



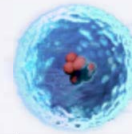
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# Style Invitational Week 1494: Put it in bee-verse

Write a poem with one of this year's National Spelling Bee words. Plus winning parodies on the news.



By Pat Myers

June 23, 2022 at 11:52 a.m. EDT



This week's contest: Write a short poem featuring this or any other word from the later rounds of this year's National Spelling Bee. (For The Washington Post)

Click [here to skip down](#) to the inking song parodies about the news.

“Charadriiform” — oh, what a mouthful!

Such abstruse ornithology talk.

I'd better forgo the five syllables

And stick with “a gull!” or “an auk!”

Did you see this year’s finals of the National Spelling Bee, with the new lightning-round tiebreaker? You rock, 14-year-old Harini Logan, [who fired off 22 ridiculously obscure words correctly](#) (plus a few incorrectly) in the space of 90 seconds! You’ll be happy to know, though, that YOU, dear Loser, have not 90 seconds but 12 days for this annual contest:

**Write a humorous poem of eight lines or fewer that includes at least one of the words used in Round 4 or later of this year’s bee**, as in the example above from Round 13. **OR: Write a joke in Q&A form that uses at least one of the words.**

At least for the poems, you must use the word with its real meaning and pronunciation; you can’t pretend it’s something else (stay tuned for a future contest like this). You may use a slightly different form of the word, such as a plural, adding “-ing,” etc. You may add a title, and you may even use the word in the title and not the poem itself. **To see the words:** Go to [spellingbee.com/round-results](http://spellingbee.com/round-results), then click on any of the rounds from 4 through the final spell-off. (Warning: The correct spelling is the *first* one on each line; the second is the spelling that the kid said, which was sometimes wrong.) If you don’t want to look up those words and then their meanings and pronunciations, **check out my list of 20 of the words** at the bottom of this column. Submit up to 25 entries at [wapo.st/enter-invite-1494](http://wapo.st/enter-invite-1494) (no capitals in the web address).

**Deadline is Tuesday, July 5** (we’ll give you July 4 off); results appear July 24 in print, July 21 online.

**Winner gets the [Clowning Achievement](#)**, our Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives **the cutest little bedbug you’ve ever seen**, 2½ inches long, plush and squeezable with big winsome eyes and a velvety exoskeleton. Yet another in our series of noisome parasites that we offer as second prizes. We do recommend that you not decorate your Airbnb rental with it. Donated by Dave Prevar.



A bedbug you can cuddle in bed! This week's second prize. (Pat Myers/TWP)

**Other runners-up** win their choice of our [“For Best Results, Pour Into Top End” Loser Mug](#) or our [“Whole Fools” Grossery Bag](#). Honorable mentions get one of our [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/inviteFAQ](http://wapo.st/inviteFAQ). The headline “Sung in Cheek” is by Jon Gearhart; both Chris Doyle and Kevin Dopart submitted the honorable-mentions subhead. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at [on.fb.me/invdev](http://on.fb.me/invdev); “like” the Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at [bit.ly/inkofday](http://bit.ly/inkofday); and follow [@StyleInvite](https://twitter.com/StyleInvite) on Twitter.

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**The Style Conversational:** The Empress's weekly online column discusses each new contest and set of results; this week, some spelling bee poems from earlier years. See this week's — published late Thursday, June 23 — at [wapo.st/conv1494](http://wapo.st/conv1494).

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

## Sung in cheek: The news parodies of Week 1490

In [Week 1490](#), the Empress once again went to Loserdom's wheelhouse for songs about the news, and once again received hundreds of parodies, including dozens of inkworthy ones (some also-rans might appear in future weeks). The video option proved ever more popular; I've interspersed some honorable mentions among this week's top four (text) winners, with a few more after that. (If you don't see the video on your picky little device, click on the nearby link.)

### 4th place:

#### ***To “[I Feel Pretty](#)”:***

I bought Twitter, don't be bitter,  
I will git 'er much fitter, you'll see  
I'm no quitter — there's no leader more steadfast than me!  
But the price is a small crisis  
To think twice is the wisest, I feel  
My advice is: Twitter must give me a better deal!

