

# **CERT**

A Puzzle Adventure

# STOP!

## How To Read This Book

**CERT** is a puzzle game book. You will need a pencil and an eraser to play through it.

Unlike normal books, in **CERT** you do not simply move from one page to the next; instead, each page has a puzzle to solve.

Page solutions are always a single word. When you think you have found the right word, look it up in the dictionary at the back of the book; if you have the right answer, the dictionary will show you the number of the page you came from, and the number of the page you should go to next.

For example, suppose you are solving a puzzle on page 6, and you have determined that the answer is “RAIN”. We look up “rain” in the dictionary and find:

**rain** <sup>(n.)</sup> Continuous precipitation, esp. of bullets. (6 > 17)

This tells us that when we answer “rain” on page 6, we should read page 17 next. If the dictionary had shown no numbers, or a different starting page number, that would mean our answer was wrong.

Additional instructions and help will sometimes appear in info boxes, like this one.

When you're ready, turn to page 4 to begin your adventure!

4 |:

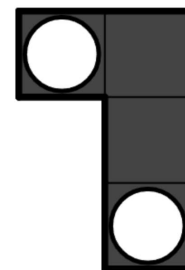
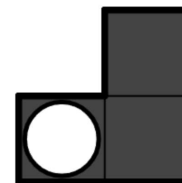


**Y**ou wake sharply, alarmed by a distant rumble shifting the pile of rough, rubbery balls that seem to be your bed. As your eyes adjust a narrow room comes into view around you; ridged metal walls packed with unidentifiable spheres, dimly lit by a small screen and keyboard at the far end.

Lying on your lap is a tray marked with letters and a few awkward, heavy metal shapes. Some kind of puzzle? It seems you will need to solve this to get out of the room.

Draw the three metal shapes in the tray above them without overlapping, mirroring or rotating them. When you're done, read the letters in the four circles to find the word you need to advance.

P	O	M
P	O	L
E	O	N



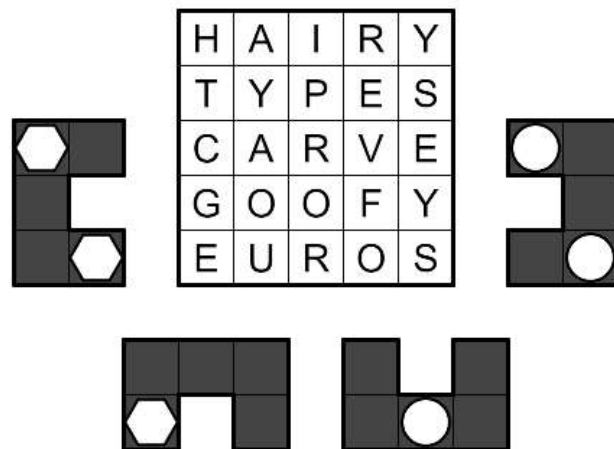
:| 5



It takes more effort than you would expect to squeeze the last piece into place on the metal tray, but as soon as you do the ship lurches forward with regained momentum! The furred creatures rumble with delight, scuttling around and under the creaking vessel.

It seems that the energy of solving these puzzles can be used for propulsion in this causeway. After a moment spent pondering how many puzzles you might need to solve to get anywhere, you realise that you can just remove and reinsert the last piece of your current puzzle as many times as needed.



Before long, though, the rising rocks get steeper and steeper, and the power of this small puzzle becomes less and less. On a nearby rock you quickly spot what you need.





**C**old air rushes in as you pull the creaking metal door open. You emerge onto the silent deck of an old steamship, and the night winds bite at your skin. You wonder briefly what sea the ship sails on, but a quick look over the side returns a quick and surprising answer: There is no water beneath you – instead the sea of stars stretches far and wide, above and below. With no respect for reason or common sense, the mighty ship sails through the endless vacuum of space.

You wonder how you are breathing.

You have found a hub! Fill in the  icon at the bottom of this page. From now on, at any time, you can go to any page with a filled  icon and start reading from there.

Continue to the next page (page 10).



