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Outline

- How do cryptic crossword clues work?

- A *brief* history of cryptic crosswords

- Why they're worth studying

- How TEI encoding can help

Anatomy of a typical cryptic clue

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Anatomy of a typical cryptic clue

- A clue is a phrase or sentence which has an apparent meaning as a whole.

- One part of it constitutes a definition of the answer.

- The other part of it consists of instructions for constructing the answer.

Four card players wrapping party gifts (6)

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Four card players wrapping party gifts (6)

Constructor

Four card players wrapping party gifts (6)

Constructor

Definition

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Four card players wrapping party gifts (6)

"Four card players" = **E N W S** (East, North, West, South)

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"Four card players" = **E N W S** (East, North, West, South)

"party" = **DO** (UK informal word)

Four card players wrapping party gifts (6)

"Four card players" = **E N W S** (East, North, West, South)

"party" = **DO** (UK informal word)

"wrapping" = instruction to put one thing around the other

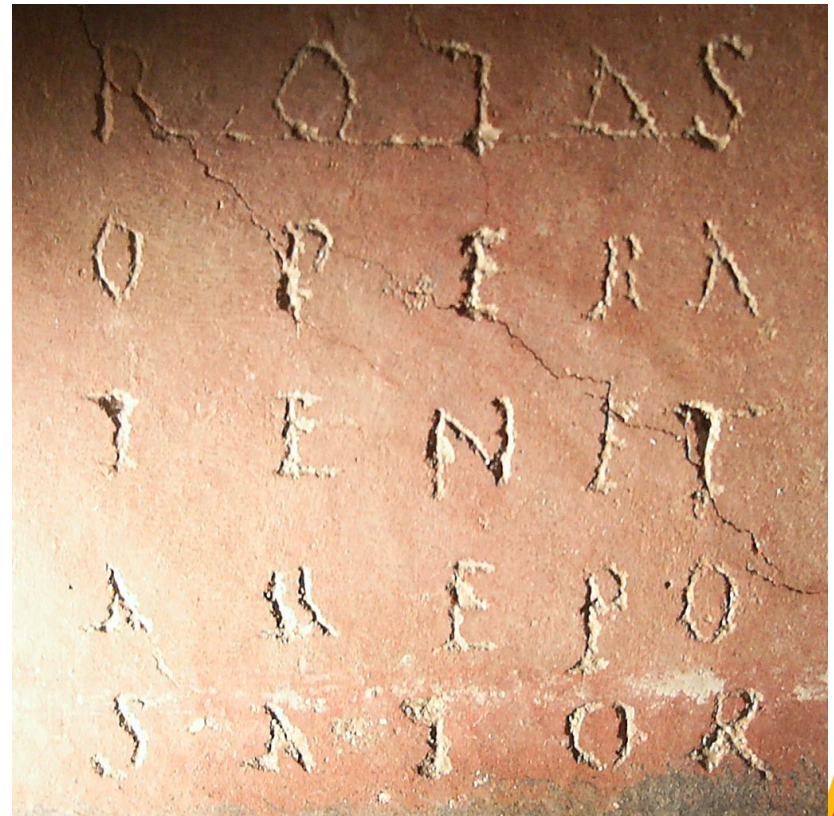**Four card players wrapping party gifts (6)**
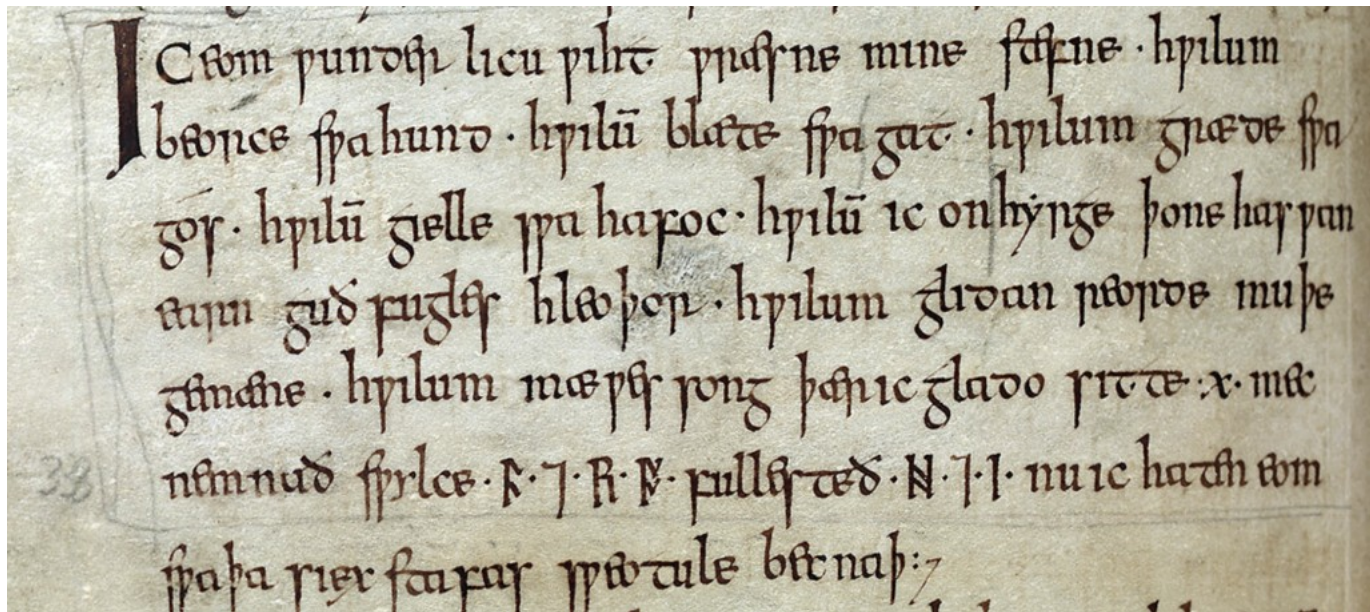
Answer:

