

Snowflakes

EACH OF THE 108 LETTERS to be entered into the diagram will be used multiple times to form 81 words. Nine are six-letter words entered in order either clockwise or counterclockwise on the exterior chambers of each of the nine snowflakes. The solver must determine the proper snowflake, the starting point, and the direction for each of these entries, aided by the knowledge that adjacent exterior chambers share a letter.

Nine more six-letter words will be entered into the interior chambers of the snowflakes. These will be scrambled for entry. The six-letter interior words can be paired with the exterior words to form the seven-letter words described below. The order of the interior letters will be determined by the nine Acrostic clues, which are of varying length.

The remaining 54 words are seven-letter words, formed by adding each of the interior letters to the six exterior letters of its snowflake and scrambling. For example, the exterior of a snowflake might be WONDER and the interior RTSUIF, a scrambled version of FRUITS. The six seven-letter words might be FROWNED (WONDER + F), DROWNER (WONDER + R), REWOUND (WONDER + U), and so on.

The first level of hints identifies the snowflakes for the exterior words. The second level matches the interior six-letter words with their snowflakes. The third level does the same for the seven-letter words. The fourth level provides the direction for each exterior word.

There are two proper nouns, one of which doesn't have to be but is as clued. Everything else is playable in Scrabble. Ignore punctuation, which is designed to confuse.

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

Exterior Clues (six letters)

- i. Disputes brute's maneuvering
- ii. Holiday wrapping is to hold fast
- iii. Presto change-o, Bill
- iv. Display a breath mint—or a candy mint—on the tongue
- v. Surprisingly, Art's in tune
- vi. Titians I removed to the team in Nashville
- vii. Felt sorry about state needing oil
- viii. Samson's workers following soldier
- ix. Denser compositions from Mailer

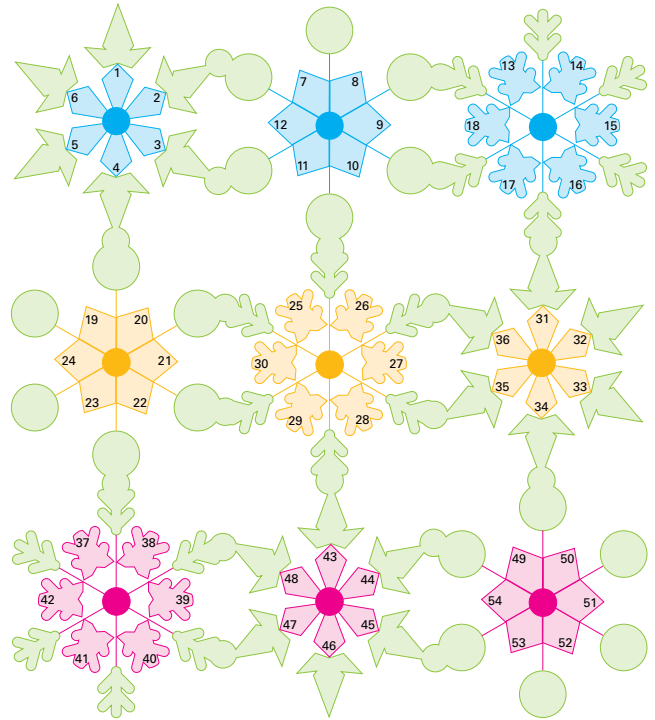
Interior Clues (six letters)

- a. Comic's bombing is universal
- b. In Scandinavia, God can part with the heart
- c. Gee, nearly perfect Vandyke

- d. Small payments to guys from Mattel
- e. In the past, Hector and Ed gang-banged
- f . Droop and writhe uncontrollably
- g. Need a return of the old-style bootlicker
- h. Like an adult male, at five I exasperate
- i. Highs without heroin for peeps

Seven-Letter Words

1. Bombast from someone with a second-rate sex drive?
2. Translates for those who can only tear things apart
3. It may be Joan taking on a big role in Hamilton, one that's very emotional
4. Grasps this way and that way at elected officials



5. Poorer, poorest, and one who goes really low
6. Places limited insurance with emergency room coverage of tracheotomies
7. True sparkling wine no good for sipping
8. Wild esparto in retreat
9. Expert retorts, "On the borders, ships out"
10. Hideous stories of bombing raids
11. Leaders of Institute to Terminate Euthanasia introduced to seniors' caretakers
12. Declaring an inhibitor good
13. Reed's in, excited by sea nymphs
14. Disrupters kiss over three times, per doctors' orders
15. More ground down by our side position
16. Cancels the excursion and takes another road?

