

The Style Invitational

Week 628: You Gotta Have Connections



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

How are Groucho Marx's eyebrows like two male rabbits? They both get a rise when they catch sight of a hot bunny.

Groucho Marx's eyebrows
The 400-meter dash
Sea urchin sushi
Two male rabbits
\$52.20

The gestation period of a hippopotamus

The Flying Spaghetti Monster
A \$400 pair of jeans
Deep Throat's throat
The Pandacam at the zoo
2 degrees Celsius
John Roberts's breakfast

This week's contest, a perennial Style Invitational feature: Choose any two or more items from the truly random list above and describe how they are alike or different, as in the example above. Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up receives a pair of lovely pink and white argyle socks sent to Style magazine critic Peter Carlson to promote something. He says they are unused.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or, if you really have to, by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Sept. 26. Results will be published Oct. 16. Put "Week 628" in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Entries are judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's contest is by Scott Campisi of Wake Village, Tex.

Report from Week 624, in which we asked for limericks featuring words beginning with bd- through bl-:

◆ Third runner-up:

If you don't want a swimsuit that's teeny,
 You'll be wise not to try a **bikini**.
 Even worse is the thong,
 Which, unless I am wrong,
 Would more aptly be called the betweeni.
 (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

◆ Second runner-up:

Alden knew what his friend Miles Standish
 meant;
 What his blushing request so outlandish
 meant.
 He'd woo fair Priscilla
 For that gruff old gorilla
 Who couldn't provide his own
blandishment.
 (David Smith, Santa Cruz, Calif.)

◆ First runner-up, winner of the inept horror movie "Manos: The Hands of Fate":

There once was a little French chamois
 Who frolicked on rocks near his mamois.
 His **blameless** young fun
 Was soon wrecked by a gun,
 And he's now washing cars in Miamois.
 (David Alan Brooks, Llanfair-yn-Neubwll, Wales)

◆ And the winner of the Inker:

Near my hospital room in a line
 Are my **bingo** pals, hoping I'm fine.
 Now the doc's at the door
 (I'm in N-24).
 And he's calling my tumor . . . B-9!
 (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

In the mind is it nobler to die?
 Or to fight without questioning why?
 Should I face my life's lot?
 Should I **be**, should I not?
 That's the question; check all that apply.
 — *Hamlet, State of Denmark*
 (Scott Campisi, Wake Village, Tex.)

Roast **beast** by the Grinch was allotted
 To Whos, who responded, besotted,
 With shouts and applause,
 While the heart of this Claus
 Grew three sizes — and burst his carotid.
 (Tim Alborn, Port Jefferson, N.Y.)

The doctor says now I'm forbidden
 To get up and walk — I'm **bedridden**.
 I drank lots of iced tea
 And I have to go pee
 But I'm desperately wishing I didn't.
 (Andrew Hoenig, Rockville)

At the newsstand one frequently sees
 An assortment of bared double-D's.
 Don't begrudge the fair sex
 A few well-toned pecs:
 We girls want some **beefcake**, not cheese-
 (Pam Sweeney, Germantown)

He was poised, and had calmness within,
 And the Peace Prize (Nobel) he would win.
 But Prime Minister Begin
 Would curse like a pagan
 When people would call him "**Begin.**"
 (Sheila Blume, Sayville, N.Y.)

A **belch** is a short burst of air
 That in public may cause you despair
 But it's not quite so crass
 As the air you might pass
 Impolitely from your derriere.
 (Greg McGrew, Leesburg)

Most election reformers **believe**
 Contributions are bad. (How naive!)
 But my Bible instructs
 What to do with my bucks:
 Says it's better to give, *then* receive.
 (Chris Doyle)

A husband inclined to **berate**
 Might admonish a spouse who is late.
 But this little showdown
 Will just make her slow down:
 Cool your heels, zip your lip, and just wait.
 (Ron Stanley, Reston)

There's an interesting notion aroun'
 That this limerick can only be foun'
 When a person can see it
 Or say it. So be it;
 That's **Berkeleyanism**, the noun.
 (Bill Spencer, Exeter, N.H.)

Berries are better by far
 Than all other kinds of fruit are:
 They come black and blue,
 And rasp and mul, too,
 and huckle and boysen and strawr.
 (Douglas Frank, Crosby, Tex.)

