

The Style Invitational

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 71: Join Now!

Judi-genious:
Able to get O.J. acquitted.
Var-mit:
A license to raise rats in your yard.

For the legions out there who believe the English lexicon is just too darn small, here's another of our perennial neologism contests: **Hyphenate the beginning and end of any two multi-syllabic words appearing anywhere in the April 29 or May 6 Style or Sunday Arts section, and then define the compound.** Each part should consist of at least one syllable but can't be the entire word, and your entry can't be an actual English word. You may use the new word in a sentence. Readers on washingtonpost.com after today: Click on "Print Edition" at the top of the page, then on "View Previous Editions" a couple of inches below. Both halves of the examples are from this column.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up gets a 30-inch-high styrofoam capital L (for Loser, natch) with a curved top that makes it look like a backward 2. It was sent to us at great expense by Arthur Litoff of York Springs, Pa., who made the Empress promise that she would mention that he is a member of the Dramatists Guild. There you go, Arthur! If you "win" this L and are not inclined to come and pick it up, the Empress will substitute something else.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable Mentions (or whatever they're called that week) 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 by mail to The Style Invitational, The Washington Post, 1150 15th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005. Put "Week 71" 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. Contests 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. Results will be published May 27. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. Next week's revised title is by Kevin Dopart. This week's Honorable Mentions name is by Susan Urban of Silver Spring.

REPORT FROM WEEK 707

In which we asked you to write humorous poetry or prose using only the 236 words used in "The Cat in the Hat." Concerned that such a small group of almost all one-syllable words wouldn't permit clever and varied enough writing, the Empress told entrants they could combine words on the list into compound words. Immediately, numerous Losers started submitting entries that included not just true compound words but such meldings as "so" and "up" to make "soup." Clearly not in the spirit of the contest, but awfully ingenious, and funny enough to merit a rule-bend. ("Funny enough" is the primary judicial criterion when it comes to imperial leniency.)

4 I stand up, go near her. "You are a fox, how about the two of us . . ." "Your fly is down," she says. Red in the face, I sit back down. Man, that was cold. (Russ Taylor, Vienna)

3 I was, like, a mess. But now my head has a new look! Kind of pink. I had to pack up and, like, go away for a little. It was no big thing. Want to go out? — B. Spears, Los Angeles (Anne Paris, Arlington)

2 The winner of the big red Naked sign: Who put the bump in the bump-deep-bump-deep-bump? Do do run run run, do do run run. Put your head on my — Hold it, Pot-see! This is when your show jumps the you-know-what. (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

On day one He made the sun and all. And He saw it was good. Then He made a man. From out of the man, she came. Now there were two. And the two did something. What they did was bad. So there was shame. A lot of it. And He said, go away from here! And they went away and be-got another. And that one be-got another one. And so on. — The Good Book. (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

THESE DID NOT DO AS WELL

Give a man a fish and he will not fast. Show a man how to fish, and he will sit all day and hold a string on a hook, with nothing to show for it. (John O'Byrne, Dublin)

Your mother so big, if she fell into the well, she would not know it was wet. (Susan Thompson, Cary, N.C.)

Some things that should not be said in the White House:

"Look at that fox!"

"Get me some pot!"

"This bump? Oh, I fell down when I was high."

"Do you know this fun game? No? Well, I put my hands on your dear little can . . ."

"Come on up, cupcake! Hop into my big bed!" (Beverly Sharp, Washington)

Mother, why do I always get picked last for ball games?

Now, now — be a dear and put your pink gown back on. (Elwood Fitzner, Valley City, N.D.)

If I step on a rake, I will get a bump on my head, and I will be sad. If you do it, it will be funny as all get-out. (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

I and he as you are he as you are me and we are all to-get-her.

See how they run like strings from the fun, see how they fly

For nothing.

I and the milk man, they are the milk man.

I is the wall-was, who-do-we-two. (John Kupiec, Fairfax)

To be or not to be, that is the thing asked. Is it good, do you think, to put up with the kicks and bumps of bad things, or to stand up to them, And with that stop them? (Russell Beland, Springfield)

I saw this on the box in our house. A man who looked mad said: "Did you say that to ME? Did you say that to ME?"

Did you say that to ME? Then who did you say it to? Did you say that to ME? Well, I am the one that is here. Who did you think that you said it to? Oh yes?" (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

"Look," said Sally. "There are fish in my bed. Fish with big . . . big hands."

"That is some good pot," said Mother. "Can I have another hit?" (Beth Morgan, Palo Alto, Calif.)

Yes: Let us play something bad. How about "Up, Up, and Away?"

The Who: No, do "The Way We Were." It is so put-rid! (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Lay down, Sally, and plop here in my hands. Do you think you want someone to talk to? Lay down, Sally. No fun to hop so soon.

