

DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

Patent pretending: invention fictoids

BY PAT MYERS

In **Week 1209** we asked for *totally bogus* alternative explanations for the origins of various products or their names.

4th place

Stealth technology for warplanes came about when an aerospace engineer discovered that the material used to make laundry hampers was invisible to her husband and children. (John Hutchins, Silver Spring)

3rd place

Although the **turn signal** was invented more than 100 years ago, it seems that BMW engineers still consider it too experimental to install in their cars. (Dallas Baker, Arlington)

2nd place and the alternative-fact board game Fact or Crap?

Bathtub mats were actually invented as workstation flooring for Chiquita employees in their packing plants. (Marni Penning Coleman, Falls Church)

And the winner of the Inkin' Memorial:

Traveling down Interstate 40 in early 1967, a marshmallow truck driver discovered that his truck's back door had sprung open, spilling out boxes of his cargo — just when a highway crew was painting yellow lines on the asphalt. The first Peeps hit the shelves that year in time for Easter. (Rob Huffman, Fredericksburg, Va.)

Others of invention: honorable mentions

"Kleeneex" comes from the Swedish word for "shirt sleeve." (Sarah Jay, Churchville, Md.)

The **motorized canoe** was patented just weeks after the release of the movie "Deliverance." (Warren Tanabe, Annapolis)

A Nebraska woman named Anna Graham developed the prototype for what would become the game of Scrabble. (Hildy Zampella, Falls Church)

The **adding machine** was developed in response to the Great Legume Failure of 1931, when accountants in Chicago were unable to do their work because they did not have enough beans to count. (Mark Raffman, Reston)

American cheese came about one Saturday when a Kraft R&D scientist, having left his 3-year-old unattended for a few minutes, returned to the kitchen to find a melted pool of margarine and orange crayons on the stove. (Colin Schatz, Oakland, Calif.)

Boston-based baker Clyde Dunkin ran out of dough one day, punched out the middle of each of his buns to make a few more, and realized he could sell **"dough nuts"** for a higher price AND less cost. (Neal Starkman, Seattle)

Botox was invented by a mortician in Utah who noticed that dead people looked much nicer than their passport photos. (John O'Byrne, Dublin)

Count Chocula cereal was named after the legendary vampire whose bite turned his victims into diabetics. (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf, Md.)

Cowboys of the Plains states in the 1800s would pull ticks off their leather chaps and apply them to their parched lips to draw blood and rehydrate them. The development of a waxy balm eventually replaced this practice, but the name, **Chapstick**, remained. (John McCooey, Rehoboth Beach, Del.)

First presented at the Iowa State Fair in 1932, the original **candy corn** was handmade from corn syrup and earwax. (Mary Kappus, Washington)

The **fortune cookie**: Twelve-year-old Emperor Pu Yi, denied access to soothsayers by the Imperial Regent, devised this secret method for them to send him pearls of wisdom, and lottery numbers. (Mark Raffman)

Gleb Kotelnikov invented and tested the first **knapsack parachute** in April 1911; Gleb Kotelnikov Jr. successfully tested the first knapsack parachute with nonslip shoulder straps in May 1911. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Jose Angostura was extremely resentful that his girlfriend ran off with a bartender. (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

New for Week 1213: Punku

Alexander Hamilton

**A foggy morning
And a hole in your jacket:
Burr, it's really cold** (Jeff Brechlin, Week 453, 2002)

**"We must raise taxes!"
"No, we must lower taxes!"
Budget: Can't budge it.** (Dave Prevar, Week 923, 2011)

This week's contest was suggested by Reader but Not a Loser Rich Strimel, and it's straightforward enough: **Write a haiku that incorporates a pun**, as in the examples above from earlier Style Invitational haiku contests. Yes, yes, they might not fit the classic description of haiku.

For the purposes of this contest:

— **The haiku must be three lines long, 5-7-5:** with exactly five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, five in the third. A website called Howmanysyllables.com will tell you how many are in a given word, though one might argue with some of its conclusions.

