

Thank you to everyone who solved the puzzles at NotACon! This is the set of solutions for the puzzles, so let's put a big **SPOILER ALERT** right here before a page break. If you still want to solve the puzzles, don't look at these solutions!

## 1. ENTRANCE EXAM

This puzzle featured 14 paragraphs of “exam problems”, which are all pretty much nonsense technobabble. Taking the first letters of each sentence in order spells out DIVIDE WORD COUNT BY THE ACIDITY. The “acidity” in question is the number of ph’s in each paragraph, some in words (anaphylaxis), and some obscured by spaces or punctuation (top has, deep-held).

This instruction indicates that one should count the number of words in each question, and divide that by the number of ph’s. Let’s do the first question as an example:

*“Derive the optimal enthalpy of anaphylaxis for an inorganic solution, assuming the cylindrical vessel containing the solution rests on an oblate spheroid of infinite radius. Indicate your assumptions and directly explicate the morphology of your answer”* has 36 words and 3 ph’s (anaphylaxis, spheroid, morphology), and  $36/3 = 12$ .

Repeating this process for all 14 questions gives the numbers 12 5 20 20 5 18 16 18 9 15 18 20 15 10. Using A=1, B=2, C=3, etc, this becomes LETTER PRIOR TO J.

There are precisely five J’s in the puzzle, in questions 2, 6, 7, 10, and 13. Taking the letters prior to J in each of these questions gives the word EVERY, the solution to the puzzle.

## 2. CONNECTING THE DOTS

The first step in this puzzle is to identify all the images in both columns. They are:

|         |        |
|---------|--------|
| Ear     | Curie  |
| Euro    | Don    |
| Eye     | Idiom  |
| Heel    | Knees  |
| Knight  | Liam   |
| Manga   | Naan   |
| Murr    | PM     |
| Ray     | Ten    |
| Tongues | Trojan |
| Z       | Urn    |

One way to resolve any ambiguities (Marie or Curie or Marie Curie) is to notice that the images in each column are in alphabetical order.

The next step is to figure out how to connect each image on the left with one on the right. The trick is to notice that they can be paired to form the phonetic names of chemical elements (e.g. Heel + Liam = HELIUM). Connecting the associated dots gives a line that intersects two letters in the middle. The full list of elements and the letters they intersect is (ordered by the left column):

|         |        |           |    |
|---------|--------|-----------|----|
| Ear     | Idiom  | Iridium   | RD |
| Euro    | PM     | Europium  | EN |
| Eye     | Urn    | Iron      | EL |
| Heel    | Liam   | Helium    | LE |
| Knight  | Trojan | Nitrogen  | EL |
| Manga   | Knees  | Manganese | OO |
| Murr    | Curie  | Mercury   | IN |
| Ray     | Don    | Radon     | AL |
| Tongues | Ten    | Tungsten  | TO |
| Z       | Naan   | Xenon     | EM |

The final step is to order the elements by atomic number, which yields the message LEELOO ELEMENT ORDINAL, so the answer to the puzzle is FIFTH.

### 3. SAGE ADVICE

Each string of characters is a group of words that have been altered by a give rule, different for each grouping. To solve the puzzle, you need to decode the string, find the rule, take the answer suggested by the decoded string, and re-encode it. These are as follows:

