

DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

Short ribs: All-common-word poems

BY PAT MYERS

In Week 1478 the Empress asked aspiring Loserbards to write a poem using only the “ten hundred” words (plus variants) deemed most common by “Thing Explainer” Randall Munroe’s Simple Writer tool. Entrants turned up some odd inclusions and omissions: “Nine” was missing, but the checker allowed “creature,” “familiar” and — what? — “youngling.” The E got in touch with Randall; he explains all in this week’s Style Conversational. (Poems’ titles didn’t have to be from the list.)

**4th place:**  
**Tom Brady Retires, Then Unretires**  
Once more returns the old ball-guy.  
Here’s my belief: The reason why  
Of him the team just can’t get rid:  
He left, but then forgot he did.  
(Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

**3rd place:**  
These boxes, yellow, green, and gray,  
Fill up my feed, each night and day.  
If you are one who shares each Word-all,  
This finger means: I give the bird-all.  
(Duncan Stevens)

**2nd place and the cheery-Bigfoot socks:**  
“You might get killed, from what we’ve heard.  
We’ll help you leave. Just say the word!”  
This leader, not afraid, replied,  
“I need what guns shoot, not a ride.”  
(Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.)

**And the winner of the Clowning Achievement:**  
**Earth’s Got Talent**  
Some strange people from outer space will fly to Earth one day  
And share with us the things they know and did, light-years away.  
We’ll probably shrug and tell those guys we also have great powers:  
We change time and make the sun come up at different hours.  
(Pam Shermeyer, Lathrup Village, Mich.)

**Funny but less so: Honorable mentions**  
Why am I up at two in the morning  
Looking at stupid Face-book?  
Why do I care about that girl from high school  
And the pictures of lunch that she took?  
Tomorrow at work when I can’t keep my eyes open  
I’ll promise I’m sleeping by ten.  
But who am I kidding? In twenty-four hours  
I’ll be right back here again.  
(Marty Gold, Arlington)

We’ve circled the city for more than an hour  
Showing the world how we hold all the power,  
Running our engines and acting real mad  
Fighting for rights we already had.  
This road’s not familiar — perhaps we should pause;  
I think maybe we’re lost — much like our cause.  
(Frank Mann, Washington)

**Tough Luck, Oligarchs**  
Because they’re friends with you-know-who  
They find themselves in deep do-do;  
Big boats, big cars, and foot-ball teams,  
But life’s less simple than it seems.  
For in the end, just-us they’ll get,  
No hiding place for each as-set.  
And when their boats are off high seas,  
No tears cried for all-egg-are-keys.  
(Jeff Rackow, Bethesda)

Where is my phone? Oh, it’s here in my hand.  
My keys disappeared, I can’t go where I planned.  
Why did I walk in this room? I forgot.  
I had a good reason. Okay, maybe not.  
I went to the store for some eggs and some tea,  
Came home with a bird house to put in a tree.  
Where is my memory? Help look for it, please.  
I’ve left it somewhere, along with my keys.  
(Hildy Zampella, Alexandria)

The rich get rich, the poor get poorer.  
Since I’m flat broke, my future’s surer.  
(Chris Doyle)



BOB STAAKE/ILLUSTRATION FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

New contest for Week 1482: The Tile Invitational IX

- |                |                |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>ABBMOST</b> | <b>ADDEISY</b> | <b>ADLNORU</b> | <b>DDEILOT</b> |
| <b>CEHIKTT</b> | <b>EENSTVY</b> | <b>ABEIKLT</b> | <b>AADMNNS</b> |
| <b>CIOSUVV</b> | <b>ABNOOSS</b> | <b>BELMPRU</b> | <b>DEFFISU</b> |
| <b>AELNPPY</b> | <b>AAHPWTY</b> | <b>AAKLOOP</b> | <b>BHIMSTU</b> |
| <b>ADEOPPS</b> | <b>ADFPRTU</b> | <b>CDEILN</b>  | <b>AELNQUU</b> |
| <b>ACHINNU</b> | <b>AABCITX</b> | <b>ABGLNOO</b> | <b>AAEKMRR</b> |
| <b>ACCDESU</b> | <b>ACEFFIN</b> | <b>AEMRSTW</b> | <b>ACDEGOR</b> |
| <b>DDEEILY</b> | <b>BEIMSTU</b> | <b>EGGIRRT</b> | <b>DDGOOOW</b> |
| <b>AHISTTW</b> | <b>DEHNRTU</b> | <b>AABNNOZ</b> | <b>EEMOOSW</b> |