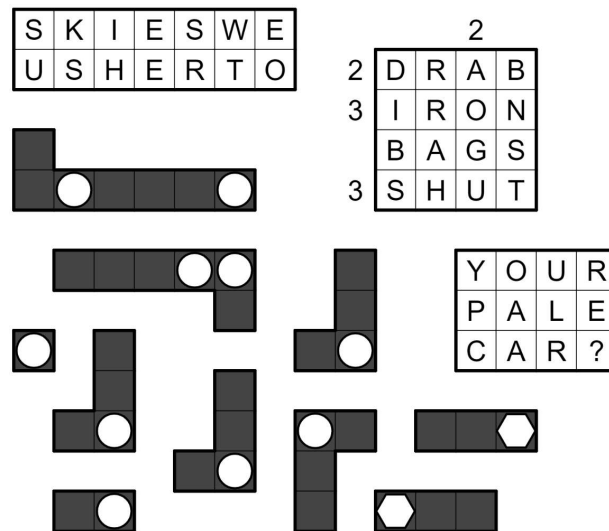
10 |:



**O**n the deck at the fore of the ship are three more letter trays and a pile of metal pieces. This time, though, it's not clear which pieces are for which puzzle – and worse, some of the puzzle trays are strangely shaped and have odd markings on them that you're not sure you recognise. Maybe it would be best to tackle these one at a time for now?

Just behind the bow is a large steering wheel, surely ornamental. Mounted incongruously in the centre is a small keyboard, and a glowing screen flashing the words “Enter course?”

Each piece is used in exactly one of the three puzzles, When you have a solution you're happy with for one of the puzzles you can enter it immediately. Remember that you can always return to the hub later!



:| 11

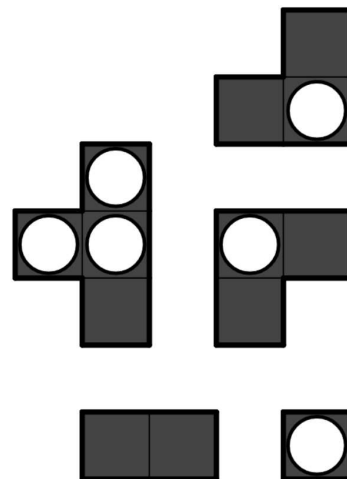
## 12 |:

**Y**ou hand the completed puzzle back to the figure through the open window. It studies it silently for a moment, then howls approvingly and opens the door of the train carriage, inviting you in.

None of the busy figures react to your arrival, their attention fully taken by the work before them. Your new friend gestures once, pointing you in the direction of the front of the train, then returns its attention to its own puzzle paper, swallowing it whole before pulling another from under its seat.

You make your way through the shaking carriages, silent except for the skritch of pencils, until you arrive at a closed door at the very front of the train. This must be the driver's cabin; there is no handle, but a note is pinned.

N	O	
E	N	
T		
R	Y	0
E	M	
P	L	
O	Y	
E	E	0
	S	
O	N	2
L	Y	



14 |:

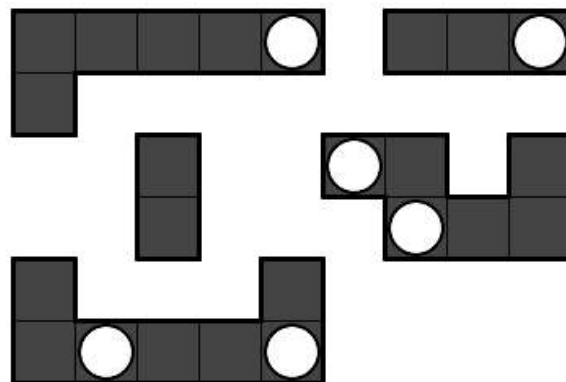


**A**s you enter the final character, the end wall of the metal box opens into a large chamber filled with all manner of crates, boxes and shipping containers, packed close enough to make a rat run of awkward corridors.

Squeezing through and climbing bit by bit, you eventually grab onto a scaffolding staircase and pull yourself above the fray to a large bulkhead door; is this some kind of ship? The distant rumbles you've been feeling could be waves.

Beside the door is another code entry keyboard, and a familiar looking lettered tray with accompanying metal shapes. Looks like you'll need another password.

C	R	A	T	E
D	R	U	M	S
B	O	X	E	S
C	A	S	E	S
T	R	U	N	K



:| 15







**E**very stratagem exhausted, the ancient puzzle collapses against the prow of your ship, its bifurcations unravelling before your eyes. In its last moments it whispers to you in something more and less than words:

*Seek the spaces between.*

And then it is gone.

Now revealed to the air, the chest is swarmed over by hordes of tiny lemmas, which crack it open easily despite its size. Inside is merely a tiny trinket of crystal and metal, perhaps cracked from some larger object. You take it as spoils, with a nod of respect to your fallen foe.

