

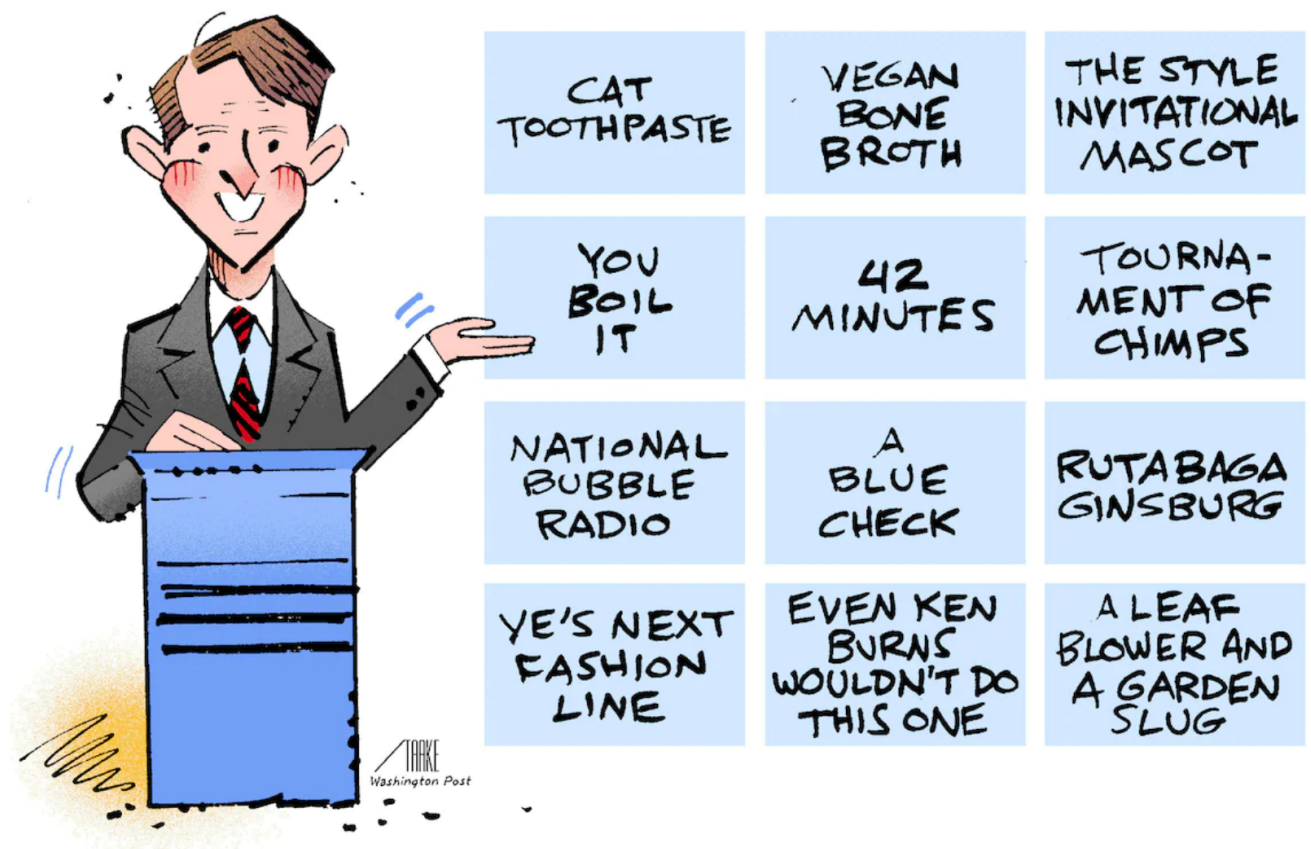
Style Invitational Week 1514: Ask Backwards XLI

We answer, you ask. Plus winning poems using just one vowel.



By Pat Myers

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Style Invitational Mascot • A Snickerdoodle • Three Squats and a Burpee • Rutabaga Ginsburg • A Leaf Blower and a Garden Slug • National Bubble Radio • You Boil It

Yes, good Roman-numeral-readers/Super Bowl fans, it's our 41st go at this "Jeopardy"-adjacent game. **Above are the answers; you supply the questions** — up to 25 of them for any or all. (Note that there are more in the list above than in Bob Staaake's cartoon.)

Submit up to 25 entries at wapo.st/enter-invite-1514 (no capitals in the Web address; see formatting instructions on the entry form).