I would stand here all the day to bump with you. (Randy Lee, Burke)

I red how you make fun of me, Well, let me tell you what: You wood be nothing with out me,

So you can bite my but! — J.D. Quayle, Indianapolis (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

Want to hear our new hit? I can play it for you. It will come out any day now and go to the top:

Oh, I . . . tell you something I think you something something

When I say that something I want to hold your hand.

— John Lennon, 1963 (Russell Beland)

From the Play "White House Fun and Games":

POT-US: What can I say to get whosewhatsit in Iran to back down? Me: Something will come to you.

"The Think-man with that thing on his head."



POT-US: How about this? "When I say 'jump,' you say 'how high?'"

Me: That would be good.

POT-US: This? "Go a-head — make my day."

Me: Another good one.

POT-US: I got it! "Bite me!"

Me: There you go.

POT-US: Well, he asked for it.

Me: Yes he did.

— K. Rove, Washington (Chris Doyle)

Say you are about to hit your ball when you get a call and hear that your mother has gone to the here-after. What things would come to mind? Should I go with the two-wood? Will I play a hook? Can I get it near the cup? (Chris Doyle)

We did not like the bad man. It was our wish to tip the out-house when he was in it. "Did you do it?" he asked. We did not tell. My mother did not like the man. We said nothing, but it was her wish too. "Did he go plop plop?" she asked. Man, that was funny. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

Dear Little Man: Do you want to get big, fast? You know she would want you to. So ship your in-for-mat-i-on to me now and I will give you all that you could wish for. (Spam-I-Am, Whoville) (Kevin Dopart)

Would you, could you, in a box? Would you, could you, with a fox?

(Oh, what a shame — now that I look, All that was from another book.) (Brendan Beary; Jay Shuck)

And Last: When you put down lots and lots of funny things, you should get the Think-man with that thing on his head. Not always, I know, but now and then. (G. Smith, Reston)

See more Honorable Mentions at www.washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational.

Next Week: What Kind of Foal Am I? or Ponys

Stone Cold Steve Austin Reveals His Acting Chops

STONE COLD, From D1

"The Condemned" opened nationwide Friday, and the \$20 million movie was written, designed and financed by WWE Films as a vehicle for Austin. The premise: A reality TV producer purchases 10 of the worst murderous rapist terrorist scum convicts on Earth, drops them onto a deserted island, where the damned are ordered to fight to the finish, and the lone winner is promised his (or her) freedom and some wonderful prizes, including a passport and cash. Of course, the island is rigged with cameras and the death match will stream live over the Internet for the low, low pay-per-view price of \$49.95. So . . . it's a think piece.

The R-rated movie is incredibly violent, including the equal opportunity machine-gunning of attractive young women. Austin plays (relative) good guy Jack Conrad, a U.S. Special Forces black-ops type, who has been abandoned by his own government to rot as an innocent man in a dungeon in El Salvador. Jack is a man of few words. "Let's dance, sweetheart" would be a long speech. Austin's thespian method is more rooted in Ooog! Gurgle! Neck snap!

"I think he's going to be a huge star," says Scott Wiper, the writer and director of "The Condemned," who bases his opinion in part on the film's reception when it screened recently for 5,000 wrestling fans at the Fox Theatre in Detroit. "They went ballistic."

The WWE has high hopes for Austin, whose acting résumé outside the ring includes a turn as a prison guard alongside Adam Sandler in "The Longest Yard" and the recurring character of Detective Jake Cage on the old TV show "Nash Bridges."

"Where are the new action heroes?" asks Joel Simon, president of WWE Films. "Where's the new Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bruce Willis?"

Austin reminds Simon of "the young Steve McQueen, the young Clint Eastwood, the young Lee Marvin and young Charles Bronson," though not all at once, of course. Austin is actually 42 and his body bears the insults and injuries of 14 years of broncobusters and flying clotheslines. (Austin retired from the fight game in 2003, although he continues to make appearances at events tied to wrestling, which remains highly popular with millions of fans and viewers.)

Is the film any good? Nope, according to critics. "A real stinker," writes the Chicago Tribune. "Off-putting and ridiculous," says the Hollywood Reporter. "Austin deserves better material than this. So do we," goes the Philadelphia Inquirer.

But can he act? Well, acting here is a relative term because . . .

WARNING!!!!!! The following paragraphs contain information that could be

mind-altering for some fans of professional wrestling, particularly the wee ones.

"Tom Cruise has 10 weeks with a script and he gets to do 10 takes," Simon explains, as opposed to a professional wrestler in the ring. "Our guys get a story line, and that's it. There is no script. And they do it live, improvised. And they do their own stunts. One take. In front of 20,000 people. And they do 52 fresh new shows a year."

Simon says of Austin: "He's got that magic, that look, that intensity. He's not a bully, but here's a man you don't want to [ahem] with. And he's as recognizable as any movie star in the world to his core audience."

