

DIVERSIONS

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List tickles: Winning comparisons

BY PAT MYERS

Week 1442 was another installment of our compare/contrast contest, in which you explain how any two items on the random list we posted are alike or different. As usual, lots of the connections were real stretches, but some were so right that it seemed we must have planned for such an answer (but we didn't).

4th place:

The difference between **Simone Biles** and the **Texas power grid**: You can count on only one of them to light up an arena. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

3rd place:

An Olympic pole vaulter: Man with a 17-foot pole.

An evening with Mitch McConnell: Man! Not with a 17-foot pole! (Jon Gearhart, Des Moines)

2nd place and the socks that look like a box of Nerds candy:

A quarantine puppy and the world's largest pants: Both come out of a dog giving birth. (Daniel Gable, Tallahassee)

And the winners of the Clowning Achievement:

12 gallons of hand sanitizer: Purell.

An evening with Mitch McConnell: Pure 'ell.

(Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.; Jeff Rackow, Bethesda, who submitted virtually identical entries)

Linklings:

Honorable mentions

A mask-making company and an evening with Mitch McConnell: With one, you cover your nose and mouth; with the other, cover your eyes and ears. (Frank Mann, Washington)

A mask-making company: 3M. **Pineapple upside-down cake**: MMM! (Jesse Frankovich)

The world's largest pants and the singular "they": They're both really useful when nothing else quite fits. (Deb Stewart, Damascus, Md.)

An evening with McConnell: would give Obama fits. **The world's largest pants** are what Your Mama fits. (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.)

The world's largest pants and a non-fungible token: Both allow for wide swings of your most precious assets. (Allan Zackowitz, Brookeville, Md.)

The world's smallest pants and a pre-algebra textbook: My teenage daughter wouldn't be caught dead with a textbook in public. (Mike Gips, Bethesda, Md.)

A mask-making company and a quarantine puppy: One cleaned up during the pandemic, and the other made you do it. (Mia Wyatt, Ellicott City, Md.)

Pineapple upside-down cake and pandemic gray hair: You can imagine Rudy Giuliani turning up publicly with the cake on his head, but definitely not the gray hair. (Mark Turco, McLean, Va.)

Simone Biles and an evening with McConnell: Simone Biles also flips when it's inconvenient. (Jesse Rifkin, Glastonbury, Conn.)

A triple word score and an evening with McConnell: Both are better if you have a J. (Deb Stewart)

12 gallons of hand sanitizer and Jewish space lasers: They make the perfect gift package for the modern-day mohel. (Robert Schechter, Dix Hills, N.Y.)

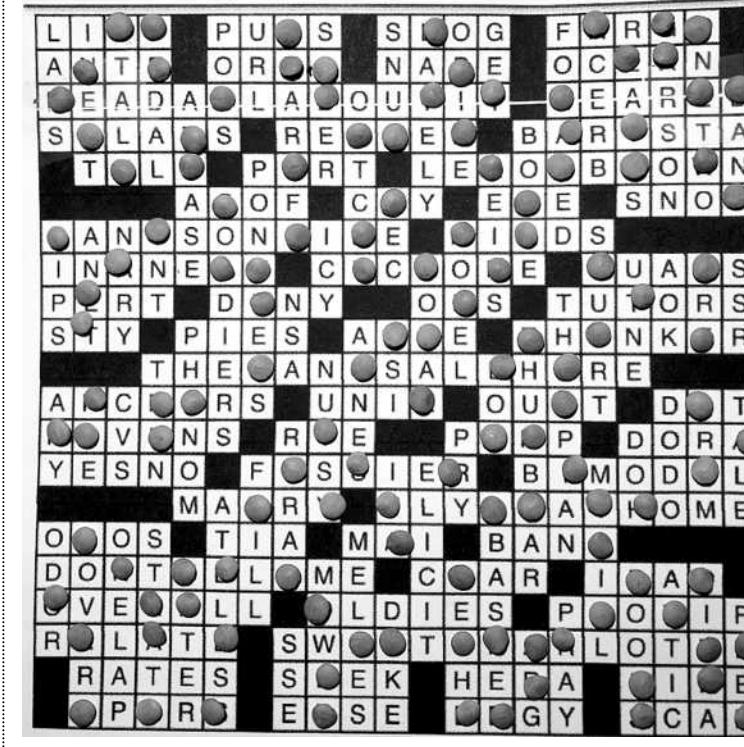
12 gallons of hand sanitizer: It's not easy being clean. **Jewish space lasers**: It's not easy being a clown. (Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.)