I wore black and refrained from all merrying
 As I pondered celestial ferrying.
 I arrived; my host gazed
 On my outfit, amazed,
 As it seems I'd been asked to go **berrying**.
 (Sheila Blume)

A **bestiality** fan (what a creep!)
 Had a torrid affair with a sheep.
 The thing she most hated
 Was that after they mated,
 He would count her, then go right to sleep.
 (Melissa Ann Taylor, New York)

If a peddler in Athens declares
 You'll receive, if you purchase his wares,
 A free panda that dances,
 Don't take any chances:
Beware of a Greek giftng bears.
 (Tim Alborn)

At a palace one sultry July
 Near Paree, a *jeune fille* caught my eye.
 She **bewitched** me that day
 And I fell right away
En amour. It was love at Versailles.
 (Chris Doyle)

Swapping presents twice yearly, you'll find
 You'll **biannual** get back in kind.
 But if every two years
 We exchange souvenirs,
 Then **biennial** thing — I won't mind!
 (Brendan Beary)

The gang who proved war is evadable
 Now declare, "Any country is raidable,
 And, for what it is worth,
 We will not harm the Earth
 Because people are **biodegradable.**"
 (Harvey Smith, McLean)

There's another deserving of **blame**
 For divulging a CIA name,
 But I sit in this cell
 For refusing to tell
 Who told me about Valerie Plame.
 — *Judith Miller, Alexandria*
 (Chris Doyle)

Don't serve pork to an Orthodox Jew.
 It's not kosher, so he'll say to you,
 "That's a **blasphemy**, sir!"
 The reply I prefer
 Is: "Well, thanks, it's a blast for me too."
 (Seth Brown, North Adams, Mass.)

To censors, the **bleep** was a hit
 (Though directors go into a snit).
 It doesn't sound swell
 But it does the job well,
 So your virgin ear never hears [bleep].
 (Seth Brown)

The **blues** came from origins rural.
 The songs paint a sorrowful mural.
 I'm down with the woe
 But I'd still like to know:
 Is "blues" singular or are they plural?
 (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

And Last:
Begrudge not the winner his spoil,
 Though in vain goes another week's toil.
 'Tis the fool who'd aspire,
 Like a moth to the fire,
 To match rhymes with one Christopher
 Doyle. (Steve Fahey, Kensington)

You can see more limericks from one
 Christopher Doyle and many other Losers at
www.washingtonpost.com.

Next Week: Haven't Seen It, or Hollywoodn't

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Familiarity Breeds Contempt

Historical dramas hold little suspense for Miss Manners. She always knows what the first conversation between important characters will contain.

A young patriot approaches a jolly bespectacled man with scraggly hair. "I never thought I would meet the great Dr. Franklin," he says.

"Oh, please," is the modest reply. "It's Ben."
 Or a courtier gives a dignified bow while maintaining eye contact projecting an attractively insolent gleam. "Your Majesty misleads her subjects," he says. "You are much more beautiful than your portraits."
 She meets his gaze. "My friends call me Bess," she replies.

Or a student says, "I don't quite follow you there, Professor Einstein."

"Nobody does," is the reply. "But my name is Al."

No matter what the period and no matter what the age, rank or nature of the personage portrayed, one of the first items of exposition will establish that the characters will call one another by their first names.

It is an etiquette issue handled by people who are ignorant of the history and practice of etiquette.

Miss Manners means no indictment of the entertainment industry. The ubiquity of this mistake has more to do with age and the pseudo-camaraderie now practiced in the workplace.

Far from meaning to portray their characters as rude, they mistakenly believe that they are illuminating such character traits as modesty, kindness and a democratic spirit. But prior to the mid-20th century, even the most modest, kind and democratic of people would have considered the use of first names by non-intimates to be condescending and insulting.

There was plenty of that rudeness going around. Women, African Americans, servants and low-ranking employees were routinely addressed by their first names by people who expected the respect of titles and surnames in return. But no one would volunteer to be treated that way.

Nowadays, people have a hard time believing that formality is not rude under any circumstances. If they are involved in making historical dramas, they have at last discovered that it was once common for people to address one another

formally. So they figure that nice people would have protested.

On the contrary. Nice people would have been particularly careful to maintain such formalities because they symbolized respect. Attempting to rush others into an unwarranted display of intimacy would have been considered presumptuous and vulgar.

Such concepts as instant intimacy, deference to age as a slur and the ersatz friendship in professional situations had not yet come along. Granting the use of one's first name was an important, sometimes thrilling, sign of affection. But if the unauthorized dare to assume this privilege without permission, people took it as being as much of a slight as — well, as people do now when telemarketers and doctors address them by their first names.

In any case, those scenes that purport to be historic betray the spirit of the times they purport to represent. Miss Manners has often had cause to lament that historic dramas that may have been stunningly researched in terms of costume and setting betray total innocence of the etiquette practiced at the time.

Dear Miss Manners:

What is the proper way to eat rambutan?

With the attitude that beauty is not important, and it is what is inside that counts.

You will need this even to approach this scary-looking fruit that appears to be covered with fleshy crimson or yellow hair.

But you may take courage from the fact that you will be armed with a knife. It should be used to cut the rambutan as far as, but not through, the seed, and skin it, eating the flesh by hand, being careful not to ingest any papery skin from the seed that should remain attached.

There are those who advise leaving the skin on the plate as decoration. Miss Manners is not among them.

Feeling incorrect? E-mail your etiquette questions to Miss Manners (who is distraught that she cannot reply personally) at MissManners@unitedmedia.com or mail to United Media, 200 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016.