ENDOWS

Brief history

- Word-grids go back to ancient times.

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- Riddles are among the oldest English language texts we have.

Image: https://sites.nd.edu/manuscript-studies/2017/02/17/reading-runes-in-the-exeter-book-riddles/.

FUN'S Word-Cross Puzzle.
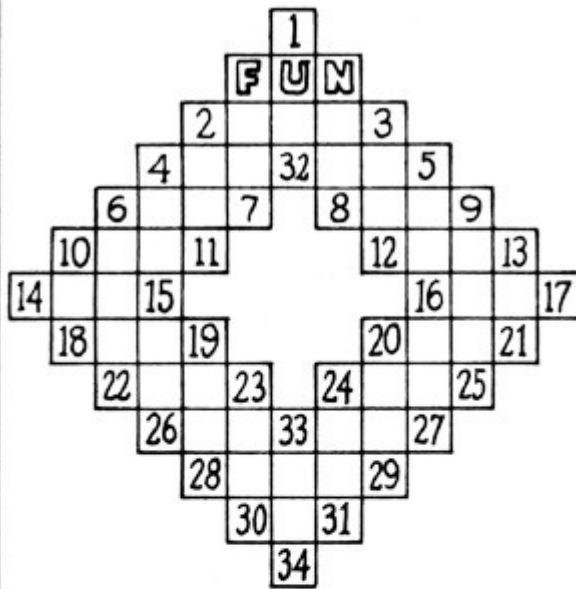
FILL in the small squares with words which agree with the following definitions:

2-3. What bargain hunters enjoy.
4-5. A written acknowledgement.
6-7. Such and nothing more.
10-11. A bird.
14-15. Opposed to less.
18-19. What this puzzle is.
22-23. An animal of prey.
26-27. The close of a day.
28-29. To elude.
30-31. The plural of is.
8-9. To cultivate.
12-13. A bar of wood or iron.
16-17. What artists learn to do.
20-21. Fastened.
24-25. Found on the seashore.
10-18. The fibre of the gomuti palm.
6-22. What we all should be.
4-26. A day dream.
2-11. A talon.
19-28. A pigeon.
F-7. Part of your head.
23-30. A river in Russia.
1-32. To govern.
33-34. An aromatic plant.
N-8. A fist.
24-31. To agree with.
3-12. Part of a ship.
20-29. One.
5-27. Exchanging.
9-25. Sunk in mud.
13-21. A boy.

