

The Invitational Week 54: S Is for Smartass

Presenting the Devil's Alphabet Soup. Plus new humor from old contests.

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AND

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The Invitational Week 54

Send us couplets of rhyming lines from any two consecutive (contiguous) pages of a wickedly seditious and cynical children's alphabet book, as in these two from a long-ago Invite:

K is for Klingon. What's that? You have met one?

L is for Life. I suggest that you get one. (Robert Schechter)

And :

G is for God-given rights, like big rifles.

H is for Health care and other such trifles. (Melissa Balmain)

This the first time doing this contest that our judging is not constrained by the sometimes puritanical Washington Post rules of decorum, so have your way with it. We're judging each couplet independently — themed lines covering a run of more than two letters won't get ink.

[Click here for this week's entry form](#), or go to bit.ly/inv-form-54. As usual, you may submit up to 25 entries for this week's contest, preferably all on the same form.

Deadline is Saturday, Jan. 20, at 9 p.m. ET. Results will run here in The Gene Pool on Thursday, Jan. 25. While we'll run the results as two-line poems, **please submit each couplet as one long line, and we'll break them up appropriately.**

The winner gets **two hundred dollars!** In the form of a pair of socks, each of which is imprinted with a very large and elastic \$100 bill. Show to the world that you know how to stretch a buck. Donated by Father Prize himself, Loser Dave Prevar.



Political wonks would call this walking-around money. This week's prize.
(SockySock.com)

Déjà Two: Another go at 25 contests from '23

In Week 52, in the second week of our annual retrospective, we invited you to enter or reenter any or all of The Invitational's contests from the second half of 2023, including limericks, song parodies, "life lessons," photo captions, and our stock in trade, new words.

Third runner-up:

From [Week 39](#): Pair a line from a Bob Dylan song with your own rhyming line:

"Arise, arise," he cried so loud in a voice without restraint,

And folks hissed, "Shh, this is the quiet car! We'll issue a complaint!" (*Karen Lambert, Chevy Chase, Md.*)

Second runner-up:

From [Week 35](#), Muldoons, which are quatrains that mention at least two body parts, a place name, and at least one rhyme:

I'd walk my dog in Central Park, I'd watch him pee and poop,

Then with my hand into a bag, his excrement I'd scoop.

But now my legs are weak, my sight is poor at ninety-three.

I wish to hell I'd trained my dog to do the same for me. (*Rob Cohen, Potomac, Md.*)

First runner-up:

From [Week 50](#), the news events of 2024:

Stingier than ever, airlines now require passengers to bring food to serve to the flight attendants. (*Leif Picoult, Rockville, Md.*)

And the winner of the [Dull Men's Club Calendar](#):

Predicted news events of 2024:

Prince Andrew joins the Artist Formerly Known as Prince in being formerly known as Prince. (*William Kennard, Arlington, Va.*)

Re-ruins: Honorable mentions

Week 26, compare any two items on a random list:

Handel's *Messiah*: A tribute to the Son of God. A silent fart: Attribute to your son or dog. (*Steve Smith, Potomac, Md.*)

Week 27, how businesses might pander to Trump's base:

Hallmark would market "Happy January 6" cards. (*Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.*)

The Texas Rangers would hold a Bring Your Gun to the Game day. (*Steve Smith*)

The famous pumpkin brand would make its slogan "We're Libby's. Own Us!" (*Pam Shermeyer, Lathrup Village, Mich.*)

Hamilton would tour with a historically accurate cast. (*Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.*)

Week 28, poems featuring words from the 2023 National Spelling Bee:

Chutzpah: nerve or temerity

"I'd like to see your manager," the woman said to me.

"The service here is terrible. I'm sure he will agree."

Replied I, "Ma'am, your chutzpah's entertaining — I'm verklempt.

But this is still my courtroom, and I find you in contempt." (*Mark Raffman*)

Omphaloskepsis: navel-gazing:

Ommity-bommity,

Friend, have you gleaned any

Truths 'bout existence, or

Even a hint,

Eyeing your navel so

Omphaloskeptically?"

