**Article of the Week: “**Did Somebody Smell a Rat?” By Dave Berry

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1. Show evidence of close reading. Mark up text with questions and/or comments. Annotate text.
2. Answer multiple choice and short answer questions.

**Part 1:** Matching

“Did Somebody Smell a Rat?”By Dave Barry

So we found out our house had rats. This surprised me. I always thought rats mainly hung out in gritty urban neighborhoods, and we live in Coral Gables, a grit-free community that keeps property values up by making pretty much everything illegal. You get fined for painting your house a non-approved color; if you left a tire in your yard, you’d get the death penalty. That’s how serious they are about property values in the Gables. So I just assumed it wasn’t zoned for rats.

But they’re there. The way we found out is that one of them — let’s call him Stu — died in the bowels of our house. My wife smelled Stu immediately. Like many women, she has supernatural powers of smell; she can detect a single molecule of rancid milk at a range of 1,000 yards. I, on the other hand, never smell anything. I routinely eat foods that expired during the Civil War. And even I could smell Stu. It was disgusting. It reminded me of college, when I shared a dorm room with Bob Stern, and we did our laundry basically every other Christmas.

Naturally it was my job, as Man of the House, to deal with the smell. Fortunately I’ve been a homeowner for a long time, and without tooting my own horn of masculinity, I will say that I have developed a fair amount of expertise. So I knew exactly what to do about Stu, which is the same thing I do about all other household problems; namely, call a man with a truck.

Specifically I called a guy named Robert, who came over in his truck and confirmed, after approximately five seconds of nasal investigation, that there was indeed a dead rat somewhere. This was followed by two days of pounding by men armed with tools, at the end of which Stu was (a) still dead, and (b) still somewhere in the bowels of our house. Robert told us, regretfully, that Stu had chosen to kick the bucket in a particularly inaccessible and structurally critical bowel. He said our options were:

1. Wait a week, which is how long it would take for Stu to dissolve and the smell to go away, or

2. Pretty much tear down the house.

My wife was all for tearing down the house and, if necessary, setting it on fire, but I talked her into waiting it out. I have to say she handled it well, except for never going for more than 45 seconds, day or night, without pointing out that she could still smell the dead rat.

Meanwhile I was addressing the issue of whether there were any more rats in our house. The approach I took here, as you may have guessed, was to call another man with a truck. This particular man is named Jeff, and his truck has tiger stripes painted on it, because he’s a specialist in the removal of pesky animals, up to and including snakes.

Jeff is a competent, can-do kind of pest remover. Do you remember the movie *Alien*, in which Sigourney Weaver and her supporting cast are chased around a spaceship by a hideous predatory alien creature the size of a steam shovel? If Sigourney had called Jeff, he’d have poked around the spaceship with his flashlight for a while, then set a large trap baited with peanut butter, or possibly a member of the supporting cast. A half-hour later the movie would end happily, Jeff carting the alien carcass away in his striped spaceship.

So anyway, Jeff, who found a minor infestation, caught three more rats in our house. Fortunately, they were all in the attic. Jeff told me that rats sometimes get into the plumbing and show up in people’s toilets. If that happened to us, my wife would never go to the bathroom again. On another note, Jeff really has a crappy job.

It was during this period that we found out that we had termites. This means we had to endure still more pounding, plus of course men in trucks had to come and fill our house with deadly poison gas. I considered simply remaining in the house with the gas and the termites and the wood rot and the dissolving corpse of Stu, to put myself out of the misery of continued home ownership. But of course that would be morally wrong, as well as a violation of Coral Gables law.

Anyway, at the moment we are pest-free, as far as I know, unless you count the vast menagerie of cockroaches, mosquitoes, lizards, toads, snakes, etc., that infest every square inch of our tropical paradise.

1. “So anyway, Jeff, who found a *minor* infestation, caught three more rats in our house” uses a(n)
2. Pun
3. Euphemism
4. Oxymoron
5. “Robert told us, regretfully, that Stu had chosen to kick the bucket…” uses a(n)
   1. Synecdoche
   2. Euphemism
   3. Oxymoron

3. Barry chooses to fix the problem by calling “a man with a truck.” He is using

1. Synecdoche
2. Allusion
3. Oxymoron

4. “On another note, Jeff really has a crappy job” uses a(n)

1. Pun
2. Euphemism
3. Oxymoron

5. The story uses an allusion to the movie *Alien* to emphasize that:

* 1. The rats are like aliens that will attack the narrator and his family
  2. Jeff is very good at his job of exterminating rats and other pests
  3. Escape from the rats is hopeless

6. What **two lines** best support your answer to number 6?

* 1. Sigourney Weaver and her supporting cast are chased around a spaceship by a hideous predatory alien
  2. A half-hour later the movie would end happily, Jeff carting the alien carcass away in his striped spaceship.
  3. He’d have poked around the spaceship with his flashlight for a while…
  4. Jeff is a competent, can-do kind of pest remover.
  5. Jeff told me that rats sometimes get into the plumbing and show up in people’s toilets.

7. Dave Barry uses a humorous *tone* to describe a specific problem. On the lines below, write two

pieces of direct evidence you would use to support Barry’s use of a humorous *tone*.

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