Level 1: exterior clues
 Upper left—5, 8, 9, 25, 27, 38
 Middle center—6, 10, 11, 28, 31, 39
 Middle left—15, 16, 40, 42, 47, 50
 Upper center—17, 20, 26, 29, 34, 46
 Lower right—21, 22, 33, 41, 51, 52
 Upper right—24, 43, 48, 49, 53, 54
Level 4: exterior clues
 Upper left—deasil, upper
 center—widdershins, upper
 right—widdershins, middle left—
 widdershins, middle center—deasil,
 middle right—deasil, lower left—
 deasil, lower center—deasil, lower
 left—widdershins
 Lower center—4, 7, 12, 32, 37, 45
Level 2: interior clues
 a—middle left, b—upper left, c—
 upper center, d—middle center,
 e—lower center, f—lower right, i—
 lower left
Level 3: seven-letter words
 Lower left—1, 3, 14, 19, 30, 36
 Middle right—2, 13, 18, 23, 35, 44
 Lower center—4, 7, 12, 32, 37, 45

17. Endowments following commencement addresses
18. Flirted with radical deniers
19. Let's rub out more than one manservant
20. Passage from "Art Isn't Easy"
21. South America wearies of lampoons
22. Tessera arrangement found in theater curtains
23. Thin, snake-like Shylock
24. Male-only party accepting female element for dallying
25. Exam following golf instructor's demonstration
26. Tsarina upset with The Voice
27. Refrain from catastrophe if you can, Tom, and strike the first of August
28. Smashes into small children's vehicles
29. Glowering evident in Lonestar ingrates
30. But sire, Gaga is better proportioned
31. Obstreperously explains moves
32. Immediate interest surrounding Stan
33. Most imprudent and afflicted with the worst case of poison ivy?
34. Retsina drunk is more revolting
35. Looked with contempt as snowflake volunteered marginally

36. Kids kid from South Park
37. Force guarding station from afar
38. Journalists after a couple of beers
39. Egregiously, I stress nuns
40. Crullers tasted, incidentally, with a deposit
41. Stalls with arrowroot harvests framing
42. Nate's murderer returned holding Kit (two words)
43. California trap: choosing actors
44. Merchants of Venice potholders giving away everything between 4 and 12
45. Set up a type of low tuition at a public university
46. Keeps leashes around classroom monitor
47. Most vulgar as Red cuts loose
48. Delay over Mobile isn't permanent
49. Opposed to anti-gas treatment
50. Inhibited by a kind of inheritance, if you can believe your ears
51. Waters inundating society of prodigals
52. Tumblers' put energy into false starts
53. Gambling, you might say, "Don't move, Rex"
54. Random seating is annoying

Previous Issue's Puzzle—Transformations Solutions

This one was hard, and you'll notice that 2 out of 3 of my test solvers used the hints. Several of you took the challenge, though, and so I'm glad I can offer different levels. There were twenty-six different ways to complete the diagram, depending upon how you interpreted the transformation. As a guitar player, I tend to think of how one plays chords up the neck: first position, second position, and so on. So the across and down answers in square number 1 are "first position" and would be entered normally, COMMUTING and COZEN. Clue #27 goes in normally, too. Then clue #2 is second position, and so every letter is shifted one. L goes in as M, I goes in as J, and so forth. The most common alternative way of entering was considering each clue's number as the shift, so COMMUTING and COZEN get entered as DPNNVUJOH and DPAFO. In that case, only #26 goes in normally. You can start anywhere; the first C can be any of the letters, as long as you shift everything that follows appropriately.