Fill in the  icon at the bottom left of this page to show that you've collected this fragment. This has no effect on its own, but you may be asked about it later.

When you're ready, return to a hub page marked with the  symbol.



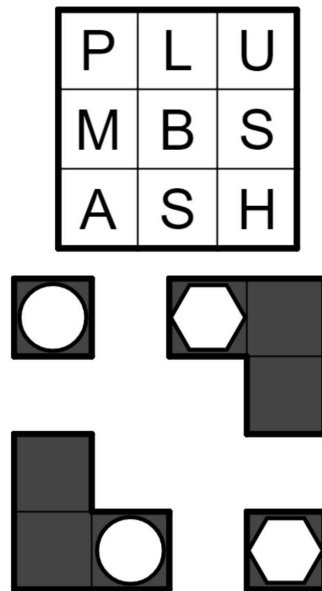
**Y**ou worry briefly whether it's bad form not to say "starboard", but nonetheless the ship turns in a wide arc, heedless of your concerns.

Within a few minutes large hexagonal rocks begin to jut upwards out of the nothingness of space, quickly becoming denser and denser until the ship is scraping on top of them. The scraping of metal against rock attracts attention; tiny furred crab-like figures emerge from behind the rock, clustering curiously around your boldly amphibious vehicle.

Atop some of the taller rocks are familiar looking trays with scattered metal pieces; you pick one up and study it. The tray appears normal, but the pieces seem to strongly repel each other, almost like magnets.

The ship is slowing down.

Hex-shaped holes on puzzle pieces work the same way as circles do, however a hex can never be placed adjacent to another hex or a circle (not even diagonally).



20 |:

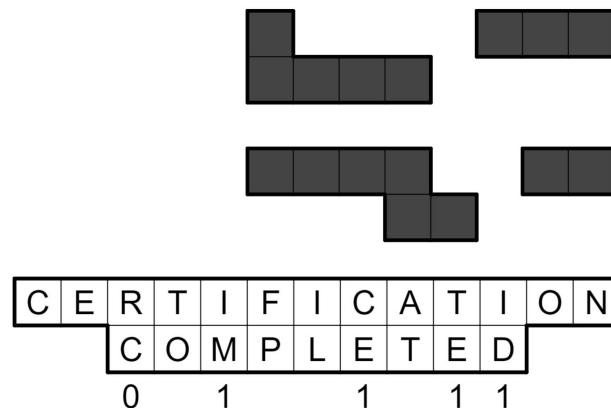


**Y**ou conduct the pieces into place with the fury of one possessed; behind you the robot arms strip away layer after layer of the ship, hewing it down to its innermost core. The cacophony of violent machinery is unbearable until, suddenly, it stops.

You turn around. All that remains of your trusty steamship is a small tickertape printer spinning leisurely in the centre of the asteroid. You float over and observe it for a moment, before it clatters to life, printing a short message.


Congratulations on passing Space Ltd's Astral Navigation Certification Program. When you are ready to finish please remove your Immersive Reality Gear.

Then, nothing more. The asteroid is again idle, save for a small grid of flashing letters on a distant wall.



:| 21



Fill in the  icon at the bottom left of these pages to show that you've collected this fragment. This has no effect on its own, but you may be asked about it later.


**G**athering your strength you slam the final piece into the puzzle and your ship soars up the mountainside, hovering in midair for a moment before crashing down next to the peak.

On the very highest rock sits an especially ancient furred crab, its whiskers and mandibles grey and faded. It regards you dispassionately for a moment, then opens its mouth and intones in a deep baritone:

*"The path is scrambled."*

Its message delivered, the creature pauses, then begins to hack and cough violently, disgorging an odd fragment of metal and crystal – perhaps part of a larger object? Uncomfortably you wipe it off and take it with you; it seems to be all that's here.



When you're ready, return to a hub page marked with the  symbol.



**Y**ou enter the direction uncertainly, but the ship immediately jolts, flinging itself upwards – not any upwards direction you're familiar with, but unmistakably an ascension. The black space around you becomes lighter and brighter, glowing until it becomes unbearable -

And then you pop out of a cloudback, floating in a pristine blue sky. The air around you teems with perfect mathematical concepts which you can only barely visualise as golden numbers and formulae.