The third seat on Jeff Bezos's space trip and an evening with Mitch McConnell: One involves G-forces, and the other involves Q-forces. (Leif Picoult, Rockville, Md.)

A mask-making company and 12 gallons of hand sanitizer: Two things you should have bought in February 2020. (Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore)

The third seat on Jeff Bezos's space trip and an evening with McConnell: One offers 12 minutes of excitement. (Jeff Rackow)

A non-fungible token and an evening with McConnell: In short, you could call either of them "non-fun." (Gary Crockett)



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New contest for Week 1446:
Clue us in — and we spill the beans

The reverse crossword — we show you the answers, you write the clues — is a Style Invitational perennial; we've done the contest at least 17 times before. There are always lots of clever clues in the results, but frequently the same entry is submitted by a dozen different people. So this time the Empress hopes to broaden the variety of entries with the help of some lentils from her pantry.

Above is the answer grid for the Los Angeles Times puzzle that ran on this page July 11 — but I've covered more than half of the squares with the li'l legumes so that you can choose your own letters in almost all the words in the grid. This week: Write novel clues for as many as 25 answers in the grid, across or down, first substituting your own letters for any covered ones. Your answer may be a single word or a phrase, a real word or one you made up. (Treat unbanned answers as those actual words.) **The letters DON'T have to cross**; just think of each answer on the grid as an individual word or phrase, just placed in an irritatingly unwieldy format instead of a nice tidy list.** Also, your clues don't have to be as brief as in real crosswords, but they shouldn't run more than a dozen words or so.

There's one hitch: To make the letters big enough to be read, the Empress left the numbers out of the squares, which means you can't tell me where your word appears on the grid. So: **YOU MUST SUBMIT YOUR ENTRIES IN THIS FORMAT**:

• First type the word as it appears, with hyphens or dashes designating the covered squares;
• then type YOUR word;

• then type your clue, as in the examples below. **Do not break those elements into separate lines!**

— AR — F — CLARIFY: What you do after you're caught in a blatant lie

TH — P — AN: THE APIAN: Jeff Goldblum's new movie role as a giant bee

Submit up to 25 entries at wapo.st/enter-invite-1446 (no capitals in the Web address). Deadline is Monday, Aug. 2; results appear Aug. 22 in print, Aug. 19 online.

Winner gets the Clowning Achievement, our Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives an olive-drab canvas bag that Loser Cheryl Davis got from a street vendor at the Great Wall of China. The lettering is Mao's own, of his motto "Serve the People," but who's that pictured in the Chinese army uniform? Why, it's . . . Barack Obama.

Other runners-up win their choice of our "For Best Results, Pour Into Top End" Loser Mug or our "Whole Fools" Grossery Bag. Honorable mentions get one of our lusted-after Loser magnets, "No 'Bility" or "Punderachiever." First Offenders receive only a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). See general contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/InvRules. The headline "List Tickles" is by Mark Raffman; Kevin Dopart wrote the honorable-mentions shubhead. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at fb.me/invdev; "like" the Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at bit.ly/invday; and follow @StyleInvite on Twitter.

**The Style Conversationalist: In this week's column the Empress provides that tidy list of the words (complete with dashes) in the grid. See wapo.st/conv1446.

The "You're Invited" podcast: A new half-hour episode just dropped, featuring several Losers, live from the Invite picnic at the Empress's house. See bit.ly/invite-podcast.

A pineapple upside-down cake and an evening with Mitch McConnell: Both would be sweet repasts, except for the evening with Mitch McConnell. (Dan Helming, Whitemarsh, Pa.)

A pole vaulter and Simone Biles: get about the same height off the ground, but you'll never see a pole vaulter stick the landing. (Steve Breig, Springfield, Va.)

