

Darts

THIS MONTH'S PUZZLE INVOLVES 20 SEVEN-LETTER WORDS, to be entered into the 20 radial sections of the dartboard diagram. The letters of each word are scrambled for entering. I have provided some guides to help you determine where within a radial section a particular letter goes.

The double ring (the thin band just inside the numbers) will spell out a four-word message of encouragement, "It's just like clockwork," clockwise, of course. The large outer band contains an appropriate twenty-letter word, "counterrevolutionary," anticlockwise. The letters from the triple ring (the thin inner band), reordered, can form the phrase: "Netflix series: Old Crap." The large inner band will spell out a four-word piece of advice, "Do some target practice," in a direction for you to determine. The outer bull's-eye contains just one letter, the same letter for all twenty radial sections. The inner bull's-eye is a wild card, a different letter for each radial section—but not twenty different letters; there is some repetition.

The twenty inner bull's-eye letters don't spell much of anything, but joining them with the triple ring's letters, you can form the phrase, "Squalid cover band fixed spare vocalizing fast," although why you would want to escapes me.

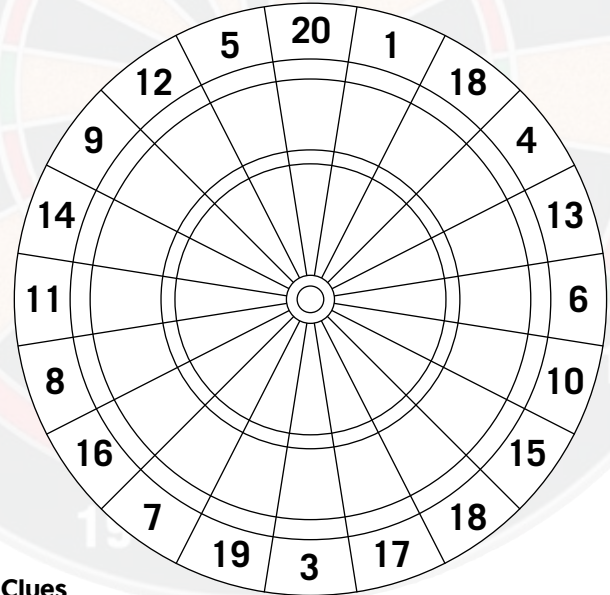
The above accounts for 120 of the 140 letters. The remaining letter of each word will replace the radial section's number outside the circle. When read in order (i.e., 1, 2, 3, etc.), these letters will spell out a pertinent five-word taunt.

As for the messages in the double ring and the two large bands, the solver will have to determine which radial sections they start in.

The first level of hints provided below gives the starting points of these three messages, as well as the direction of the large inner band's message. The second level of hints provides a complete guide to letter placement. Let me know which level you solve at.

All 26 letters are used. There are no proper nouns. All of the 20 words are playable in Scrabble. There is an unusual word in Radial Section 15. There are two other relatively unusual words, including one I've only encountered in an insurance context, so yay for that. Ignore punctuation, which is designed to confuse.

Thanks to Eric Klis, Bob Fink, and Jerry Miccolis for test-solving and editorial suggestions.



Clues

1. Stranger secures ransoms
2. Primarily, estimated life expectancy gets increasingly attenuated, causing melancholy
3. A big star suddenly, Edward casually swapped one contract for another
4. Virtue can be manipulated anytime
5. Tops of some dresses made out of blue-orange cubes
6. Take advantage of you till ayes are recorded
7. Quiet torment—hmm—is good for nothing
8. Diamonds turned over first give another option
9. Cut lice off dead skin
10. Food delivery without Takei's trout
11. Mad Hatter's bluffs
12. Passionate fan of rock band with a three-way joint
13. Hybrid from drone and mixed up foal
14. Show some signs of life and question an utterance of disgust by extreme elements in Esfahan
15. Loud sermon heard by fold

First-level hints

The four-word message in the double ring starts in Radial Section 9. The 20-letter word in the large outer band starts in Radial Section 5. The four-word piece of advice in the large inner band also starts in Radial Section 5 and runs clockwise.

Second-level hints

Some words use a letter more than once, in which case the band assignment shown above is not unique.