Deadline is Monday night, Nov. 21; results appear Dec. 11 in print, Dec. 8 online.



Winner gets the [Clowning Achievement](#), our Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives this “Rutabaga Ginsburg” T-shirt, discovered by Loser Craig Dykstra at a Goodwill. (No, it won’t necessarily be the Rutabaga Ginsburg question that wins the shirt, but it would be fun.)

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](#). The headline “Ink With Wit in It” is by Jesse Frankovich; Jesse also wrote the honorable-mentions subhead. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at [on.fb.me/invdev](#); follow 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 discusses each new contest and set of results. See this week’s at [wapo.st/conv1514](#).

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

Ink with wit in it: One-vowel poems from Week 1510

In [Week 1510](#) the Empress presented the clearly daunting challenge to write a poem containing only one of the vowels A, E, I, O and U. She read through lots of “nymph wryly synes lymph’s spryly lynx crypt tryst’s sly cry” to bring you the ingenious verses below.

4th place:

Pool host snorts: “Yo, porno thong!

So gross! Not cool, fool. Now, go long!”

Choosy moms’ll opt to toss

Bros who don only bottom floss.

(Frank Mann, Washington)

3rd place:

Got droop of bottom, or oblong bosom of sorrow?

Go not to body doctors to crop or boost tomorrow.

Trot hot! Drop low! Show off yo’ promontory!

Now boldly sport yon chonk or flop! Opt for no “sorry” story!

(Christy Tosatto, full-time RV nomad currently stopping in Asheville, N.C.)

2nd place

and the [paperweights containing real cicadas](#):

Gen. 2-3

The scene: Eden. Key decree:

“Heed me, Eve; eschew the tree.”

Yet Eve the clever serpent met;

The serpent tempted Eve; she et.

Next she fed her peer, the gent.

Then men fell — we hence repent.

(Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.)

And the winner of the Clowning Achievement:

Repressed, dejected, Ed pens, then sends text:

“Beekeeper: eschews revels, sex, the next

New scene; prefers the decent chew; esteems

Svelte slenderness; detests expense, lewd themes.

Seeks helpmeet: gentle; sews; rejects excess

(The perverse, presents, jewels), expects less;
Reveres strength; never henpecks; sweeps; meek, sweet.”
Ellen sees, retches, then presses “Delete.”
(*Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.*)

These deserve less esteem: Honorable mentions

Biding in Wilds in Chilly Twilight

By Ribt. Frist

Which wild is this? I think I'm right,
His living isn't in my sight.
Invisibly, I visit still,
With flitting drifts in shiny flight.
My filly's whinny, timid trill:
I'm sitting by this icy rill,
In wintry, frigid wild? Why?
This night I find in inky spill.
My hill is dimly lit by sky,
This wild is inviting ... sigh ...
I'm riding till my crib is nigh,
I'm riding till my crib is nigh.
(*Sarah Walsh, Rockville, Md.*)

Beer Revelry

We're merry, we're blessed,
We're never depressed.
We're cheeky, we're cheery,
We belch, then we jest.
Wherever there's beer
We never feel stressed.
Fetch beer!
(*Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore*)

Beer Revelry 2

We're never ever reverent,
"We're free! We're best!" we cheer.
We'll never rest! we're cleverest!
We merely need the beer.
(*Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.*)

West's ever newsy,
Sez, "Every Jew screws me." The
Less Ye, the better.
(*Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.*)

So Old So Soon

Bloodwork poor. No oomph or pop.
Myopy, woozy. Jowls. Low-T.
Snowy top, soft pot, foot rot.
Tho' colon's not too polypy.
(*Ash Sharman [great name for this contest!], Fairfax, Va., a First Offender*)

Feh, Recent Red-Pelts!

New emblem's meh, the ex-term smelt;
The bevy, recent-Red-Type-Pelt —
They're fettered, hexed; the shell needs shed.
"De-Snyder, feckless crew!" we've pled.
(*Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.*)

And ...

Scram, Dan! Walk! Say, Walla Walla!
Qatar! Caracas! Alps! Valhalla!
Cart that gang away, Mad Dan!
A hand? Glad fans'll pack that van.
(*Duncan Stevens*)

It's tricky living
With highly spicy chili:

My tightly binding lining
Is firing willy-nilly.
(Dale Frankel, Bloomfield Hills, Mich.)