Both a doped horse and a quarantine puppy: have a leg up. (Eric Nelkin, Silver Spring, Md.)

Mozart and the third seat on Jeff Bezos's space trip and 12 gallons of hand sanitizer: Hear high G, feel high G and smell hygiene. (Ben Aronin, Washington)

Pandemic gray hair: You maybe don't want to dye it. **Pineapple upside-down cake**: You definitely don't want to diet. (Craig Dykstra, Centreville, Va.)

Pandemic gray hair vs. the

Texas power grid: People want only want one of those to go dark again. (Jesse Frankovich)

Simone Biles: Awe. **A quarantine puppy**: Aww. (Dave Prevar, Indianapolis)

The difference between **cardboard audience members** and an evening with Mitch McConnell: One will lie flat; the other will be flat out lies. (Kevin Dopart)

Jewish space lasers vs. a vaccination card: One is the outrageous creation used to shame a minority that just wants to be left alone, and the other is space lasers run by Jews. — M.

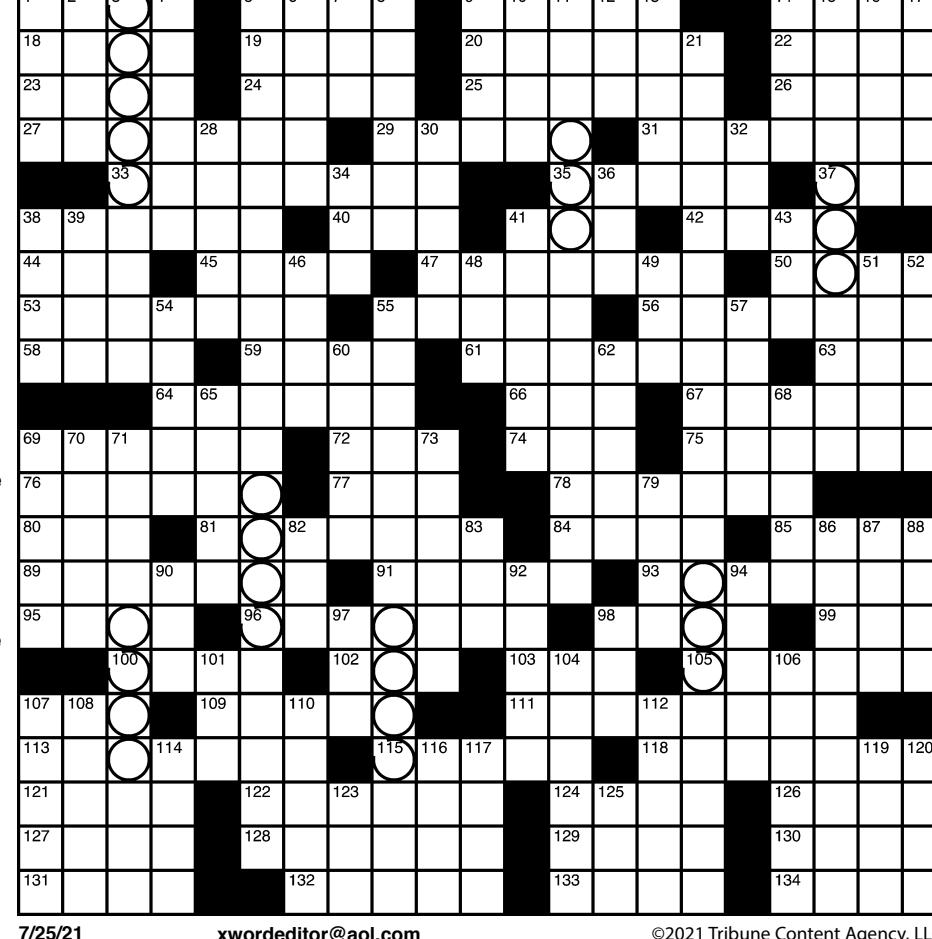
Taylor Greene (John Hutchins, Silver Spring, Md.)

More honorable mentions in the online invite at wapo.st/invite1446.

