Style Invitational Week 1339:
Songs for a modern error

A parody contest. Plus winning poems and jokes based on spelling bee words.

(Bob Staleske for The Washington Post)

By Pat Myers
July 3

(Click here to skip down to the winning spelling bee poems and jokes)

Tonight, tonight, a most distressing sight:
My WiFi router’s light blinking red.
Such blight, this plight; it isn’t working right;
Offline, I really might just be dead.
I can’t log on and check my emails
Or ogle pics of females
Whose outerwear is slight.
To right this blight,
I’ll call and stay on hold out of spite
All night! — Matt Monitto, channeling “West Side Story”

It’s our first song parody contest of 2019, and this week’s theme comes courtesy of Loserbard Matt Monitto, complete with sample song (and even this week’s headline). We’ll be broad in scope. This week: Write
humorous lyrics to a song about some modern woe, set to a familiar tune. It can be about a how-you-say First World problem, like Matt’s lament above, or something more serious as long as your anger and bitterness don’t overwhelm your wit (the Empress calls that “screediness”).

We’ll give you an extra week — until July 22 — to get the parodies done. If you make a video, we might feature it in the online Invite (you could even use your own tune) but it’s the quality of the lyrics that matters most. See this week’s Style Conversational column at wapo.st/conv1339 for more guidance about writing songs for us.

Submit entries at wapo.st/enter-invite-1339 (all lowercase).

Winner gets the Lose Cannon, our Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives the “Mr. President Wig” worn for a minute by Loser Howard Walderman while he sang a parody of “Imagine” (“Imagine I’m the Donald”) at last weekend’s Flushies, the Losers’ annual awards “banquet.” Howard’s older than the Current Occupant but in way better shape: He recently medaled in swimming in the 80-to-84 group in the Maryland Senior Olympics.

Other runners-up win our “You Gotta Play to Lose” Loser Mug or our “Whole Fools” Grocery Bag. Honorable mentions get one of our husted-after Loser magnets, “Too-Weak Notice” or “Certificate of (de) Merit.” First Offenders receive only a smelly tree-shaped air “freshener” (FirstStink for their first ink). Deadline is Monday night, July 22; results published Aug. 4 in print, Aug. 1 online. See general contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/InvRules. The headline “Spelly Laughs” was submitted by both Jesse Frankovich and Duncan Stevens; Chris Doyle and William Kennard both suggested the honorable-mentions subheadline. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev. “Like” the Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at bit.ly/inkofday; follow @StyleInvite on Twitter.

The Style Conversational: The Empress’s weekly online column, published late Wednesday afternoon this week, discusses the week’s new contest and results. Check it out at wapo.st/styleconv.

And from The Style Invitational four weeks ago . . .

SPELLY LAUGHS: THE BEE POEMS & JOKES FROM WEEK 1335

In Week 1335 we asked for poems based on words from this year’s Scripps National Spelling Bee — and we also invited some riddles.

4th place:

Omphalopsyche (AHM-fuh-lo-SIGH-kites), people who meditate by focusing on their navels
Bellery-buttony
Omphalopsyche are
Folks who can gaze at their
Navel all day.

Genesis demonstrates
Incontrovertibly
Abel and Cain were the
First born that way.
*(Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.)*

3rd place:
**Badderlocks, brownish seaweed eaten in Northern Europe:**
Whatever’s on the Donald’s head’s unsightly.
Like some dead thing he found beneath the docks,
But if he threw some seaweed on, you’d rightly
Say now he’s even sporting badderlocks.
*(Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)*

2nd place and the bacon-scented soap and air 'freshener':

**Fucus (FEW-kus):**
A brownish type of algae is the kind that’s known as fucus;
But if we mispronounce this word, they’ll sure as heck rebuke us.
*(Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)*

And the winner of the Lose Cannon:

**Apophysitis (uh-PAH-fuh-SIGH-tuhs), painful bone spurs:**
Once upon a time of drafting,
Donald pondered, sly and crafting,
Over many dark, dishonest ways to dodge the call to war —
Fearing far-off foes who’d fight us, settled on apophysitis,
Blaming it without the slightest hint of shame forevermore.
"I’d be honored," Donald uttered, "to have served within the Corps.
But, alas, my feet were sore."
*(Jesse Frankovich, Grand Ledge, Mich.)*

Bee-flats: Honorable mentions

**Seitan, flavored wheat gluten, often a meat substitute:**
Said the Church Lady, ‘Dontcha be hatin’
On my vegan cafe — we’re creatin’
Dishes tasty and new!
After one bite or two,
You’ll be wondering, could it be ... seitan?"
(Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)

Murrelet, a seabird
Among endangered species is the avian marbled murrelet.
It would be sad to see this species going down the turrelet.
(Dave Zarrow, Reston, Va.)

