Report from Week 957

In which we asked you to write sentences or other passages in which each successive word was one letter longer until the middle and then shrank, or vice versa: We also include today the “You know it’s going to be a bad marriage. . .” jokes from Week 956. Both lists are a bit longer in the online invite at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational.

2 Winner of the no-pictures Braille copy of Playboy: (4 to 11 to 4) We’ve found unique pattern: renowned rock—in roll guitarists continually medicating, carousing, imbibing alcohol = Twenty-Seven Club, (Matt Monitto, Elron, N.C.)

(10 letters to 3, 3 to 10) Douchiness checklist: spray- tan, Cartier, fedora, Lexus, vest, “bro.” You make being nearly utterly horrible. — Larchmont bellyacher (Bird Waring, Larchmont, N.Y.)

3 Very close. Cigar? Nope. Honorables

Honorable mentions


We met that enemy. Sadly, Pogo, it’s U.S. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Parties, chicks, boozes, long nap, skip class, repeat: College. (Matt Monitto, Elron College Class of 2014)

I’m sad. Dear sweet Cousin Whitney; Dionne’s powers didn’t ever see it. (Jra Allen, Bethesda)

(Burp!) “Ocean cruise” spells “broad beam.” (Burp!) “Ocean cruise” spells “broad beam.”

Sometimes “standing ovation” really means “grumpy patrons speedily departing.” (Craig Dykstra, Centreville)

Studying Timman’s rusted ankle, Toto looks guilty (besides relieved), (Kevin Dopart)

Italian cruise ships head for sea; they often return upright. (Dave Silberstein, College Park, a First Offender)

Countdown: Nineteen, sixteen, twelve, eight, WAIT, HEY! six, STUPI . . . seven, eleven, fourteen, seventeen . . . (Lee Giesecke, Annandale)

Domestic harmony snooze alarm rule: Hit it one time; extra delays outrage bedmates. (Mark Richardrson, Washington)

Best broad policy: honesty. Marriage success: “Superb dress, dear.” (Kevin Dopart)

I’m fat! Love pizza, donuts, sundae, potatoes, chocolate, enchiladas, Spaghettio’s, girdle-cakes, miscellaneous carbohydrates, sarsaparilla, gingerbread, milkshakes, deep-fried anything — perhaps Atkins’ diet’s best for us. (Loulise Dockenhoff Hauser, Falls Church)

Suck-up entry of the week (2 to 11 to 2): Is any life worth living without tackling whimsical conundrums, stimulating vocabulary, enigmatic wordplay? Empress grants these joys for us. (Neal Starkman, Seattle)

Anti-suck-up entry of the week (12 to 3 to 12): Experiencing symmetrical perfection requiring wordplay — Empress judges dimly with the IQ of ten, just count stupid letters watching carefully, performing statistical mindlessness. (Jim Lubell, Mechanicsville, Md.)

And Last: Oh, you need HUMOR inside winning rhopalic sentences? Doltishly counting letters exactly right won’t cut it? (Amanda Yanovitch, Midlothian, Va.)

From Week 956: You know it’ll be a bad marriage when . . .

The minister asks if anyone objects to this marriage and God stands up. (Bob Huffman, Frederick)ing)

Her wedding gown says, “I’m With Stupid.” (Beverley Sharp)

Someone calls you from Match.com and anxiously says, “I really hope we’ve reached you in time.” (David Ballard, Reston)

Her wedding dress reveals her trumpet stamp. (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

Your fiance has a “Free Scott Peterson” bumper sticker. (David Kleinbard, Jersey City)

Her mark of honor is Gloria Allred. (Mark Welch, Alexandria)

The groom is about to place the ring on the bride’s finger, and she grabs it saying, “I’ll just do it myself.” (Judy Blanchard, Novi, Mich.)

Next week: All’s Weller, or A Har Har Better Thing

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Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorables mention get a lusted-after Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives — because although it’s by no means required, the E has a feeling there might be a few political entries this week — matching little bags of “Democrat Donkey Dung” and “Republican Elephant Dung!” A little bag of political poop. They are actually chocolate-covered peanuts. Donated by Dave Prevar.

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorables mention get a lusted-after Loser magnet. First Offenders get a tree-shaped air “freshener” (FirstStink for their first ink). E-mail entries to losers@washpost.com or fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, March 12; results published April 1 (!) (March 30 online). No more than 25 entries per entrant per week. Include “Week 961” in your e-mail subject line or it might be ignored as spam. Include your real name, postal address and phone number with your entry. See contest rules and guidelines at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational. The revised title for next week is by Chris Doyle; the subhead for this week’s honorable mentions is by Gary Crockett. Join the Style Invitational Devotees on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev.

**THE WINNER OF THE INKER**

**THIS WEEK’S CONTEST: WEEK 961**

The end of our rhops

The Empress did a contest for rhopalic sentences, in which each successive word was one letter longer. Then we did one in which each successive word was one letter shorter. Then — as you see in today’s results — we asked for sentences whose words got longer till the middle and then shrank, as well as those that shrank and then grew. And so what’s left: the anti-rhopalic, suggested by Loser Craig Dykstra: Write a funny passage or headline whose words all have the same number of letters, as in Bob Staake’s not-so-ambitious example above (directions to Bob: “Write something cartoonable”). As in earlier contests, two words joined by a hyphen may serve as a single word or two words; for contractions such as “you’re,” just count the number of letters and ignore the punctuation.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives — because although it’s by no means required, the E has a feeling there might be a few political entries this week — matching little bags of “Democrat Donkey Dung” and “Republican Elephant Dung!” A little bag of political poop. They are actually chocolate-covered peanuts. Donated by Dave Prevar.

**STORY CONVERSATIONAL** Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join us at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational.

**POP CD REVIEW**

**Ceremony**

**ZOO**

When Northern California band Ceremony started out in the mid-’00s, it was a straight-edge-inspired hard-core band whose 2006 debut notoriously featured 13 songs in 13 minutes.

Both hard-core and straight-edge had peaked long before, and Ceremony seemed nostalgic for all the things it had missed. Back then, its new disc, “Zoo,” would have been unthinkable, and not just because its release on Matador, a major-ish indie label, would have been tantamount to selling out back in the day (although the act of selling out is something that, by Ceremony’s time, had also peaked). “Zoo” retains that (possibly inadvertent sense of nostalgia, that sense that all the best things that could happen have happened already. It signals Ceremony’s move from hard-core to post-hard-core, which basically means band members occasionally sing instead of yell, and some of their songs have melodies. In other words, it’s pretty drastic. It’s also terrific, a template for how to grow up without giving in. “All of us move on,” explains lead singer Ross Farrar, without apology, on the great, comparatively cheerful “Adult.” “We have to give up the things we love sometimes.”

“Zoo” sticks closely to basic post-punk tropes: It has more hooks than chord changes, retains the band’s endearing fondness for Husker Du and the Pixies, and sounds like it was made in Farrar’s parents’ garage. Also intact: Ceremony’s misanthropy, enshrined in twin terrors “Community Service” and “Ordinary People.” Both are the sort of hellish, other-people-broadsideled bombard the band used to excel at, proof that adults don’t have to give up everything they love.

— Allison Stewart