| String   | Decoded string  | Rule  | Answer  | Encoded answer |
|--|---|---|---------|----------------|
| GRUGIARLGUAGAM<br>OLREGOMPONENR<br>T   | CRUCIAL<br>GUACAMOLE<br>COMPONENT   | Insert R at penultimate position, replace C with G      | AVOCADO | AVOGADRO       |
| IEHABITANTSLEEO<br>ELEEBEACKLEERE<br>CKLEECETYLEEEOE<br>LEESEOVETOPLEE<br>PERTSLEE                 | INHABITANTS<br>OF BLACK<br>ROCK CITY<br>OR<br>STOVETOP<br>PARTS   | Replace second letter with E, append LEE                | BURNERS | BERNERS-LEE    |
| FORTYWEBLIKETHI<br>RTYDOILYFIFTEEN<br>FABRIC   | WEBLIKE<br>DOILY FABRIC   | Prepend tennis score                                    | LACE    | LOVELACE       |
| PPETRIDPISHSPUB<br>STRATEMPADEFPR<br>OMAPLGAE  | PETRI DISH<br>SUBSTRATE<br>MADE FROM<br>ALGAE   | Insert P as second letter                               | AGAR    | APGAR          |
| FORMEROFSPREAK<br>EROSOFOOTHEOT<br>HOUSEOHGINGRIC<br>HOG   | FORMER<br>SPEAKER OF<br>THE HOUSE<br>GINGRICH   | Append O, then duplicate first letter and place at end. | NEWT    | NEWTON         |
| KOBIMUGKELIBATE<br>EGV   | GUMBO<br>VEGETABLE  | reverse & put K-I around first two letters              | OKRA    | KARIKO         |
| TYCOMPANTEONC<br>TNKNOWTSATETH<br>OTOKYTSTELECOM<br>MUNICATIIONTDANT<br>ENGINEERINTNCO<br>RPORATIO | COMPANY<br>ONCE KNOWN<br>AS THE<br>TOKYO<br>TELECOMMU<br>NICATIONS<br>AND<br>ENGINEERING<br>CORPORATIO<br>N | Move last letter to front, prepend T                    | SONY    | TYSON          |

|  |   |   |           |          |
|--|---|---|-----------|----------|
| MAUTICALSERMEO<br>RSHEKEFTRIDENFZ<br>UESSEL        | NAUTICAL<br>TERM FOR<br>THE LEFT<br>SIDE OF A<br>VESSEL           | Move first letter back one<br>place in the alphabet | PORT      | OORT     |
| ELMICHAEYKINSLE<br>DCREATISTHNEON<br>LINEMAGAZI    | MICHAEL<br>KINSLEY<br>CREATED<br>THIS ONLINE<br>MAGAZINE          | Move last two letters to<br>front                   | SLATE     | TESLA    |
| TOOPPLRUSEPPDR<br>TPPORBREAPPKRU<br>PPRSOIPPLR     | TOOL USED<br>TO BREAK UP<br>SOIL                                  | put PP-R around<br>penultimate letter               | HOE       | HOPPER   |
| WASTÖTETZWEIVÖ<br>GEL                              | WHAT KILLS<br>TWO BIRDS<br>(WAS TÖTET<br>ZWEI VÖGEL)              | Translate into German                               | ONE STONE | EINSTEIN |
| IEMMMSSINGGFOM<br>MTISLSTTWOOWE<br>REEWENWYHW<br>W | ITEM MISSING<br>FROM THIS<br>LIST WHO<br>WHERE<br>WHEN WHY<br>HOW | Delete second letter,<br>double last letter         | WHAT      | WATT     |
| IENVYGISLOTHGIO<br>RGIPRIDEG                       | ENVY SLOTH<br>OR PRIDE  | Prepend I, append G                                 | SIN       | ISING    |
| TYPENOFNPROSEN<br>EPICNORIGINATING<br>NINNICELANDN | TYPE OF<br>PROSE EPIC<br>ORIGINATING<br>IN ICELAND                | Add N to each word                                  | SAGA      | SAGAN    |
| UHTENNISYTIGHTE<br>NYOusetwobeeu<br>HHUGHESTINWAT  | A TENNESSEE<br>TITAN USED<br>TO BE A<br>HOUSTON<br>WHAT           | Change words or syllables<br>into homophones        | OILER     | EULER    |

Notice that all the re-encoded answers are famous scientists. The first letter of each of these, in page order, gives the phrase A BLANK TO THE WISE, so the answer to the puzzle is WORD.

