

The Invitational Week 127: Put It in Bee-Verse

Use one of those obscure spelling bee words in a funny poem. Plus 'air quotes' winners.

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2024 photo by Matt McLain, The Washington Post via Getty Images

Amphicrania, headache on both sides of the head:

A native of West Transylvania

Was plagued by advanced amphicrania.

He's not a vampire

**But his teeth feel on fire —
It's a headache that really can painya.**

(We're announcing that we
Are doing the spelling bee
Again,
Fren'.)

In this week's Invitational contest, Week 127: Write a humorous rhyming poem or tell a short joke (e.g., a riddle) using any word from Round 6 or later in the 2025 Scripps National Spelling Bee. The real meaning of the word should be clear, from context alone or by brief definition, as in the Czar's limerick up top. The Bee's website, spellingbee.com, doesn't supply the meanings, but you can find them at m-w.com or by Googling, or just choose a word from the sample list below.

- You may use a slightly different form of the word (e.g., plural, past tense).
- Be sure to use the *correct* spelling of the word, which appears on the list to the left of however the kid spelled it in competition, correctly or not.
- For Guidance 'n' Inspiration,® [here are the results](#) of our last bee poetry contest.

A few words chosen more or less randomly from this year's lists (but choose from [dozens more here in Rounds 6 through 21](#):

Acker (ACK-er), a ripple or a patch of ruffled water

Adytum (ADD-a-tum), an inner sanctum of an ancient temple available only to priests

Bibliognost (BIB-li-og-nost): Someone with comprehensive knowledge of books

Dolabrate (DOLE-a-bret or DOLE-a-brate): Shaped like the head of an ax or hatchet

Dyslogistic (DIS-logistic): Uncomplimentary, derogatory

Éclaircissement (ay-CLAIR-cease-mont): Clarification, a clearing up of something obscure. (This was this year's final word.)

Epistrophe (eh-PIS-tro-fee): A literary device in which a word or expression is repeated at the end of successive phrases for effect (e.g., "government of the people, by the people, for the people")

Polyptoton (po-LIP-to-tahn or polyp-TO-tahn): A literary device in which a word is repeated but in different forms (e.g., "To be ignorant of one's ignorance is the malady of the ignorant")

