Trick Question or Stupid Question?

April 25, 2021
Trick Question or Stupid Question?

1. I will project a set of questions.
2. You will, in a small group, try to figure out answers.
3. I will then give the answers.
4. When I do, for each question, we will vote:
   ▶ Trick Question
   ▶ Stupid Question
5. We will do this several times—there will be FIVE SETS of questions.
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Trick Question or Stupid Question? PART I

1. What is the least common birthday in America?
2. What US state has the easternmost point in America?
3. What is the least common first names for a U.S. President as of 2021?
4. A bird’s stomach can hold ten worms. How many worms can a bird eat on an empty stomach?
Answer to PART I, Q1

What is the least common birthday in America?
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What is the least common birthday in America?

**CORRECT ANS** Feb 29.
Answer to PART I, Q1

What is the least common birthday in America?

**CORRECT ANS** Feb 29.

**VOTE** Trick or Stupid?
What is the least common birthday in America?

**CORRECT ANS** Feb 29.

**VOTE** Trick or Stupid?

**MISC** Second Least: Dec 25.
What is the least common birthday in America?

**CORRECT ANS** Feb 29.

**VOTE** Trick or Stupid?

**MISC** Second Least: Dec 25.

**MISC** Most common: Sept 16. 9 months after Holiday Season.
What US state has the easternmost point in America?
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**COMMON ANS** Maine (Quoddy Head Maine).

**CORRECT ANS** Alaska (Cape Wrangell Alaska). The Prime Meridian is just east of Alaska’s Islands so the easternmost point in America is in Alaska.

**VOTE** Trick or Stupid?

My Opinion

Who cares where some stupid line is. I STILL say MAINE!
What US state has the easternmost point in America?

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What is the least common first name for a U.S. President as of 2021?
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**CORRECT ANS** All of the names that no president had are tied.
What is the least common first name for a U.S. President as of 2021?


**CORRECT ANS** All of the names that no president had are tied.

**VOTE** Trick or Stupid?
What is the least common first name for a U.S. President as of 2021?


**CORRECT ANS** All of the names that no president had are tied.

**VOTE** Trick or Stupid?

**Prez Trivia** On Next Slide.
1. Tom, Dick, and Harry, the proverbial common names, only appear once each for presidents.

2. Most common first name, take a guess. 6 James: Madison, Monroe, Polk, Buchanan, Garfield, Carter.

3. The only president sworn in by his nickname is James Carter who was sworn in as Jimmy.

4. If Jeb Bush was president, he would be the second. His real first name is John.

5. Joe Biden was sworn in as Joseph Biden. He should have been sworn in as Joe Biden, though if he had the Reps may have tried to say it was invalid.

6. When I am sworn in as president, I will be sworn in as Bill instead of William.

7. I look forward to a second Lincoln presidency when Lincoln Doney runs in 2040.
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A bird’s stomach can hold 10 worms. How many worms can a bird eat on an empty stomach?
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**COMMON ANS** 10 worms.
A bird’s stomach can hold 10 worms. How many worms can a bird eat on an empty stomach?

**COMMON ANS** 10 worms.

**CORRECT ANS** Once the bird eats one worm the birds stomach is no longer empty.
A bird’s stomach can hold 10 worms. How many worms can a bird eat on an empty stomach?

**COMMON ANSWER** 10 worms.

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**VOTE** Trick or Stupid?
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**COMMON ANS** 10 worms.

**CORRECT ANS** Once the bird eats one worm the bird’s stomach is no longer empty.

**VOTE** Trick or Stupid?

**OBJECTION** Once the bird eats $\epsilon$ of the worm his stomach is no longer empty. So the question may be ill defined.
1. An expert on tracking animals notices one day that there are bear tracks and rabbit tracks converging. He can estimate that they met at 6:00PM with a margin of error of 17 seconds. Hence they must have been there at the same time. He also notices that from the spot they met only rabbit tracks can be seen leaving that point. There are some bear bones in the area. **HOW CAN A RABBIT EAT A BEAR FOR DINNER?**

2. The following quote is from the back of a book that I dusted off and took off my shelf recently: **FORTRAN is one of the oldest high-level languages and remains the premier language for writing code for science and engineering applications.** What year was the book written? If you come within five years then you get it right.
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**THE RABBIT SKIPPED BREAKFAST AND LUNCH!**
Answer to PART II, Q1

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**VOTE** Trick of Stupid?

**HISTORY** When I first saw this I thought it was hilarious, but I was young at the time.
An expert on tracking animals notices one day that there are bear tracks and rabbit tracks converging. He can estimate that they met at 6:00PM with a margin of error of 17 seconds. Hence they must have been there at the same time. He also notices that from the spot they met only rabbit tracks can seen leaving that point. There are some bear bones in the area. **HOW CAN A RABBIT EAT A BEAR FOR DINNER?**

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**COMMON ANS** Fortran has not been *the premier language for writing code for science and engineering applications* for a very long time, and you had to dust it off, so early 1970’s.
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Answer to PART II, Q2

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**VOTE** Trick or Stupid?
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**CORRECT ANS** The Book is *Modern Fortran* by Clerman and Spector, 2012. I should dust more often.

**VOTE** Trick or Stupid?

**MY 2CENTS** The back of the book is incorrect.
1. What are the next two numbers in the sequence below?

   2, 4, 6, 30, 32, 34, 36, 40, 42, 44, 46, 50, 52, 54, 56, 60, 62, 64, \ldots

2. You have 6 blue socks, 8 white socks, and 10 black socks in a drawer. You take them out of the drawer randomly, one at a time. How many do you need to take out in order to ensure that you have a pair?

