

REPORT FROM WEEK 734

In which we asked you to provide rhyming couplets containing two words that were anagrams of each other. While such online tools as Anagram Genius have rendered useless any further contests just to create anagrams, even for entire sentences and paragraphs, they still can't write poems like these. Some very clever entries this week contained anagrams of two-word phrases or names, but not of single words. The best was from Andy Bassett of New Plymouth, New Zealand: "AXL ROSE, an anagram for some specific acts: / Your mouth's agape? Don't worry, I won't say it, SO RELAX."

**5** A baby quickly locates (it's his biz) The place on Mommy where the lactose is. (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

**4** If the spirit is willing, but the flesh hangs in doubt, Those pills on the shelf will straighten things out. (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.)

**3** "Diet" and "edit," a perfect pair, that: Anagrams both meaning "cut out the fat." (Beverly Sharp, Washington)

**2** The winner of two light-verse collections by New Loser Ed Conti, "Quiblets" and "The Ed C. Scrolls": His 95 Theses made Luther the man, But the church wasn't pleased and the sheets hit the fan. (Chris Doyle, sent from Bangkok)

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER The pope's stopped cussing audiences out with spontaneity; In Italy, he's learned, that ain't no way to treat a laity. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

COUPLETS PUT CLOSE

My spouse considered me deranged because of all I'd gardened. We're now estranged, and sad to say, my heart and soil have hardened. (Peter Metrinko, Chantilly)

The state of progress in Iraq, admittedly, is varyin' With how you choose to ascertain which killings are sectarian. (David Smith, Santa Cruz, Calif.)

When a royal sheikh hikes the price of crude, The rest of us are royally scrude. (Peter Metrinko)

At every bordello I've been to (don't ask me what for), There's nary a doorbell, but wow, they have knockers galore! (Brendan Beary)

Ann Coulter needs a strong reproach; her Wacko rantings scream for cloture. (Chris Doyle)

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 738: So What's to Liken?



BY BOB STANKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

"American Gothic" is like the Xbox 360 because they're associated with the same facial expression.

Here's a perennial contest that never fails us, no matter how bizarre the material the Losers are given to work with. In fact, after reading the results, readers over the years have written in to insist that the contest elements must have been set up to engineer the winning wordplay. **This week: Take any two items from the utterly random list above and explain how they are different or how they are similar.** How utterly random? The Empress contacted 15 people and asked them each to contribute one item to the list above; none of them saw any of the other items. Okay?

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a Gummy Tapeworm AND a tin of bacon-flavored toothpicks, both courtesy of the ever-courteous Russell Beland of Springfield, who has taken to writing a critique of the Invitational every Monday on the Losers' own Web site, at [www.gopherdrool.com/tww](http://www.gopherdrool.com/tww) ("her track record on judging, picking, and most especially editing, song lyrics tends toward the terrible").

1. A piranha
2. Lindsay Lohan's handbag
3. A "great introductory rate"
4. The next three presidential debates
5. A Hawaiian Punch martini
6. An Xbox 360
7. The National Christmas Tree
8. Womanly knuckles
9. Cupholders on a Ferrari
10. "American Gothic"
11. An annotated copy of Lynne Cheney's "Blue Skies, No Fences"
12. Singing in the rain
13. An anesthesiologist's cat
14. The peaks of Mount Whitney
15. Broccoli skin cream

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. 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](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Nov. 12. Put "Week 738" 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. Results will be published Dec. 1. 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 Kevin Dopart of Washington. This week's Honorable Mentions name is by Tom Witte of Montgomery Village.

Unless I cut my movie, they threaten to X-rate: They say a certain extra seems to stand out much too straight. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Your admirer charms you with topics so varied. Too bad he won't mention that he's also married. (Anne Paris, Arlington)

If you rail against a liar, Pray your own pants don't catch fire. (David Moss, Arlington)

What happens from taking the steroid called "clear": You bring a sad end to a storied career. (Rob Caskey, Fairfax Station)

Gone are the sounds of young children's rattles: The starlet has lost her custody battles. (Mike Cisneros, Centreville)

JFK strove (though to note this seems callous)

To attract the attention of voters in Dallas. (J.J. Gertler, Alexandria)

I wandered lonely as a cloud . . . Could be because I'm gross and loud. (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

Carelessness, calumnies, cursing at waits: These are a few of my masculine traits . . . (Brendan Beary)

