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Entertainment

Style Invitational Week 1454: Punku 3 – haiku with a pun, duh

Plus winning looks at how space aliens/ future archaeologists would see us



(Bob Staake for The Washington Post)

By Pat Myers

September 16, 2021 at 8:53 a.m. EDT



(Click [here to skip down](#) to the winning looks as how future archaeologists would see us)

**The #MeToo movement
Has had it up to here with
Male pattin' boldness.** (*Chris Doyle, Punku 2, 2019*)

For those for whom limericks are too long-form, the Empress brings you the third installment of our Loserly version of haiku:

This week: **Create a haiku containing a pun or similar wordplay**, as in the Week 1317 runner-up above, one of the few [inking entries that week](#) that weren't (alas) out of date. You may add a title if you like.

**By "haiku" we mean —
Purists, please chill a minute —
Just 5-7-5.** (As in syllables per line.)



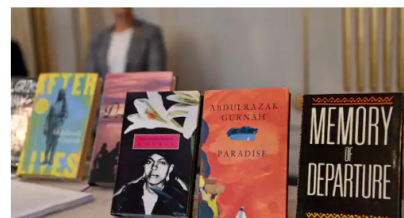
Submit up to 25 entries at wapo.st/enter-invite-1454 (no capitals in the Web address).
Deadline is Monday, Sept. 27; results appear Oct. 17 in print, Oct. 14 online.

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Thumb thing special for this week's second prize.
(PearlRiverMart.com)

Winner gets the **Clowning Achievement**, our Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives, in yet more “homage” to an ancient and revered Japanese tradition, **Thumb Sumo**, a pair of rubber fat guys whom you fit over your fingertips and who give a new meaning to “thumb wrestling.” You don’t even have to feed them **7,000 calories a day**. **Complete with a mini-book about sumo and its culture**. Donated by Dave Prevar.



Other runners-up win their choice of our **“For Best Results, Pour Into Top End” Loser Mug** or our **“Whole Fools” Grocery Bag**. Honorable mentions get one of our new **lusted-after Loser magnets**, “A Small Jester of Appreciation” or “Close, but Ceci N’est Pas un Cigare.” First Offenders receive only a smelly tree-shaped air “freshener” (**FirStink** for their first ink). See general contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/InvRules. The headline “What on Earth?” was submitted by both Roy Ashley and Jesse Frankovich; Chris Doyle wrote the honorable-mentions subhead. 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; and follow [@StyleInvite](https://twitter.com/StyleInvite) on Twitter.

The Style Conversational: The Empress’s online column, published Thursdays, will return next week.

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

What on Earth? Views from space aliens in Week 1450

In **Week 1450** the Empress asked for observations by either visiting space aliens or anthropologists from the future. Numerous Losers reported the humanoid slaves of cats or dogs, not to mention the little rectangle-idols the Earthlings hold in their hands at all times.

4th place:

Oddly, many of the largest human dwellings had fewer occupants than the smaller ones. Perhaps this is because their inhabitants lacked the proximity that leads to mating. (Terri Berg Smith, Rockville, Md.)

3rd place:

Humans are incredibly fast readers. In seconds, they absorb pages of incomprehensible technical data and legal disclaimers before declaring, “I accept the terms and conditions.” (Frank Mann, Washington)

2nd place

and the **bendy Bigfoot figure**:

The most powerful figure in their society is the Dentist, who is so revered that when she makes a patient bleed, the patient apologizes to her. (Coleman Glenn, Huntingdon Valley, Pa.)



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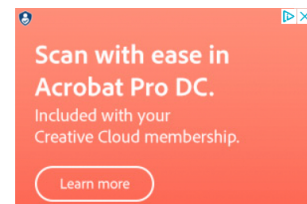
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And the winner of the Clowning Achievement:

Once a year every human must recommit to the familial cult by lighting a cake on fire while clan members chant a mournful dirge. (Scott Richards, Hollywood, Md.)

