

AD DUO UNUM



IN THIS ISSUE, WE HAVE A PUZZLE BY A NEW CONSTRUCTOR. Nate Worrell contacted me a few months ago with an idea for a puzzle. After a few email exchanges, we refined his original idea and came up with this puzzle, Ad Duo Unum, which is the best I could do for punning on our nation's motto.

The protruding letters along each border will spell out a word. Actually, two words. The border clues define these words, in both their one-word and two-word senses. Of two, one. The solver will have to decide which clue goes with which border, but that won't be too hard, especially because if you actually solve the puzzle, you don't actually need the border clues. But they won't hurt. And they might help.

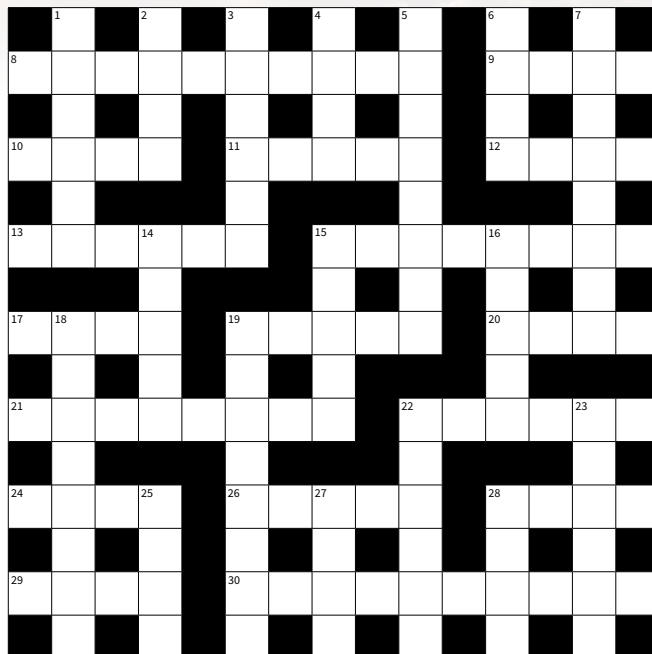
There are three proper nouns. Everything else is playable in Scrabble.

Thanks to Jerry Miccolis for test-solving and his editorial suggestions.

Across

8. Legal mess when fiancé loses head defining fidelity
9. Mail lost in the City of Fog
10. Fills tanks with spinning toys
11. Beyond the principles of Aristotelian beliefs, Olympic virtues endure
12. Bard returns uninspired
13. Rock singer rules
15. A librarian at closing consumed fiction, stirred tea and split
17. Pacific Island has zero appeal at first, leads to hotel upgrade
19. Secure a group of retail stores
20. Fat Tuesday shenanigans from one to four
21. Heaven is calling a couple of Shakers
22. Top talent discovered in notable stats
24. Dithers in stitches
26. Measure of wind speed (but not in Kansas)
28. Protagonist Homer is confused without Marge's lead
29. Painful call made by young entrepreneur initially, assuming IPO's not completed
30. Unending needs consuming pharmacy's closing and operating room backup. Page counter rep for small dispenser

TOM TOCE is an FCAS and a seasonal director at KPMG. He is a member of the Jeopardy Hall of Fame. Solutions may be emailed to ttoce@nyc.rr.com. In order to make the solver list, you should send him your solutions by Feb. 1, 2026.



Down

1. Cozy nook in natural cover
2. Beginners losing essential petitions
3. Rhode Island v. Alabama, earliest of spurious contests
4. Data connects uncertain forecast
5. Empty space as Georgia leaves delegation
6. Happy at home in Bangladesh
7. Prep for fight as Dorothy's aunt meets winged creature. Let chaos ensue
14. Travel on the fourth of January, taking a couple of danishes and some Dutch cheese
15. Sleepless? Initiating Ambien will always kill energy
16. Nascent criminal at the border is squealing
18. A California media disaster for college community
19. Pick each mixture for hummus ingredient
22. Drive in reverse to follow a beat-up bus—it's crazy!
23. Surge buffer terminals for Internet browser
25. So, I hear smuggling potassium is out of line
27. Unlimited lovers? Isn't that too many?
28. Aim for Elizabeth to help Charlie, ultimately

Border Clues

- Accomplice to one who shoots craps
- Cut off a connection to either side
- Shrink size of a prize
- Bloke who hands a cheque to a guard at The Clink