On a cruise around Hellenic ports I knew not how to feel When I went below the deck and spied the captain in chenille. (Brendan Beary)

Not even a vat of minty-fresh Retsin Could freshen the mouth you insert cigarettes in. (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

Don't despair over diapers, guys: You'll be amazed

How, by changing a few, any man'll get praised. (Chris Doyle)

"Get out of here, and don't come back!" her fuming father ranted; Her ardent swain, despite the rain, took to the road de-panted. (Beverly Sharp)

I felt so nervous when I went onstage to start my act, I unloaded all the contents of my duodenal tract. (Brendan Beary)

The D.C. life is really fun, with things to do aplenty. High taxes are the penalty (complain to Mr. Fenty). (Beverly Sharp)

Divorce makes women rummage through the debris of their lives And wonder why they took the step to change from brides to wives. (Ross Elliffe, Picton, New Zealand, where they pronounce it DEB-ry.)

Iran has not a single day Of rain or clouds, nor any gay. — M. Ahmadinejad (Chris Doyle, sent from Siem Reap, Cambodia)

How sparse is one between the ears Who parses dirt on Britney Spears? (Chris Doyle)

I am daily repaid by my loving child By a diaper in which his poop is piled. (Kelly Esposito, Frederick)

She kissed him in earnest, she called him her dearest. But the fact of the matter was he was the nearest. (Mae Scanlan)

New data may give George Bush renewed urges To constantly tell us how dandy the surge is. (Deanna Busick, Knoxville, Tenn.)

You should really see your doctor; a prescription's of the essence If gelatin approximates your genital tumescence. (Brendan Beary)

In Olympic doubles luge, the rumors aren't true: Oh, no, they don't hold on like THAT! (But sometimes they use glue.) (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

As A-Rod and his slugger teammates faded into the night, The gurgles of their sinking ship announce Joe Torre's flight. (Bill Spencer, Baltimore)

The neglected lady was hurt when ignored And the young men redoing her kitchen looked bored. (Christopher Lamora, Arlington)

A rogue plastic surgeon was jailed among felons, Unlicensed, he changed women's lemons to melons. (Howard Walderman, Columbia)

And Last: Dear Empress: Read this verse, don't yap! You pay me zip, I serve you crap. (Chris Doyle)

Next Week: Look Back in Inker, or A Trip Down Memory Lane

CAROLYN HAX

Adapted from a recent online discussion:

Carolyn:

One of our other friends started dating this guy whom none of us can stand. He treats her well and makes her happy, and I really am thrilled for her, since she hasn't always had the best romantic luck. All of us have made concerted efforts to like this guy for her sake — but we still find him obnoxious, offensive and annoying.

I'm running out of excuses for missing such-and-such when she's bringing him along. It would hurt her feelings to know, and I feel like it's none of my business anyway as long as he respects her. So how do I avoid the toxic boyfriend but maintain a really valuable friendship?

Boston

I'm going to ask a strange favor. Can you name a widely known fictional character who fits your description of the boyfriend? Because I'm having a hard time imagining someone who is so offensive you don't want to see him even in the context of a group activity and yet is good for her.

I visualize a loud, bad-joke-telling, nudge-nudge-wink-wink type, and here's the problem I run into: If the bad jokes are harmless, then he's harmless (if annoying), and the occasional group outing seems bearable. If the bad jokes are offensive, I can't envi-

sion him as good for my friend.

Why don't they just ask her what she likes about him, conversationally, to find out what makes her so happy? Maybe then it'll be easier for them to see that in him. It's possible he's nervous about impressing them, which comes out as obnoxious jokes, and over time he'll settle down.

Re: Boyfriend

I can't think of a fictional character. But I have an annoying co-worker who laughs like a drunk cowboy, tosses around inane trivia like he's Alex Trebek, usually has some rogue snot somewhere in his ungroomed facial hair, always talks about how cool he was in law school and hijacks every conversation by telling a 45-minute story unrelated to the subject at hand. We finally resorted to just telling him to shut up, so we could stand him in our shared lunchroom. He does. But he says really respectful things about his girlfriend and obviously loves her. In fact, we just heard a 20-minute diatribe about their trip to the store to buy noodles and how they got in a fight about who is cuter.

Fictional Character

Thanks for the vivid images. I think. (Postscript: Best characters proposed, Janice of

"Friends" and Mr. Darcy.)