ABGLNOO > **LOANBOG**: The 793-page real estate contract you have to initial on every page in three places.  
DEHNRTU > **NERDHUT**: A treehouse with multiple routers and a mesh network.  
ACDDEIN > **DINE-CAD**: “She didn’t even smile when I patted her bottom. No tip for her!”

It’s our annual-or-so homage to (a much nicer term than “exploitation of”) the venerable syndicated ScrambleGrams word game, which runs in the print Post’s daily comics pages. Below are 36 of the letter sets from the long-out-of-print “Big Book of ScrambleGrams”; each unscrambles into a real word, but of course we don’t care about that. **This week: Rearrange the letters of any of the letter sets below to create a new term, then define or describe it**, as in the examples above; **you may use all seven letters, but also just six or five**. As with all our neologism contests, feel free to use it in a sentence, if that makes your entry funnier; there’s a good chance that someone else will come up with the same new term as yours.

**How to format your entry: Begin every entry with the letter set you’re unscrambling** — follow those examples up there — so the Empress can sort them all into 36 little groups (or, more likely, big groups). **Don’t put the letter set and your word on different lines**, because you’d gum up the works and the E will be tearing at her tiara. (Don’t try to do about italics or boldface; they don’t transmit on the entry form.)

Submit up to 25 entries at [wapo.st/enter-invite-1482](http://wapo.st/enter-invite-1482) (no capitals in the Web address). **Deadline is Monday, April 11**; results appear May 1 in print, April 28 online.

**Winner gets the Clowning Achievement**, our Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a **Mini-Brain Two-Pack: A cute little plush pink human (?) brain** that easily fits in your hand and can clip to a key chain; and an **itty-bitty music box that plays “If I Only Had a Brain”** as long as you keep cranking it. Both donated by Brainiac Loser Dave Prevar.

**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, “A Small Jester of Appreciation” or “Close, but Ceci N’est Pas un Cigare.” First Offenders receive only a smelly tree-shaped air “freshener” (FirStink for their first ink). See general contest rules and guidelines at [wapo.st/inviteFAQ](http://wapo.st/inviteFAQ). The headline “Short Ribs” is by Chris Doyle; Craig Dykstra wrote the honorable-mentions subhead. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at [on.fb.me/invdev](https://on.fb.me/invdev); “like” the Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at [bit.ly/inkofday](https://bit.ly/inkofday); and follow @StyleInvite on Twitter.

**The Style Conversational**: The Empress’s weekly online column discusses each new contest and results. See this week’s (with comments from Randall Munroe) at [wapo.st/conu1482](http://wapo.st/conu1482).

**The little thinks: Itty-bitty brain, itty-bitty music box.**



**A sequel to “The Raven”:**  
The bird upon my stone-art head  
Reminds me that my lady’s dead.  
The only way to cool my hate:  
I’ll see that bird upon my plate.  
I smell him through the kitchen door!  
He never will say “never” more.  
(Sarah Jay, Churchville, Md.)

Put-in, Put-in, Rush-in boot-in,  
Sent a lot of soldiers shoot-in’  
Into lands that aren’t his  
‘Cause that’s the kind of guy he is.  
(Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.)

One should never drink and drive  
(I’ve often heard it said)  
That way, when you do arrive  
You’ll find that you aren’t dead.  
(Milo Sauer, Fairfax, Va.)