A crystallised platonic ideal of a puzzle ambles up to the ship's railing and confidently introduces itself, preening its elaborate solve path. It seems like it wants you to try it.

		4		
1	A	R	T	S
	R	O	U	T
	S	K	I	P
2	S	A	M	E






**A**s you speak the word, the door slides open to reveal... nothing. No driver, no controls – just a plain, spotless cabin.


A small dedication plaque fixed to the wall reads:

**Galactic Express**  
Constructed 07-200XX  
Property of Space Ltd.  
*There is Always a Fourth Way™*

In the centre of the plaque, attached with ancient chewing gum, is a small trigonal bauble of metal and crystal; it seems to be part of a larger object. You take it with you.

Fill in the  icon at the bottom left of this page to show that you've collected this fragment. This has no effect on its own, but you may be asked about it later.



When you're ready, return to a hub page marked with the  symbol.



## Credits

**CERT** was made in 48 hours  
for Ludum Dare Compo 54.

**Concept**

**Puzzles**

**Writing**

**Artwork**

Thomas Morley

**Thanks**

thinky-puzzle-games

Penpa+



**B**efore you even have a chance to wonder whether compass directions have meaning in space, the ship wildly veers to the side and charges into the deep black.

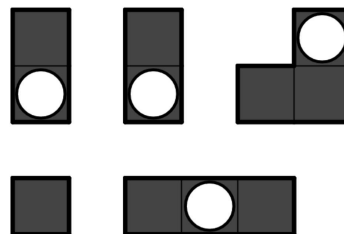
Soon enough it slows again, pulling alongside a set of tracks with a fashionable locomotive running over them. Within its passenger cabins, row after row of thin scaly humanoids in black suits and bowler hats scribble diligently on large sheets of inky black paper.

With an expression of disgust, one of them throws their paper sharply out of the window; it lands on the deck, and curiously you pick it up. The writing means nothing to you, but the structure resembles a newspaper, and the format of these creatures' entertainment seems familiar.

The figure, clearly still irritated, looks expectantly at you.

Numbers next to a column or row indicate the number of *different* (not necessarily differently shaped) pieces that should be placed in that column or row.

		3		1
	A	R	E	A
0	R	A	I	L
	F	R	O	M
	A	F	A	R








**Y**ou flip the ship into reverse, riding it back along the time stream through its many voyages toward the moment of its birth. Wartime and peacetime flicker by like days and nights, until the breakneck pace cuts short in the shadow of a massive asteroid.

Foreboding metal doors are cut into the rock, large enough to swallow the ship whole. While the doors show no signs of having moved in millennia, their blinking pilot lights echo a sense of prescience, as if waiting for someone.

Look at all pages on which you have filled in the  icon. Take the first letters of those pages and write them in the spaces on the opposite page. If you have all three, you can rearrange and combine them to solve the puzzle! If not, you'll need to go back to the hub for now.

--	--	--



**Y**ou pull off the headset of your Immersive Reality Gear, taking care not to get any probiotic fluid in your eyes. The invigilator is watching you with a friendly expression.

“It’s good to take a break when you can, these long sessions can be hard on the muscles. Make sure you stay hydrated too!” She throws out a reassuring smile, then looks back down at her book.

Perhaps you’re done for now?

Whenever you’re reading a page with a □ symbol in the top right corner, you can fill in or erase that symbol. At any time, or when you return to the book after a break, you can go to any page with a filled-in ■ symbol and continue reading from there.

To return to the simulation and continue reading, turn to any other page with a filled in ■ or ■ icon.

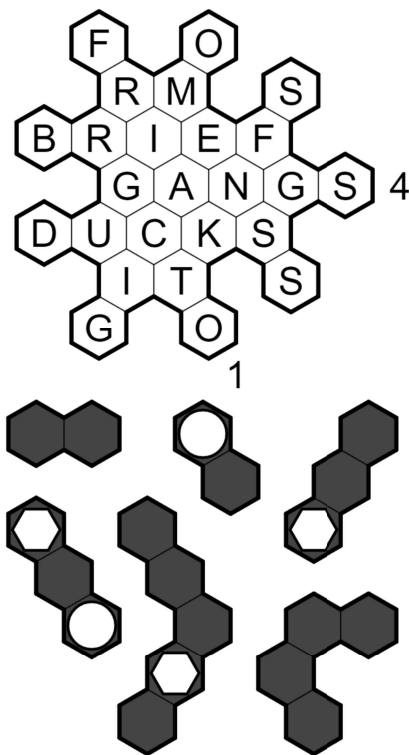




**A**s you intone the password into the vacuum your assembled clump of metal and crystal glows slightly, then crumbles to dust. The door is silent for a moment, considering, then wrenches suddenly open; robotic arms reach out to drag your vessel inside.

