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**Intro:**

My project is about crossword puzzles.

I scraped all the New York Times crossword puzzle clues and answers from the last fiveyears, but I’ve done the crossword manually almost every day for the past eight years, so I’ve actually clued in way more puzzles over my lifetime than I was able to scrape this past week.

I think there’s a myth about crosswords, which is that being good at crosswords is about knowing a lot of trivia, and it just couldn’t be further from the truth. Sometimes a constructor will put an obscure word in there just to get all the clues to fit, but if you put too much trivia in your crossword puzzle, Will Shortz will not print it.

A good NYT crossword consists of two important elements:

* clever puns
* zeitgeist-y clue-answer pairs

“zeitgeist” is a german word which means “spirit of the times”. If you examine the html code of these crosswords, the title field of every crossword puzzle is just the date. And the idea is that every crossword puzzle is supposed to be about that day, it is supposed to capture the spirit of the moment.

I don’t know how to analyze how clever the puns are, so my project was about trying to visualize and understand how the NYT crossword puzzle stays current.

One way to do this is to follow certain answers in the crossword and catalog how the clues have changed over time.

Here are some examples from the Sunday Crossword Puzzle two days ago:

New Tech Jargon: 63. Acronym for a class taught over the Internet : [MOOC](https://www.xwordinfo.com/Finder?word=MOOC)

Hip Slang: 75. Bulked up, in modern lingo : [SWOLE](https://www.xwordinfo.com/Finder?word=SWOLE)

Pop Culture References: 14. Tyrion Lannister of "Game of Thrones" and others : [IMPS](https://www.xwordinfo.com/Finder?word=IMPS)

**Conclusion:**

The NYT Crossword became a regular feature in 1950. And I used to go back in the archive and try to do puzzles from back before I was born, and I found them impossible. And I used to think, wow, I guess people were a lot smarter back then, the puzzles are so much harder. I now after this project I don’t think that’s the case. I think that the NYT Crossword is one big inside joke, and you just had to be there, and if you weren’t there for it you just don’t get it. And that’s my presentation. Thanks for listening.