Sky-bus riders acting bad  
from sea to wet blue sea;  
“Don’t you teach my kid the truth!”  
dads shouting on TV;  
Drag our bodies back to work  
much rounder than before;  
There goes the place-where-  
neighbors-live — Deep State  
family moved next door;  
Truck guys against fed over-  
reach are circling ‘round the city;

This is the new normal — you can see it isn’t pretty.  
(Rozi Slemp, Bariloche, Argentina)

**Metro Advisory**  
“If you see something, say something,” train guys all say!  
Well, I’m quiet — no stuff to explain.  
I’ve seen hardly a thing as I’ve sat here all day,  
And I’ve certainly spotted no train.  
(Duncan Stevens)

**And Last:**  
Some writing above’s tongue-in-cheek;  
Some will only get laughs from the woke.  
A few lines may fall short, but each week  
We make many a pants-wetting joke.  
(Chris Doyle)

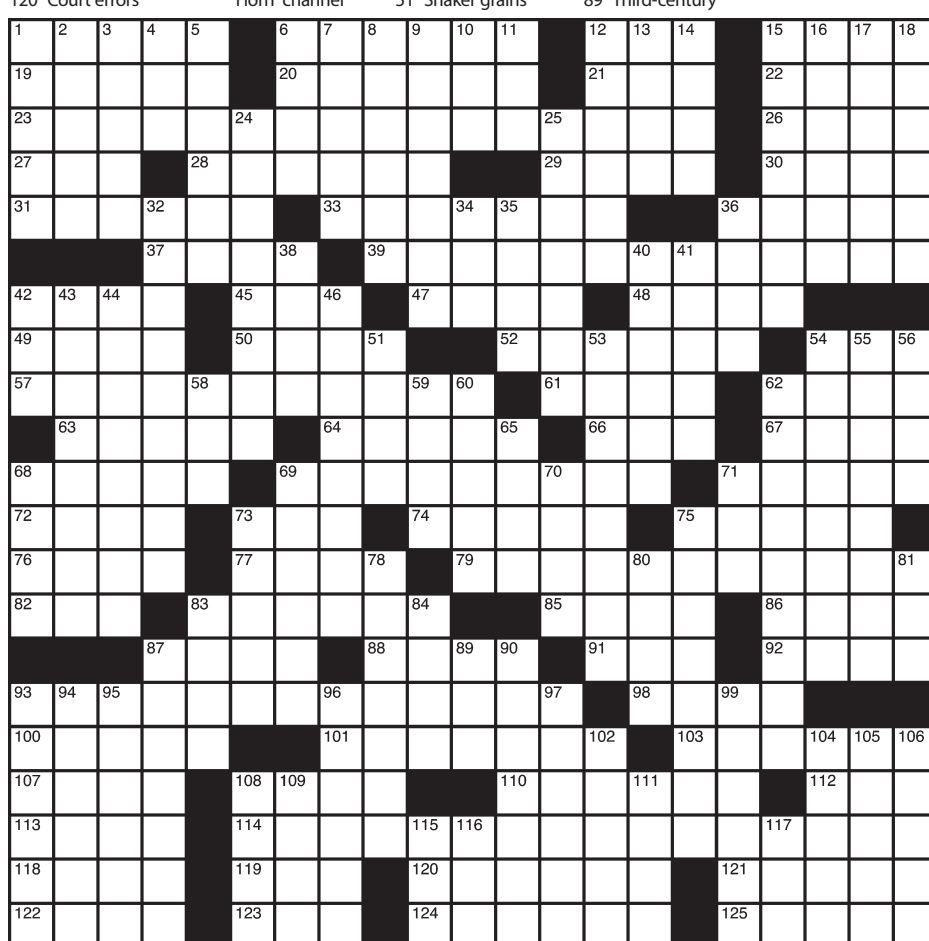
More honorable mentions in the online Invite at [wapo.st/invite1482](http://wapo.st/invite1482).

