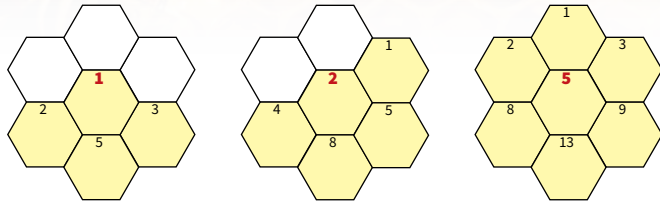


Honeycombs

THE SOLUTION DIAGRAM FOR THIS PUZZLE contains 25 “rosettes”—clusters of seven hexagon-shaped cells—plus a few extra cells on the far left and far right. Each rosette is identified by the number in its central cell. For example, rosettes #1, #2, and #5, respectively, look like the following:



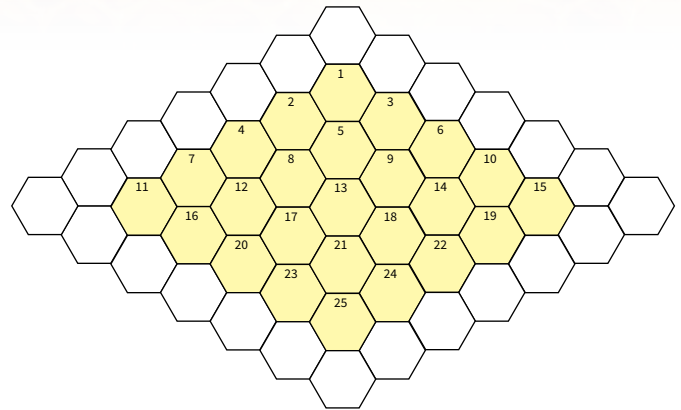
All of the clues yield seven-letter answers, which are to be scrambled before entry. When the diagram is completed, the central row (blank, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, blank) will yield a seven-letter answer pertinent to the theme. Another two-word phrase will emerge from rows 2 (blank, 2, 3, blank) and 8 (blank, 23, 24, blank).

There are eight unchecked cells, one each from rosettes 1 and 25, two each from rosettes 11 and 15, one at the far left, and one at the far right. The unchecked letters in rosette 1 (and 25) will be determined from the placement of the other six letters. The far left and far right cells will be determined by the theme entry. And the other unchecked cells in rosettes 11 and 15 spell out a common four-letter word that could describe the overall shape of the diagram, especially if you squint.

There are three proper nouns. (One wouldn't have to be but is as clued.) Everything else is playable in Scrabble. And to quote Stephen Sondheim, who brought cryptic puzzles to the United States in the 1960s, “Ignore punctuation, which is designed to confuse.”

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

1. Mule carrying some Peruvians back to mineral deposits
2. Mingler operating an old economy car
3. EU evils might be hard to pin down
4. That lady's band? They probably ran into each other during school days
5. Despicable one knighted may be called obsequious
6. They say plotless musicals can get raves and pans from the critics



7. Uncontrollable greed instilled in high school investment club that focuses on futures
8. Greece is nonbelligerent until peacetime ultimately, and it's hard to swallow
9. Pivots in two directions and lives wantonly
10. Advantages seen in junk drawers
11. Skip's heavyhearted, edgy—it can't be avoided. Or can it?
12. Snakes found in garrets? Unfortunately
13. Some middle distance runners gobble up turkey at first, then some fish
14. Woes expressed in work-song series at the Fringe
15. Doctor, after one, who can come up with a treatment?
16. “Namaste America” is all over ship
17. Wise-ass is bashing imarets
18. Pretty half of a philosophical statement of acceptance
19. A basketball player like LeBron James is so pushy
20. Make an error on your Tinder profile and go out with Mr. Wrong?
21. Unfortunately Tim, Ian's pagan
22. Knotty entanglement, in more ways than one
23. Adam gets excited returning to a children's novel
24. Onanism runs rampant at chateau
25. Perhaps in name only? Yen does not exist “in name only”

Center row: _____

Rows 2 and 8: _____

Four-letter word from unchecked cells in groups 11 and 15:

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 June 1, 2026.