Still running — deadline Monday night, July 26: Our contest for poems based on spelling bee words. See wapo.st/invite1445.

EDITED BY RICH NORRIS AND JOYCE NICHOLS LEWIS

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7/25/21 xwordeditor@aol.com

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Answers to last week's puzzle below.

HOROSCOPE

BY GEORGIA NICOLS

HAPPY BIRTHDAY | July 25: You are a sensitive, spiritual person with humanitarian values. You are also playful, fun-loving, warm and friendly. There is often an air of mystery about you. This is a powerful, wonderful year for you. Expect kudos, promotions and acknowledgments. You might get richer. You will certainly experience material gain, because this is a year of achievement and recognition.

Moon Alert: Avoid shopping or making important decisions from 7 p.m. to 11:45 p.m. Eastern time today. After that, the Moon moves from Aquarius into Pisces.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) Power struggles with a family member might take place today. These generally accomplish nothing. Relax. You feel sympathetic. You will party hard and work hard.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) Although you might be obsessed about an idea today, resist your urge to persuade others to "see the light." Home repairs and focus on family are important. Competitive sports are in the picture.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) Money issues or a possession is important today, which is why you will stand your ground. A busy, fast-paced, upbeat week is ahead. Cope with increased chaos and activity at home.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) You want to get to the bottom of something. More likely, you will end up in an intellectual conflict. Your ideals and appreciation of beauty are aroused. Focus on earnings and ways to boost your wealth. You'll be convincing about moneymaking ideas.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) Today hidden information might come to light, perhaps even a secret. You feel generous to someone in need. It's a powerful week for you. You will feel strong and vigorous. You will work hard to earn money and spend it.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) You might meet someone pushy today. They might want to indoctrinate you or others into their way of thinking, or perhaps they want you to join an organization. You will have a warm conversation with someone close to you. Get physical exercise to blow off any pent-up steam.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) Today a boss, parent or someone in a position of authority might throw their weight around and try to beat their drum so that everyone follows their path. Or perhaps they have a grievance to air. You have concern for a co-worker or a pet.

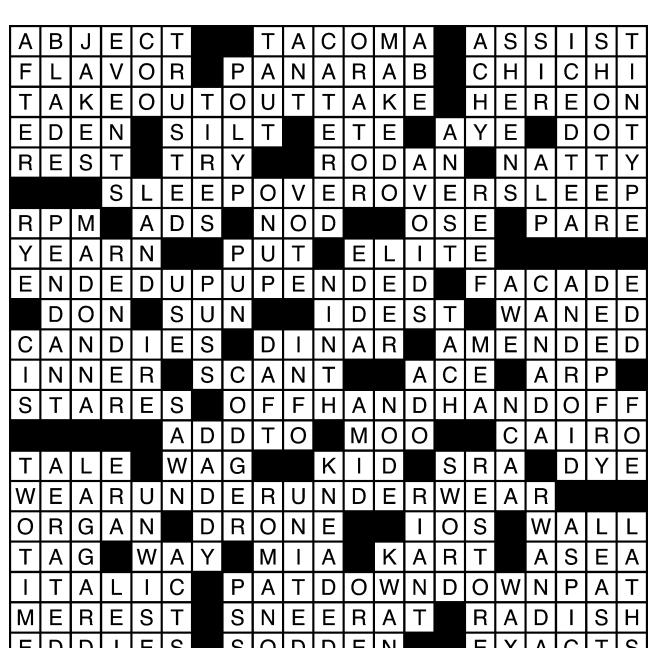
SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) Resist the urge to proselytize and persuade others to agree with your beliefs about politics, religion or racial issues, because this is what you are tempted to do. There's no point in browbeating others to agree with you. Enjoy romance and socializing.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) Squabbles about shared property or how to divide an inheritance or a certain amount of money might arise today. Disputes about borrowing something also might arise. Family discussions are warm and understanding. Travel if possible, or get further learning. Your ambition is aroused.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

Power struggles with kids might take place today. Remember who's the adult and who's the child. Power struggles between romantic partners are also likely. Work to get better organized. Avoid disputes with partners.

Answers to last week's puzzle.



7/18/21