

METALESKA

June 29, 2013

Hello, Solver! Thank you for participating in Metaleska, the Pre-Shortzian Puzzle Project's First Anniversary Metapuzzle Contest. This 23x metapuzzle was constructed by yours truly and is meant to be a fun challenge (though not as difficult as the infamous Lasher Thrasher!). Many of the clues are devious (twisted but fair, per Merl Reagle), but the answers themselves are mostly in-the-language . . . what kind of pre-Shortzian-inspired metapuzzle, however, would be devoid of pre-Shortzian "crosswordese"? I did throw two frequently used pieces of pre-Shortzian crosswordese (with easy crossings, of course) into the fill, though one has a highly unconventional clue. To make a long story short, no entries in the nonthematic fill should poison your solving experience like inee (a.k.a. the most common piece of pre-Shortzian crosswordese); there are even a few Easter eggs to enhance your solve!

All right, let's get down to the nitty-gritty of how to solve this metapuzzle. You'll notice that the puzzle contains eleven starred clues. Each of the answers to these clues would fit very nicely into (but wasn't actually contained in) one of the pre-Shortzian Sunday puzzles from the year indicated in brackets; each year of pre-Shortzian puzzles currently up on *XWord Info* is represented exactly once. Your task is to identify which pre-Shortzian Sunday puzzle each of these entries fits into! To help you out, Jim Horne has created a clickable list of pre-Shortzian Sunday puzzles by date (<http://www.xwordinfo.com/Sundays/ps>), which also lists the titles. Some of the titles clearly don't fit the theme entries in question—there may be a few red herrings here and there, but generally you should be able to locate the correct Sunday puzzles with relative celerity. Once you think you've found the pre-Shortzian Sunday puzzle in question, record the letter of the title appearing at the position of the month the puzzle was published in, disregarding spaces and punctuation. For example, if the Sunday puzzle was published in September (the ninth month) and titled "A Giant Crossword," you'd extract the letter O (the ninth letter in the title).

After extracting a letter from each starred entry, you should end up with eleven letters. Unscramble these letters to form the meta-clue, a bizarre, uniquely pre-Shortzian way of defining a common entry. Solve this clue to get the meta-answer. Finally, find a better clue for this meta-answer hidden within the clues of the meta-puzzle (but not necessarily constituting an entire clue). Disregard capitalization when looking for the better clue; also, if you're faced with two choices, send the longer answer—as verification, the "better clue" is a single word longer than five letters. **When you've completed the metapuzzle, e-mail the meta-clue, meta-answer, and better clue to me at preshortzianpuzzleproject@gmail.com. Each contestant is allowed only one entry; all entries must be received by 11:59 p.m. on July 6, 2013, Pacific Daylight Time.**

This puzzle is truly a pre-Shortzian salmagundi—without the pre-Shortzian puzzles, it never would have existed. After constructing the puzzle, I discovered that a pre-Shortzian constructor even made the connection between the meta-clue, meta-answer, and a slight variation on the better clue. Great minds think alike, even across generations! With all this in mind, I hope you enjoy solving Metaleska as much as I enjoyed constructing it—and that you become familiar with some of the brilliant Sunday puzzles of the pre-Shortzian era. Thanks again for participating, and good luck!

Sincerely,

David Steinberg