Name: _____ Date: _____

How a Crossword Maker Builds a Puzzle Grid

Circle group

Every crossword in the newspaper was made by a person. That person had to solve a puzzle first. A crossword constructor must fit many words into a grid. Each word that crosses another one shares a letter.

The constructor often starts with a theme. The long answers might all be funny phrases. They have one thing in common. These long answers go in first. They are the hardest to place.

Then comes the grid. Many newspaper puzzles follow a pattern. The black squares look the same when you turn the page upside down. Constructors like this because the puzzle looks neat and balanced. When the black squares are set, the writer fills in the rest. This is done one word at a time. Sometimes a word does not fit. Then the writer erases a whole corner and tries again.

Last, the writer makes a clue for each answer. Easy clues give away the word fast. Tricky clues use a pun or a second meaning. Before printing, test solvers try the puzzle. They tell the writer about any clue that is confusing or unfair.

Questions

1. What must a constructor do with the words in a grid?

_____

_____

2. Which answers go into the grid first?

_____

_____

3. What pattern do many newspaper puzzles follow?

_____

_____

4. What does the writer do when a word does not fit?

_____

_____

5. Who tries the puzzle before it is printed?

_____

_____

6. Why do the long answers go in first?

_____

_____

7. Why would a test solver report a confusing clue?

_____

_____

Words to know

constructor: a person who builds or puts something together
grid: a pattern of squares in rows and columns
theme: the main idea that ties parts together
pun: a joke that plays on words with more than one meaning
balanced: even on both sides

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

How a Crossword Maker Builds a Puzzle Grid

Triangle group

Every crossword puzzle in a newspaper was built by a person, and the person had to solve a puzzle of their own first. A crossword constructor must fit dozens of words into a grid so that every word that crosses another one shares a letter.

The constructor usually starts with a theme. For example, the longest answers might all be funny phrases that have one thing in common. These long answers go into the grid first, because they are the hardest to place.

Then comes the grid itself. Many newspaper puzzles follow a pattern: the black squares look the same if you turn the page upside down. Constructors do this because it makes the puzzle look balanced and neat. After the black squares are set, the writer fills in the remaining spaces, one word at a time. Sometimes a word will not fit, and the writer must erase a whole corner and try again.

Last, the writer creates a clue for each answer. Easy clues give away the word quickly. Tricky clues use a pun or a different meaning of a word. Before the puzzle is printed, test solvers try it and report any clue that is confusing or unfair.

Questions

1. What must a crossword constructor do with the words in a grid?

_____

_____

2. Which answers does the constructor place in the grid first?

_____

_____

3. What pattern do many newspaper puzzles follow?

_____

_____

4. What does the writer do when a word will not fit?

_____

_____

5. Who tries the puzzle before it is printed?

_____

_____

6. Why does the constructor place the long answers first?

_____

_____

7. Why would test solvers report a confusing clue?

_____

_____

Words to know

constructor: a person who builds or puts something together
grid: a pattern of squares in rows and columns
theme: the main idea that ties parts together
pun: a joke that plays on words with more than one meaning
balanced: even on both sides

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

How a Crossword Maker Builds a Puzzle Grid

Square group

Every crossword puzzle printed in a newspaper was assembled by a real person, who first had to solve a puzzle of a different kind. A crossword constructor must fit dozens of words into a grid so that every word crossing another one shares a letter with it.

The constructor usually begins with a theme. For instance, the longest answers might all be amusing phrases that share one characteristic. These lengthy answers are placed in the grid first, because they are the most difficult to position.

Then the constructor designs the grid itself. Many newspaper puzzles follow a pattern in which the black squares look identical when the page is turned upside down. Constructors favor this arrangement because it makes the puzzle appear balanced and orderly. Once the black squares have been positioned, the writer fills in the remaining spaces one word at a time. Occasionally a word refuses to fit, and the writer has to erase an entire corner and start that section over.

Lastly, the writer composes a clue for every answer. Straightforward clues reveal the word quickly, while tricky clues depend on a pun or on a different meaning of a word. Before the puzzle is printed, test solvers attempt it and report any clue they find confusing or unfair.

Questions

1. What must a crossword constructor do with the words in a grid?

_____

_____

2. Which answers does the constructor place in the grid first?

_____

_____

3. What pattern do many newspaper puzzles follow?

_____

_____

4. What must the writer do when a word refuses to fit?

_____

_____

5. Who attempts the puzzle before it is printed?

_____

_____

6. Why does the constructor position the lengthy answers first?

_____

_____

7. Why would test solvers report a confusing clue?

_____

_____

Words to know

constructor: a person who builds or puts something together
grid: a pattern of squares in rows and columns
theme: the main idea that ties parts together
pun: a joke that plays on words with more than one meaning
balanced: even on both sides

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: How a Crossword Maker Builds a Puzzle Grid

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: How a Crossword Maker Builds a Puzzle Grid

Easier · 183 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 3.7

1. Fit them so each word that crosses another shares a letter.
2. The long theme answers.
3. The black squares look the same upside down.
4. Erases a whole corner and tries again.
5. Test solvers.
6. They are the hardest to fit, so the rest is built around them.
7. So the writer can fix it and keep the puzzle fair.

Triangle: How a Crossword Maker Builds a Puzzle Grid

This passage · 200 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 6.6

1. Fit them so every word that crosses another shares a letter.
2. The long theme answers.
3. The black squares look the same when the page is turned upside down.
4. Erases a whole corner and tries again.
5. Test solvers.
6. They are the hardest to fit, so it is easier to build the rest around them.
7. So the writer can fix it and make sure the puzzle is fair for the people who solve it.

Square: How a Crossword Maker Builds a Puzzle Grid

Harder · 212 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 9.1

1. Fit them so every word that crosses another shares a letter with it.
2. The long theme answers.
3. The black squares look identical when the page is turned upside down.
4. Erase an entire corner and start that section over.
5. Test solvers.
6. They are the most difficult to place, so the remainder of the grid can be built around them.
7. So the writer can correct it and ensure the puzzle is fair to the people who solve it.