— **The strict definition of a pun** is a play on words between two words or phrases that *sound* very much alike, as in the examples above. But the Empress won't turn away wordplays that use the same word with different meanings.

— **It's fine if two or all three of the lines rhyme.** Or not.

— **A title is optional.** If there's a pun in it, all the better.

Submit entries at this website: bit.ly/enter-invite-1213 (all lowercase).

Winner gets the Inkin' Memorial, the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place gets a very cool night lamp — it's not really Loserly, to be honest, except for the nerd factor — that forms a somewhat 3-D-looking image of the "Star Wars" Death Star in rotating colors. You know it's truly nerdy when its electric plug is a USB. Donated by Style Invitational Devotee Kathleen Delano.

Other runners-up win the yearned-for "This Is Your Brain on Mugs" Loser mug or our Grossery Bag, "I Got a B in Punmanship." Honorable mentions get one of our new lusted-after Loser magnets, "No Childishness Left Behind" or "Magnum Dopus." First Offenders receive only a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). Deadline is Monday night, Feb. 13; results published March 5 (online March 2). See general contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/InvRules. The headline for this week's results was suggested by both Chris Doyle and Jesse Frankovich; Chris also wrote the honorable-mentions subhead. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev. "Like" the Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at bit.ly/inkofday; follow @StyleInvite on Twitter.

● **THE STYLE CONVERSATIONAL** The Empress's weekly online column discusses each new contest and set of results. Especially if you plan to enter, check it out at wapo.st/styleconv.



PAT MYERS/THE WASHINGTON POST

You're sure to sleep soundly with this 3-D-looking Death Star lamp next to your bed. This week's second prize.

Just as its police companion is called the walkie-talkie, **the Taser** was originally known as the runnie-stunnie. (Jeff Brechlin, Apple Valley, Minn.)

Mountain Dew is actual mountain dew, collected each morning outside the bottling plant on Three Mile Island, Pa. (John Hutchins)

Opera glasses became practical only after 18th-century Viennese inventor Fritz ZauberKünstler stumbled on a formula for lenses that could not be shattered by the human voice. (Lawrence McGuire)

Sheared from specially bred sheep during World War I, **steel wool** was developed in Britain for knitting army helmets. (Mary Kappus)

The **Brazilian wax** came about when a clumsy eyebrow aesthetician spilled a huge glob in the wrong location, claiming to the stunned, screaming client, "No, really — everyone's doing it this way..." (Marni Penning Coleman)

The **earliest shoes** had no laces but

had holes for them: DNA evidence indicates that cave men would instead secure them with their braided foot hair. (Warren Tanabe)

The first **airplane seat** was designed for Wilbur Wright, who was 5-2 and weighed 126 pounds. In honor of his contributions to aviation, modern engineers use the same specifications to this day. (Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.)

The first **ceiling fans** were installed in the palace of the Mughal Shah Jagpur II, who was renowned for his love of lentils. (Dallas Baker)

The **toilet** was originally named the "water closet" because of how very wet it would become. The fixture was eventually redesigned so that the flushing water would go down. (Warren Tanabe)

Cindy Gunn, inventor of the **T-shirt cannon**, says she was inspired by her Great Dane: "After I'd seen Horst projectile-vomit everything from a knee sock to half a couch cushion, the patent application pretty much wrote itself." (Melissa Balmain, Rochester, N.Y.)

Your Mama jokes were first popularized in 1950, when an Atlantic City comedian got stuck for two hours behind her in a buffet line. (John Hutchins)

William Stanley invented the **induction coil** in 1893. To this day no one knows what it does, though scientists suspect it induces something or other. (Jeff Brechlin)

More honorable mentions in the online [invite at bit.ly/invite1213](http://bit.ly/invite1213).

Still running — deadline Monday, Feb. 6: Our ScrabbleGrams neologism contest. See bit.ly/invite1212.