Who's that billionaire in the mirror there?  
Who'll set social media free?  
It's not Zuckerberg, not that Bezos dude, not the Google guys, Not Bill  
Gates, it's me!

I have Teslas, I have rockets,  
And with Twitter I have a new toy.  
All in all, I'm a pretty wonderful boy!



(Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.)



“THAT Part Belongs to Daddy,” inspired by Ivanka Trump’s finally acknowledging that she knew her father’s claims were a total crock. Lyrics and performance by Sandy Riccardi, Asheville, N.C.; Richard Riccardi on piano. If you don’t see the video above, [click here](#).

### 3rd place:

#### **Alito’s Favorite Plans**

*To “My Favorite Things”*

Stare decisis? We say no *comprendo*!

We’re dissing women? That’s just innuendo.

Our rulings govern until we are dead,

Just so the Senate’s at least one-third red.

We chose a president, spiting the nation.

We did the bidding of each corporation.

To gerrymanders we give the green light

When they preserve seats for pols on the right.

Confirmations! Public speeches! We prevaricate.

We’ll execute all of the plans we have hatched,

So you’re fighting back too late!

(David Young, Falmouth, Mass.)



“Song of the Antiabortion Legislators”: Lyrics by Melissa Balmain, Rochester, N.Y.; sung by Melissa and daughter Lily FitzPatrick. If you don’t see the video above, [use this link](#).

## 2nd place

and the [1968 Humphrey-Muskie campaign flask](#):



### The Jan. 6 Committee

To “I Feel Pretty”

Here’s the nitty and the gritty:

Our fair city was ransacked by thugs!

This committee does not think they came to give out hugs.

Lost-election insurrection!

Their complexion? We bet you’ve a sense.

It’s not pretty when a mob is out to kill Mike Pence.

How did that sedition get organized?

Who arranged that violent mob?

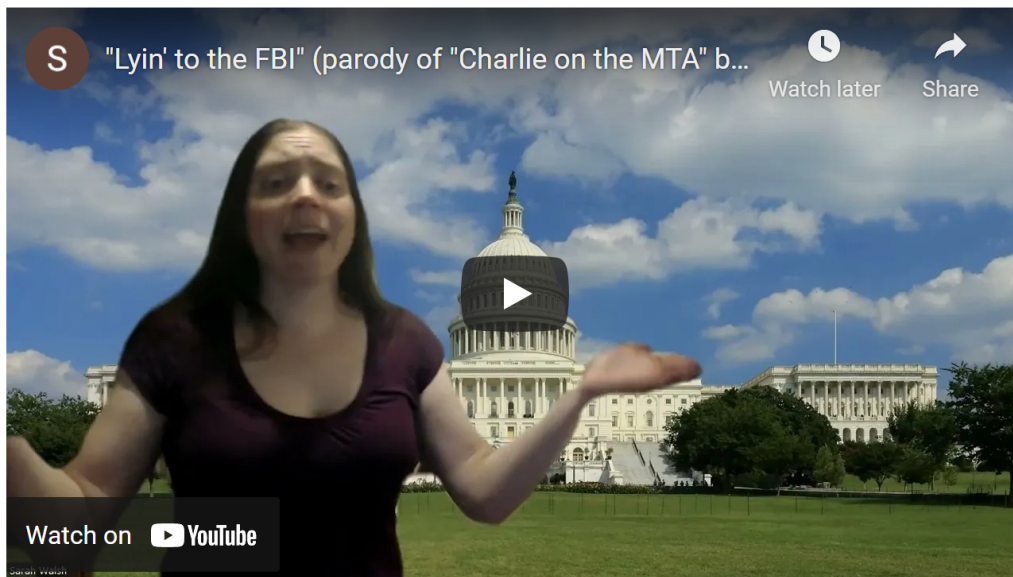
Who unleashed the gang that was out to hang, turn the Dems and Reps  
into shish kebab?

Though you're sneering and you're jeering,

At this hearing we're clearing the air,

And we'll learn who's the culprit for steering them there!

*(Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)*



“The Ballad of Louie Gohmert,” inspired by the congressman’s complaint that “if you’re a Republican, you can’t even lie to Congress or lie to an FBI agent or they’re coming after you.” Lyrics and performance by Sarah Walsh, Rockville, Md.; Jonathan Jensen on accordion. If you don’t see the video above, [use this link](#).