Hyaline (HY-a-lin): Transparent, glasslike

Innominal (in-NOM-inable): Cannot be named, indescribable

Penannular (pen-ANN-ular): Having the shape of a ring with an opening

Kinnor (kee-NOR): An ancient Jewish lyre

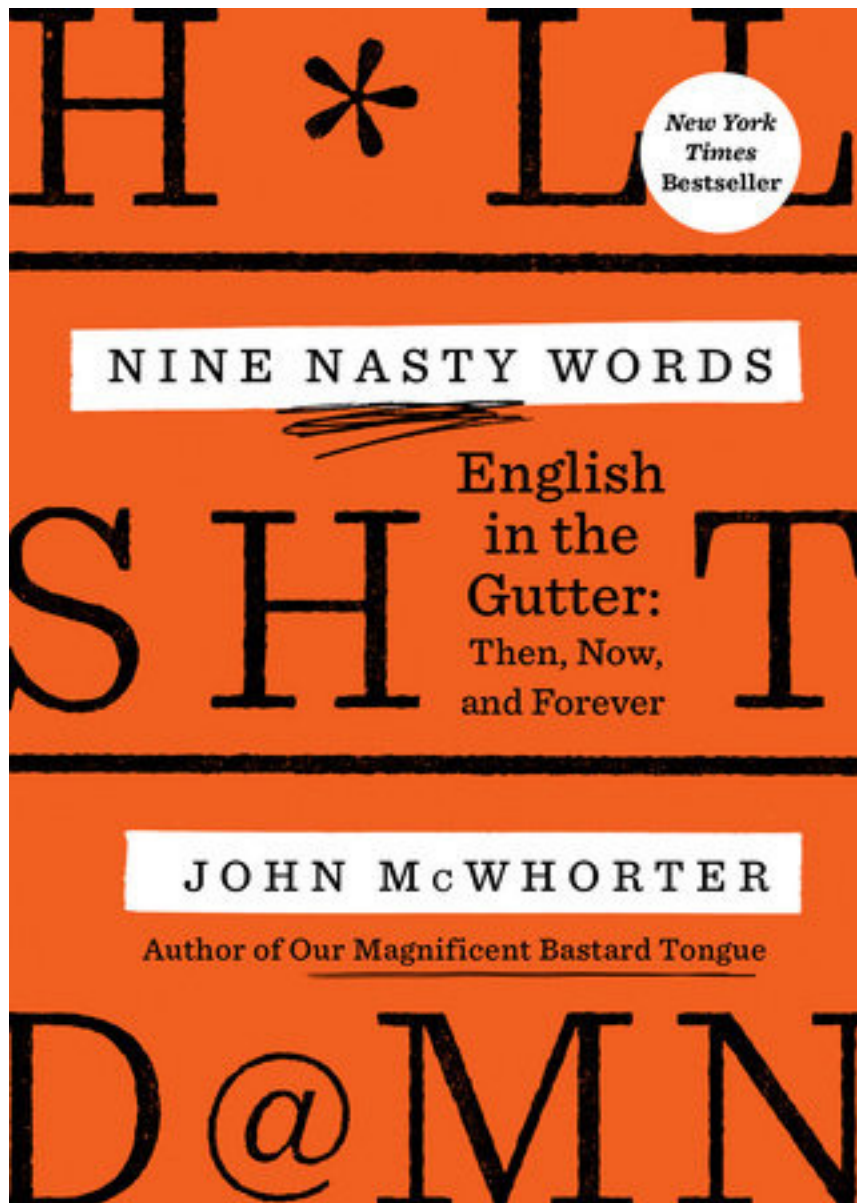
Radicicolous (RAD-i-SICK-o-lus): Living on or in roots, as do some fungi

Formatting this week: As usual with our poetry contests, **just type each poem as you'd like to see it appear**; this is an exception to our usual request to write each entry as a single line. If you're writing more than one poem (or joke), add a line of space or other indication between one and the next.

Click here for this week's entry form, or go to **tinyURL.com/inv-form-127**. As usual, you may submit up to 25 entries for this week's contest, preferably all on the same form.

Deadline is Saturday, June 14, at 9 p.m. ET. (Please don't tell us you'll be watching that parade.) Results will run here in The Gene Pool on Thursday, June 19.

The winner, apropos of the literary nature of today's contest, gets the book **Nine Nasty Words: English in the Gutter: Then, Now, and Forever**, by John McWhorter. Chapters on the history and current lives of said words include "What Is It About *Fuck*?, " "Profanity and Shit," and "Those Certain Parts" (and the many more than nine things we call them).



Look 'Wit'hin: The 'air quotes' from Week 125

In **Invitational Week 125** we presented our final “air quotes” contest (there have been at least nine of them over the years) to find a word within another word that can shade its meaning. Please note that an unusually high percentage of these inking entries involve poop. We cannot explain this except for the fact that the Czar was mathematically one-half the judging team.

Third runner-up:

“MUSK”ENTRY: The “ready, fire, aim!” management approach. (*Stu Segal, Southeast U.S.*)

Second runner-up:

C“LOG”: “I think I see the problem here with your toilet.” (*Judy Freed, Deerfield Beach, Fla.*)

First runner-up:

A“BS”TINENCE: “I just want to look into your eyes when we wake up in the morning.” (*Rob Cohen, Potomac, Md.*)

*And the winner of the **travel mug that looks like a dirty can of auto brake cleaner**:*

TO“MBS”TONE: Don’t cross this guy. (*Neil Kurland, Elkridge, Md.*)

Top-‘Not’ch: Honorable mentions

M“AIN”TENANCE: Fixing that leaky faucet, painting the kitchen, and other tasks that I’m just not going to do. (*Roy Ashley, Washington, D.C.*)

“PROSE”CUTABLE: What freedom of speech is, according to Pam Bondi. (*Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.*)