Aw/Ah Ha-ha

A Yank can't stand an Alabama drawl,
That lazy "Mama wants a drank, y'all."
And Alabamans always say "ha ha!"
At any Waltham, Mass., man's "pahk ya cah."
(Jonathan Jensen)

Sam was cagy, had a plan:
Sack a bank and nab a van.
What a brassy act (and scary!)
Had a whack at "cash-and-carry."
(Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

A man, a plan, a Panama? That
Wasn't a canal — nay, 'twas a hat.
(Amy Livingston, Highland Park, N.J., a First Offender)

spring wings sing smiling
lilting in still night chirping
bird dirt dripping. Ick.
(Irene Plotzker, Wilmington, Del.)

An ant farm, a scarf, and a fat panda!
Thanks, Santa!
What? Thank Ma and Pa??
Angst.
(Randy Lee, Burke, Va.)

Tomorrow off? Oh no, poor fool.
Snowstorms stop not work nor school.
From top to bottom, lowdown gloom:

Old boss now knows to go on Zoom.

(Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Wacky Grandma alarms all —

That gas-gland can amass gasps.

Nana claps and says, “Yay!”

Thanks, fatty Spam cans.

(Leif Picoult, Rockville, Md.)

The gentle sex’ll be

Deftly preppers-free

When selfless he-men

[Elect seedless semen.](#)

(Chris Doyle)

Oh look! Slow down to shop for old Ford.

Old Ford looks cool, smooth, bold. Oh Lord, so good.

Got Ford.

Oops, oh no, poor Ford!

Motor now hot: growls, stops.

Too hot. Old motor shot.

Soot on hood, roof, floor, doors.

Now, Ford won’t go. Bloody, gory horror show.

Now tow to Ford body shop.

(G.T. Bowman, Falls Church, Va.)

Kleenex everywhere, very sneezy,

Eyes feel weepy, chest seems wheezy.

Temp exceeds 99 degrees.

Sheesh, need remedy, MD, jeez!

“These keys help fevers deplete:

Wet sheets, leeches, smelly feet.

Next, chew nettles, gently scented.”

Heed the expert, Dr. Demented.

(Yet he regrets these few effects:

Green teeth, eye bleeds, lepers' necks.)
(*Pam Shermeyer, Lathrup Village, Mich.*)

A Sad Ballad

Ah! Ah! Alack and alas!

Ah! Alas and alack!

A bard crafts a sad ballad,
And sang that ballad back:

'Twas a dark and sad and clammy day;
A lark caws daftly, madly.
And Alma—Ah, that Alma! —
Alma crafts a salad, badly.

Alma was a tall lass,
and a stalwart lass, and calm.
Alma attacks a chard stalk,
a saw at Alma's palm.

As tall as a hat rack Alma was,
and as drab as a bad banana,
and Alma's natty salad-saw —
as sharp as a katana!

As calm as stagnant Armagnac
And as gay as a clam, was Alma.
And Alma's wan and pasty hands?
Alma can't act calma!

Alas! As sand can fall aslant,
and pass a glass shaft,
as hay and straw can stand apart
and an ax can crack an ax's haft ...

A stray sassafras branch mars Alma's calm

as Alma hacks and hacks.
An awkward hand strays — and an ax falls —
Alma pays a dark tax ...

Aghast, Alma calls: “Ah!”
An arm (ah, tardy!) snaps back.
At Alma’s arm’s aft, a hand?
Nay! A hand’s lack!

Ah! Ah! Alack and alas!
Ah! Alas and alack!
A bard crafts a sad ballad,
And sang that ballad back;

Ah! Ah! A lack and a lass!
Ah! A lass and a lack!
A bard crafts a sad ballad,
And Alma — a bad salad.
(Daniel Galef, Tallahassee)

And Lasts:

We’ll enter wee verses; we’ll jest.
The Empress, she’ll keep the few best.
The rejects less clever?
Be seen, these’ll never —
She’ll next feed her shredder the rest.
(Jesse Frankovich)

I’m writing till midnight, I’m scripting this pitch,
I’m wittily grinning, I’m striking it rich.
My insights! I’m thinking,
It’ll kill! This is Inking!
Is it childishly fiddling, whilst digging this ditch?
(Frank Osen)

Still running — deadline Monday night, Nov. 14: Our contest for greeting-card rhymes for novel occasions. See wapo.st/invite1513.

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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](#)