

Style Invitational Week 1198: Give it to us straight

'Translate' an insincere quote into 'plain English'; plus the winning bogus word derivations



Ad in the paper: "Our biggest sale of the year!" Translation: Nobody bought our sweaters. (Bob Staake/For The Washington Post)

By Pat Myers • Entertainment October 20

(Click [here to skip down](#) to the winning totally bogus word derivations from Week 1194)

Ad: "Our biggest sweater sale of the year!" |

Translation: "Nobody bought our sweaters!" (Dave Prevar, Week 897)

Actual quote: "The economy was in strong condition going into the recent period of volatility, and while certain sectors like housing are undergoing a transition, overall economic fundamentals remain solid."

Translation: "The poo hasn't hit the fan — yet." (Susan Shapiro, Week 729)

You don't have to be from Washington to be used to the language of obfuscation and spin, though we in the D.C. area tend to be especially fluent. It's been six years since the Invite's last of several contests to translate quotes into "plain English," and our need for interpreters is just as dire. **This week: Take any sentence from an article or ad in any publication dated Oct. 20 to Oct. 31 — or from an online article dated within that period — and translate it into "plain English,"** as in the examples above from 2010 and 2007. (In the past, the Empress was caught also giving ink to snarky comments on the quotes even if they weren't really "translations," such as Dion Black's runner-up from Week 897: Quote: "If you are out and about in a kilt, then remember to show some decorum." PE: And decorum is the only thing you'd better be

showing.)

Please say where the sentence came from, along with the date. For more guidance and to see the results of previous “plain English” contests, see this week’s Style Conversational column at bit.ly/conv1198 (posted late Thursday afternoon).



Push a button on her throat and you get her recorded scary laugh: this week's second prize.

Submit entries at this website: bit.ly/enter-invite-1198 (all lowercase).

Winner gets the [Inkin' Memorial](#), the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives — just in time for the election to be over — a [Hillary Laughing Pen](#): Press a button on Hillary's throat and her jaw moves up and down as a recorded Clintonian cackle — her own voice — bursts forth. Donated by Loser Dave Prevar, who also gave us the analogous Donald Talking Pen that we offered in [Week 1196](#).

Other runners-up win their choice of a yearned-for [Loser Mug](#), the older-model “[This Is Your Brain on Mugs](#)” mug or our new Grossery Bag, “[I Got a B in Punmanship](#).” Honorable mentions get one of our lusted-after Loser magnets, “[Magnet Dum Laude](#)” or “[Falling Jest Short](#).” First Offenders receive a smelly tree-shaped air “freshener” ([FirStink](#) for their first ink). Deadline is Monday night, Oct. 31; results published Nov. 20 (online Nov. 17). You may submit up to 25 entries per contest. See general contest rules and guidelines at [wapo.st/InvRules](#). The headline for this week’s results is by Chris Doyle; the honorable-mentions subhead is by Tom Witte. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at [on.fb.me/invdev](#). “Like” the Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at [bit.ly/inkofday](#); follow [@StyleInvite](#) on Twitter.

● **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, check it out at [wapo.st/styleconv](#).

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

RECKLESS DERIVERS: REPORT FROM WEEK 1194

In [Week 1194](#) we asked for fictitious etymologies, bogus explanations of where various words came from. Sorry to many of you, but we’d already heard the one about “Congress” meaning the opposite of “progress.”

4th place:

Pokémon (from Jamaican slang *pokey mon*, or jailer): Fictional beings that capture and lock up the brains of nonfictional beings. (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.)

3rd place:

Novice (*no* + Latin *vice*, corruption, deficiency): A person who has yet to learn the wrong way to do something. (Warren Tanabe, Annapolis, Md.)

2nd place

and the [collection of New York Magazine Competition entries](#):

Autumn (from *aauggh*, despair + *tummy*): The time of year when one gets a queasy feeling that one’s first-place team will yet again go down to ignominious defeat. (Nan Reiner, a passionate Nationals fan now in Boca Raton, Fla.; this entry was written Oct. 4, nine days before The Inevitable)

And the winner of the Inkin' Memorial:

America: Concatenation of the Spanish *amé* and *rica*; rough translation: "I love the wealthy." (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.)