Solvers: Steve Alpert, Dean Apps, Steven Berman, Jack Brauner, Bob Campbell, Lois Cappellano, Priscilla Cho, Laura Cremerius, Jared Dashoff, Todd Dashoff, Christopher Dickens, Mick Diede, David Handelman, Jason Helbraun, Pete Hepokoski, Max Jackson, Ruth Johnson, Joe Kilroy, Paul Kolell, Mike Kosciuk, Ken Kudrak, George Levine, Tim Luker, Ben Lynch, Michael Manos, Mathew Marchione and Marika Brown, Dave McGarry, Jon Michelson, Jim Muza, David and Corinne Promislow, Alan Putney, Ram Raman, Chase Rawlins, Danny Rhodes, Jay Ripps, Bill Scott, Andrew Shewan, Bob and Shannon Schriver, Sally Smith, Zig Swistunowicz, Tim Tebbe, T. O. C. E. (Josh DenHartog and Sean Donohoe), James and Betsy Uzzell, and Bonnie Veenschoten

Solution to Previous Issue's Puzzle—Hallucinations

A lot of solvers went back and forth between the two sets of clues. I'm showing solutions only to the set I created. For some of the AI-generated ones, I can't begin to fathom the wordplay.

REGULAR CLUES

Across

1. MACHINE LEARNING
9. PERCOLATE—Anagram of “to replace”
10. APPLE—Outside of “appealing single” (and Fiona Apple)
11. PICASSO—Inside of “priapic associations”
12. THREATS—Anagram of “hatters”
13. LEO—Double definition
14. READS—Homophone of REEDS (“oboes and bassoons”)
16. NITRO—Anagram of “Intro”
17. FUSED—Anagram of “feuds”
19. ERASE—ERAS (“Swift tour”) + E (“a bit of eroticism”)
20. OAK—(S)OAK (“steep top cut off”)
21. SEMINAR—Anagram of “Remains”
23. HITTING—(F)ITTING (“after losing opener, apt”) following H (“Pittsburgh's closer”)
26. YERBA—Inside of “player badly”
27. INTERFACE—INTER (“bury”) + FACE (“Brook”)
28. EXISTENTIAL RISK

Down

1. MOP UP—MO (“Missouri”) + PUP (“dog”)
2. CURACAO—Homophone to some, nearly so to others, of CURE A SOW (“Heal a pig”)
3. ICONS—Anagram of “coins”
4. ELABORATE—Anagram of “Are oblate”
5. EVENT—EVEN (“just”) + T (“Thursday”)
6. REARRANGE—REAR (“behind”) + RANGE (“Ken”)

1	M	A	2	C	H	3	I	N	4	E	L	5	A	6	R	N	7	I	N	8	G
	O		U		C		L		V				E		M					U	
9	P	E	R	C	O	L	A	T	E				10	A	P	P	L	E			
	U		A		N		B		N				R		L				S		
11	P	I	C	A	S	S	O				12	T	H	R	E	A	T	S			
			A					R						A		N			W		
13	L	E	O					14	R	E	A	D	15	S		16	N	I	T	R	O
	I					E				T			P		G					R	
17	F	U	18	S	E	D			19	E	R	A	S	E			20	O	A	K	
	E		A			U						G					R				
21	S	E	M	I	N	A	22	R				23	H	I	T	T	I	N	G		
	T		U			D		E				E		Y		G			R		
26	Y	E	R	B	A			27	I	N	T	E	R	F	A	C	E				
	L		A			N		G			T		O		M				E		
28	E	X	I	S	T	E	N	T	I	A	L	R	I	S	K						

7. IMPLANT—Reverse word bank from “Limp lantana”
8. GUESSWORK—GUES(T)S (“attendees {not including those at the opening}”) + WORK (“performance”)
13. LIFESTYLE—Anagram of “feet flying”
14. REDUNDANT—REDUN (Anagram of “Under”) + alternate letters in “dear, not”
15. SPAGHETTI—Reversal of IT + TEHGAPS (Anagram of “the” + GAPS)
18. SAMURAI—Reversal of I (“One”) + A (“first-class”) + RUM AS
20. ORIGAMI—OR (“On the other hand”) + I + G (“ultimately bag”) + A + M (“thousand”) + I (“a little bit of ingenious”)
22. REIGN—Homophone of RAIN (“Storms”)
24. TYROL—Inside of “Pretty rollicking”
25. GREEK—G (“General”) + REEK (“stink”)