SUNDAY CHALLENGE

BY BRUCE VENZKE © 2017 CROSSYNERGY SYNDICATE LLC

ACROSS

1 School mil. program
5 Saw
10 Circulatory blockage
14 "East of Eden" heroine
15 One of the Seven Sages
16 Angelic corona
17 Chow ____
18 Bagel selection
19 West Wing underling
20 Guard
22 Subtle differences
24 Results of printing mishaps, say
26 Michael of tennis
29 Up to, colloquially
30 Island group near Fiji
34 Dare to offer one's thoughts
37 Academic address letters
38 "____ Town" (Wilder drama)

DOWN

39 Pocketful of cash
40 Punch line?
41 Home of the Ringling Museum of Art
45 Pipe pieces
46 Largest New Deal agcy.
47 Worker with a fork
48 Puts down
51 Team member's cry of accomplishment
54 Contemptible coward
58 Opposite of well-done
59 Bangkok denizens
61 Maui shindig
62 Like 2016, but not 2017
63 Leader of the 1803 Irish rebellion
64 Strange-sounding lake
65 Semiaquatic lizard
66 Silent intervals
67 Many Little League coaches

Answer to last week

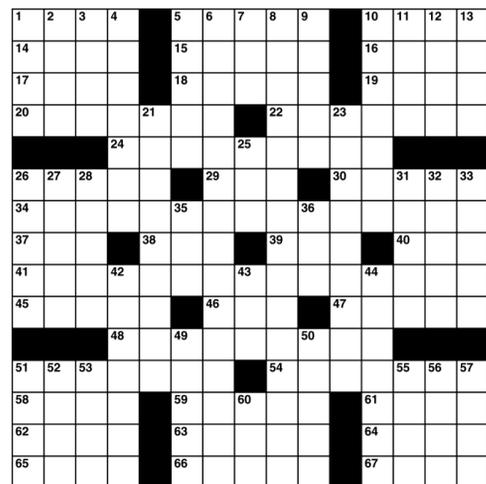
W	A	S	H	M	A	O	R	I	P	I	L	E		
A	L	T	A	A	C	T	I	N	E	N	I	D		
A	B	U	N	D	L	E	O	F	N	E	R	V	E	S
C	A	N	S	O	V	E	E	R	I	O	D	E		
G	E	N	R	E	S	I	S	K	E	L				
F	O	U	N	D	I	N	G	F	A	T	H	E	R	S
U	R	N	I	N	T	R	I	G	U	E				
N	E	S	G	U	A	R	E	S	T	E	P			
H	A	I	R	N	E	T	S	H	O	E				
A	L	T	E	R	N	A	T	E	E	N	D	I	N	G
D	I	A	L	O	G	S	A	U	E	R				
L	O	T	T	A	M	A	C	F	S	T	O	P		
I	N	T	E	R	N	A	L	A	F	F	A	I	R	S
B	E	E	R	E	L	O	P	E	D	E	S	I		
S	L	R	S	B	L	E	E	D	E	S	O	S		

DOWN

1 Cloverleaf feature
2 German for "above"
3 Small jazz combo
4 Rosa has one in "El Paso"
5 "Aw, put ____ in it!"
6 Words to stave off a disagreement
7 His title was stripped in 1967
8 Typical New Year's resolution
9 Lassitude
10 Song (Fr.)
11 Nonclerical
12 Shoppe descriptor

13 Podiatrists are concerned with them
21 Rapt
23 Counteractive agents
25 Stannous element
26 Kasparov's game
27 Attacked vigorously
28 Sky hue
31 Words before "the bud"
32 Former Philadelphia Mayor Wilson
33 1978 Nobel's first name
35 Penn & Teller, e.g.

