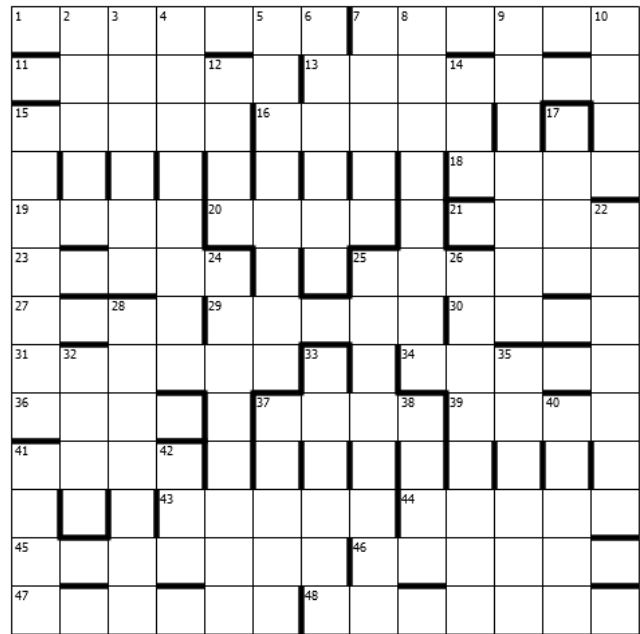


Gravest by Stick Insect

In each clue, two letters (not necessarily consecutive) must be removed from a word before solving, always leaving a real word. In clue order, one letter contributes to a message showing how to find a cryptic representation of the theme; the other contributes to two instructions which solvers must obey to produce the final grid, which contains all real words or proper nouns. Chambers Dictionary (2016) is recommended.



Across

- 1 Pretending to piracy, perhaps not on the level (7)
- 7 Happen to replace panther's head for one rousing game (6)
- 11 Fabric hood recycled by Tati (6)
- 13 Criminal inmate Mal makes propositions (7)
- 15 Hair-remover stung in odd application at first (5)
- 16 Cubicle building in ocean a U-boat periodically supplies (5)
- 18 Tweet seaports, not with head (4)
- 19 Drupel covers left shoe (4)
- 20 Lessee ashamed housing band (4)
- 21 Advanced heptads of Georgian recitals excited whistles (4)
- 23 Skier badly lusted for vessels (5)
- 25 Nine remoulades in very European French department (6)
- 27 Carer follows stink, finding fabulous bird (4)
- 29 Church half rueing of a bag in canal (5)
- 30 Nabobs, baron died in arrests (4)
- 31 American Norse disturbed about mother's stinks (6)
- 34 EOKA pursuing South African piece of armour (5)
- 36 Lacking energy, recce west in compere's car (4)
- 37 Opening by Lehar shows pace (4)
- 39 Complain in Scotland about obscene musical tenutos (4)
- 41 Look! Part of castle refound (4)
- 43 Ian and mate resolved to be as a friend (5, two words)
- 44 Baronne recruits fresh muscle (5)
- 45 Native American stung in Perth grasping heather (7)
- 46 Compounds fade and wane with entropy (6)
- 47 Listener entry about revolutionary (6)
- 48 Apparatus for webchat, perhaps, in TV farces before (7)

Down

- 2 With sails furled, a hand's starting tug jettisoning pawpaw (5)
- 3 Singular fillies vote against you for French poems (6)
- 4 Scan cat, dog, head trout and sheep (8)
- 5 Blinks at his scent wrongly (8)
- 6 Expressionless, Faith and Gary less troubled, strangely after being dumped (6)
- 7 Bating hot heat for Ed (5)
- 8 Involves one lasting in sombre novel (8)
- 9 Upset cleric within tannah's eating place (7)
- 10 Curly with enthusiasm undressing Native American warriors (4)
- 12 American checks thrombi, cycling (4)
- 14 Bing supports male rug (3)
- 15 Stress amateur producer of earth in books (7)
- 17 Alien rent old giant (4)
- 22 Royal tip: back movie (7)
- 24 Beware Iona tin goddess hunt (8)
- 25 One dassing in prophet's cave did it badly, ignoring God (8)
- 26 American charmed Edna, chaste for another, keeping diamonds to the end (8)
- 28 A Mexican polacre is blackish, Sian discovered (7)
- 32 Were editor's grass (4)
- 33 Empty arums in thaw supply heat (6)
- 35 Striding in Jerusalem, Anselm finds old lovers (6)
- 37 Egg white dad and girl cooked (5)
- 38 Relabel island's sock (4)
- 40 Little support for neon good for Zambian currency (5)
- 41 Spinal marrow is source of costal hurt initially (4)
- 42 Understanding martial art lacking skills (3)