

The Style Invitational

Week XXXV: Hyphen the Terrible

Quiet-asm—n., sexual satisfaction achieved in a library during business hours.



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Worry-tarians—n., parishioners in a Unitarian church composed entirely of converted Jews.

Enthusi-fied—adj., describes the short-lived but intense excitement of the audience immediately after hearing a motivational speaker like Zig Ziglar.

This Week's Contest: Combine the first half of any hyphenated word in a story in today's paper with the second part of a different hyphenated word from the same story, and provide a new definition. The examples above are from today's Miss Manners column. (Make sure you tell us from which story your words were chosen.) First-prize winner gets a mint condition 1975 full-color campaign brochure extolling the many virtues, including unimpeachable ethics, of Maryland's then-Gov. Marvin Mandel. This is worth \$50.

First runner-up wins the tacky but estimable Style Invitational Loser Pen. Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-Shirt. The Uncle's Pick wins the yet-to-be-designed but soon-to-be-coveted "The Uncle Loves Me" T-shirt. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312, or by e-mail to losers@washpost.com, or by U.S. mail to The Style Invitational, Week XXXV, c/o The Washington Post, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071. Deadline is Monday, Oct. 2. All entries must include the week number of the contest and your name, postal address and a daytime or evening telephone number. E-mail entries must include the week number in the subject field. Contests will be judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Editors reserve the right to edit entries for taste or content. Results will be published in four weeks. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes.

REPORT FROM WEEK XXXI,

in which you were asked to come up with a new punctuation mark.

◆ **Fourth Runner-Up. The Sarcasterisk: *✕** This is placed at the end of a statement to indicate a sarcastic tone. Ex: "Of course I'll pick up your dry cleaning, sir. It's not like I have any real work to do." *✕ (Cindi Rae Caron, Lenoir, N.C.)

◆ **Third Runner-Up. The Spastic Colon: :§** This indicates an unspoken moment of visible discomfort on the part of the speaker. Ex: "I hereby, with great enthusiasm, :§ release my delegates to George W. Bush . . ." (Greg Pickens, Washington)

◆ **Second Runner-Up. The Raised Eyebrow: ^** This alerts readers to something scandalously noteworthy that might otherwise be missed. Ex: "The congressman was not seriously hurt in the accident, but ^ an unidentified woman in the car . . ." (Ben Aronin, White Plains, N.Y.; Sue Lin Chong, Washington)

◆ **First Runner-Up. The Semicorleone: †** This is used to indicate an implied threat in an otherwise nicely worded sentence. Ex: "Perhaps youse might be interested in accompanying us on a † fish inspection of the East River." (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

◆ **And the winner of the 45 rpm recording of Tammy Faye Bakker: Parent-theticals: ♂ ♀** Used before and after a clause, this denotes Mom or Dad's contribution to homework. Ex: "Slavery was very bad ♂ exemplified by President Lincoln's formulation of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. ♀" (Bob Dalton, Arlington)

◆ **Honorable Mentions: The Misquotation Mark: ™ ??** This is placed before and after a statement that is just too good to be true. Ex: "We will locate the illegal shipment of toilet seats ™ just as soon as we have something to go on." ?? (Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park)

◆ **The High-five: 5** This is used following sentences where points are scored. Ex: "Nice outfit, Hillary. Perfect for your concession speech. 5" (Judith Cottrill, Bronx, N.Y.)

◆ **The Division by Zero: /0** Signifying futility, this is used to flag a pointless attempt to apply to life the concept of "fairness." Ex: "But I was here first! /0" (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

◆ **The Apostlephe: †** This is placed between two statements where a leap of faith is necessary to follow the logic. Ex: "Our economy is the best it's been in 30 years. † This is the result of policies implemented during the Reagan administration." (Cindi Rae Caron, Lenoir, N.C.)

◆ **The Eclipses: ■ ■ ■** Used to indicate that what follows it overshadows what came before. Ex: "The Clinton administration will be known for many policy successes ■ ■ ■ and one sex scandal." (Mike Genz, La Plata)

◆ **The Cold Shiver: {{{** Used to warn readers of an extremely disturbing image. Ex: "Last night the family was entertained by Grandpa Zeke and his {{{ dancing goiter." (Ned Bent, Herndon)

◆ **The Coma: zzzz** This is placed before and after a section of text that is so boring it will be heard only by the speaker or writer. Ex: My mom: Oh, did I tell you about zzzzz. Me: Uh-huh. My mom: . . . and anyway, the azaleas were zzzzzzz. Me: Uh-huh. (Chris Korte, Alexandria)

◆ **The Hanging Curves: §§** Warns the reader that what follows is not English but sports talk. Ex: "We lost the game but we didn't have to. §§ A turnover or two goes our way and we out-possession them." (Russell Beland, Springfield)

◆ **The Daschle: ☹** This indicates that the phrase that follows is to be spoken in a deeply serious, oratorical manner, however trivial the subject matter. Ex: "☹ Mr. President, I once owned a dog . . ." (Russ Beland, Springfield)

◆ **The Prepostrophe: !%** This is used before a statement that is blatantly preposterous. Ex: "!% "After Bill divorces Hillary," Monica said, "he's going to marry me." (Joe Lombard, McLean)

◆ **An Apropostrophe: "★"** This is used to call attention to a delightful mot juste: Ex: "It depends whether I embrace your principles or your mistress." "★" (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

◆ **The Wag: ●~** This is used to warn that the passage that follows must not be read aloud, because it might cause dog arousal. Ex: "Where is the can opener? ●~ I must find it before I can go for a walk." (Ray Ratajczak, Arbutus)

◆ **The Ticktock: ●*** Used as a warning before referring to someone with a ticking biological clock. Ex: "Say, Fred—Mary ●* wants to meet you." (Kevin Mellema, Falls Church)

◆ **The Diarrheasis:** This is a raised mark denoting fluid vowel movements. Ex: "Is this the quee to the loo?" (Chris Doyle, Rockville)

◆ **The Comma Kaze: ,,** Denotes a verbal assault exhibiting little concern for one's welfare. Ex: "Bite me,,Tyson." (Chris Doyle, Rockville)

◆ **The Uncle's Pick: The Questionmarkwain: ?;** Used to underscore an amusingly witty question. Ex: "Have you noticed that everybody talks about the weather but nobody does anything about it ?;" (Joseph Romm, Washington)

◆ **The Uncle Explains: I have noticed this, too.**