## And the winner of the Clowning Achievement:

**If I Only Had a Brain — A Heart — The Nerve:** Musing With the  
GOP Three

***First: Marjorie Taylor Greene:***

I could while away the hours on legislative powers, or helping folks in  
pain,

And I might not be rootin’ for the folks who are shootin’, if I only had a  
brain.

I would get to know some new folk, not just a lot of Q folk — I’d know



they were insane;

And I wouldn't get crazier with a Jewish space . . . lazier if I only had a brain.

Oh I . . . could tell you why . . . Joe Biden won the vote.

I could even introduce a bill of note

And never give a stupid quote!

But my voters love the crazy, so why not just be lazy, not cause my head a strain;

I could lose their affection, and might not win election, if I only had a brain.

***Then: Mitch McConnell:***

When a man's an empty vessel, he never needs to wrestle with conscience for his part.

I might start actin' human, though my downfall would be loomin', if I only had a heart.

I must cater to the donors, the billionaires and owners, like anyone who's smart.

I'd become just like Cupid, which would be kind of stupid, if I only had a heart.

Picture me on your TV, my voice all sweet and slow.

Contradicting what I said a year ago

Hypocrisy? That's me!

When majorities they muster, I use the filibuster. It's really quite an art.

I'd turn into a lefty; my remorse would be hefty, if I only had a heart.

***And finally, Lindsey Graham:***

Yes, it's sad, believe me, missy, when you're born to be a sissy, without the vim and verve,

But I could be a hero, not a bootlicking zero, if I only had the nerve.

I'm afraid there's no denying I've given up on trying to protect and to preserve

Our great land's Constitution — but I'd find a solution, if I only had the nerve.

Oh, I'd be in my stride, I'd give a rousing speech!

Full fidelity to law is what I'd preach —  
And bravely vote then to impeach.  
I would show that con man Donny a bravery so bonny, no longer would I  
serve!  
I'm well read; I am brainy; I could be a Liz Cheney — If I only had the  
nerve!  
(*Michael Stein, Arlington, Va.*)

## Bad news airs: Honorable mentions



"The Ballad of Madison Cawthorn" (*Sam Gold, Sarasota, Fla., a First Offender*) If you don't see the video above, [click here](#).

## Baby formula shortage after lab was shut down over cronobacter bacteria:

*To "Be Our Guest"*

Pump your chest! Pump your chest  
Till our problem is addressed,  
In our lab up here at Abbott  
The inspectors weren't impressed.  
Was there dirt? Was there grime?  
Or a nauseating slime?  
Was our cleanliness a factor  
When they found the cronobacter?  
With no stock on the shelves,  
You'll produce it all yourselves.

'Cause our formula is "Mothers, do your best!"

We've gone to no production, so get out that suction,

Do not rest! Get expressed! Pump your chest!

*(Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)*

### **"Indiana Jones 5" to premiere in June 2023, with 80-year-old Harrison Ford:**

*To 'When I'm Sixty-Four'*

When his fedora covers no hair, a few years from now

Indiana Jones will hunt the Fountain of Youth,

Crepe-skinned, half-deaf, long in the tooth

If he is streamed or on the big screen,

Will they beg for more?

Will Indy awe them next time they thaw him

When he's 84?

*(Kenneth McLeod, Bowie, Md., a First Offender)*



"You May Be Right," Dave Scheiber, St. Petersburg, Fla. If you don't see the video above, [click here](#).

### ***To "Be Our Guest"***

IRS: it's a mess! Decades straight of "more with less"

Mean few audits and no plaudits ('cept from tax cheats, who say "Yes!")

Downsized staff, ancient tech make our oversight a wreck;

Might as well claim that deduction for your tummy liposuction!

Such abuse we can't catch—systems here aren't up to scratch—



So to fraud we have to meekly acquiesce;

Enforcement: have to fudge it, 'cause they've slashed our budget;

Reassess! No BS: IRS! (*Duncan Stevens*)



*“Don’t Say Gay,” by Jonathan Jensen; sung by Sandy Riccardi;  
Richard Riccardi on piano. If you don’t see the video above, [click here](#).*

### **Washington Commanders search for a new home**

*To “Somewhere” from “West Side Story”*

There’s a place for us, some new tax base for us,

P.G. County won’t pay its share —

Wait, we must — nah — done there!