My brother-in-law is wonderful for my sister and niece, but I can't stand him. He's a know-it-all who argues with anyone who disagrees. Not with a nice "we're having a discussion" argument, but full-blown, "Well, you're an idiot and that's why you think that." But he doesn't treat my niece or sister that way. Maybe that's the kind of person the boyfriend is.

Re: Boyfriend

If it's one of the former, it would seem worthwhile to give the guy a chance. With the latter, keep an eye on the situation. Not to say it's happening here, but I have seen a similar case where it became clear the poor treatment did, in fact, extend to immediate family. A merely annoying surface can be many different things on the inside; a toxic surface usually means a toxic core.

Read the whole transcript or join the discussion live at noon Fridays on [www.washingtonpost.com/discussions](http://www.washingtonpost.com/discussions).

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In 'Black Watch,' a Tour of Duty Turns Into a Tour de Force

BLACK, From C1

turally unprepared for the contradictions of Iraq.

The play, with a script by Gregory Burke, has made stops in California and New York. Other American audiences would be more than fortunate to be paid a visit by this tightly wound and expertly researched soldier's tale.

Like David Rabe's Vietnam play "Streamers" and, more to the point, Francis Ford Coppola's movie epic "Apocalypse Now," "Black Watch" attempts to portray war in all its chaotic, theatrical absurdity.

If there is poetry in "Black Watch," it's because of director John Tiffany's astonishing pictorial style. On what is essentially a bare floor bound by two sets of scaffolding, he and his design team conjure for us everything from the explosive energy of men in formation to the percussive force of a makeshift bomb.

In one scene, the men of "Black Watch" are perched on the scaffolding, their faces bathed in a halo of orange: They are transfixed by the sight of American rockets laying waste to an enemy target. (TV screens suspended from the set

play and replay military videos of guided missiles scoring kills.) In another scene, the soldiers of the unit, caught in a checkpoint explosion, float on cables in sickening slo-mo — the anatomy of a suicide bombing.

It's as if we ourselves are embedded with this unit, and certainly, from the standpoint of pure sympathy, we are. "Black Watch" — the title is the name of the vaunted 268-year-old regiment that fought in Crimea and whose bagpipes and drums played at the funeral of President John F. Kennedy — takes us in documentary fashion into the lives of the young men. They're working-class kids carrying on a great tradition: "We're warriors," one of the men declares. "We're Celts."

We see them at home, before they've shipped out, cocky and combustible. Their deployment takes them not only across a continent, but also, cleverly, through the red-felt fabric of a pub's pool table. The table will be put to use again and again as, among other things, the chassis of a stifflingly overheated troop carrier.

We see the men in the field, achingly isolated from normality. A mail call is staged as a poignant moment of repose, the letters passing solemnly from man to man. And we're with them, too, as they are interviewed by a journalist back

home, in the sullen, disillusioned aftermath of service.

The play was conceived for Scottish consumption, unveiled at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in the summer of 2006. The history of the Black Watch would be much more significant to a homegrown audi-

ence than it is to us, but we're made to clearly understand its legacy. The regiment's history is boiled down brilliantly to a five-minute scene during which a single soldier is dressed and re-dressed by his mates in the regimental uniform as it changes over time.

And although it occasionally resorts to facile editorializing — an officer calls the conflict "the biggest Western policy disaster, ever" — the work remains an unsettling document for American spectators.

The cast of 10 splendidly conveys the profane roughness of the unit, a brave-face locker-room spirit that does not entirely mask the soldiers' terror and tenderness of experience. The actors' conditioning, too, is superb; their drilling is as tautly choreographed and exhaustingly performed as a tarantella.

If some American soldiers have expressed confusion about the goals of the war, how alien might the operation seem to a soldier tapped for a backup role from a place such as Aberdeen or Dundee?

To anyone seeking a further awakening to the incongruities of the fight, "Black Watch" is like a dose of caffeine delivered directly to the bloodstream.

**Black Watch**, by Gregory Burke. Directed by John Tiffany. Sound, Gareth Fry; set, Laura Hopkins; lighting, Colin Grenfell; costumes, Jessica Brettell; movement, Steven Hoggett; music, Davey Anderson; video, Leo Warner and Mark Grimmer. With Paul Higgins, Emun Elliott, Jack Fortune, Paul Rathay. About 1 hour 50 minutes. Through Nov. 11 at St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. Call 718-254-8779 or visit [www.stannswarehouse.org](http://www.stannswarehouse.org).

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