ApocryFail: honorable mentions

Orangutan (from *orange* + *tan*): A big animal classified as critically endangering. (Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.)

Euphrates (Greek *eu-*, good + Old English *phrate*, afraid): An area of the world we are good and scared of. (Warren Tanabe)

Lavatory (Latin *lave*, wash + *Tory*, monarchist): During the Revolution, angry colonists would dunk British "loyalists" heads in filled chamber pots as a punishment. (Rob Huffman, Fredericksburg, Va.)

Offhand: Casually negligent. First used to describe a Saudi man who "forgot" to pay for a pomegranate. (Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)

Grammar (from French *grand-mère*): "Proper" usage as defined by old people. (Mark Raffman)

Football: From the 13th-century Flemish *ffut*, the sound made by a collapsing pig bladder when kicked, an event that tended to happen several times per game. (Bob Turvey, Bristol, England)

Politics: Soon after the advent of democracy in Athens, Pericles coined the term from *poly* (many) and *tikia* (twitches): something involving a large number of jerks. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Decadent: From Greek *deka-*, ten + French *dent*, tooth: Linguistic relic from a time when having only a few remaining teeth indicated a lifestyle rich in costly sugar and chocolate. (Daniel Galef, Montclair, N.J.)

Dowager: (From *Dow Jones* + *-ager*): An elderly woman with considerable stock market assets. (Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.)

Committee (Latin *com-*, together + *mitty*, from Walter Mitty) A group fantasizing that it will accomplish something. (Warren Tanabe)

Nominal: Trifling, insignificant. From the mishearing of an expression as "It cost a nominal egg." (Chris Doyle)

Contract (*con*, abbrev. of *convict* + *tract*, leaflet): A document you probably shouldn't sign. (Neal Starkman, Seattle)

Mystery: From the Middle Ages, an ephemeral apparition often called "Mr. E," observed at numerous crime scenes but never apprehended. (Jack McBroom, Fort Valley, Va.)

Offend (*off* + *end*): To treat someone inconsiderately, as if pushing a person off the end of a crowded bench. (Skip Livingston, Hopewell, N.J.)

Most people think **Delmarva** is an acronym of the three adjoining states. But it actually is a Spanish expression, “of where the sea goes”; while the Spanish never settled this area, they would empty their bilges so the ocean would wash away their effluence. (Bird Waring, Larchmont, N.Y.)

Diagnose: From the ancient practice of assessing a patient’s condition through the sense of smell, particularly for urinalysis. A far less popular method was to diagtongue. (Jeff Contompasis)

Uranus, the seventh planet from the Sun, so called because it was regarded as the original (*ur*) back end of the solar system. (Hugh Thirlway, The Hague)

Technology (Greek *tech*, skill + *no* + *-logy*, discourse) A means to avoid interacting with people. (Warren Tanabe)

A French journalist observing a U.S. political party gathering in 1916 observed that the proceedings were full of *vent* (wind); ever since they have been called “**conventions.**” (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

Donnybrook (diminutive of *Donald*, + *brook*, stream): Argument engendered by babbling nonsense. (Nan Reiner)

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Cosmology (*Cosmopolitan* magazine + *logy*, sluggish): The study of why the universe needed 13 billion years of foreplay before it had its first Earth-shattering organism. (Gary Crockett)

Incomprehensible, from *income*, earnings + *prehens*, grasping, as in “The candidate’s tax plan is incomprehensible.” (Steve Langer, Chevy Chase, Md.)

Furniture (*fur* + *niture*, to knit): a place where animals deposit and interweave their hair. (Lynne Larkin, Vero Beach, Fla.)

And Last: Invite (Latin *in-*, not + Latin *vitae*, life): Having no life. (Warren Tanabe)

Still running — deadline Monday night, Oct. 24: Our Bob Staake cartoon caption contest. See bit.ly/invite1197.

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