- 1913: first recognizable crossword

- Author: Arthur Wynne

- Published in New York *Sunday World*

- 1925: crosswords are appearing in daily newspapers in US and UK.

- 1926: Torquemada (Edward Powys Mathers) begins using cryptic clues regularly in the *Observer*.

- 1949: Afrit (A. F. Ritchie) publishes *Armchair Crosswords*.

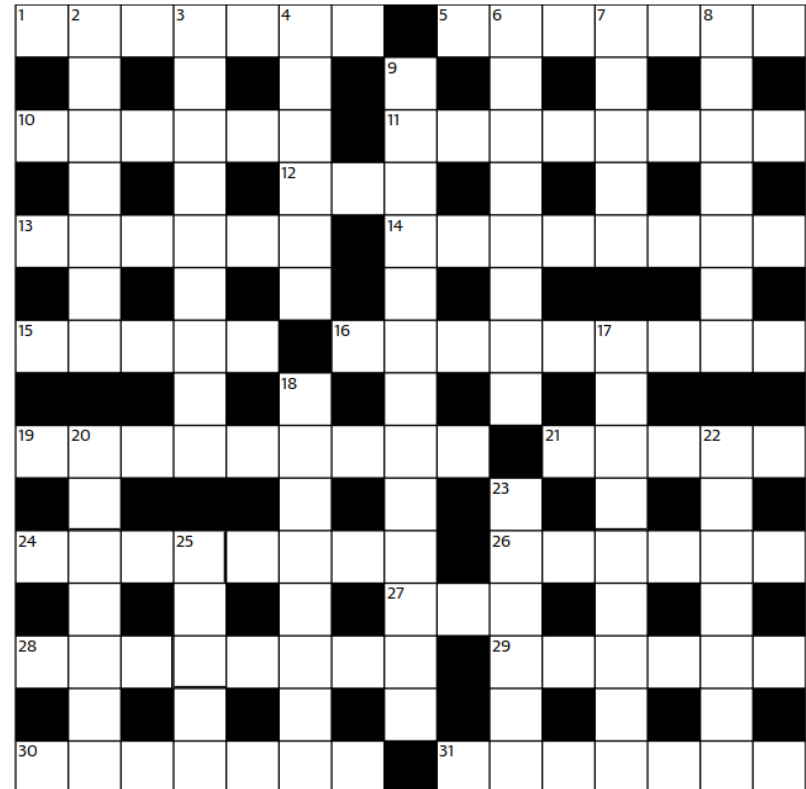- 1966: Ximenes (Derek MacNutt) publishes *Ximenes on the Art of the Crossword*.

Ximenes on the Art of the Crossword

- Ontology of clue types

- Rules and principles for fairness ("cluemanship")

- Guidance on constructing grids and clues

Grids

- 15 squares by 15 squares

- Symmetrical

- About half the "lights" should be "checked" (part of at least two words)

Why are cryptic crosswords worth studying?

- The tradition stretches back nearly a century.

- It has been very stable for over 50 years.

- These are literary artefacts.

Features of good cryptic clues

- Elegance

- Concision

- Clarity

- Precision

- Allusiveness

- Multiple layers of meaning

Myxomatosis
by Philip Larkin

Caught in the centre of a soundless field
While hot inexplicable hours go by
What trap is this? Where were its teeth concealed?
You seem to ask.

