

Entertainment

## Style Invitational Week 1213: Punku

Yup, write us a haiku with a pun. Plus the winning fictoids about product origins and names



Don't throw away your shot at this week's "punku" haiku contest. (Bob Staake/for The Washington Post)

By Pat Myers 

February 2

(Click [here to skip down](#) to the winning fictoids about product origins and names)

### *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](#).



You're sure to sleep soundly with this 3-D-ish Death Star lamp next to your bed. The colors change, too. This week's second prize. (Pat Myers/The Washington Post)

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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://on.fb.me/invdev). "Like" the Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at [bit.ly/inkofday](http://bit.ly/inkofday); follow [@StyleInvite](https://twitter.com/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](http://wapo.st/styleconv).

[And from The Style Invitational four weeks ago . . .](#)

## **PATENT PRETENDING: INVENTION FICTOIDS FROM WEEK 1209**

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, Md.)

### **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, Va.)

### **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, Va.)

### **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**

“**Kleenex**” 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, Md.)

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

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, Va.)

**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 McCooney, 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, Va.)

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)

The inventor of the **remote control** would have sent in the patent months earlier, but it suddenly went missing;

eventually it was found in his refrigerator. (Marni Penning Coleman)

Following his embarrassing bidet incident while visiting Paris for the 1889 World Exposition, John Kohler's company began distributing **drinking fountains** in America. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

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Joseph Ascot created **the necktie** when his wife bet him that he couldn't come up with an article of men's clothing that was totally useless and still make money off it. (Neal Starkman)

Repurposing an existing product for use in the food industry often presents a marketing challenge. "Eat Paste . . . for Breakfast!" achieved minimal success, so Nabisco renamed the product "**Cream of Wheat.**" This worked marginally better. (Colin Schatz)

Asking his male lab subjects to exercise in frigid water while wearing an extremely tight nylon garment to cut off circulation to the genitals, Dr. Ernst Spido studied "nonchemical noninvasive sterilization." Later, the garments became popular in the nonmedical application of appearing embarrassing on the beach. (Bird Waring, Larchmont, N.Y.)

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)

**Still running — deadline Monday, Feb. 6: Our ScrabbleGrams neologism contest. See [bit.ly/invite1212](https://bit.ly/invite1212).**

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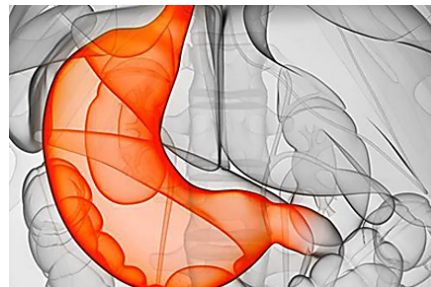
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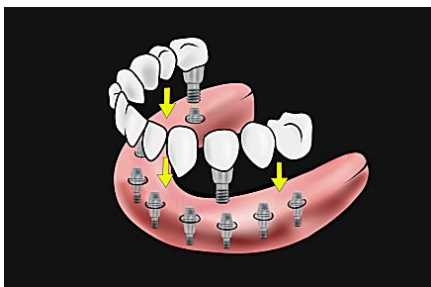
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