AD“VANCE”: To climb the political ladder by suddenly ignoring all your previous views. (*Howard Walderman, Columbia, Md.*)

“ANAL”GESIC: A painkilling suppository. (*Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.*)

BLISTERI“NGL”Y: How your warts-and-all performance review is conducted. (*Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.*)

BR“AI”N: What you need to use to get ahead in school. (*Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.*)

“BUTT”ONHOLE: To corner someone at a party to blather about yourself. (*Duncan Stevens*)

CHA“GRIN”: That big frozen smile on the face of someone who says, “It was an honor just to be nominated.” (*Jeff Contompasis*)

COMPL“EXIT”Y: Too long, didn’t read, zoned out. (*Pam Shermeyer, Lathrup Village, Mich.*)

C“HA”OS: What the Marx Brothers perfected. (*Neil Kurland*)

CR“YOLO”GY: Can frozen bodies really be resurrected? (*Jesse Frankovich, Laingsburg, Mich.*)

DECOLLET“AGE”: The year your bust becomes “a bust.” (*Stephen Dudzik, Olney, Md.*)

“DEPART”MENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY: Good riddance, Elon. (*William Kennard, Arlington, Va.*)

ÉCLAIRCIS“SEMEN”T: “Explaining to” your mom that you spilled Elmer’s glue on your sheets. (*Mike Ostapiej, Charleston, S.C.*)

HOMI“LIES”: If Trump *were* Pope, what he’d offer. (*Neil Kurland*)

IL“LUST”RATION: Manga porn. (*Gary Crockett*)

INCOM“PETE”NCE: Nobody does it like Mr. Hegseth. (*Jesse Frankovich; Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.*)

INHO“SPIT”ABLE: Unwelcoming (in the extreme!). (*Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.*)

IRRELE“VANCE”: The Vice President’s primary function. (*Jesse Frankovich; Neil Kurland*)

LI“FELON”G: The sort of wrongdoer the President is. (*Jesse Frankovich*)

LOLLAPA“LOO”ZA: “Blimey, I think I just set a personal record in there!” (*Pam Shermeyer*)

M“ANGER”: “No room at the inn? What is this crap, Joseph? I am NOT having this baby out here!” (*Mark Raffman*)

“NEEDLES”S: What RFK Jr. thinks covid shots are. (*Chris Doyle*)

NE“ME”SIS: Everyone’s worst enemy. (*Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.*)

OLI“GOP”OLY: The reason we love unregulated free markets. — JD Vance (*Chris Doyle; Neil Kurland*)

P“IRATE”: He flies the Cranky Roger flag. (*Jeff Hazle, San Antonio*)

“POO”L: No swimming today! (*Chris Doyle*)

QUE“SAD”ILLA: When you are hungry for Mexican but only Taco Bell is open. (*Terri Berg Smith, Rockville, Md.*)

RHO“DE I”SLAND: The wokest state. (*Jesse Frankovich*)

ROCKY MOUNTAI“N O”YSTERS: “Um, I’m good, thanks.” (*Leif Picoult, Rockville, Md.*)

SPL“END”ID: Callipygian. (*Gary Crockett*)

S“TURD”INESS: What you immediately notice about Tesla trucks. (*Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.*)

TRU“ST FU”ND BABIES: People who shouldn’t lecture others about pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. (*Duncan Stevens*)

YO“U SAID” IT: Trump on his foreign aid cuts: **“You know, it’s devastating.”** (*Kevin Dopart, Washington, D.C.*)

THE WASHINGTON “POS”T: A formerly great metropolitan newspaper. (*Jeff Contompasis*)

And Last: **CL“INKER”:** The entry you didn’t think was worth submitting, but wins the contest for someone else. (*Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore*)

And Even Laster: **O“INK”S:** Invitational entries that they’ll run when pigs fly. (*Chris Doyle*)

The headline “Look ‘Wit’hin” is by Judy Freed; Judy and Jon Gearhart each submitted the honorable-mentions subhead.

Still running — deadline Saturday, June 7, at 9 p.m. ET: Our “Questionable Journalism” contest to misinterpret sentences in news stories. Click below for details.