3. What is the degree of \((x - a)(x - b)(x - c) \cdots (x - z)\)?
What are the next two numbers in the sequence below?

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**COMMON ANS** ???

**CORRECT ANS** The sequence is all numbers that, when written in English, do not have an e in them. Answer is 66 and 2000
Answer to PART III, Q1

What are the next two numbers in the sequence below?

2, 4, 6, 30, 32, 34, 36, 40, 42, 44, 46, 50, 52, 54, 56, 60, 62, 64, . . .

COMMON ANS  ???

CORRECT ANS  The sequence is all numbers that, when written in English, do not have an e in them. Answer is 66 and 2000

VOTE  Trick or Stupid
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**COMMON ANS** 4.

**CORRECT ANS** 2. As soon as you take two out you have a pair. The problem does not say that the socks have to be the same color.

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What is the degree of \((x - a)(x - b)(x - c) \cdots (x - z)\)?
Answer to PART III, Q3

What is the degree of \((x - a)(x - b)(x - c) \cdots (x - z)\)?

**COMMON ANS** 26.
What is the degree of \((x - a)(x - b)(x - c) \cdots (x - z)\)?

**COMMON ANS** 26.

**CORRECT ANS** 0. Note that the poly is

\[(x - a)(x - b) \cdots (x - w)(x - x)(x - y)(x - z) = 0\]
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**VOTE** Trick or Stupid?

**One comment** Very interesting trick question, brings up all kinds of issues of type safety and lack of specificity in mathematics education.
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Someone who does not like being tricked told me Degree is 26. Different types-of-variables. The ‘\(x\)’ in \((x - a)\) is of a different type then the second \(x\) in \((x - x)\).
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He would call it a stupid question.

I would call him a sore loser.
1. TRUE or FALSE:
   If the powerset of $A$ has 5 elts then $A$ is infinite.

2. The universe of discourse is the natural numbers, which we will assume does not include 0. How do you compliment the set $\{1, 3, 5, \ldots\}$?

3. What is the next letter in the following sequence?
   $W, I, T, N, L, I, T, F$
The following are two real conversations. For each one: (1) Is the examiner correct? (2) Where and when do you think this conversation took place?

**Conversation 1:**
- **Examiner:** What is the definition of a circle?
- **Student:** The set of points equidistant from a given point.
- **Examiner:** Wrong! It is the set of *all* points equidistant from a given point.

**Conversation 2:**
- **Examiner:** What is the definition of a circle?
- **Student:** It is the set of *all* points equidistant from a given point.
- **Examiner:** Wrong! You must say the distance is nonzero.
T or F: If the powerset of the set $A$ has 5 elts then $A$ is $\infty$. 

COMMON ANS F since the powerset of $A$ cannot be five. 
CORRECT ANS T vacuously.

VOTE Trick or Stupid?

COMMENTARY I did an experiment with this question. One year I put this on a Discrete Math exam as a T-F-No-Explanation-Needed. 5 years later I put this on a Discrete Math exam as T-F, if T give short proof, if F give counterexample.

Hypothesis More would get second version right.

VOTE Did more people get it right if they had to explain? Y or N?

WHAT HAPPENED People did TERRIBLE on this question both times. Even the honors section.
Answers to PART V, Q1

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**WHAT HAPPENED** People did TERRIBLE on this question both times. Even the honors section.
The universe of discourse is the natural numbers, which we will assume does not include 0. How do you compliment the set \( \{1, 3, 5, \ldots, \} \)?

**COMMON ANS**
\{2, 4, 6, \ldots, \}

**CORRECT ANS**
This question has multiple answers:
- Set, you look lovely today!
- All your elements are odd which is very cool!
- Notice that I asked compliment not complement.

VOTE
Trick or Stupid?
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**COMMON ANS** \{2, 4, 6, \ldots,\}

**CORRECT ANS**

- Set, you look lovely today!
- All your elements are odd which is very cool!
- Notice that I asked **compliment** not **complement**.

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What is the next letter in the following sequence?

W, I, T, N, L, I, T, F

Hence the answer is S.

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Trick or Stupid?

COMMENTARY
In the past I asked this as X, J, U, O, M, J, U, G
Which is a shift by 1 of the original sequence.
Nobody every got it right so I thought I would try making it easier.
What is the next letter in the following sequence?
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**CORRECT ANS** Look at the sentence
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The following are two real conversations. For each one: (1) Is the examiner correct? (2) Where and when do you think this conversation took place?

**Conversation 1:**

**Examiner:** What is the definition of a circle?

**Student:** The set of points equidistant from a given point.

**Examiner:** Wrong! It is the set of *all* points equidistant from a given point.

**Comment**

On Next Slide.
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**Comment** On Next Slide.
The following scenarios puzzle me

The USSR wanted to compete with the United States in Science. Excluding a group from becoming scientists makes this harder.

Note the argument was not they are not good enough. They did not have an argument.

In 1947 Jackie Robinson was the 1st black ML baseball player. He was very good. Some of his own teammates did not want him there. I would like them to fill in the following sentence.

On the one hand, if he plays with us, we may win the pennant and the World Series and get extra money (in those days this could double a players salary). On the other hand ???. Some fans would rather lose without him then win with him.

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My Point

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The academic in me is thinking
This would be a good topic for a History PhD