



# Fightin' Words

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As soon as I learned he existed, I knew this language just wasn't big enough for the both of us.

Jeff Rubin, aka Punctuation Man, claims to have invented National Punctuation Day back in 2004. It now comes around every Sept. 24, and with this year's holiday this past Monday he even celebrated the advent of the first official National Punctuation Day meatloaf.

"It's cooked in the shape of punctuation marks," he says. "Can you imagine sitting down to a dinner that says, 'I can't believe this is meatloaf!' with an exclamation point?"

Punctuation Man goes into elementary schools with his Punctuation Playtime program, trying to lure unsuspecting little kids into the grammatical fold using the one trick that all old people seem to think all young people always fall for: a rap song.

"I am a question mark, what do I do?/ I'm at the end of questions like where, what or who/ Punk, punk punctuation/ Punk, punk punctuation."

Such bald-faced punctuation mockery left me with only one choice: The Angry Grammarian had to challenge Punctuation Man to a duel.

"I am the guru of punctuation," he boasts.

At least I'm not the one hiding in a blue superhero costume with a silly red cape, like this serial-comma apologist admits to doing.

"We believe if we reach the kids when they're little, they'll learn," Punctuation Man says of his plans for world domination. But he insists that prior to our conversation, he'd never considered a battalion of little punctuators, marching in lockstep while reciting the rules of semicolon usage.

"You put that vision in my head about an army of little caped punctuation crusaders marching down the street. Aw, man!"

I try to tell him that Angry Grammarian Nation is already millions strong, that he doesn't have a dog in this fight.

"I'm gonna steal them away from you. I'm gonna bribe them with little meatloafs."

Bribe them. With. Little. Meatloafs. When was the last time you saw a kid enticed by meatloaf?

Oh, this is so going to be no contest.

*Hear the entire Angry Grammarian vs. Punctuation Man battle royale super-smackdown in this week's Angry Grammarian podcast.*