Stakhanovite (sta-KAH-no-vite), a Soviet worker awarded for exceeding production quotas
Russia is our closest friend.
The FBI can hack you.
Trump is on an upward trend.
Vaccines are used to track you.
I tweet it all day, I tweet it at night:
I troll to be a Stakhanovite.
(Sam Mertens, Silver Spring, Md.)

Haustellum, an insect proboscis adapted to suck blood
Folks hate skteers and fear the haustellum.
They can try but they cannot dispel ’em.
The poor humans outside —
They can run but not hide.
Skeeters find ’em and bite when they smell ’em.
(Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.)

“Badderlocks” jokes
Q. What might you advise someone who ate some lousy Scottish salmon?
A. Badderlocks next time.
(Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Q. What European diet features full meals plus snacks of seaweed?
A. Badderlocks and the Three Squares.
(Mark Raffman)

Rhathymia (ra-THIM-mia or ra-THIGH-mia), the state of being carefree
Does current news depress me? Oh yes, plenty.
But then I picture Trump’s defeat in ’20;
This vision never ever fails to gimme a
Distinct, exalted feeling of rhathymia.
(Duncan Stevens)

Soon Yi fills my heart with rhathymia,
So I guess that this means it’s goodbye, Mia.
(Ann Martin, Brentwood, Md.)
Does current news depress me? Oh yes, pretty.
But then I picture Trump’s defeat in ’20;
This vision never ever fails to gimme a
Distinct, exalted feeling of rhhythmia.
(Duncan Stevens)

Soon Yi fills my heart with rhhythmia,
So I guess that this means it’s goodbye, Mia.
(Ann Martin, Brentwood, Md.)

No job and no worries I’ve got,
A care in the world I have not.
I’ll live in rhhythmia
(Ann Martin, Brentwood, Md.)

No job and no worries I’ve got,
A care in the world I have not.
I’ll live in rhhythmia
‘Cause my parents will buy me a
Rolls, a new home and a yacht.
(Hildy Zampella, Alexandria, Va.)

Jalap (JA-lupp), a laxative made from a Mexican plant
With its purgative properties, jalap
Sends you off to the loo at a gallop,
For it’s quite unsurpassed —
In fact, it’s a blast —
At freeing a laggardly bowel up.
(Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

Mondegreen, a misheard song lyric
I can see clearly now Lorraine has gone
Wrapped up like a douche, I ask what was she on?
“There’s a bathroom on the right,” she would unload,
“Another turnip boy, a Ford stuck in the road.”
In the Garden of Eden, honey, don’t you know that I’m lovin’ you?
Hold me closer, Tony Danza — doughnuts make my brown eyes blue.
‘Scuse me while I kiss this guy — do you know what I mean?
Can’t you tell I’m just a nerd who loves a mondegreen?”
(Rick Broomberg, Fairfax, Va.)

Q. Who are the greatest supporters of an “Echo-Friendly Nude Eel”?
A. The Mondegreen Party.
(Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.)

Chelydroid, a snapping turtle
Once upon a summer, sweating, I desired a cooling wetting,
So I stepped without a care into a pond with murky floor.
With the water gently lapping, suddenly there came a snapping
turtle with its jaws a-clapping, clapping like a carnivore —
“Tis some chelydroid!” I hollered, “Snapping inches from the shore —
Where my big toe’d been before.”
(Dave Zarrow)

Campylobacter, bacterium that causes food poisoning
Her stomach was tied up in knots
After eating two undercooked brats.
The bug that attacked her,  
A campylobacter,  
Turned strolls to the pot into trots.  

(Chris Doyle)  
(Dave Zarrow)

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**Tathagata (Tatha-GA-ta)**  
Enlightened dude: when perfect truth he sees,  
He’s called, in Buddhist lingo, tathagata.  
That means he’s figured out life’s mysteries;  
He understands announcements on WMATA.  

(Duncan Stevens)

**Taurokathapsia (TOR-uh-kuh-THAP-see-uh): an ancient sport in which a performer grasps the horns of a bull and somersaults over it**