There’s a field for us, Someplace to yield for us,

Woodbridge? Dulles? Or Delaware?

Timbuktu? I don’t care!

Someday, somewhere,

We’ll build a new place for playing,

Long as the government’s paying. Somewhere.

I’ve got plans for us,

Somewhere with fans for us,

Sure, they’ll root for the other team,

Revenue, that’s my dream!

Someday, somewhere,

We’ll build a place that is giant,

Funded by locals compliant.

Somewhere. (*Mark Raffman*)

## Xi Jinping sings “The Major-General’s Song”

I am the brilliant leader of a "socialist democracy"  
(Though some might say I'm guilty of a wee bit of hypocrisy...);  
I am by far the smartest; that's why I decide what's best for you;  
(And if you disagree, there'll be a warrant of arrest for you...).  
I'm like a sneaky predator, I gain the upper hand with ease;  
I just extend my tentacles and snap up anything I please!  
I've built some nifty islands all across the vast South China Sea  
For my offensive weapons; and (of course!) Taiwan belongs to ME!!!

I'm working on my Belt and Road because investing is my game;  
(I've got my sticky fingers almost anywhere that you can name!)  
So look out, world! I'm on a roll; as Number One I'll take my place;  
I'll steal your tech to take control, and next... I've got my eyes on space!  
(*Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.*)

The following parody of “[Mona Lisa](#)” — about the climate change activist who smeared “a cakelike substance” across the glass covering of the Mona Lisa in the Louvre — is one of two excellent ones submitted on the same subject, with the same song. I couldn’t decide between them, so I put them (anonymously) to the vote in the Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook. This one won, 20-19. See the other, by Chris Doyle, in this week’s Style Conversational.



Mona Lisa, look alert! He tried to smash you;  
So precautions it's imperative to take!

Someone nuts just had the guts to try to trash you  
With a hammer and a large amount of cake.  
Did you smile and drive him crazy, Mona Lisa?  
Are you sorry that he failed in his attack?  
Do you hunger at times, Mona Lisa?  
Does your tongue ache  
For that cream cake?  
Do you live, do you breathe, Mona Lisa?  
Then (after all these years!) you prob'ly need a snack! (*Beverley Sharp*)



"Omicron," a parody of "Kodachrome," by Rick Bromberg, Fairfax, Va.; sung by Nancy Lawrence. If you can't see the link above, [click here](#).

### **Trump on Liz Cheney**

*To "Janie's Got a Gun"*

Cheney's gotta go, Cheney's gotta go  
The whole world's gonna know  
She's a RINO just for show.  
Her time in D.C.'s through –  
What's wrong with one small coup?  
They see that Cheney's prime-time scheme's  
More lying by a nasty dame  
Oh man, she has it comin', so Liz Cheney's gotta go  
I ain't never gonna take the blame.  
(*Kevin Dopart, Washington*)

### **Back at the Office: Who Are You?**



To *"Who Am I?"* from *"Les Miserables"*

Who are you?

The guy who started two long years ago?

There's really so much that I did not know.

I never saw your spittle fleck

Or how you look below your neck.

Must you eat?

I hate the way you chew and chomp and munch.

The way your stomach rumbles after lunch.

The stench that lingers in the air

That you and I are forced to share.

I can't stand

Exasperating mannerisms you display

Now that I'm in the office every day.

How soon can I go back to Zoom

And hang out in my living room?

I know that you are newly hired,

But just how soon can you be fired?

Who are you? Who are you?

My office-mate! (*Barbara Sarshik and Andy Pike, Vienna, Va.*)

### **NRA meeting in Houston**

To *"Come Out and Play"* by the Offspring

"We gotta keep our guns," restated:

All the chits we cash in,

All the palms we grease,

The Second A. never goes out of fashion.

Who will protect us? (Hint: It ain't the police!)