The interior is enormous; the ceiling above you bears a massive grid of letters, and irregular metal pieces the size of skyscrapers float through space. All around you metallic saws, claws and drills stand ready to slice your ship back into raw materials.

You reach up and grab one of the metal pieces as if it were a child's toy. Your mind begins to guide the pieces into place as naturally as breathing, and the asteroid's machinery rumbles into life.



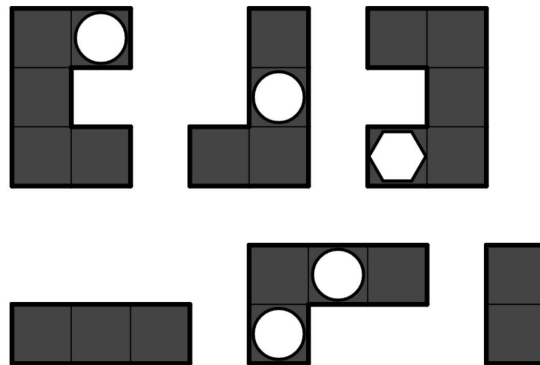


**T**he puzzle puffs out of existence,  
Terrytoptlike, as you announce its solution.  
You're uncertain whether that was the right  
choice, but it seemed happy with the outcome.

Your ship sails on through the clouds of math,  
eager puzzles chittering and prinking for a  
chance to be seen. You do your best to ignore  
them.

At last you spot what must be your  
destination; a magnificent treasure chest  
visible in the belly of a large puzzle. The  
puzzle stirs, looks up at you, and snorts a  
small cloud of black givens. Extending its X-  
wings, it challenges you to solve it – if you can.

					1
4	G	A	M	E	Y
	A	X	M	A	N
	L	O	S	E	S
	F	I	R	S	T
	T	H	U	M	B



## A-E |: Dictionary

**age** (n.) Any one of a number of authored worlds, connected by books. (33 > 36)

**arial** (n.) Only her typesetter knows for sure.

**back** (n.) The path to the future. (11 > 32)

**by** (v.) Opposite of cell.

**cake** (n.) Falsehood; deception.

**credit** (n.) Standard unit of galactic currency. (21 > 28)

**direct** (n.) Do not pass go; do not collect \$200. (21 > 28)

**doubts** (n.) Absolutely none.

**east** (v.) To hide eggs for children to find.

## Dictionary :| E-J

**ega** (n.) Enthusiastic. "You're a bit too ega to solve this puzzle."

**embark** (v.) To wire around with treeskin. (15 > 8)

**employ** (v.) Enact a cunning plan. (13 > 26)

**exist** (v.) Vegan. (39 > 16)

**eyesore** (n.) Only read in adequate lighting and take regular breaks.

**finis** (n.) Bitter enemies of the Norvegs. (37 > 20)

**furry** (adj.) Without cost.

**gae** (n.) Spear, esp. mythical. (33 > 36)

**heaves** (n.) Bitter enemies of the Norvegs. (7 > 22)

## K-R |: Dictionary

**kwest** (?) I know you know that's not a real word. Try again.

**laari** (n.) One laari is worth one one-hundredth of a rufiyaa.

**open** (int.) Exclaimed when discovering a lost biro. (5 > 14)

**pass** (v.) What you'll do if you keep finding these.

**pompoleon** (n.) Grapefruit.

**push** (n.) The only language a crate understands. (19 > 6)

**rain** (n.) Continuous precipitation, esp. of bullets. (6 > 17)

**right** (n.) Red is grey is yellow white. (11 > 18)

## Dictionary :| R-Z

**roar** (n.) Telltale call of a Hyper Beast. (31 > 12)

**S** (int.) .ḡniqəəleḡ ḡḡ ḡiəoqoḡḡmonO

**truism** (n.) An outburst of fury at everyday life. (25 > 38)

**up?** (int.) Casual abbreviation of the formal greeting, "sup". (11 > 24)

**west** (n.) A more casual vaistcoat. (11 > 30)

**x** (n.) Mastodon. (15 > 28)

