

The Invitational Week 78: History for the tl;dr Crowd

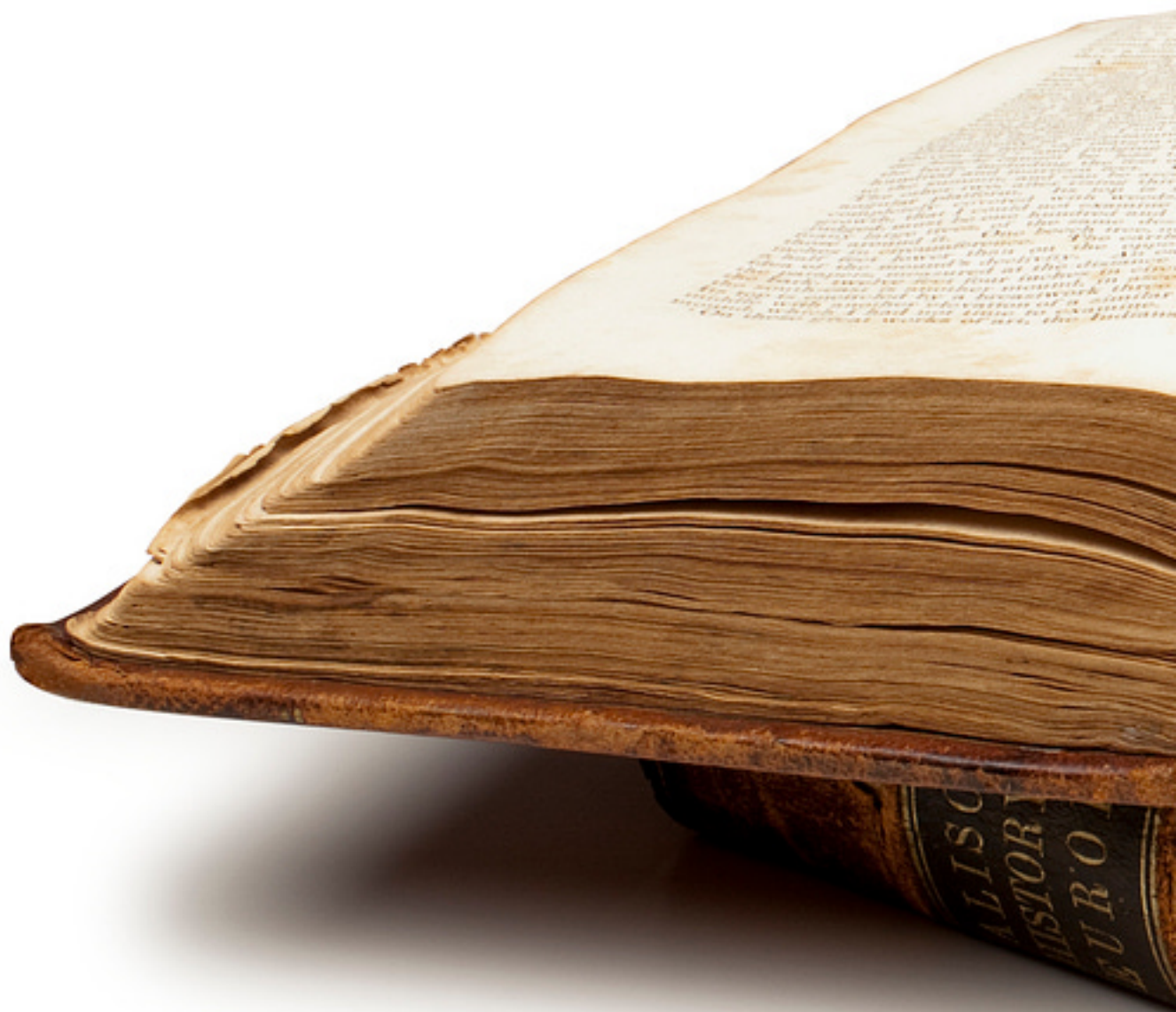
Sum up an event for the 21st-century reader in a rhyming couplet. Plus our winning 'good/bad/ugly' progressions.

[PAT MYERS](#)

AND

[GENE WEINGARTEN](#)

JUN 27, 2024



Hello. We were going to muse wistfully for a spell about how today's readers no longer value the craft of a well-constructed essay, its argument furthered by each paragraph expertly building upon the previous one.