#### 4. UNIVERSAL CONSTANT

First, one needs to find the things clued by the phrases at the top of the page. Those are:

Instrument primarily played by the Beatle supposedly dead in 1966

BASS GUITAR

Assassin who conspiratorially said "The doctors killed Garfield—I just shot him"

CHARLES GUILTEAU

Narrative principle that says a loaded weapon introduced in a plot must go off (and which is violated in the purported author's very own *The Cherry Orchard*)

CHEKHOV'S GUN

At the coronation of King Charles, 78-year-old Welsh composer Karl Jenkins was accused of being Megan Markle in this

DISGUISE

Wizard of Oz female lead (rumored to have been drugged during filming), at birth

FRANCES GUMM

Low-mpg vehicle, colloquially (a tax on which was suspected to be hidden in the Affordable Care Act)

GAS GUZZLER

Despite Western European claims, he didn't actually create the world's first printed book

JOHANNES GUTENBERG

Title held by Michelle Cohn

MISS GUATEMALA

Union that is joined with the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists

SCREEN ACTOR'S GUILD

Symptom of PTSD experienced by those who lived through a disaster when others did not

SURVIVOR'S GUILT

Vatican armed force commanded by Alois Estermann (whose murder is the subject of conspiracy theories)

SWISS GUARD

The crucial thing to notice here is that all these answers have the string SGU in them. Putting these in the blanks so that SGU occurs at the SGU logo and then reading the gray squares gives the answer UNBELIEVERS.

## 5. CIRCULAR REASONING

The answers to the clues are as follows:

- A. RATIONALIST
- B. QUESTIONER
- C. DOUBTING THOMAS
- D. DEBUNKER
- E. CYNIC

- 1. SMERSH
- 2. MASHES
- 3. SMITHS
- 4. SHIISM
- 5. MOISES
- 6. MESSIN
- 7. ASSUME
- 8. MUSSEL
- 9. SIESTA
- 10. ASSETS
- 11. STATUS
- 12. SQUATS
- 13. AMUSES
- 14. SESAME
- 15. ESSAYS
- 16. YEASTS
- 17. STALIN
- 18. TALONS
- 19. SUNTAN
- 20. AUSTEN
- 21. STONER
- 22. DOESN' T
- 23. ON-SITE
- 24. UNITES
- 25. BIRTHS
- 26. T-SHIRT
- 27. TIGRIS
- 28. STRING
- 29. PIGSTY
- 30. TYPIST
- 31. ASHPIT
- 32. PATOIS
- 33. FOLSOM
- 34. LOOFAS
- 35. FLOSSY

- 36. FLOYDS
- 37. SOFTEE
- 38. BEST OF
- 39. USE FOR
- 40. FRESNO
- 41. KOSHER
- 42. HEROES
- 43. POSHER
- 44. CHEOPS
- 45. OSPREY
- 46. PERSON
- 47. SOPHIE
- 48. EPOCHS

To enter these into the grid, the trick is to start from the outer ring and work your way inward, mixing up the letters in each word so that the larger spaces contain the letters common to the relevant words. (In other words, anagram the answers so you get the right overlaps.) The completed grid is shown here:

**NOT A CONSPIRACY!**  
**S. CIRCULAR REASONING**  
*When your brain is going in circles, even the most straightforward thoughts end up scrambled.*

**Outer Ring**

- A. Skeptic like Descartes or Spinoza
- B. Skeptic or press conference participant
- C. Skeptic in the Bible (2 wds.)
- D. Skeptic like James Randi
- E. Skeptic who is pessimistic

**Spokes**

1. Soviet counter-intelligence agency also fictionalized in James Bond books
2. Pulverizes, as potatoes
3. Horseshoe makers, for short
4. Second-largest branch of Islam
5. Felipe Alou's Silver Slugger son
6. Aerosmith classic "Stop \_\_\_ Around"
7. "When you \_\_\_ you make an..."
8. Shellfish often served steamed in wine
9. Nap, in Nogales
10. Liabilities' opposites
11. Word before quo or symbol
12. Leg-building exercises
13. Brings out a smile in
14. "Open \_\_\_"
15. Written homework assignments, often
16. Fungi for bakers and brewers
17. Leader Joseph who coined the name in entry 1
18. Hawk's claws
19. Bask on the beach
20. Pride and Prejudice author
21. Cheech or Chong, famously
22. Contraction in the subtitle of Kelly Clarkson's "Stronger"
23. Adjective for training performed in the workplace (hyph.)
24. Brings together
25. Certain population statistic
26. Convention souvenir, sometimes (hyph.)
27. Euphrates's sister river
28. Kite-flyer's need
29. Slob's room, metaphorically
30. Person at a keyboard
31. Area under a fireplace grate
32. Pidgin or creole
33. Prison in a Johnny Cash song
34. Natural bath sponges (var.)
35. Stringy, like some dental care items
36. Boxers Patterson and Mayweather
37. Mister of ice cream truck fame
38. Words on a greatest hits album title (2 wds.)
39. Have no \_\_\_ (dislike) (2 wds.)
40. Largest city in California's Central Valley
41. Not tref
42. Many Marvel characters
43. More swanlike
44. Ruler entombed in the Great Pyramid
45. Fish-eating raptor
46. Part of VIP
47. Actress Turner of "Game of Thrones"
48. Geologic time periods