“Actually, bud, I’m just
Hunting for lint.” (*Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.*)

Sabulous; sandy or gritty

They’d set out when the day was hot;
The beach had been the perfect spot!
He told her she looked sabulous;
She thought that he said “fabulous.”
“No, no,” he said, “*that’s* not the case!”
She kicked some sand right in his face. (*Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.*)

To **querken** is to choke real hard
Even through the tears.
The Washington Commanders have
Been querkening for years. (*Jesse Rifkin, Arlington, Va.*)

Tolsester, a fee paid to a feudal lord for a license to brew ale):

Disbursed the funds to ply my trade;
Brewed Miller Lite all year.
My tolsester was just repaid!
The reason wasn’t clear.
When I asked why: “That stuff you made?
Good Lord! You call that beer?” (*Duncan Stevens*)

Week 29, short sentences that include all 26 letters:

Balmy antivax dingwad quack RFK Jr. for prez? No shot. (*Duncan Stevens*)

Tonight I knew maybe every one of the *Jeopardy!* quiz answers; the questions,
not exactly. (*Neal Starkman, Seattle*)

**Week 31, neologisms formed from seven-letter “racks” in the
ScrabbleGrams anagram game:**

EGIMOST > OMGIEST: Most amazing. “That was the OMGiest thing I ever
saw.” (*Neil Kurland, Elkridge, Md.*)

AEUKLPM > PALM UKE: Euphemism for an instrument that's played enthusiastically by teenage boys. (*Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.*)

ADEIMTY > YADTIME: Outdoor party in Boston. (*Rob Cohen*)

ADEIMTY > YAMTIDE: The holiday one month before Yuletide. (*Pam Shermeyer*)

Week 32, limericks featuring words beginning with “ho-”:

If the tortoise had challenged the hare
To race **home**, that would not have been fair
'Cause that would just be
One big shell game, you see,
'Cause the tortoise is already there. (*Jon Gearhart, Des Moines*)

Our trip to the Netherlands cost
So much that I drank till I lost
All feelings of woe.
Egged on by my bro,
I spent all of my **Holland** days sauced. (*Jon Gearhart*)

Week 33: Ask Backwards: We give the “answers”; you tell us the questions.

A. Donald Trump, PhD.

Q. Which American most resents sharing a name with someone else? (*Jeff Contompasis*)

A. Arguably, they're the same.

Q. If I want to show my commitment level, do I go “all in” or “all out”? (*Jeff Contompasis*)

Week 34, compare two people who share a birthday.

Sonja Henie (April 8, 1912) vs. Claudine Gay (April 8, 1970):

One knew how to skate on thin ice. (*Steve Smith*)

Shaquille O’Neal (March 6, 1972) and Michelangelo (March 6, 1475):

Towering figures in their fields, they both did great work in the paint. (*Pam Shermeyer*)

Babe Ruth (Feb. 6, 1895) and Zsa Zsa Gabor (Feb. 6, 1917):

For his homers, they dubbed him the Sultan of Swat;

Seven hundred fourteen was the number he hit.

Ms. Gabor had big numbers for tying the knot,

Though her tally of husbands was lower — a bit. (*Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore*)

Week 35, Muldoons, quatrains that mention at least two body parts, a place name, and a rhyme:

Said Cyrano of Bergerac,

“This nose, so big — I understand.”

Said fair Roxane, replying back:

“Who cares? I’m looking at your hand.” (*Mark Raffman*)

It has P, E, N, I, and S.

It’s shaped like Chile. What’s your guess?

I doubt there’s one as stiff as mine—

Of course I’m speaking of the SPINE. (*Jesse Frankovich, Laingsburg, Mich.*)

Week 37, “backronyms”:

BOEBERT: Beetlejuice Offers Excellent Boyfriend-Erotic-Rubbing Time (*Duncan Stevens*)

Week 38: Chiasmus, phrases paired with their inversion, including spoonerisms:

Trump: “Hunter is a criminal who should be prosecuted.”

Also Trump: “Prosecutors are criminals who should be hunted.” (*Mark Raffman*)

“Have you emptied our trash cans yet?” “Done that bin there.” (*Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.*)

Week 39: Dylan “tailgaters,” a line from a song written by Bob Dylan,
then paired with your own rhyming line:

I paid fifteen million dollars, twelve hundred and seventy-two cents

’Cause buying Supreme Court justices is quite a large expense. (*Karen Lambert*)

Go away from my window, leave at your own chosen speed:

You’re hardly the first sick creep to watch me while I peed. (*Jon Ketzner, Cumberland, Md.*)

Week 40, song lyrics about the news:

Ballad of a Straw Man

To “If I Only Had a Brain”

Pay no heed to those indictments, those frivolous incitements,
In time they’ll leave no stain!
Prosecutors whipped grand juries into anti-MAGA furies
Just to mess with my campaign.