But we aren't. Because, we're told, you don't have time for such things, semicolons and transitions and supporting arguments and other such eye-glazers.

Just tell what you're getting at, okay? Preferably with bullet points.

For Invitational Week 78: Summarize any event from history into two rhyming lines, as in these examples from ancient Invites, transcribed from the cuneiform (full results [here](#) and [here](#)):

**480 B.C.: If King Xerxes and friends had invaded Greece properly,
That unpleasantness could have been skipped at Thermopylae.** (*Mark Eckenwiler*)

**1888: The mind of Jack the Ripper warps: his
Madness leaves a spree de corpses.** (*Chris Doyle*)

**1776: Though Jefferson professed all men are equal at creation,
The only way he showed it was covert miscegenation.** (*Steve Fahey*)

Deadline is Saturday, July 6, at 9 p.m. ET. Results will run here in The Gene Pool on Thursday, July 11. As usual, you may submit up to 25 entries for this week's contest, preferably all on the same form.

[Click here for this week's entry form,](#) or go to tinyURL.com/inv-form-78.

Formatting this week: Though we'll present the inking entries as nice couplets, **please write your couplet as one long line, with a slash where the lines should break.** Put the year of the event at the beginning of the line. Here's

how we'd like to receive your entry (this one is by Russell Beland, the winner of the 2004 contest):

**1925: Even though it's John T. Scopes whom they were really tryin',/
Darrow made a monkey out of William Jennings Bryan.**

This week's winner gets toilet plungers that hang from your ears. Who knows when you might be out and about and encounter a stopped-up dollhouse toilet — or two — and you can save the day?



Not recommended for earwax extraction: This week's prize.

Runners-up get autographed fake money featuring the Czar or Empress, in one of [eight nifty designs](#). Honorable mentions get bupkis, except for a personal email from the E, plus the [Fir Stink for First Ink](#) for First Offenders.

Meanwhile, send us questions or observations, which we hope to deal with in real time today. You do this, as always, by sending them to this here button:

[this here button](#)

Wait — It Gets Worse! The ‘good/bad/ugly’ of Week 76

In Invitational [Week 76](#) we invited you to tell us jokes in the classic good-news/bad-news form, but with even badder, *ugly* news added. In judging, the judges exerted some prejudice: This entry by Kevin Dopart, for example, was eliminated with Czarist prejudice: **Good: Kiss cam. Bad: Nanny cam. Ugly: Toilet cam.** It was eliminated because “kiss cam” is not “good.” It is a revolting intrusion on privacy, and a tyranny of yahoo crowds braying for strangers to kiss. It’s as disgusting as the idiotic practice at weddings in which guests tinkle their glasses to get their bride and groom to kiss on command. It will not be further dignified here. Mr. Dopart wins an “abuse point” in the [Loser Stats](#) for this savagery of his poor taste in cams, but that is it.

Third runner-up:

Good: Someone says you’re pretty.

Bad: But they’re out to get you.

Ugly: And your little dog, too. (*Jesse Frankovich, Laingsburg, Mich.*)

Second runner-up:

Good: A 300 bowling score.

Bad: A 300 credit score.

Ugly: A 300 golf score. (*Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.*)

First runner-up:

Good: Your boss just promoted you to CFO.

Bad: He fired your predecessor, saying “it’s time to turn the page to a new chapter.”

Ugly: That would be Chapter 11. (*Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.*)

*And the winner of the **blinking-eyeball earrings**:*

Good: You have impressive office furniture.

Bad: Everyone wants to try out sitting at your desk.

Ugly: It’s January 6. (*Judy Freed, Deerfield Beach, Fla.*)

Hey, Badder, Badder: Honorable mentions

Good: Someone generously offers a cigarette.

Bad: It’s awkward to say you don’t smoke.

Ugly: The only other thing they offer is a blindfold. (*Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.*)

Good: You finally decided to cut the cord.

Bad: It was the microwave cord.

Ugly: It was plugged in. (*Pam Shermeyer, Lathrup Village, Mich.*)

Good: You jumped into the backyard pool on a steamy day.

Bad: It hasn’t been cleaned in a while.

