash

The Stolen Tillamook Murders

'Twas a muensterous crime, when some curd made a-whey
With three Tillamook Cheese vans around Monterey.
Cops were soon on the queso, and right on his heels,
They ricotta all of the hijacked cheese wheels.
The thief smelled a trappe, said "Cheese it!" And bleu,
Leaving one stolen van, burned when fondue.
But police still Maytag him, now that they're tracking
Al "Mas" Carpone, for the Monterey-jacking.
(Frank Osen)

Tapped Out

The good ship Lollipop has sunk,
its bow is breached, its hull is torn,
the mighty craft is shipwrecked junk,
and now my heart's forlorn.
Oh for those innocent days of yore
when life was pure and simple,
but Shirley Temple comes no more:
she's dead down to each dimple.
(Robert Schechter, Dix Hills, N.Y.)

The (Rear) End

Her iPhone jammed, like raspberries mashed upon the rocks,
As she swiveled her hips, not like those round things on rose bushes,
To take another selfie of her bulbous buttocks,
The mounds the world's seen most among all tushes.
A day could not go by, as days will do, without a shot of Kim's gluteus max.
Her pimping Mommy could ne'er relax if such a horror would occur,
It was her bread and butter (or at least her butt) that paid the taxes
And brought fame to the talentless, embalmed facade like hers.
(Phyllis Reinhard, East Fallowfield, Pa.)

The Loss of William Topaz McGonagall

We mourn the death of this Scottish master of rhyme and acclaimed
tragedian;
No poet of his caliber shall ever on Earth be seen again.
To celebrate the genius from the brain that is William McGonagall,
What will allow me to emulate his style of verse? A gin and tonic'll.
(Matt Monitto, Bristol, Conn.)

Team Loser's Tragic Loss in the Washington Post Hunt

A picture of Massachusetts was all that was needed
To send the winning text and have victory to us ceded.
What a day it would have been to have some winning Losers
But those who write for fun, you see, are not the quickest movers.
(Jennifer Dickey, Silver Spring, Md.)

Still running — deadline Monday night: Our contest for humorous phone apps. See bit.ly/invite1083.

Next week's results: **It's the Stupidity, Stupid**, or **64 Dullard Questions**, our contest for dumb questions like some of those posted to Yahoo Answers. See bit.ly/invite1081.



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Pat Myers



Pat Myers is editor and judge of The Style Invitational, The Washington Post's page for clever, edgy humor and wordplay. In the role since December 2003, she has posted and judged more than 700 contests. She also writes the weekly Style Conversational column and runs the Style Invitational Devotees page on Facebook. [Follow](#)

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Opinion

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Who stood tall?

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'Trump recently sought his lawyers' advice on possibility of pardoning Manafort, Giuliani says

Trump attorney Rudolph Giuliani said Trump was seeking advice on pardons generally, and was upset that Manafort faced criminal exposure on charges unrelated to his work on Trump's campaign.