Reading the yellow rings clockwise, outer to inner, gives the answer MANIFESTO.



## CONSPIRACY PUZZLES

Throughout the conference, 15 minipuzzles were revealed in different formats: signs, fake sponsors, Brian's t-shirt, audio, and more. The answer to each minipuzzle corresponded to an icon on the back of the puzzle introduction sheet, indicating a famous conspiracy theory.

The full set of minipuzzles, and the associated conspiracies are as follows, in order by the icons on the back of the sheet:

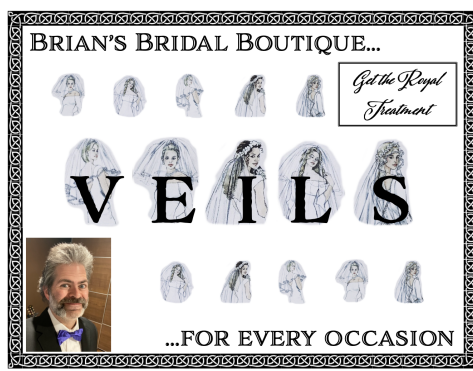
Conspiracy: Birds Aren't Real

Puzzle: message OVEQF NER QEBARF on Brian's t-shirt, worn on Saturday

Answer: BIRDS ARE DRONES (Rot-13 cipher)

Conspiracy: Elvis Is Alive

Puzzle: fake sponsor "Brian's Bridal Boutique"



Answer: ELVIS LIVES, given by rearranging the letters VEILS in the orders indicated by the images.

Conspiracy: UFOs Have Landed

Puzzle: A series of fake Novella siblings masquerading as conference attendees, shown on a loop Saturday. The siblings were named Alfie, Leonardo, Isabella, Erasmus, Norberto, Stella, Imelda, Nadine, Nandor, Maximus.

Answer: ALIENS IN NM, given by reading the first letters of each name.

Conspiracy: Paul Is Dead

Puzzle: Medley of short clips of Beatles songs, played after the live Geologic Podcast on Saturday. The songs in order are: Let it Be, I Want To Hold Your Hand, Nowhere Man, Day Tripper, All You Need Is Love, Magical Mystery Tour, When I'm 64, Eleanor Rigby, Eight Days A Week, Penny Lane, Strawberry Fields Forever

Answer: LINDA M WEEPS, from the first letter of each song

Conspiracy: Lizard People

Puzzle: Sign with numbers near registration desk reading 5-12-9-20-5-19 1-18-5

12-9-26-1-18-4-19



Answer: THE CIA DID IT, from the nautical flags

Conspiracy: 5G Vaccines

Puzzle: Hygiene sign, on entrance doors starting Saturday AM

Now **please** wash your **hands**.  
Now **please wash your** hands.  
Now **please** wash **your** hands.  
Now please **wash** your **hands**.  
Now please wash **your hands**.  
**Now** please **wash** your hands.  
Now **please** wash your **hands**.  
Now **please wash your** hands.  
Now please **wash your hands**.  
Now please **wash your** hands.  
Now **please** wash your **hands**.  
**Now** please **wash your** hands.  
Now please **wash** your **hands**.  
Now please **wash your hands**.

