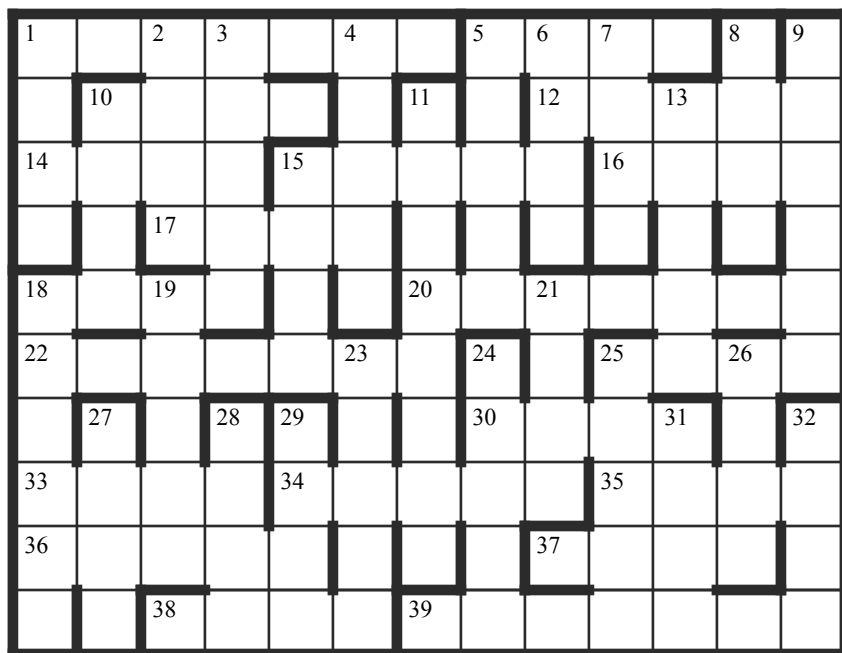


At Cookie Party Time

by Ucaoimhu

This year, all of the ACPT occurs during an online cookie-themed puzzle extravaganza. Correspondingly, this puzzle is beset by five 4x7 subpuzzles, all linked by cookies! Specifically, each Down clue has an extra word that must be deleted before solving; in clue order, these words form five five-word “cryptic clues” whose definition and word-play clue two *different* seven-letter answers. Each such “answer pair” will appear (vertically or horizontally) in the filled grid; mark off the 4x7 subgrid centered on it. Where these subgrids intersect, circle the letters that are *not* part of an answer pair; these circles and the letters that *are* part of an answer pair will form the cookies, and all the circled letters in the grid will say what the ACPT is this year.



Of course, any puzzle extravaganza should have at least one “meta.” To do one of these, note that (a) ten Across clues each yield an answer that must be anagrammed before entry, and (b) the other ten Across clues each have one word that must be moved rightward before solving, and which clues one of the anagrammed entries in (a). Write the ten words in the “answer pairs” the previous paragraph described (in order of the clue parts that clue them) next to the ten (b) clues (in clue order); for each, where the moved word started as the *m*th word and became the *n*th, write the

*m*th and *n*th letters of the answer-pair word next to the (a) clue whose entry is clued by the moved word. Read all of these letters to get an message you may find encouraging at this point.

Finally, for a second “meta,” just read the grid squares that are *not* part of any 4x7 subgrid (circularly, in the direction indicated by the M-E-T-A that can be traced out by king’s moves at their center) to get an answer appropriate to the cookies and the encouraging message you have found.

ACROSS

1. Locates some fishing equipment from each Estonian bass on Bill’s side, initially (7) [NI2]
5. Expanse of brine that’s chemical protected symbols of cobalt and vanadium and earth (4)
10. Tool resembling plumber’s last snake (4)
12. Ghanaian coins in sauce dishes (5)
14. Gold clothing of nattiest relative (4)
15. Arch surrounding loose front of fuse (5)
16. Char comes from salt water? Right (4)
17. Bring back Mr. Spinks for Christmas (4)
18. Audiences got a bouquet for ignoring hissing mix (4)
20. Say, many a miserable person exhibits illness (7)
22. Cuts one fissure near one anatomical intersection (7)
25. Assess the result of evacuating the street (4)
30. Play where control automata seize boxes left in High German region (4)
33. Show where hippies sing fish song after, at the end (4)
34. Sheep, sir, intoned “Come Together” (5)
35. Anger about Newton is concerning (2 2)
36. Brought back word scorers employed by Italian, exhibiting a plural diminutive suffix (5)
37. Exactly two retain tablespoons Elsa’s covering, depicting part of a cow (4)
38. Hardy heroine found in delicatessen (4)
39. Grades that norms exceed confused Duden unexpectedly (7) [NI3]

DOWN

1. Argentine tire is smashing seat (4)
2. Before the Parisian takes one route (4)
3. At first, college registrar fills in B-plus mark (5)
4. Chime chiefly enhances lecture’s beauty (5)
5. Stop talking about nickel finish on Threepio’s nose (3 2)
6. More old, disheartened Democrats calculated chances (4)
7. Compete with uncommon Spot (4)
8. You and I and wild Rabbi Earl existed (4)
9. Blue equine creature is, ultimately, great help (6)
10. Quiet old city leader in Essex is not corrupt ant (4)
11. Brings colorful clay having little rhenium? (3 5) [NI3]
13. Heard supporter of Bugs shifted six out? (5)
15. Mister Brummel has discussed taser weapons (4)
18. Nanny he portrayed in an Emma Thompson movie mixed up Chem & PE (6)
19. Fixed kosher pickled garnishes I originally cooked (5)
21. Word after “Mötley makes” is vulgar, but not Dutch (4)
23. Beloved is creating catnip-like plants (5)
24. Goddess of Discord traps awesome English people in New York (5)
25. Frozen ogre makes King Richard finally tear up (5)
26. Upsettingly, the great healer’s put desserts out (4)
27. Worries about gravity-free phase continue (4)
28. Canadian alongside people of faith, mostly (4)
29. Visitor disregarding rank east wind (4)
31. Lea’s beauty mark is real, see (4)
32. Soon lover will be an orangutan outwardly (4)