Ugly: It’s a cesspool. (*Kevin Dopart, Naxos, Greece*)

Good: Carolyn Hax.

Bad: Political hacks.

Ugly: Lizzie Borden hacks. (*Kevin Dopart*)

Good: It’s finally time for your big presentation.

Bad: Others judge the delivery as too slow-paced.

Ugly: You have to come out by C-section. (*Jeff Contompasis*)

Good: Your orchestra has never sounded better.

Bad: The audience seems distracted.

Ugly: By a surprisingly large iceberg. (*Judy Freed*)

Good: You're drilling and hit a gusher.

Bad: The spillage is everywhere and you can't contain it.

Ugly: You're a dentist. (*Sam Mertens, Silver Spring, Md.*)

Good: Folding an origami bird.

Bad: Folding a winning hand.

Ugly: Folding a fitted sheet. (*Jesse Frankovich*)

Good: Got right through to a real person without being put on hold.

Bad: It was the wrong number.

Ugly: You were calling 911. (*Judy Freed*)

Good: You're at a gathering where people are speaking very highly of you.

Bad: You can't hear a word they're saying.

Ugly: It's your funeral. (*Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore*)

Good: Astronaut Barbie.

Bad: **Teen Talk Barbie.**

Ugly: Klaus Barbie. (*Kevin Dopart*)

Good: My son is planning to vote.

Bad: He's planning to vote for Trump.

Ugly: My son is Hunter Biden. (*Neal Starkman, Seattle*)

Good: One of your son's videos goes viral.

Bad: It's on Nextdoor, not TikTok.

Ugly: It's Ring doorbell footage of him stealing a Kia from a driveway. (*Terri Berg Smith, Rockville, Md.*)

Good: Ooh, look at the cute kitty!

Bad: Wait, why is it swinging its paw at me?

Ugly: Oh, right, I'm a hamster. (*Mark Raffman*)

Good: It's the Publishers Clearing House Prize Patrol at your door!

Bad: They call you Herbert, but your name is Joe.

Ugly: Herbert is your despicable next-door neighbor. (*Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.*)

Good: You aced your cognitive test.

Bad: You're telling everyone.

Ugly: The same people, every five minutes. (*Frank Osen, Pasadena Calif.*)

Good: You're interviewed at length by a newspaper reporter.

Bad: You're wondering why the reporter looked kind of puzzled.

Ugly: All your quotes end in "[sic]." (*Roy Ashley, Washington, D.C.*)

Good: You are gazing upon millions of stars in a spectacular display.

Bad: It is really cold out.

Ugly: Your spacesuit tether broke. (*Jesse Frankovich*)

Good: You find a parking space on K Street.

Bad: You use up a whole roll of quarters for the meter.

Ugly: It's Sunday. (*Rob Cohen, Potomac, Md.*)

Good: Your boss recognizes your exemplary work.

Bad: By asking you to work late.

Ugly: To train the recent graduate who's replacing you at half your salary. (*Karen Lambert, Chevy Chase, Md.*)

Good: Your daughter is paying her way through college.

Bad: She has to work insanely long hours.

Ugly: At her OnlyFans site. (*Karen Lambert*)

Good: You're finally home after being out all day.

Bad: Your dog ignores you.

Ugly: Because he's eating the steak thrown to him by the thieves currently ransacking your house. (*Dave Prevar, Annapolis, Md.*)

Good: You've got a big date tomorrow!

Bad: You don't have time to get ready.

Ugly: It's your trial date. (*Mark Raffman*)

Good: Your credit score has gone up.

Bad: Because you've opened some high-limit lines of credit.

Ugly: Which must have been done by somebody else. (*Sam Mertens*)

Good: Dad wearing the new socks you got him.

Bad: With sandals.

Ugly: And nothing else. (*Jesse Frankovich*)

And Last: *Good:* You got ink last week!

Bad: You notice a typo.

Ugly: You shouldn't have gone to Tatoos 4 Less. (*Leif Picoult, Rockville, Md.*)

The headline "Wait — It Gets Worse" is by Tom Witte; Jesse Frankovich wrote the honorable-mentions subhead.

Still running — deadline 9 p.m. ET Saturday, June 29: our Week 77 contest to write a script for a "Barney & Clyde" comic strip about memory loss. Click on the link below.