

IG® NOBEL LIMERICKS: BEETLES, COWS, INTOXICATION

Ig Nobel Achievements distilled into limerick form

by Martin Eiger, Improbable Research Limerick Laureate

The Ig Nobel Prizes honor achievements that first make people laugh, then make them think. For details of all the Ig Nobel Prize-winning achievements, see each year's special Ig Nobel issue of the magazine, and also see www.improbable.com/ig/winners.

2013 Biology/Astronomy Prize

Marie Dacke, Emily Baird, Marcus Byrne, Clarke Scholtz, and Eric Warrant, for discovering that when dung beetles get lost, they can navigate home by looking at the Milky Way.

WITH MY FANCY, BRAND NEW GPS,
I FIND MY WAY HOME EVEN LESS.
IF I LOOKED AT THE SKY,
LIKE THE DUNG BEETLE, I
WOULD LIKELY HAVE GREATER SUCCESS.

2013 Probability Prize

Bert Tolkamp, Marie Haskell, Fritha Langford, David Roberts, and Colin Morgan, for making two related discoveries: that the longer a cow has been lying down, the more likely that cow will soon stand up; and that once a cow stands up, you cannot easily predict how soon that cow will lie down again.

THE PASSAGE OF TIME UPS THE RATE
AT WHICH LYING-DOWN COWS CHANGE
THEIR STATE.
BUT CAN WE TELL WHEN
THEY'LL LIE DOWN AGAIN?
WE CAN'T, SO WE'LL JUST HAVE TO WAIT.

2013 Psychology Prize

Laurent Bègue, Brad Bushman, Oulmann Zerhouni, Baptiste Subra, and Medhi Ourabah, for confirming, by experiment, that people who think they are drunk also think they are attractive.

THE TIME USED TO BE WHEN I THUNK,
IN TERMS OF MY LOOKS, THAT I STUNK.
BUT THOSE DAYS HAVE PASSED.
I'M ATTRACTIVE AT LAST,
NOW THAT I THINK THAT I'M DRUNK.

AIR Teachers' Guide

Three out of five teachers agree: curiosity is a dangerous thing, especially in students. If you are one of the other two teachers, *AIR* and *mini-AIR* can be powerful tools. Choose your favorite *hAIR*-raising article and give copies to your students. The approach is simple. The scientist thinks that he (or she, or whatever), of all people, has discovered something about how the universe behaves. So:

- Is this scientist right—and what does “right” mean, anyway?
- Can you think of even one different explanation that works as well or better?
- Did the test really, really, truly, unquestionably, completely test what the author thought he was testing?
- Is the scientist ruthlessly honest with himself about how well his idea explains everything, or could he be suffering from wishful thinking?
- Some people might say this is foolish. Should you take their word for it?
- Other people might say this is absolutely correct and important. Should you take their word for it?



*Kids are naturally good scientists.
Help them stay that way.*