                  I make a sharp reply,
Then clean my stick. I'm glad I can't explain
Just in what jaws you were to suppurate:
Perhaps you thought things would come right again
If you could only keep quite still and wait.

Myxomatosis
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Imagined conversation

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Killing

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Guard dog kept within sight (6)

Daily Telegraph. 2002. The Daily Telegraph big book of cryptic crosswords. 9. London: Pan.

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Guard dog kept within sight (6)

Definition

Guard dog kept within sight (6)

Definition

Constructor

Guard dog kept within sight (6)

"dog" = **CUR**

Guard dog kept within sight (6)

"dog" = **CUR**

"sight" = **SEE**

Guard dog kept within sight (6)

"dog" = **CUR**

"sight" = **SEE**

"kept within" = instruction to put one thing inside the other

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Guard dog kept within sight (6)

Answer:

SECURE

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Guard dog kept within sight (6)

Overlapping hierarchy

Four card players wrapping *party* *gift*s (6)

Overlapping hierarchy

TEI encoding can be used to:

- Identify clue components

- Categorize clue and component types

- Delimit overlapping segments

- Categorize topics and themes

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Taxonomies

- Clue components:
  - Definition
  - Form (constructor)
  - Signal (word or phrase signaling e.g. anagram or insertion of one thing inside another)
  - Misdirection (such as exploitation of overlapping hierarchy)
  - Convention (well-used or fossilized instances of word-play such as "worker" = "ant" or "bee")
  - Length

Taxonomies

- Clue types:

  - Enumerates the range of types of clue

  - A single clue may have multiple values

  - Most types are initially derived from Ximenes Chapters VI and VII.

- Unknown

- Synonyms (Xim type 6.1: one or more meanings)

- Reversals (Xim type 6.2: reversal)

- Charade (Xim type 6.3: charade)

- Container and contents (Xim type 6.4: container and contents)

- Pun (Xim type 6.5: pun)

- Anagram (Xim type 6.6: anagram)

- Heads and tails (Xim type 7.1 Heads and tails)

- Speech peculiarities (Xim type 7.2 Peculiarities of speech)

- Words in words (Xim type 7.3 Words treated as parts of other words)

- Initial or final letters (Xim type 7.4 Initial or final letters)

- Foreign languages (Xim type 7.5 Foreign languages)

- Literary references (Xim type 7.6 Literary references etc.)

- Outsides (Xim type 7.7 Outsides

- Embodiment (non-Ximenean)

- Cross-reference to another clue/answer (non-Ximenean)

- & Lit. (Xim type 8 & Lit.)

- Unclassified (Xim type 7.8 Various)

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Example encoding

```
<item ana="crs:ctpWordsInWords" source="bibl:xwDt_2002">
  <anchor xml:id="item_001_1"/>
  <seg ana="crs:ccpDef">Guard</seg>
  <seg ana="crs:ccpForm">dog<anchor xml:id="item_001_2"/>
   <seg ana="crs:ccpSignal">kept within</seg> sight</seg>
  <seg ana="crs:ccpLength">(6)</seg>


  <span ana="crs:ccpMisdirection" from="#item_001_1"
    to="#item_001_2">The phrase <mentioned>guard
    dog</mentioned> crosses the definition/form
    boundary.</span>
</item>
```

Possible research approach

- Select two or three British broadsheet newspapers covering 1930 to 2017

- Randomly select one crossword from each year from each newspaper (= 88 crosswords per paper)

- Encode and analyze

Possible research questions

- How do the various clue types emerge over time?

- When do the fossilized conventions emerge?

- How similar are well-known setters to each other?

- How closely are Ximenes's principles adhered to over time?

1, 2, 3: I.e. everyone, as Porky Pig said (5,3,5)

1, 2, 3: I.e. everyone, as Bosko said (5,3,5)

Favourite clues

- Of of of of of of of of of of (10)

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- Honestly? No, otherwise (2,3,3)

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