**Still running** — deadline Monday night, April 4: Our Mess With Your Heads bank headline contest. See [wapo.st/invite1481](http://wapo.st/invite1481). **And next week — our famous foal name contest.**

L.A. TIMES SUNDAY PUZZLE

EDITED BY RICH NORRIS AND JOYCE NICHOLS LEWIS

- |  |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
|--|--|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| *COMING TO TERMS* By DAVID ALFRED BYWATERS | 83 Neckwear accessory                    | 121 Confused conflict        | 14 Elephant feature                               | 53 Foolish ways                   | date   |
| 1 Well-trodden ways                        | 85 Arid                                  | 122 Oolong and pekoe         | 15 Haunted house occupants, it’s said             | 54 Friendly                       | 90 Attentive   |
| 6 Fountain favorite                        | 86 Prefix with cumulus                   | 123 Boot a grounder, say     | 16 Titular Verdi bandit                           | 55 Ferret relatives               | 93 ‘Arabian Nights’ vehicle  |
| 12 Encountered                             | 87 Achy                                  | 124 Joint effort, briefly    | 17 Become fond of                                 | 56 Largest of the Inner Hebrides  | 94 Colorful songbird   |
| 15 Dams, say                               | 88 More than just comfortable            | 125 Visionaries              | 18 Go faster, with ‘it’                           | 58 ___ wolf                       | 95 Cocktail named for a plant  |
| 19 In the area of                          | 91 Weaken                                | DOWN                         | 24 Attacks  | 59 Just fair                      | 96 ___ John: meat brand  |
| 20 Go too far                              | 92 Source of class struggle?             | 1 Measured, with ‘off’       | 25 Award recipient                                | 60 Word after scared or bored     | 97 Book predecessor  |
| 21 The Pac-12’s Sun Devils:                | 93 Endorse certain property barriers?    | 2 Too good for               | 32 Closing pieces                                 | 62 Yale, for five U.S. presidents | 99 Fixes the edge of   |
| Abbr.                                      | 98 Cut                                   | 3 Reference library array    | 34 Portuguese year                                | 65 Big name                       | 102 Sealy rival  |
| 22 Fall lead-in?                           | 99 Opera highlights                      | 4 Wheel center               | 35 Post-op places                                 | 68 Winter forecast                | 104 Didn’t take well?  |
| 23 Grill a bit too long?                   | 101 Commercial bigwigs                   | 5 Daze                       | 36 Chance-of-rain nos.                            | 69 Mashed into a paste            | 105 Down source  |
| 26 19-Across, on a memo                    | 103 Less verbose                         | 6 Apple juice eponym         | 38 Utah city that’s an anagram of an Italian city | 70 French vineyards               | 108 Traditionally, amount of land plowable by one man in one day with a team of oxen |
| 27 Title TV role for Sandra Oh             | 107 Edges                                | 7 Confront opposite          | 40 Admirers, as a group                           | 71 “___ Beso”: 1962 Anka hit      | 109 Common par   |
| 28 Comme une jeune fille                   | 108 Grooming style named for a continent | 8 Far from festive           | 41 “Let me clarify ___”                           | 73 Scot’s tot                     | 111 Govt. accident on them to reach a high shelf                                     |
| 29 Sound from a snorter                    | 110 Saturate                             | 9 Arboreal apex              | 42 Cigar end, in two senses                       | 75 Winter road hazard             | 115 “Brocknir” network   |
| 30 Stairway alternative ruler              | 112 Miembro de la familia                | 10 Harris and a horse        | 43 Coast companion?                               | 78 Done with, perhaps             | 106 Valentine’s Day gift   |
| 31 Oppressive                              | 113 “Hunny” lover                        | 11 Happy                     | 44 Examined by touch                              | 80 Ensnare                        | 108 Traditionally, amount of land plowable by one man in one day with a team of oxen |
| 33 Won’t let go                            | 114 Immortal confection?                 | 12 20th-century Chinese      | 46 Eagerly accepted, as compliments               | 81 Tyle on a trike                | 111 Govt. accident on them to reach a high shelf                                     |
| 36 ___ bean                                | 118 Besides that                         | 13 “Around the Horn” channel | 51 Shaker grains                                  | 84 Prime time time                | 116 Confucian path   |
| 37 Estimate words                          | 119 Feel bad about                       |                              |   | 87 Big hits                       | 117 “I had no idea”  |
| 39 “No Time for Sergeants,” e.g.?          | 120 Court errors                         |                              |   | 89 Third-century                  |  |
| 42 Venomous slitherers                     |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 45 Text letters often in blue              |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 47 Way more than drizzle                   |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 48 City:                                   |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 49 One may be saved or taken               |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 50 Stew veggies                            |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 52 Fishing nets                            |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 54 Tough H.S. tests                        |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 57 Palatial mansion navigation need?       |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 61 Old Norse poetic work                   |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 62 Wild way to run                         |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 63 Dismiss contemptuously                  |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 64 Novel features                          |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 66 Na+ or Cl-                              |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 67 “The Munsters” matriarch                |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 68 Sheltered from the sun                  |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 69 TV series with funny animals?           |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 71 Host                                    |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 72 Make special mention of                 |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 73 Beer nickname                           |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 74 Joan ___                                |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 75 Name on the “Robot” sci-fi series       |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 76 Miner’s finds                           |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 77 Stuck in ___                            |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 79 Fresh food fight?                       |  |                              |   |                                   |  |
| 82 Go beyond dating                        |  |                              |   |                                   |  |



