

The Invitational Week 126: Questionable Journalism

In which we invite you to gleefully misinterpret the news. Plus winning what-if scenarios.

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AND

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What if Blanche DuBois were a cannibal? See the results of this week's Invitational, below.

Hello. Welcome to the Invitational Gene Pool, where we begin with an extraneous question: Is Melania Trump human? That's it. We'll address the question in a day or two. Here comes The Invitational.

Sentence from a news story: "There is a big grassroots movement that's sprung up."

Q. What did the plumber say after using his plunger on the vegan's toilet?

Another one: Let me be honest here.

Q. What does a politician say before lying?

One more: There's something about digging in the dirt, turning it, smelling it.

Q. What do you like best about being a reporter for the National Enquirer?

As people for whom reading the newspaper every day is as deeply ingrained a habit as rolling our eyes when someone says “mischievous,” we know how hard it is to face the daily chronicle of events that threatens to send you fleeing back under the bedcovers. So we're here to offer a way to make reading the news an eensy bit more fun, a game that's given us a wealth of zingers over the years.

For Invitational Week 126: Choose any sentence (or the major part of a sentence) from any publication (online or on paper) dated May 29-June 7, 2025, and follow it with a question it could comically answer, as in the examples above by Jon Gearhart (the first two) and Beverley Sharp from earlier Questionable Journalism contests.

The sentence can be in an article or ad. Tell us the name of the publication and the date and (if in print) the page number; for online publications, include a link to the webpage. (Here are the [results from our last QJ](#), a couple of years ago.)

Formatting this week — it's important! Even though we'll be reprinting the A's and Q's in two lines as above, please **DO NOT break your entry into two or more lines**; i.e., don't push Enter until the end of each entry. Just write the “answer” followed by the question, and even the URL of the webpage, all on one line. Then hit Enter and a space or two before your next entry. Otherwise, we might not be able to find the various parts of your entry and all that news-reading will have been for naught.

[Click here for this week's entry form](#), or go to tinyURL.com/inv-form-126. As usual, you may submit up to 25 entries for this week's contest, preferably all on the same form.

Deadline is Saturday, June 7, at 9 p.m. ET. Results will run here in The Gene Pool on Thursday, June 12.

The winner gets this industrial-strength battery-powered **Bullshit Button**. Push the big red top and lights flash accompanied by sirens and beeps and various warnings: “Bullshit alert!” “Bullshit detected! Take precautions!” “Bullshit level Defcon 5!” We recommend taking it with you as a helpful aid during your performance review. Donated by recidivist gifter Dave Prevar.



Out of Your Minds: What-ifs from Week 124

In [Invitational Week 124](#), we asked you to create “what if?” scenarios with entertaining answers.

Third runner-up:

What if dinosaurs still roamed the Earth? We would be treated to photos of Don Jr. and Eric standing next to dead ones. (*Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.*)

Second runner-up:

What if nobody had invented the gun? You might get mugged by somebody threatening to throw a bullet at you very hard. (*Sam Mertens, Silver Spring, Md.*)

First runner-up:

What if Charles Dickens hadn't written *A Christmas Carol*? No one would have ever heard of Scrooge McDuck. (*Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.*)

And the winner of the O-Balm-A lip balm:

What if Kristi Noem were arrested and imprisoned without being charged with a crime? Well, tough shit for her. (*Jon Ketzner, Cumberland, Md.*)

The If-Troop: Honorable mentions

What if Blanche DuBois were a cannibal? She would say, "I have always depended on the kidneys of strangers." (*Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park, Md.*)

What if ice cream had bones? If you're lactose-intolerant and ate it, you wouldn't care about the lactose. (*Stephen Dudzik, Olney, Md.*)

What if Ilsa returns to Rick in *Casablanca II*? Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but sooner or later they'd start squabbling. (*Dan Steinbrocker, Los Angeles*)

What if the whole world were in the same time zone? Then you'd actually have to wait until 5 o'clock to have a drink. (*Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore*)

What if a restaurant were designed around the bachelor aesthetic? There would be no chairs, and every table would have a kitchen sink to eat over. (*Sam Mertens*)

What if it were men who got pregnant? Paternity clothes would consist of men not buttoning and zippering their current shirts and pants. (*Art Grinath, Takoma Park, Md.*)

If men could get pregnant, abortion bans would include an exception to prevent the inconvenience of the father. (*Jonathan Jensen*)

What if eating casu marzu — maggot cheese — could make you live forever? I'm still going to die. (*Sam Mertens*)

What if Abraham Lincoln were innumerate? The Gettysburg Address would have begun, "Three years ago, or possibly eighty thousand, I'm not sure" (*Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.*)

What if air traffic control equipment were inoperable for a week? Finally, you'd snag that aisle seat. (*Howard Walderman, Columbia, Md.*)