Lose encounters: Honorable mentions

Humans waste irrational amounts of energy disparaging groups of strangers from cities they know nothing about who get paid to hit spheres with wooden clubs when they could be disparaging the Yankees. (Coleman Glenn)



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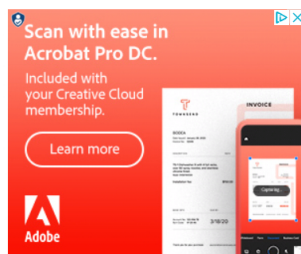
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In addition to the small containers we have identified as “jewelry boxes,” many homes featured large boxes on floors. The adornments inside, displayed on sand, must have once been beautiful and highly prized; Sadly, they have now deteriorated into [randomly shaped brown lumps](#). (Robin Rowland, Potomac, Md.)

In American culture, references to excrement are taboo unless they also include a smiley face. (Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)

The inhabitants’ language, English, probably died out because of excessive complexity: for example, the terms “antihistamine,” “antipasto,” “Antietam” and “Auntie Em” had nothing to do with each other. (Kristin Braly, Baltimore)

These humans go about having the most awful thoughts — I’m embarrassed even to hear them. I can’t believe how few of them know about tinfoil caps! (Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.; Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

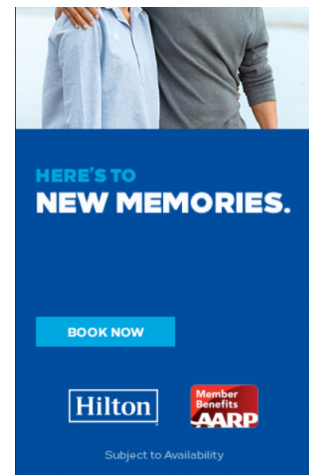


While excavating some 21st-century female graves, our archaeologists uncovered a curious practice of burying the deceased with two plastic bags of salt water. (Frank Mann)

As an act of supplication to the gods of safe travel, airline passengers visit a small shrine within the communal building and, upon making an appropriate donation, are presented with a religious tome labeled “John Grisham.” (Todd DeLap, Fairfax, Va.)

As they place themselves before their computing devices, humans type brief prayers for success. Translators still have not discerned their meanings, but they appear to address deities whose symbols include at least one capital letter, at least one number and at least one symbol such as !@#\$\$%^&*. (Marli Melton, Carmel Valley, Calif.)

According to video evidence, pizza deliveryman was apparently once a high-status occupation that made males instantly desirable to females. (Terri Berg Smith)



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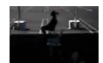
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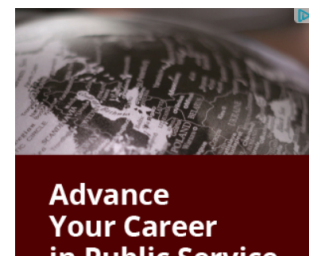
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Presumably because so many humans are unpleasant and disliked by others in the clan, they have taken to partly covering their faces in an attempt at disguise. When undisguised individuals appear and are recognized, disputes often ensue. *(Robin Rowland)*

Every 10 years, a government agency sends representatives to every house in the country to determine whether its doorbells work. *(Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)*

As they travel about in their wheeled vehicles, humans often greet other drivers with loud bursts of sound. These drivers respond with similar bursts, or a friendly extension of the third digit. *(Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore)*

Dark gray transports with a stylized phallic symbol pointing to the letters “PRIME” can be seen going up and down streets daily. They seem to be delivering life-sustaining objects so that humans do not have to leave their pods. *(Phyllis Reinhard, East Fallowfield, Pa.)*



Early 21st-century humans raced to develop artificial intelligence, apparently eager for the security that eventually would come from living under their robot masters. *(Bob Kruger, Rockville, Md.)*

Employees of milk carton factories lose a disproportionate number of children. *(Jesse Rifkin, Arlington, Va.)*