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ASK AMY

Dear Amy:

My husband and I have been together for years but have been married for only a couple of months. Our relationship couldn't be better.

The problem is his grandmother. She is hypercritical and judgmental. She has never liked me and doesn't think that I am good enough for her grandson. She is always talking badly about me behind my back and saying that I'm a bad influence on him.

I have a high-school education. I work full time and go to college and I have never been into drugs or partying. Around my family and me, she acts like she's okay with me. My family adores my husband.

The real problem is that my husband and I just found out that we are going to have a baby and we couldn't be happier. His grandma doesn't think that we should have a child because it will make it harder for my husband to realize what a mistake he made and leave me.

I know that we did everything backward by today's standards by finishing high school, getting married and finding our own place first before starting a family, but we're traditional people.

I have heard from other members of his family that she has said she doesn't want to have anything to do with our child. This really bugs me and I know it hurts my husband that she acts this way, but we just don't know what to do. I don't want this to put a strain on our relationship or our family.

Frustrated

Your decision to finish high school, get married and establish your life before having a child means that your family will start out strong. That's a good thing.

If your husband's grandmother is hypocritical enough to treat you decently when she is with you, then be glad. It sure beats the alternative. If your husband's other family members report back negative comments that she has made, then you should ask them to stop telling you about these comments, because knowing her opinion doesn't help you at all.

Your husband should take the lead with his grandmother and tell her that he is starting a family and that he has every intention of remaining in it. Then you and he should go about your busi-

ness, swallow your annoyance and keep moving forward. His grandmother will come around when it comes to your baby. Babies tend to have that effect on people.

Dear Amy:

Were you off the mark with your response to the husband whose wife didn't want him to attend her reunion with her. I went to my wife's 20th reunion and it was one of the worst nights I have ever spent.

I felt like an anchor that she was dragging around as she met her old friends, and every sentence started with "Do you remember when" or "I wonder what ever happened to so-and-so." After about 30-45 minutes of agony, I excused myself and spent the rest of the night in the bar with another misplaced husband.

When my 40th rolled around, I told her that I was going — alone. I said that I wouldn't subject her to the miserable time she forced me to endure. She wasn't exactly happy, but when everyone that we talked to told her the same thing about not knowing anyone and feeling very out of place, she reluctantly said okay.

I came back after having a wonderful time seeing and catching up with people I hadn't seen or spoken to in 40 years and thanked her for letting me do it my way. I also told her of the spouses who sat alone at tables or stood silently by as their "better halves" talked about the "old days" and reminisced about the glory days of high school. My wife's 40th will be coming up next year, and unless hell freezes over, she'll be going by herself.

Ken

Many reunion spouses shared your perspective. The difference between your account and the original letter was that this husband didn't seem to trust his wife's reasons for asking him to stay away. My thinking was that she should have offered him the option of attending her reunion and being bored senseless.

Write to Amy Dickinson at askamy@tribune.com or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.

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BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ A 10 3
 ♥ J 7 3
 ♦ J 9 6 3
 ♣ Q 7 3

WEST

♠ Q 9 8 2
 ♥ Q 2
 ♦ A 10 5 2
 ♣ K 9 4

EAST

♠ 7 4
 ♥ 8 6 5
 ♦ 8 7 4
 ♣ A 10 8 5

SOUTH (D)

♠ K J 6 5
 ♥ A K 10 9 4
 ♦ K Q
 ♣ 6 2

The bidding:

South	West	North	East
1 ♥	Pass	2 ♥	Pass
3 ♥	Pass	4 ♥	All Pass

Opening lead: ♠ 2

Years ago, I was declarer at five clubs with a trump suit of A-J-7-6 in dummy opposite my 10-8-5-4-3-2. I cashed the ace, and my right-hand opponent dropped the king and made a surly comment about my good luck. At that moment, I knew his partner had the missing queen, and that information let me make my game.

"Table presence" really has two aspects. A player with good table presence notices his opponents' remarks and mannerisms. He also draws inferences from their bids and plays.

Today's declarer won the first spade with the jack and led the king of diamonds, and West took the ace and guessed well to shift to clubs. South ruffed the third club, cashed the ace of trumps, led a spade to dummy's ten, returned the jack of trumps . . . and finessed. West won and gave East a spade ruff for down

two.

"Great table presence," North growled. "When the man didn't cover the jack of trumps, you might have put up the king."

Should South have guessed right?

South might play West for the queen of trumps but not because East failed to cover an honor. North-South had a tentative auction to game — they had 26 points at most — and dummy would have a weak hand. Hence West wasn't called on to make an aggressive opening lead. A good West would choose the safest lead available.

West didn't have a passive lead in clubs or diamonds, nor did he have one in spades. Still, he led a dangerous spade from the queen. If West had only low trumps, a trump lead would have been much more attractive.

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