4. B-I-C-O-T-D-N
 3. N-D-O-T-I-C-B
 2. C-O-T-I-B-N-D
 1. O-C-I-N-D-T-B
 5. B-N-I-T-O-C-D
 6. N-I-O-T-D-B-C
 7. T-N-B-I-D-C-O
 8. T-C-B-D-N-I-O
 9. I-O-N-D-B-T-C
 10. O-I-D-C-T-B-N
 11. I-N-D-C-B-O-T
 12. T-C-B-O-D-I-N
 13. N-C-I-T-B-D-O
 14. B-N-I-T-D-C-O
 15. B-N-C-T-O-I-D
 16. O-C-B-T-D-I-N
 17. B-T-C-O-D-I-N
 18. O-T-I-B-C-N-D
 19. C-D-B-T-N-I-O
 20. C-T-D-I-O-N-B

N = numeric; D = double band; O = outer large band; T = triple band; I = inner large band; C = common letter for all; B = bull's-eye wildcard

16. Another try, Rene? Wally's falling short
 17. Are Leos refitted for haloes?
 18. High points to date: Republicans I turned to the left
 19. Adaptable group for Toce? Yep, maybe

20. Realized unusual need surrounding Carol's first word

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Solutions may be emailed to thomas.toce@ey.com.

In order to make the solver list, your solutions must be received by May 31, 2016.

Previous Issue's Puzzle—Penthouse

- a. GRAPE—GR (“Grain”) + APE (“bananas”)
 b. SPEAR—Anagram of “pears”
 c. GARBO—GARB (“Dress”) + O (“Circle”)
 d. NERTS—Anagram of “terns”
 e. VISIT—VI (“Six”) + SIT (“take a seat”)
 f. ZEBRA—ZE (“the pseudo-French”) + BRA (“undergarment”)
 g. FERAL—FE (“iron”) + RAL (“Ralph, but coming up short”)
 h. CHALK—Outside “choirmaster’s talk”
 i. SPLAY—Anagram of “plays”
 j. OTHER—Anagram of “Or the”
 k. ABODE—Anagram of “adobe”
 l. OPERA—OP (“some art from the Sixties”) + ERA (“generation”)
 m. REINS—Homophone of reigns (“terms of power”)
 n. PEASE—P (“Penny”) + EASE (“effortlessness”)
 o. LORRE—Referring to Peter Lorre (“Someone from Casablanca”) and ERROL (“Flynn”) reversed
 p. RELAX—RE (“a drop of golden sun,” as in the song) + LAX (“California airport”)
 q. QUOTA—Q (“Question”) + U (“unsatisfactory”) + OT (“Hebrew bible”) + A (“answer”)

- r. VAPOR—VA (“Virginia”) + POR (“porn for the most part”)
 s. SEEKS—Homophone of Sikhs (“Punjabis”)
 t. PETIT—PET (“favorite”) + IT (“the computer department”)
 u. JETER—JETE—(“Ballet move”) + R (“originally rendered”)
 v. BOATS—B (“British”) + OATS (“grain”)
 w. DENSE—Anagram of “Eden’s”
 x. COPSE—Homophone of cops (“Police”)
 y. LEECH—Hidden inside “Little echidna”
 z. EVERY—EVER + (“invariably”) + Y (“unknown”)
 aa. GRILL—GR (“Greek”) + ILL (“adversity”)
 bb. FACTS—F (“false”) + ACTS (“pretenses”)
 cc. TEPEE—Homophone of TP (“toilet paper, I hear”)
 dd. ELIDE—Anagram of “Lee, I’d”
 ee. WHERE—Homophone of wear (“attire”)
 ff. SMELT—Double definition
 gg. ERASE—ERSE (“Irish”) around A
 hh. HEMPS—HEM (“the border”) + PS (“by the way”)
 ii. OBESE—OB (“one delivering”) + ESE (“from San Francisco to Miami”)

- jj. DEBRA—DEB (“young society woman”) + RA (“rather adroit at first”) and Debra Messing, the TV star
 kk. BADGE—BAD (“Harmful”) + GE (“conglomerate”)
 ll. ROUGE—Anagram of “rogue”
 mm. ADORE—Homophone of a door (“an opportunity”)
 nn. LEVEE—LE (“the French”) + VEE (third letter in “Riviera”)

Solvers

Solvers at the Excruciating Level:

Anthony Amodeo, Stephen Bates and Tim Buckner, Lois Cappellano, Deb Edwards, Bob Fink, Phil Gollance, Eric Klis, Paul Kolell, Tim Luker, Dave McGarry & John Murray, Jerry Miccolis, Lee Michelson, David & Corinne Promislow, Jon Turnes

Solvers using some hints (or not saying):

Accardo Family, Dean Apps, Karl Baker, Glenn Bier, Bob Buck, Bob Campbell, Laura Cremerius, Todd Dashoff, Mick Diede, Sean Donohoe and Josh DenHartog, dba T.O.C.E (The Thousand Oaks Cryptic Enthusiasts), Bruce Fuller, Rich Harder, Pete Hepokoski, Catharine Hornby, Ruth Johnson, Joe Kilroy, Ken Kudrak, Adrienne Lewis, David Lovit, Jon Michelson, Philip Morse, Jim Muza, Danny Rhodes, Bill Scott, Doug Szeper, Dave Wallman, Frank Zaret