Even into the 21st century, the residents of the city where the U.S. Congress met did not have voting representatives in that body; from this, we infer the preeminently high value accorded to irony. *(Perry Beider, Silver Spring, Md.)*

Every four years, the civilization holds a ritual contest in which the winner, or sometimes inexplicably the loser, becomes “President,” which apparently means “Most Hated Person in America.” *(Jon Gearhart, Des Moines)*

Every human is tired. Every human enjoys complaining about this fact unless someone else has suggested that the human seems tired, in which case the human enjoys denying it. *(Coleman Glenn)*



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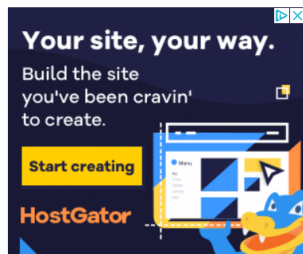
Few artifacts from that era remain except for billions of narrow tubes that archaeologists have determined were used for siphoning liquid from drinking vessels. *(Hildy Zampella, Alexandria, Va.)*

Humans are forbidden to drive past a herd of bovines without trying to communicate with them. *(Kevin Dopart, sojourning in Naxos, Greece)*

Humans and cats apparently lived together peacefully, before felines evolved thumbs. *(Hannah Seidel, Alexandria, Va.)*

I saw two Earthlings cleaning each other in the park, but only around the mouth, neck and ears. The rest of their bodies appears to be self-cleaning, as each of them was secreting a liquid through the skin pores — especially the big, hairy one. *(Jon Gearhart)*

Office workers wear short lengths of cloth trailing from their necks as a sort of leash to be yanked by in case their boss needs them. *(Daniel Galef, Tallahassee)*



On pilgrimage to the southern and western parts of their country, disciples of giant rodents promenade wearing artificial ears in tribute to cult leaders. *(Jeff Rackow, on a work assignment in Abidjan, Ivory Coast)*

On the open road, speed limit signs appear to correlate to the speed of the slowest vehicles. In busy areas, speed limit signs correlate to nothing in particular. Conclusion: more funding is needed to study this phenomenon. *(Lee Graham, Rockville, Md.)*


Baristas, indigenous pharmacologists who would distribute coffee bean stimulants mixed with lactate extract, facilitated “blogs” (bean-induced logs?) throughout worldwide networks after the humans overdosed on the lactated stimulants. *(Chris Damm, Charles Town, W.Va.)*

Given the lack of concordance of this group with the basic tenets of Christianity, we believe that the “t” around their necks stood for “Trump.” *(Daniel Galef)*



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Males devoted countless, typically late-night hours studying short films concerning the reproductive techniques of physically imposing peers. *(Rob Huffman, Fredericksburg, Va.)*

Many police officers of the 2020s are fully robotic, but must constantly charge their batteries by sitting in their cars all day with the engines running. *(Frank Mann)*

Some humans play an electronic game called “Spelling Bee” and we are using it to learn their language. We wanna go down to the llano to see if they practice homogamy, but dunno how to get there. *(William Joyner, Crozet, Va.)*

We have finally discovered one thing the Earthlings have in common with us: Their richest inhabitants go into space to glorify themselves. — Zbulgar's Assistant Flunky (*Chuck Smith, Woodbridge, Va.*)

And Last: **In one of the time capsules** were newsprint collections of jokes (?), seemingly to appease a minor goddess of some sort to win worthless junk. (*Dave Prevar, Annapolis, Md.*)

Still running — deadline Monday night, Sept. 20: Our contest to misinterpret a book title. See wapo.st/invite1453.

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1 Comments

Gift Article



By 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. [Twitter](#)

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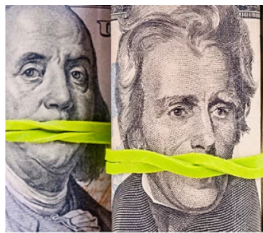
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