Answer: INJECTING FIVE G, found by converting to binary (plain = 0, bold = 1) and then using A=1, B=2, etc

Conspiracy: Illuminati

Puzzle: Picture of Andrea's circus performance, shown Saturday



Answer: NEW WORLD ORDER, found by reading the floor as Braille

Conspiracy: Fake Moon Landing

Puzzle: Fake Italian restaurant sponsor, shown Friday AM

## *Chef Jay's Meatball Mania*



*Try our new location in East Meatford, CT!*



*One free garlic knot with all orders over \$500!*

Answer: FILMED BY KUBRICK, found by reading meatballs & sausages as Morse Code

Conspiracy: Flat Earth

Puzzle: License plate for car, a Nissan Xterra with plate 17SFL47, read Friday

Answer: IT'S FLAT, by reading numbers as letters

Conspiracy: Treasure in Mount Rushmore

Puzzle: Bold letters in intro puzzle handout

Answer: NATIONAL TREASURE HIDDEN THERE, taking the bold letters.

Conspiracy: Chemtrails

Puzzle: List of topics to be covered next year, read by Steve during SGU taping:

Artificial Intelligence: friend or foe?

Arby sandwiches: real meat or not?

Operating room horror stories

New England: How the Patriots cheat and get away with it

Time out: Taking a break is the best way to recharge

Xi Jinping: autocrat or visionary?

Nanoseconds: Can anyone perceive time that short?

Answer: AIRBORNE TOXINS, found by using bigrams hinted at by each topic (AI RB OR NE TO XI NS)

Conspiracy: One Direction Relationship

Puzzle: Bob's Fobs ad, shown Saturday



**Bob's Fobs**

**"Need a fob?  
Flag down Bob!"**

The advertisement features a man with grey hair and a goatee, wearing a dark shirt, with his hand to his chin. To his right is a 3x5 grid of 15 clock faces. Each clock face has a unique hand position that, when read as a semaphore, spells out the words 'LOUIS LOVES HARRY'. Above the grid, the text 'Bob's Fobs' is written in a bold, black font. Below the grid, the text '"Need a fob? Flag down Bob!"' is written in a bold, black font. In the top left corner of the ad, there are two small icons: one of a fob and one of a clock.

Answer: LOUIS LOVES HARRY, found by reading clock hands as semaphore

Conspiracy: Princess Di was murdered

Puzzle: "Middle Way" sign hung up Saturday:

A LIST FOR THE DAY excerpted from

# The Skeptic's Guide to Finding the Middle Way

Sixteen Ingredients to Help You Be More  
Centered, Sensitive, and Sensible

BY JAY NOVELLA

**PERSPECTIVE**  
**KNOWLEDGE**  
**EQUILIBRIUM**  
**LORAZEPAM**  
**MEDIATION**  
**FLEXIBILITY**  
**BIOFEEDBACK**  
**QUIETNESS**  
**SYNTHESIS**  
**THEOSOPHY**  
**CHOCOLATE**  
**DISCERNMENT**  
**TREADMILL**  
**CONSENSUS**  
**INSPIRATION**  
**DESSERT**

Answer: ELIZABETH'S ORDERS, found by reading middle letters

Taking the first letters of all of these in order by the icons on the back of the instruction sheet, the answer is BE ALERT IN FINALE, which hinted at where the final part of the puzzles would be revealed.

## ENDGAME

The five answers, in order, are EVERY FIFTH WORD UNBELIEVER'S MANIFESTO. It should not have been immediately obvious what to do with this information, but at the Saturday night singalong, George and Brian performed the song "Manifesto" by the Unbelievers, which has the following lyrics:

### Manifesto by The Unbelievers

I never thought I'd join the club  
Or be the solution  
My heart beats deep inside  
I just can't state my resolution

Walk on by without detecting  
As I secretly think of you  
The winking eye inside  
Only looking at you

Like a blue jay in the wind  
I'm without a steady perch  
Will anyone see me?  
I'm beyond noticing

Taking every fifth word of this gives the phrase JOIN THE DEEP STATE BY SECRETLY WINKING AT JAY WITHOUT ANYONE NOTICING. About 20 people did this, and got a sticker from Jay with "DS" on the back. Later that night, Brian found people with these stickers and gave them the following certificates indoctrinating them into the Deep State, aka the Novella Family.