Across

1. COMMUTING—Double definition
6. HAIKU—Terrible homophone of HIGH COO ("shrill, amorous talk")
9. RAJAH—First letters of "Roger and Jezebel addressed Hizzoner"
10. UNWELCOME—Anagram of "Wee column"
12. YARNED—Anagram of "any red"
13. OUTLAW—OU(R) ("our run unloaded") + TLAU ("Walt turned")
15. NAVE—Homophone of KNAVE ("Amoral man")
16. ABSURDNESS—Anagram of "burns as Ed's"
19. SCHLEPPING—SCHEDULE—EDU ("with no extension") + PPING ("stopping after three")
20. AJAR—A + JAR ("jerk")

22. REMAKE—REM ("deep sleep") + AKE ("Waken from within")
24. ASSIST—Hidden in "Gloria's sister's"
27. SHARKSKIN—SHARK'S KIN ("racketeer's family")
28. FAXES—MIXES with FA for MI ("with fourth instead of third note")
29. ELMER—Hidden in "multilevel Mercado"
30. CONSONANT—Anagram of "Cannons to"

Down

1. COZEN—Homophone of COUSIN ("close relative")
2. LIQUIDITY—Anagram of tidily around I ("one") + QU ("question")
3. SANDAL—SCANDAL ("transgression")—C ("with no contradictions at first")
4. FEARMONGER—Anagram of "Farmer gone"
5. CUBE—Double definition
7. HIRER—HER ("She objectively") around IR ("infrared")
8. SIGNBOARD—Anagram of "Bring soda"
11. KEWPIE—Homophone of QP ("Two letters")
14. SWISS CHARD—Anagram of "Cards swish"
15. NEWLYWEDS—NEEDS around first letters of "Wiseass little yellow wusses"
17. DAMNATION—Pun on DAM NATION ("land created by levees")
18. EFFORT—EFT ("Newt") around FOUR—U ("but no texting, you")
21. CLIMAX—CLIMATE with X ("unknown") replacing T ("true") and E ("error")
23. LIENS—Anagram of "lines"
25. ENVOY—Hidden in "Maiden voyage"
26. FLOG—reversal of GOLF ("Play eighteen")

Acrostic Clues

Where snowflakes stay as the center of a storm fulminates

9 18 52 37 4 27 1 31 21

Not satisfied with CD playing ten tunes endlessly

48 33 41 17 23 44 50 26 29 2

Saw hidden in surtax I omitted

10 6 36 25 20

Inconsequential trial takes up one volume

28 38 19 34 54 47 13

Scrambled egg? Or eat like a horse?

12 7 32 43 16

Spasm described by nitwit chiropractor

40 49 39 8 24 51

Sway in muumuu after a fashion

53 5 22 15

Develop bum leg

46 11 35

What magic is in Los Angeles, Kerry's missing half of it

42 14 30 45 3

Solvers at the Excruciating Level

Steve Alpert, Jack Brauner, Bates, Bost, Buckner, Liell, Schulthis & Zurhellen, Bob Fink, Phil Gollance, Adrienne Lewis, Dave McGarry, David & Corinne Promislow, Bill Scott, Jon Turnes

Solvers using some hints (or not saying)

Adam, Jina, and Michael Accardo, Anthony Amodeo, Dean Apps, Bob Campbell, Lois Cappellano, Laura Cremerius, Mick Diede, Deb Edwards, Sean Donohoe and Josh DenHartog, dba T.O.C.E (The Thousand Oaks Cryptic Enthusiasts), Sandy Gruhlke, Jason Helbraun, Pete Hepokoski, Ruth Johnson, Joe Kilroy, Eric Klis, Paul Kolell, Ken Kudrak, Charlie Linn, Jerry Miccolis, Becky Moody, John Murray, Jim Muza, Jay Ripps, Robert Rorex, Andrew Shewan, Zig Swistunowicz, Jim Wickwire

TOM TOCE is a senior manager for actuarial services with Ernst & Young in New York and is a member of the Jeopardy Hall of Fame. Solutions may be emailed to thomas.toce@ey.com. In order to make the solver list, your solutions must be received by May 31, 2017.