What if ants, which never sleep, did? The queen would dream of being kissed by a frog so she'd get out of that friggin' hellhole. (*Dave Prevar, Annapolis, Md.*)

What if a T. rex had escaped from the cargo hold of the Titanic? It would have been a lot less dramatic when it stood on the bow and stretched its arms out. (*Jesse Frankovich, Laingsburg, Mich.*)

What if card games had never been invented? Poker would be a duel involving fireplace implements. (*Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.*)

What if Christmas were in July? There'd be a lot of fat guys in red suits showing up at the hospital with heat exhaustion. (*Jon Gearhart, Des Moines*)

What if dinosaurs hadn't existed? Parents of toddlers would probably have more disposable income. (*Lee Graham, Reston, Va.*)

What if Donald Trump were introduced to Jesus of Nazareth? Trump would try to “win the handshake.” (*Roy Ashley, Washington, D.C.*)

What if Don Corleone had been a member of PETA? That Hollywood producer would have found a My Little Pony head in his bed. (*Duncan Stevens*)

What if fresh vegetables never went bad? How would you justify throwing them out to make room in your fridge for those pies? (*Judy Freed, Deerfield Beach, Fla.*)

What if humans had X-ray vision? “Hey, eyes up here! I’m not due for my mammogram yet.” (*Judy Freed*)

What if humans were more like jellyfish? Shit would come out of our mouths and we’d be spineless. Basically, we’d all be in Congress. (*Kevin Dopart, Naxos, Greece*)

What if it turns out that covid really did come from a Chinese lab? Trump would demand that the next pandemic come from an American lab, with U.S. citizens, but NOT located in woke Harvard! (*Art Grinath*)

What if Klara Polzl’s husband hadn’t decided to adopt his stepfather’s surname late in life, and then confer it on his kids? A lot of Trump supporters would be sporting Schicklgruber mustaches. (*Duncan Stevens*)

What if laxative commercials were realistic? They’d show actors running toward the bathroom, tripping over the dog, and elbowing a hole in a newly painted wall. (*Leif Picoult, Rockville, Md.*)

What if medical commercials didn’t list all the potential side effects? They’d be one second long. (*Leif Picoult*)

What if my autocorrect were turned off? (*Jesse Frankovich*)

What if our noses grew like Pinocchio's every time we tell a lie? Then Trump would need some sturdy wheeled vehicle to support his mammoth schnoz and prevent him from falling on his face. *(Beverley Sharp)*

What if Robert Oppenheimer and the Manhattan Project had failed? We'd "firebomb" cold pizza in the microwave. *(Kevin Dopart)*

What if sardines weighed 150 pounds? They would object to being packaged in coach. *(Mark Raffman)*

What if the British had won the Revolutionary War? We probably wouldn't have created blues, jazz, or rap, but at least we'd all have health care. *(Jonathan Jensen)*

What if the Consumer Product Safety Commission had been around in 1804? Hamilton and Burr would have fought their duel with Nerf guns. *(Duncan Stevens)*

What if the number of the beast were 555? The poor thing would be constantly interrupted by phone calls from TV actors. *(Jonathan Paul)*

What if there were no cellphones? Cars would move when the light turned green. *(Tom Witte)*

What if the Titanic had been an enormous rubber raft? No one would have been able to hear the band play "Nearer, My God, to Thee" with all that hissing. *(Duncan Stevens)*

What if the Trump Presidential Library ultimately receives the Qatari 747? It would get 11 extra bathrooms in which to store classified documents. *(Steve Smith, Potomac, Md.)*

What if the War of the Austrian Succession had never been fought? Then Maria-Theresa wouldn't have been confirmed as the rightful Archduchess in the

Habsburg line, and Prussia wouldn't have obtained control of Silesia.
Imagine! (*Duncan Stevens*)

What if Trump were gay and Black? He'd still be an asshole. (*Neal Starkman, Seattle*)

What if Viagra hadn't been invented? Life would still be worth living, I guess. (*Lee Graham, Reston, Va.*)

What if your recorded calls to customer service were actually reviewed for quality assurance? Ha! Now THAT's what I call funny! (*Judy Freed*)

What if Benadryl caused babies to poop gold bars? Its primary use would still be to keep them quiet on airplane trips. (*Mark Raffman*)

And Last: What if I should scramble up the letters in this sentence? THIS COULD ENTERTAIN THE EMPRESS, WITH ALL SUCH BENEFITS! (*Jesse Frankovich — and yes, that second sentence is a perfect anagram of the preceding question*)

And Even Laster: What if The Washington Post hadn't killed The Style Invitational? This entry, which for no particular reason refers to fellatio, anal sex, and vaginal atrophy, would likely not get ink. (*Judy Freed*)

The headline "Out of Your Minds" is by Judy Freed; Chris Doyle wrote the honorable-mentions subhead.

Still running — deadline Saturday, May 31, at 9 p.m. ET: Our final "air quotes" contest. Click below for details.