

The Invitational Week 30: Poll-ish Jokes

Come up with a ridiculous reader poll. Plus winning poems about glomerulonephritis and other spelling bee words.

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AND

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Here is today's Gene Pool Gene Poll !

POLL

Do you prefer twist ties or those cheap thin plastic slitted wafers, as a means to seal loaves of bread or whatever?

Twist ties

Slitted wafers

433 VOTES · 12 HOURS REMAINING

This week's Invitational contest was occasioned by desperation. Gene was trying to think of a Gene Poll to use for the next Gene Pool, and unfortunately came up with the one above, the poll you have just taken.

The new contest for Week 30: Come up with a really stupid online poll for a general interest news site. It can be stupid because it is trivial, like the bread-tie thing, or for any other reason. Here's another example, which we will mercifully not present as an actual take-at-home poll requiring your response:

In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, published in 1929 in German as *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, did Sigmund Freud mean to suggest that there are fundamental tensions between civilization and the individual, or was his thesis more of a psychoanalytical exploration of the urge to escape conformity?

- A. Fundamental tensions
- B. Escape conformity
- C. Neither — it's more about universal ennui.
- D. The question is biased and intellectually unsound. I refuse to answer.

[Click here for this week's entry form](#), or go to **bit.ly/inv-form-30**. As usual, you can submit up to 25 entries for this week's contest, preferably all on the same entry form. See the form for how to format your entries.

Deadline is Saturday, Aug. 5, at 4 p.m. ET. Results will run here in The Gene Pool on Thursday, Aug. 10.

This week's winner gets a pen you can play blackjack on. Donated by Kathy Sheeran of Vienna, Va.



Another game in which you're likely to win nothing!

Runners-up get autographed fake money featuring the Czar or Empress, in one of [ten nifty designs](#). Honorable mentions get bupkis, except for a sweet email from the E, plus the [Fir Stink for First Ink](#) for those who've just lost their Invite virginity.

[Leave a comment](#)

Jest for the Spell of It: Poems and jokes from Week 28

[In Week 28](#) we once again invited our Loserbards to actually use — in a funny poem, or even a joke — any of the words from the later rounds of this year's Scripps National Spelling Bee.

Third runner-up:

Poliorcetics, *the art of conducting a siege*:

Once upon a January, Trump incited, mad and scary,
Making many a rigged election claim that simply wasn't true—
While he ranted, hardly quiet, suddenly there came a riot;
Sadly he would not decry it, like a decent guy might do.
His followers tried poliorcetics, staging a revolting coup—
After all, he told them to.

(Jesse Frankovich, Laingsburg, Mich.)

Second runner-up:

Timorous, *fearful*:

As summertime approaches, we are often feeling **timorous**:
Will last year's swimsuit fit, or will there have to be a slimmer us?
(Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

First runner-up:

Sneeziness, wheeziness.
Bogart's been sick and has
Taken **loratadine**
Pills for the flu.
Flubbing his line despite
Pharmacological
Help, he says, "Ilsa, here's
Looking — ACHOO!"
(Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.)

And the winner of the [Wicked Witch of the East over-the-knee socks](#):

Crore, *ten million*:

Six crore and five million years ago, God brought forth upon this planet

An asteroid dedicated to the proposition that dinosaurs no longer ran it.

(Jesse Frankovich)

The Bee List: Honorable mentions

Ethnarch, *leader of ethnic group or homogeneous people*:

This ethnarch seeks once more to wear a crown,

Appeals to fear: his tribalistic fight.

Has little use for votes from black or brown—

Don rules for, and is blinded by, the white.

(Duncan Stevens, vacationing in Gloucester, Mass.)

Silentiary, *one appointed to keep silence and order*:

Librarian and silentary, she frowned at every sound

That was too loud and quickly vowed to have it squelched.

Imagine then her horror when a rude noise most profound

Resounded on the main floor. Without warning, she had belched!

“Shh!!” said one and all, and to her deep mortification

Her buttocks then performed a swift but thunderous aeration.

(Pam Shermeyer, Lathrup Village, Mich.)

Alexia, *inability to perceive written words*:

If you have alexia,

This poem oughta vexia. *(Jesse Frankovich)*

Hypovolemia, *a decrease in blood circulation*:

I went weak in the knees when I first saw your face.

I clumsily stumbled, besieged by your grace.

For weeks, I was dizzy, lost in a daze.

Unable to think, in an amorous haze.

The time slowly passed as I hungered and yearned.