Paid no porn star to keep quiet—did not incite a riot —
Keep docs? Oh, that’s inane!
Lefties spread disinformation, tales of vote manipulation,
Just to mess with my campaign.

A smear to interfere with votes in ’24:
“Make him someone that his base will not adore!”
With every count they love me more!

You can trust me, sure as shootin’: the people prosecutin’
Are on a gravy train.
What those meanies, every one, did, that’s because they’re Soros-funded,
Out to mess with my campaign. (*Duncan Stevens*)

Week 41, neologisms “discovered” in a random word-find grid:

Phod: Vietnamese wabbit soup. (*Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.*)

Lossie: Memory-impaired dog who keeps forgetting where Timmy went. (*Jeff Contompasis*)

Week 43, “Life lessons” to be learned from some milieu:

From reality TV: To rough it in the wilderness, take only the bare essentials: fire starter, pot, machete, and an array of makeup. (*Pam Shermeyer*)

From your parents: Always keep your banking password in a safe place, like your purse or wallet. (*Steve Smith*)

Week 46, “air quotes”:

2“46”8, who do we appreciate?: A chant never heard at Trump rallies. (*Judy Freed, Deerfield Beach, Fla.*)

A“cad”emic: A handsy professor. (*Jeff Hazle, San Antonio*)

Th“eat”er: “Acting was my life, but I found I needed to do more.” (*Frank Osen*)

Donal“D J. T”rump: So narcissistic, even his name says his name. (*Judy Freed*)

I“ow”a: Location of Ron DeSantis campaign headquarters on Jan. 16. (*Mark Raffman*)

Back“woo”dsy: Comin’ a-courtin’ with a fresh rabbit and a bouquet of honeysuckle. (*Pam Shermeyer*)

S“mother”: Being a helicopter mom. (*Howard Walderman, Columbia, Md.*)

Se“rv”ant: A SCOTUS justice who dutifully does the bidding of his patrons. (*Chris Doyle*)

Te“tan”us: So I stepped on a pop-top at Margaritaville Beach. What could go wrong? (*Neil Kurland*)

N“ew”s: A photojournalism story on Dr. Pimple Popper. (*Jeff Hazle*)

Week 47, compare two people who share some element of their names:

Alex Haley and Nikki Haley: Each is known for fictionalized accounts of slavery. (*Kevin Dopart, Washington, D.C.*)

Bruce Jenner vs. Caitlyn Jenner: In addition to having the same parents, both had exactly the same circulatory and digestive systems. (*Howard Walderman*)

Week 48, bad news rewritten to sound like good news:

Original: The planet might have entered the age of ‘global boiling’ in 2023

Spun: Global warming may be a thing of the past (*Jeff Contompasis*)

O: Alaska Airlines Grounds Fleet of Boeing 737 Max 9 Jets After Midair ‘Incident’

S: Alaska Airlines to Dramatically Reduce Carbon Emissions (*Karen Lambert*)

O: Trump’s criminality, his authoritarianism, and his malignant narcissism and psychopathy inextricably intertwine.

S: Trump may not be unraveling after all. (*Judy Freed*)

O: Nearly 700 Books Banned in Orange County, Florida

S: Orlando Libraries Dramatically Expand Shelf Capacity (*Frank Osen*)

Week 49, caption any of seven pictures:



Picasso's "Black Period" was better left forgotten. *(Leif Picoult)*

Week 50, news items from the coming year:

To make himself hipper, King Charles III rebrands as KC3. *(Leif Picoult)*

The Supreme Court rules 6-3 to reverse the Colorado decision barring Donald Trump from the ballot. Writing for the majority, Justice Thomas declares in full: “Because we said so, that’s why.” (*Elliott Shevin, Efrat, West Bank*)

Joe Biden is impeached for not having any of the evidence that House Republicans need in order to impeach him. (*Duncan Stevens*)

The D.C. area Metro system announces that, due to budget cutbacks, the Purple Line will be merely a pale lavender. (*Duncan Stevens*)

And Last: *Air quotes:* The Gene “Poo”l: Not the usual crap. It’s better crap. (*Neil Kurland*)

The headline “Déjà Two” is by Kevin Dopart; Roy Ashley wrote the honorable-mentions subhead.

Still running — deadline 9 p.m. ET Saturday, Jan. 13: **Our Week 53 contest for humorous poems about people who died in 2023. Click on the link below.**