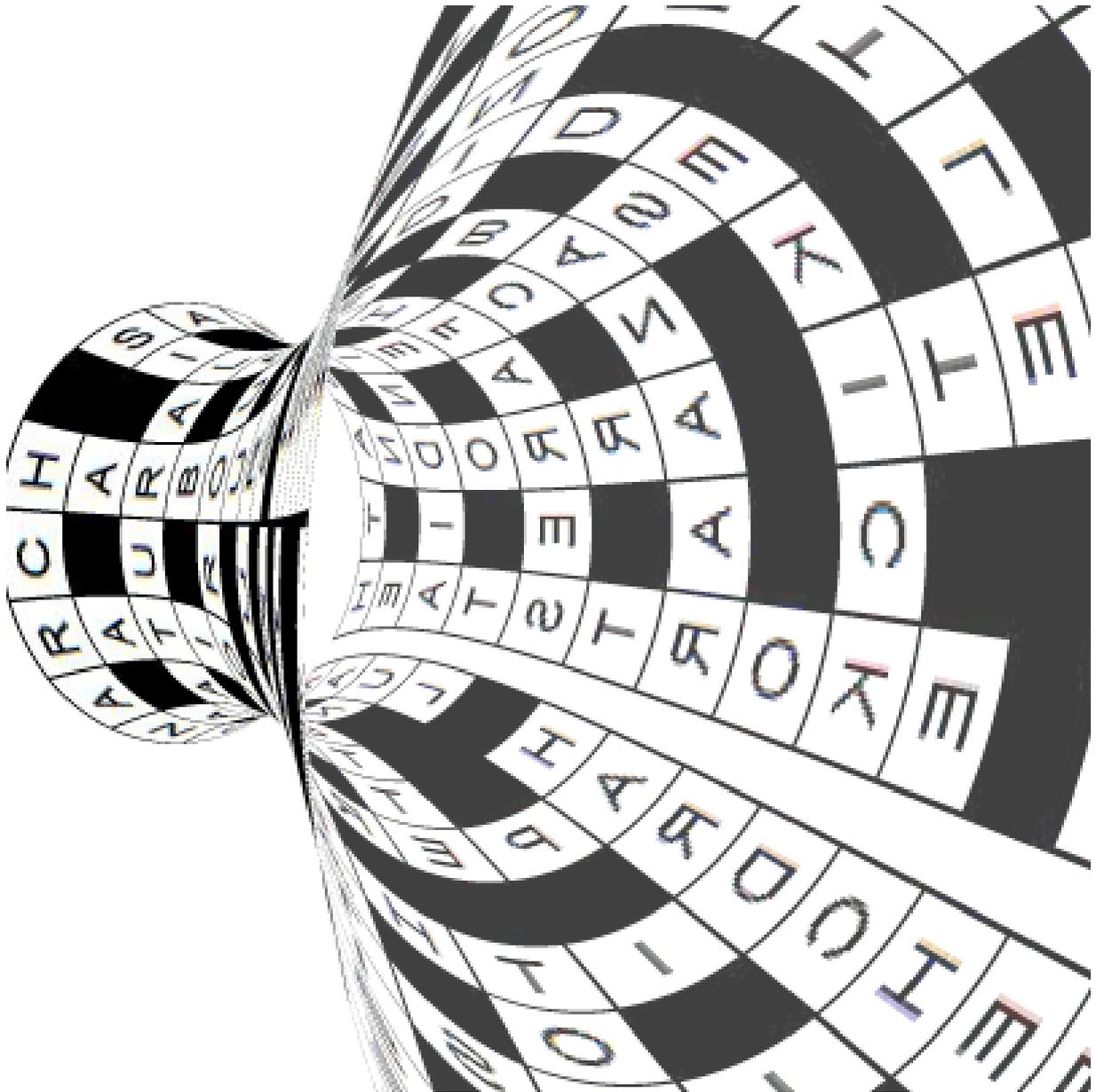


Cryptic Crosswords for Bright Sparks



A beginner's guide to cryptic crosswords for
Gifted & Talented children

Unit 2 - Words

Spotting Word Patterns

Now that you have studied how crossword grids are designed, we can start to look at what happens when the words are inserted into them. You will have noticed that crosswords are formed from a kind of lattice, in which words are arranged in a criss-cross fashion, rather like the threads in a piece of fabric. This feature of crosswords gives you a helping hand when you are solving clues, as putting an answer in will always give you a letter that occurs in any word that intersects with it. To illustrate this, take a look at this section of grid with some answers inserted:

¹ A	² C	³ R	³ O	⁴ S	⁴ S		
							⁸ E
⁹ K	I	N	D	N	E	S	S
							C
¹¹ O	P	¹² E	R	¹³ E	T	T	A
		X		J			P

As you can see, the solver has found the answers to 1 Across, 9 Across and 11 Across, but has not yet filled in 2 Down, 3 Down or 4 Down. However, each of these three answers has only five letters and the setter knows what three of them are already. This means that the solver can use his or her word knowledge to help work out what the answer might be.

