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Entertainment

Style Invitational Week 1246: Questionable journalism

Our contest to write a funny question about any sentence in an article; plus the inking 'now/then' jokes



(Bob Staake for The Washington Post)

By Pat Myers September 21, 2017 [Email the author](#)(Click [here to skip down](#) to the winning "now/then" jokes)

Sentence in The Post: Violent J and Shaggy 2 Dope take the stage in clown makeup and douse their fans with cheap Faygo-brand soda.

Q. So, Maestro, what's your plan for the symphony's "Welcome, Millennials" program?

A. "No one is going to grip-and-grin."

Q. Ambassador, will the Secret Service be making sure the president keeps his hands to himself during this trip?

This week we summon up one of our most reliable contests, one we've done at least 12 times with great results, but not for a year and a half. **This week: Find any sentence (or a substantive part of a sentence) that appears in The Post or another publication, in print or online, dated Sept. 21-Oct. 2, and pair it with a question it might answer,** as in the examples above from the Sept. 17 Post. In the Empress's experience — in 10 of these contests, she's read well over 10,000 entries — the humor tends to work better if a reader can grasp the original context of the sentence without an explanation. You may use headlines if they're written as sentences that could just as easily be in text. **Include the date and page number of the print edition, or a link to an online page** (please don't embed the link right into the text of your entry; attaching a screen shot is

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- 2 Perspective President Trump's power to pardon himself, as skewered by cartoons
- 3 Celebrities, fashion insiders react to death of Kate Spade
- 4 Review The best science fiction and fantasy

also okay).

Submit entries at this website: wapo.st/enter-invite-1246 (all lowercase).

Winner gets the **Inkin' Memorial**, the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy — one of the last few before we officially announce the new design that we've been giving to recidivist winners. Second place receives these two soft, rubbery balls, about the size of golf balls, that turn inside out into . . . wow, soft-spiny mittens! They're modeled here by Loser in Training Simon Stevens, 4-year-old son of Duncan, at a recent Loser Brunch (the very stretchy things also fit at least the Empress's hands). The ball-mittens were donated by Dave Prevar; you can't have Simon.

Other runners-up win our "[You Gotta Play to Lose](#)" Loser Mug or our Grossery Bag, "[I Got a B in Punmanship.](#)" Honorable mentions get one of our 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, Oct. 2; results published Oct. 22 (online Oct. 19). See general contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/InvRules. The headline for this week's results is by Jesse Frankovich; the honorable-mentions subhead was submitted both by Jesse and by Nan Reiner. Join the Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev. "Like" Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at bit.ly/inkofday; follow [@StyleInvite](https://twitter.com/StyleInvite) on Twitter.

The Style Conversational The Empress's weekly online column, published late Thursday afternoon, discusses each new contest and set of results. Check it out at wapo.st/styleconv.

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

COMEDY OF ERAS: THEN/NOW JOKES FROM WEEK 1242

In [Week 1242](#) we asked for then-and-now comparisons. The results fall into two categories: humor about how times have changed (or, sometimes, haven't changed) and humor about getting old. Both yield some classic results.

4th place

Then: Bell-bottom jeans.

Now: Bell-bottom bottoms.

(David Garratt, Silver City, N.M.)

3rd place

Loser Scion Simon Stevens models the spiny inside-out squishy balls. (Pat Myers/The Washington Post)

Then: A 16-ounce large Coke.

Now: A 16-ounce small Coke.

(Bill Dorner, Indianapolis)

2nd place

and the lanyard-hung [Pizza Pouch and wineglass holster:](#)

Then: Houston, we have a problem.

Now: Houston, you're gonna need a bigger boat.

(Frank Mann, Washington)

And the winner of the Inkin' Memorial:

Then: Mayberry and Opie.

The mittens before they're turned inside out.

Now: Mayberry and opioids.

to read this month



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Review

Sex, politics and art painted in broad strokes in 'Botticelli in the Fire'



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Memory lane: Honorable mentions

Then: U.S. foreign policy: detente.

Now: U.S. foreign policy: daily taunt.

(Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

Then: We're going to see the Who!

Now: We're going to see who?

(Mia Wyatt, Ellicott City, Md.)