They howl and bray 'bout our big magazines,

They'd take away all our AR-15s,

But when they float bills to provide 'em the means,

We just tie 'em up! Tie 'em up! Tie 'em up! Tie 'em up!

Hey! The lib'ral's in D.C.?'

Shut 'em down! (Gotta keep 'em all frustrated).

Hey! The guns that keep us free?

Load ‘em up! (Never mind “well-regulated”).  
Hey-ey! We’re doing fine!  
We bought those pols and we keep ‘em all in line,  
Hey-ey! We’re NRA! (*Mark Raffman*)

## **Inflating**

*To “99 Red Balloons”*

Ninety-nine-cent bread balloons  
Way up to \$2.89;  
Even on a hybrid’s tank  
Filling up can break the bank.  
We all fight but we’re the same:  
We want someone we can blame.  
Money’s tight and I know why:  
YOUR side made the costs balloon so high!  
(*Coleman Glenn, Huntingdon Valley, Pa.*)

**Still running — deadline Monday night, June 26:** Our contest for “feghoots” — ridiculous mini-stories that end in groaner puns. See [wapo.st/invite1493](http://wapo.st/invite1493).

**DON’T MISS AN INVITE!** [Sign up here](#) to receive a once-a-week email from the Empress as soon as The Style Invitational and Style Conversational go online every Thursday, complete with links to the columns.

## **20 spelling bee words you can use for Week 1494**

This is a fairly random selection of the words used in the 2022 National Spelling Bee. But you may use any of the ones listed at [spellingbee.com](http://spellingbee.com) beginning with Round 4. (The words in Round 6, a vocabulary round, aren’t obscure.) Below I usually quote or paraphrase the Merriam-Webster definitions; other times I found examples of actual modern usage. If you find another pronunciation or meaning given from another reliable source, feel free to use that as well (and show it to me, please).

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bebung: a tremolo effect similar to a violin vibrato and is produced on the clavichord by sustaining a varying pressure on the key after striking a note. [Here's a demonstration.](#)

brose (broze): a Scottish dish made by pouring boiling water over oatmeal.

chorine (kor-EEN): a old-time chorus girl. The musical “Ragtime” uses this term.

congener (CON-je-ner): a plant or animal in the same genus as another; or, figuratively, something or someone in the same group. In distilling, it refers to byproducts developed during the process.

cramignon (cra-meen-yon): a festive dance of southern France in which the dancers are in chain formation. [Like this.](#)

dasypodid (da-SIP-odid): [Relating to armadillos.](#)

empressement (ahm-press-MONT): demonstrative warmth or cordiality. (But of course!)

florilegium (FLO-ri-LEE-gium): an anthology of writings.

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frizzen: the pivoted metal upright of the action of a flintlock against which the flint strikes upon firing. [Here's a picture from Wikipedia.](#)

[glissile](#) (rhymes with missile): capable of gliding; used in geology.

[lanuginous](#) (la-NU-jinous): covered with down or fine, soft hair. The fuzz with which some babies are born is called lanugo.

[lerret](#): a traditional fishing rowboat from the Chesil beach in Dorset, England.

[noctivagant](#) (noc-TI-va-gant): going around at night.

ostmark: East German currency eventually replaced by the German mark and the euro.

[palombino](#): a light gray Italian marble. (Not a horse!)

[pigsney](#): darling or sweetheart, or a little eye. The Oxford English Dictionary says it's ""one particularly cherished; a darling pet."

[piligan](#): a Brazilian club moss that has been [used as a purgative](#).

[psittacism](#): automatic speech without thought of the meaning of the words spoken. It comes from the word for parrot and, according to Wikipedia, it's a pejorative word.

[onocentaur](#): a mythological creature having the head and arms and upper torso of a human being and the body and legs of an ass.

semmit: Scottish for undershirt. [Here's a Scot showing how the word is used.](#)

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 Gift Article



By [Pat Myers](#)

Pat Myers is the "Empress" of The Style Invitational, The Washington Post's famed contest for clever, edgy, wacky humor and wordplay. In the role since 2003 – 900-plus contests ago – she writes the column and is its only judge. She also writes the weekly Style Conversational column and runs the Style Invitational Devotees page on Facebook. [Twitter](#)