36 Broadway's "____ Joey"
42 Brian Eno's genre
43 Apropos
44 Stirred slightly, as leaves
49 Liquid measure
50 Shoemakers' forms
51 Small singer of a sort
52 It hangs around the roof
53 Girl sleuth
55 Distinctive emanation
56 Black Flag rival
57 Union requirement
60 Pro-____



HOROSCOPE

BY JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! Feb. 5: This year you become even more intellectual than you have been in the past. You can charm someone at the drop of a hat. If you are single, romance heats up your life. You are likely to go through a sequence of dating several potential suitors before you meet The One. The period from now until October will prove to be particularly fruitful for love. If you are attached, the two of you often have a ball together. Gemini inevitably makes you laugh at what you typically might try to avoid.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
You might sense a change in a partner or friend. This person usually is caring, but right now they seem to be somewhat distracted. You'll wonder what is going on, but you could have a hard time getting them to open up.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
You will be watching your budget after recent indulgences. That information could be useful in stopping you from repeating this behavior. Decide to rein in your spending.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
You'll be more energized today than you have been in a while. You could be delighted by how rewarding it is to accommodate someone at a distance. You even might decide that the time has come to get together with this person.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
Today is the right day to embrace being lazy and not push yourself so hard. With everything that has been happening around you lately, you could be overly tired and want to withdraw.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
Your words have a profound effect on a loved one. Just watch this person's facial expressions as you discuss a serious matter. Get together with others for brunch, and enjoy the moment as you catch up on each other's news.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
Bring everybody together for an early dinner. Invite family and friends, and encourage them to each bring an item. Others are aware of what you are doing and why. Allow your sense of humor to come out when dealing with a partner.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
Reach out to someone you care about. In fact, making the Sunday rounds of calls might be particularly rewarding today. Make plans to go to a concert or movie later in the day. You will enjoy letting your mind escape.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
Defer to others but first make sure that their ideas suit you. If a loved one knew what you were doing, they might find you to be rather controlling. A child or loved one could touch you on a deep level.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
You have a tendency to be a bit down on yourself at times. Nothing makes you happier than hanging out with a jovial friend. Don't give in to your moodier side; instead, go off and enjoy the moment.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
You have been so busy lately that you might not want to go out for a day or two. Spend the day getting into more leisurely activities, when you can recharge and feel much better.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
You can be unusually serious at times, but not at the present moment. You might feel as if you are kid in a candy store with a big smile on your face and a craving for mischief. A friend or a potential loved one will want to be involved in what you are up to.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
You might want to stay close to home and relax. However, a boss or older relative seems to need your help. You would not even consider saying "no" to this person, as they are a big supporter of yours.

Former Liar: Good advice!

Amy's column appears seven days a week at washingtonpost.com/advice. Write to askamy@amydickinson.com or Amy Dickinson, Tribune Content Agency, 16650 Westgrove Dr., Suite 175, Addison, Tex. 75001. You can also follow her @askingamy.

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Father is frustrated by reticent ex-wife

Ask Amy
AMY DICKINSON

Dear Amy: My former wife and I divorced after 26 years of marriage. She has refused to communicate with me.

We have twins in their late 20s — a daughter and a son. Although neither is married, each wants to eventually get married, and so I anticipate weddings.

Our son graduates from law school this spring. He may feel awkward about having both his parents attend his graduation. Last year, he went through a terrible crisis — the death of one of his best friends. It was terribly hard on him, yet his mom never talked to me about how we might help him.

Such occasions — a grief-stricken child and a grown child's life event — call for parents to come together. I want to talk with my former wife about the upcoming graduation. What do you suggest?

Loves His Twins

Loves His Twins: Ideally, you and your ex-wife would be able

to discuss not just the huge events in your twins' lives, but you would also be capable of simply checking in from time to time. However, your former wife is not willing to communicate with you, and so your twins are consigned to do the eternal dance of children of divorce, dealing with their parents separately and discreetly, as these young adults come to dread the tension initiated by big events.

If you want to try to communicate with your ex, you could send her an email titled "Graduation" in the subject line. Keep your email short, neutral and factual: Tell her what your plans are and ask her if she wants to coordinate.

She may not answer. I hope you'll make a choice to simply be the easy, accommodating, warm and loving parent, regardless of your ex's behavior. Always act cordially toward and about your ex. Never criticize her to your children. Take the high road. It's not the easiest road, but it offers the best view.

Former Liar: Good advice!

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