Now, thanks to my doctor, there's much I have learned:

If you fall for a guy who is out of your league,
That may not be the source of your sudden fatigue.
Though you're sure you know why you seem pale and anemic,
You aren't in love. You're just hypovolemic.
(*Judy Freed, Deerfield Beach, Fla.*)

A joke:

How is the Washington Commanders organization like a **lamprey**?
You have to remove the head so they'll stop sucking. (*Sam Mertens, Silver Spring, Md.*)

Conversazione, *a meeting for conversation:*

A wiseguy conversazione
Over plates of cannelloni
Features capos swapping tales
Of icing hoods for their betrayals,
Offing rats on one-way rides,
And whacking grooms in front of brides.
The highlight's when Don Vito dishes
On who's next to sleep with the fishes.
(*Chris Doyle*)

Isolette, *enclosed crib for a newborn:*

My baby's in an isolette;
No germs or chilly drafts get through.
She hears no news of climate threat,
Or what the Donald plans to do.
It's quite a thing, this bassinet!
I often wish I had one too. (*Duncan Stevens*)

Pridian, *referring to yesterday (or an earlier time)*

After dealing with trials quite worthy of Job,
How perfect if you could just fly round the globe,
Crossing that line on a mapmaker's chart

Where night turns to day – you'd just get to “restart”!
One’s pridian stresses would all dissipate —
But the baggage remains, parked right at the gate.
(Sarah Walsh, Rockville, Md.)

Pridian II

Are the films of John Hughes on the brink
Of oblivion? Certain folks think
That his '86 hit
Is so yesterday it
Should be listed as *Pridian Pink*.
(Melissa Balmain, Rochester, N.Y.)

Isogloss: *a boundary line between regions that differ in a particular linguistic feature:*

An isogloss marks where those odd people stop
Saying “soda” and properly ask for a pop. (*Midwesterner Jesse Frankovich*)

Chumble, to chew:

There’s a story, I swear it’s well founded,
Of a girl who was bright and well rounded,
But on lamp cords she’d chumble
Till to bits they would crumble,
And now she’s been totally grounded.
(Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

If [George Seurat](#) were now alive
And got online, I think it’s plain
His **pointillistic** self would strive
To make dot.com his own domain. (*Chris Doyle*)

Furtum, theft:

The key to a deftly done furtum?
The owners: try not to alert ’em.
My old thief-pal Byron,

He triggered a siren—

And the dogs, well, they gulped-for-dessert him. (*Duncan Stevens*)

Anilox, *a system of printing that transfers consistent amounts of ink*

I went down to the deli for a Sunday morning nosh

And ordered up the special of the day;

Included was a bagel, when cut open it displayed

My name, imprinted. Blew my mind away!

I asked, “How did you print my name so neatly on the bread

That I found inside the daily special box?”

The deli man replied, “It is a skill as old as time:

I simply used the bagel anilox.”

(*Rob Cohen, Potomac, Md.*)

Leguleian, *a lawyer who bogs down in trivialities:*

Said the plaintiff who got trounced in court to his attorney Sheehan:

”You only argued trial points; you’re just a leguleian!

I now reject your crude demand that I should send my fee in —

I’m shocked, based on your work today, you have a pot to pee in.”

(*Rick Bromberg, Fairfax, Va., and yes, he’s a lawyer*)

Glomerulonephritis:

To simply say or write is

An awful pain, and yet it

Is even worse to get it. (*Jesse Frankovich*)

Opacate, *to make opaque:*

When famous folk in scandals face

A public they must placate,

They promise, “I can clarify!”

(Which means “I can opacate!”)

(*Coleman Glenn, Huntingdon Valley, Pa.*)

Officious, *meddlesome, offering unwanted advice:*

My neighbors are rude – they’re officious

And their prying is downright pernicious.
They are bad to the bone
So I leave them alone
(Well, except when the gossip's delicious . . .) (*Beverley Sharp*)

Sacalait, *a Louisiana fish (aka crappie)*
On the bayou, we're fishin' today —
"Let the bons temps roulez!" we all say.
Caught another! So happy!
Who dat callin' it "crappie"?
Mon cher, it's *un grand sacalait!*
(*Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.*)

Cognoscente, expert in a certain field
Runway models just can't win
When every fashion **cognoscente**
Thinks a woman's not too thin
At six foot two, one hundred twenty. (*Chris Doyle*)

Monoxenous, *living on a single host throughout a parasite's life:*
Their son is thirty-five but still content to live at home.
"He'll find a job soon," Mother said. "I've faith in our Jerome."
"He's monoxenous. Our parasite will *never* leave," Dad said.
"But we should make him stop sleeping between us in our bed."
(*Pam Shermeyer*)

Novenary, *a group of nine:*
It's safer to crawl through machinery
And get chewed like Jack Nicholson's scenery,
Than to count on your rights
When they get in the sights
Of the current Supreme-type Novenary. (*Duncan Stevens*)

She walked into the bar and all the men began to **gawk**;
The room fell strangely silent then, and no one dared to talk.

A lusty lad approached her and he soon became **besotted**;
(He'd had a lot of schnapps, you see; quite frankly, he was potted.)
The **hapless** guy had failed to see — he really was a dope —
The girl he found so sexy was a female **lycanthrope**.
(Beverley Sharp)

The headline “Jest for the Spell of It” is by Jesse Frankovich; both Chris Doyle and Kevin Dopart submitted the honorable-mentions subhead.

Still running — deadline 4 p.m. ET Saturday, July 29: **Our Week 29 contest for pangrams** — sentences that include all 26 letters of the alphabet. [Click here](#) or type in bit.ly/inv-week-29. **NEW:** Check your pangram instantly to make sure it has all the letters at pangram.me/en.

See [more about The Invitational](#), including our [2,600-member Facebook group](#), the [Losers' website](#), and [our podcast](#).