Ah: The professional wrestling demographic. Will they show up at the multiplex, the critics be hanged? At the Texas Motor Speedway, Stone Cold — all 6-foot-2 and 252 pounds of him — is recognized wherever he goes, though he is dressed in his civilian clothes of jeans, polo shirt and sneakers (in the ring he favored black bun huggers). When he does his grand marshal duty — "gentlemen, start your engines!" he booms — before 200,000 people at the NASCAR Nextel Cup, Samsung 500, he gets a bigger round of applause than driver Dale Earnhardt Jr. (racing royalty who also drives the Budweiser car).

In the garages before the race start, Austin meets with driver Elliott Sadler, who is impressed. "I'm just the biggest wrestling fan," Sadler tells Austin. "I've had beer poured on me a hundred million times."



WWE officials hope Austin can follow his former nemesis The Rock (a.k.a. Dwayne Johnson), left, into movie stardom.



Stone Cold Steve Austin served as the grand marshal for a recent NASCAR race at Texas Motor Speedway in Fort Worth.

They talk about the movie business. "All the records I've broken. My box office. My pay-per-view. All the championships and titles. They don't mean nothing in Hollywood," Austin says. "It's a tough racket to get into."

But so is pro wrestling. Many of those unfamiliar with the story lines of characters such as Mr. Perfect, the Undertaker and Deuce & Domino are surprised by the popularity of the entertainment. According to WWE, its five hours of prime time television (on USA, the CW and Sci-Fi channels) reach almost 16 million viewers a week. Its shows are among the highest rated on cable TV (only "The Sopranos" on HBO consistently ranks higher) and they are a dominant draw among men 18 to 34, who are coveted by advertisers. The company, which is the undisputed leader in the wrestling sector, stages 346 live events a year before 2 million fans.

"Their audience is surprisingly larger and more diverse than you might anticipate," says Alan Gould, senior media analyst at Natexis Bleichroeder investment bank. Teenage boys are WWE's nuclear fuel, and the overall demographic skews blue-collar, but "I've gone to a few recently, and I was surprised to see that it's more family-oriented than I would have anticipated," Gould says. "You see a couple of people in suits, you see mothers, I mean I was shocked by who you see there."

Says Gould: "This company generates a ton of cash. And one of their issues is, we do wrestling really well, but how do we grow the business?"

The film offshoot is the latest in WWE's string of not-especially-successful efforts to expand the wrestling brand. Remember the XFL, the "extreme" version of football?



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL MULVEY FOR THE WASHINGTON POST



Scott Wiper, left, directed Austin in "The Condemned," which opened Friday with less-than-favorable reviews.

Anyone visit the wrestling-themed restaurant in Times Square? Duds. Both ventures failed, but WWE Films believes movies starring wrestlers have more potential for two reasons: The movies themselves can act as advertising for wrestling events, and the talent is already in the company.

As Simon sees it, the company produces not only hours of TV but has 250,000 subscribers to its monthly magazines, plus 16 million unique hits a month on its Web sites, plus the live shows, including 61 overseas. In every medium, there's a plug for Steve Austin starring in "The Condemned." "That's saturation," Simon says. "If a studio wanted to buy that kind of advertising we estimate it would cost them \$18 million."

So there's a lot riding on the former high school linebacker from Edna, Tex., who attended North Texas State on a football scholarship, but left school a semester short of a degree. His real name is Steve Williams and he was working on a loading dock when he heard about a wrestling

school run by "Gentleman" Chris Adams at the fabled Sportatorium in Dallas back in 1988. He spent \$1,500 to learn some of the tricks of the trade. In his first professional match against the Frog Man a promoter told Austin, "Okay, you two boys are going to wrestle and you're going to win," pointing at him. "So I was glad someone told me how it works," Austin says. He was paid \$40.

In person, sitting over a couple of draft beers at his motel, Austin is friendly, eager, and seems as gentle as a bowl of pudding (he lives with his girlfriend in Venice, Calif.). The hard case stuff — the taunts, the threats — it's all an act in the ring. He describes the wrestling circuit as a brutal but beautiful life. The constant travel. "Getting dropped on my head night after night." Though wrestlers know the outcome of a bout, the story line, they do not rehearse or choreograph their fights. Instead, they lead and follow, like a pair of dancers. Working the crowds, they learn to play the psychology of the mob. The boos. Austin loved the boos. "I knew my career was taking off because I was really getting hated," he says. In professional wrestling, which adopted a secret language of the carnival hustle, there are baby faces (good guys) and heels (the bad guys). And in his long career, Austin managed to pull off one of the greatest tricks of all: being a heel who somehow won the fans over.

He says he is approaching the movie business the same way he did the wrestling. "You learn. They pound you down. Then you learn some more," he says. "I know I'm not the best actor. . . I have a three-picture deal. I'll get better. But you know something? I have a lot of new respect for actors. It's not as easy as it looks."