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Answers to last week’s puzzle below.

HOROSCOPE

BY GEORGIA NICOLS

**Happy Birthday | April 3:** You are adventurous, multitalented and likable. You know how to charm others. You are witty in a playful way and happy to be the center of attention. This year, simplicity is your theme. Focus on what creates the foundations in your life. Physical exercise will also be an important factor as you strengthen the many aspects of your world.

**Moon Alert:** There are no restrictions to shopping or important decisions today. The Moon is in Taurus.

**ARIES** (March 21-April 19)  
Keep an eye on your money and possessions today, because something unpredictable might happen. You might find money or you might lose money. Be smart and protect what you own from loss, theft or damage.

**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20)  
Today the Moon is in your sign lined up with wild, wacky Uranus, which will make you feel impulsive and willing to act rashly. Your moods will change quickly. Because it will be tough to concentrate, postpone work that requires attention to detail.

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 20)  
This is a restless day for you. You have that feeling that you’re waiting for the other shoe to drop. (Invariably, it is ugly and the wrong size.) Guard against knee-jerk reactions or last-minute impulses.

**CANCER** (June 21-July 22)  
Almost certainly, a friend or a member of a group will surprise you today by saying or doing something you least expect. Or perhaps you will meet someone new who is different and unusual. Possibly a friend you already know will amaze you by saying or doing something unexpected.

**LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22)  
A parent, teacher, boss or the police might do something that catches you off guard today. (“Busted!”) Do whatever you can to keep a low profile and stay out of trouble. Remember the power of courtesy.

**VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)  
Travel plans will suddenly change today. They might be canceled or rescheduled or there could be a delay. Alternatively, you might suddenly have to travel when you did not expect to do so. News

about medicine, the law and schooling might surprise you.

**LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)  
Double-check details related to banking, shared property, inheritances and anything to do with the wealth of someone else or the responsibilities that you have for someone else. This is because something unexpected could affect these areas.

**SCORPIO** (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)  
A partner, spouse or close friend might do something that surprises you today. They might act differently or catch you off guard. Possibly they will introduce you to someone who is unusual.

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)  
Your work routine will be interrupted today. Staff shortages, delays, equipment breakdowns, computer glitches, accidents and mixed-up messages are just some things that might dog your steps today. Go slowly and pay attention.

**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)  
Parents should know that this is an accident-prone day for their kids, which means they have to be vigilant and mindful today. Meanwhile, social plans might suddenly change. Or perhaps you will receive an unexpected invitation.

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)  
Something related to your home routine will change today. Small appliances might break down or a minor breakage could occur. Someone unexpected might knock on the door. A family member might have surprising news. Get dressed.

**PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20)  
Pay attention to everything you say and do, because this is a mildly accident-prone day for you. Unexpected news plus new faces and new places will make this a stimulating day full of changes. On the upside, you might have a brilliant idea.

Answers to last week’s puzzle.



3/27/22