Exercise 2.1

- a) Look at 2 Down. The answer is spelled C_I_P. Make a list of any words that you can think of that could possibly fit this pattern.

.....

- b) Now do the same for 3 Down (O_D_R)

.....

- c) Finally, do the same for 4 Down (S_E_T)

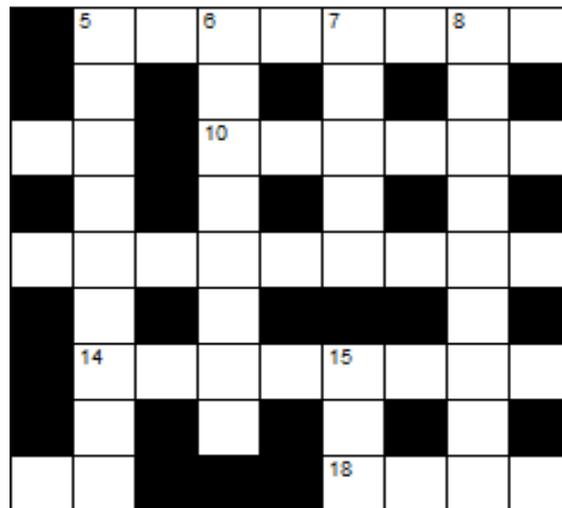
.....

.....

You probably spotted that there are a lot more possible answers for 4 Down than for the other two clues. In fact, there are even more weird and wonderful possibilities than those that I have listed in the answer key at the back of the book. However, crossword setters are (usually!) quite kind people and they tend to use words that most people would have heard of and be likely to use.

Now take another look at 2 Down, which has the pattern C_I_P. The reason why we know that the first letter is C, the middle letter is I and the last letter is P is that we already have 'ACROSS', 'KINDNESS' and 'OPERETTA' in place. The second letters from these three answers intersect with 2 Down to give us C_I_P. The letters that we don't yet know are impossible to guess just by looking at the grid. This is because they do not intersect with any of the other answers. A square that doesn't intersect with another clue is called an **unch**, which is short for 'unchecked square'.

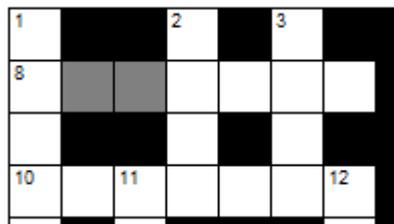
Exercise 2.2



Here's a section of another grid. Colour or shade all of the unches that you can find.

Now take a look at your shaded grid. Do you see a pattern?

You should have noticed that next to every unch there is an intersecting square. This is a tradition among setters of cryptic crosswords of this type. Occasionally, you may see two unches next to each other, like this -



- but most setters try to avoid putting too many of them in their grids, as they make it harder for the solver. Triple unches are even rarer and a setter who was to use them might struggle to get his or her puzzle published. The good news for solvers, then, is that most of the time, every other letter in a word will intersect with another word, so you can get used to seeing patterns like C_I_P appearing as you begin to solve puzzles for yourself. You can then use your word knowledge to help you work out what the answer might be.

Exercise 2.3

Here is another section of grid with some missing words. See if you can work out what the words could be when you are given a hint about the meanings.

1	H	2	A	3	W	A	4	I		5	M	O	6	L	E	7	C	U	8	L	E
										U						E		A			
9	S	T	R	E	S	S	E	D					10	G	R	A	M	M	E		
								D								S		P			
11	P	R	O	D	U	C	T	I	O	N						12	E		S		
									E							F		H			
13	14	C	O	M	15	P	O	S	E	R			16	S	P	I	R	A	L		
		B				O										R		D			
17	L		T					18	D			19	P	O	20	C	K	E	T	E	D
		I		E					E					H							
21	V		N					22	L	E	A	D	E	R	23	S	24	H	I	P	
		I		T		I							A		Y		S				
25	O		I			G				25	S	U	P	P	R	E	S	S			
		U		A		H							E		U		U				
27	I	S	O	L	A	T	E	D					28	R		P		E			

Across

- 12 (Hint: SIMPLE)
- 17 (Hint: OVERJOYED)
- 21 (Hint: COOKER)
- 25 (Hint: ELECTING)
- 28 (Hint: TORN)

Down

- 2 (Hint: SUBSEQUENTLY)
- 3 (Hint: IN FRONT OF)
- 4 (Hint: BUTTERFLIES, FOR EXAMPLE)
- 6 (Hint: FOLK TALES)
- 19 (Hint: COMMENDED)

Enumeration

Before we get on to looking at how the wording of a cryptic clue works, there is one other aspect of the layout of crosswords in general that is worth mentioning.