Then (after 9 p.m.): "Sorry for calling you so late."

Now (at 4 a.m.): "whyd it take u 2 hrs to like my photo? r u mad at me?"

(Ivars Kuskevics, Takoma Park, Md.)

Then: Getting rid of your 5 o'clock shadow.

Then: Getting rid of your 5 o'clock shadow.

Now: Maintaining your 5 o'clock shadow.

(Edmund Conti, Raleigh)

Then: Disco in the '70s.

Then: Disco in the '70s.

Now: Disks go in your 70s.

(Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.)

Then: Defending FLOTUS's fashion choices.

Now: Attacking FLOTUS's fashion choices.

(Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.)

Then: Arguing with your parents about where you're going.

Now: Arguing with your GPS about where you're going.

(Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

Then: Driving your off-road vehicle.

Now: Driving your vehicle off the road.

(David Kleinbard, Mamaroneck, N.Y.)

Then: CREEP got the president into the White House.

Now: A creep president got into the White House.

(Kevin Doherty, Washington; Jon Gearhart, Des Moines)

Then: Studying fallout predictions to see how a nuclear strike on D.C. would impact the suburbs.

Now: [Sigh.]

(Stephen Litterst, Newark, Del.)

Then: Getting past the SAT.

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Then: "Super-size me!"

Now: I'm Super-Size Me.

(Marni Penning Coleman, Falls Church, Va.)

Then: "There are Russian-sympathizers at high levels of the U.S. government!"

Now: There are Russian sympathizers at high levels of the U.S. government.

(Duncan Stevens)

Then: Bill Cosby was hilarious.

Now: You want to throw up for thinking Bill Cosby was hilarious.

(Peter Jenkins, Bethesda, Md.)

Then: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

Now: Not.

(Randy Lee, Burke, Va.)

Then: Assessing the damage caused by an ozone hole.

Now: Assessing the damage caused by, um, a disagreeable fellow.

(Duncan Stevens)

Then: Scoring well on your ACT.

Now: Scoring well on your A1C.

(Tom Cary, Hollywood, Md.)

Then: "The President's Plane Is Missing."

Now: The president's brain is missing.

(Chris Doyle)

Then: "We Are the World."

Now: We bar the world.

(Duncan Stevens)

Then: No bars? Calling it a night.

Now: No bars? Calling nobody tonight.

(Kevin Dopart)

Then: Giving the finger to the world.

Now: Getting the finger from the doctor.

(Jon Gearhart)

Then: Shop class.

Now: Shop during class.

(James Kruger, Rockville, Md.)

Then: Tiger Woods, driving long.

Now: Tiger Woods, driving high.

(Jesse Frankovich, Grand Ledge, Mich.)

Then: Unleaded gas.

Now: Tiger Woods, driving high.

(Jesse Frankovich, Grand Ledge, Mich.)

Then: Unleaded gas.

Now: Unleaded water.

(Chris Damm, Charles Town, W.Va.)

Then: Using your thumb to get a lift.

Now: Using your thumbs to get a Lyft.

(Jesse Frankovich)

Then: Hiding my confusion about algebra from my teacher.

Now: Hiding my confusion about algebra from my kids.

(Stephen Litterst)

Local Headlines newsletter

Important local stories in D.C., Va. and Md., around 8 a.m. on weekdays.

Sign up

Boomer: Used a pencil to rewind a cassette.

Gen X'er: "What's a cassette?"

Millennial: "What's a pencil?" (Hildy Zampella, Falls Church, Va.)

And Last: *Then:* Your brilliant entries were foolishly rejected by the Czar.

Now: Your brilliant entries were foolishly rejected by the Empress. (Jesse Frankovich; Steve Glomb, Alexandria, Va.)

Still running — deadline Monday night, Sept. 25: our contest for silly complaints about the paper. See wapo.st/invite1245.

0 Comments



Pat Myers is editor and judge of The Style Invitational, The Washington Post's page for clever, edgy humor and wordplay. In the role since December 2003, she has posted and judged more than 700 contests. She also writes the weekly Style Conversational column and runs the Style Invitational Devotees page on Facebook. Follow @patmyersTWP

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