

SPOONERISM RIDDLES

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Last summer on my weekly puzzle segment on NPR's "Weekend Edition Sunday" I ran a creative competition involving spoonerism riddles. Listeners were invited to submit original riddles in which each answer involved a spoonerism.

For example: What is the difference between a tax form and a man who has eaten as much as he can? One is signed and dated, while the other is dined and sated.

Or ... What is the difference between a fisherman and an angry schoolchild? One baits his hooks, while the other hates his books.

Entries were judged (by me) on originality, cleverness, and naturalness of syntax. More than 1,600 entries were received. Below are my favorites, with the winners at the end.

What is the difference between ...

A popular sandwich and a male mountain goat? One is a ham on rye; the other is a ram on high. [Vicki and Scott Magaw, Iron River, WI]

A Gulf Coast cleanup worker and a crooked cashier? One tends the spill; the other spends the till. [William Stoltzman, Bellevue, WA]

A choosy hospital and a choosy pocketbook thief in England? One picks the best nurses; the other nicks the best purses. [Dallas Lea, Poughkeepsie, NY]

A dog and a marine biologist? One wags a tail; the other tags a whale. [Marcia Kenley, Overland Park, KS]

A telegraph operator and a computer program debugger? One is a Morse code sender; the other is a source code mender. [Darryl Nester, Bluffton, OH]

A gunslinger saloon and a Tupperware party? One has a hitching post; the other has a pitching host. [Kathleen Martin, New Albany, IN]

A defective fur coat and a risqué story? One is a faulty sable; the other is a salty fable. [Tom Bowman, Richmond, MO]

A handyman and a dog that misbehaves? One might be doing chores; the other might be chewing doors. [Tom Simard, Boston, MA]

A spreadsheet and winning a bean-eating contest? In one you are starting up a form ... [Daniel Silver, San Francisco, CA]

Second runner-up:

What is the difference between a dasher and a haberdasher? One has short spurts; the other has sport shirts. [Gary Disch, Ottawa, Ont.]

First runner-up:

What is the difference between a Guinea hen and young witch? One is a wild chicken; the other is a child Wiccan. [Pat Mauer, Los Angeles, CA]

The winner:

What is the difference between a wedding chapel and a restaurant's daily specials? One is a marrying venue, the other is a varying menu. [Michael True, Falls Church, VA]

A POEM

MARTIN GARDNER

This is an excerpt from Gardner's 1969 book *Never Make Fun Of A Turtle, My Son* (Simon and Schuster, illustrated by John Alcorn).

Bedtime

Dear Rose, when Mother says to you,
 "It's time to go to bed,"
Don't whine and cry and try to do
 A thousand things instead.

Like kissing everyone good night
 Seven times or so,
And asking stupid questions
 While you scratch your little toe.

Or bouncing out of bed before
 You've slept a single wink,
To tiptoe to the bathroom
 And drink another drink.

You think it fools your parents
 But it wouldn't fool a dunce.
So—off to bed when Mother says,
 And off to bed AT ONCE!