Here is a simple, non-cryptic clue:

Language game in the form of a grid (9)

See that number 9 in brackets at the end? That is there to tell you that the word you are looking for has nine letters. The answer is, hopefully, fairly obvious: CROSSWORD.

The act of putting the number of letters at the end of the clue is called 'enumeration'. You may be wondering why you need enumeration if you can see the number of letters required in the grid. For example, suppose this is the grid -

1	C		2	Y		3	T		4	C	
	A			A			E				

- and this is the clue you are trying to solve:

Across

1 *Mysterious or obscure (7)*

I'm sure you can see that the answer is 'CRYPTIC' and you may therefore be thinking that you didn't need the (7) to help you.

Usually, this will be the case. However, you need to bear in mind that most crosswords contain a few answers with more than one word in them. Without the enumeration, you would not know how many words or how long each of them are. For example, here's another section of a grid:

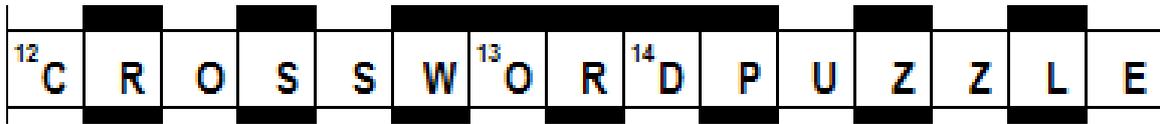
12						13		14						

At first glance, you might think that 12 Across is a 15-letter word. However, here is the clue:

Language game in the form of a grid (9,6)

There may still be fifteen letters in total in the answer, but the enumeration tells you that there are two words, the first word of which has nine letters and the second word of which has six letters. The answer is CROSSWORD PUZZLE.

NB: The space in 'CROSSWORD PUZZLE' is not included in the grid, so you would write it in as 'CROSSWORDPUZZLE', like this:

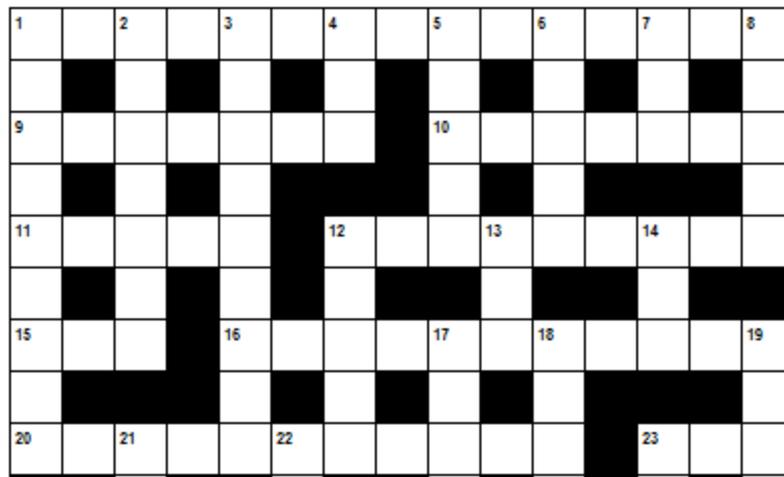


DID YOU KNOW...?

The word 'cryptic' comes from the Greek **κρυπτός** ('kruptos') which means 'hidden'. Cryptic crosswords get their name from the fact that the meaning is 'hidden' by the *word play*, in other words, the tricks that the setter has played on the solver with his or her use of words. The word 'crypt', meaning an underground chamber in a church comes from the same root. See if you can work out the link.

Exercise 2.4

Here is the top part of a grid and some of the clues that go with it. Don't worry, they aren't cryptic! Just simple definitions. See if you can fill them in, bearing in mind the enumerations given in the clues.



Across

- 1 Mythical creature from Scotland (4,4,7)
 9 More annoyed (7)
 10 Country in West Africa (7)
 11 Young person (5)
 12 An incisor or canine, maybe, that you lose in childhood (4,5)*
 15 Tool for chopping wood, perhaps (3)
 16 Random knick-knacks (4,3,4)
 20 Pride in one's own abilities (4-7)**

Down

- 1 Periods of twelve months in which there are 366 days (4,5)
 2 Waterproof jacket (7)
 3 Somebody who lives next door or nearby (9)
 4 What you might call a male teacher (3)
 5 A lesson that can be learnt from a story or experience (5)
 6 The opposite of 'day' (5)
 7 Small child (3)
 8 Stretch out an arm (5)
 12 Olympic competitors try to win one of these (5)
 13 Old-fashioned word for 'family' (3)
 14 Possess (3)

* Beware! There are two possible answers that fit with the enumeration for 12 Across. Complete one or two of the intersecting clues before putting your answer in.

** Notice the hyphen between the 4 and the 7. This is telling you that the answer is a hyphenated compound word, rather than two separate words.