

# Guardians

For Christmas we're watching a holiday special featuring a certain team. Sixteen Down answers must be altered before entry, in four different ways, corresponding to the original cinematic members of this team:

1. In tribute to Drax, the most **compact** member, four answers must become contractions.

2. In tribute to Rocket and Groot (already **a duo** before the team formed) four answers must have "double" prepended, and the resulting straight clue then solved to give the entry.

3. In tribute to Gamora, who (for plot reasons) has been **barred** from the special, four answers must be barred right at the start.

4. In tribute to Quill, who started **oddly close to earth**, four answers must be entered starting close to earth and heading up.

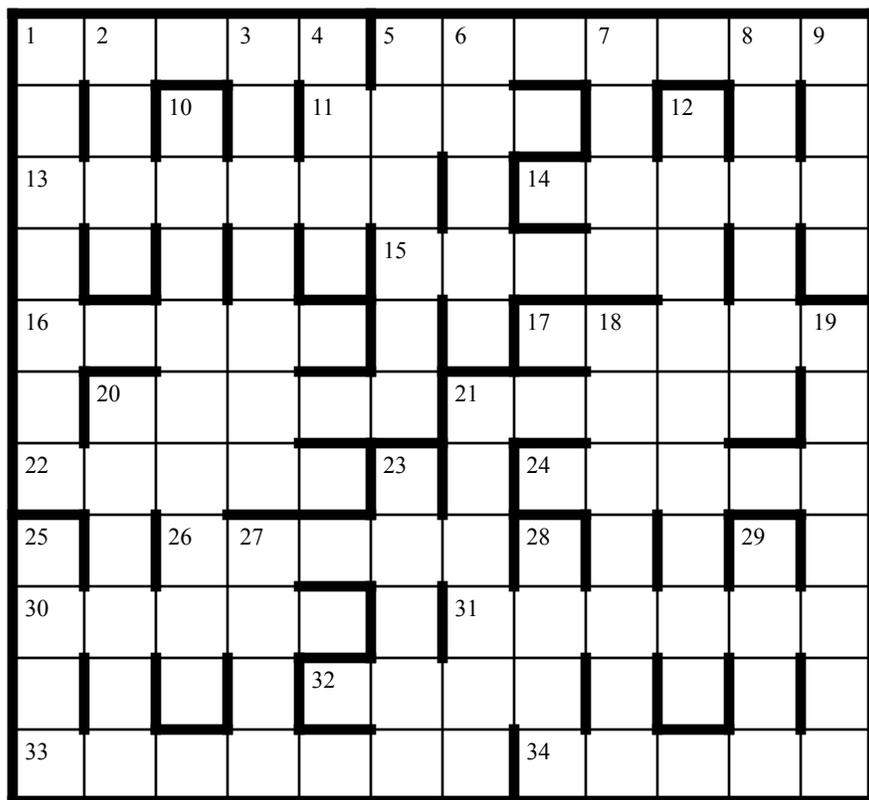
(Three resulting entries are archaic.)

The answers for the remaining four Down clues, and also for five Across clues, will be unaltered, but must be entered with *two* or *three* letters in a single unchecked square; for each, circle the *second nonspace character* or *third nonspace character* (respectively) from both the start and end of the clue. In clue order, the circled characters will name another movie with guardians, which contains the image created by the overfilled squares in the grid.

Finally, each of the thirteen remaining Across clues has an incorrect *nonspace character*, which must be corrected to some letter before solving. All the correct letters, and then all the incorrect characters (both in clue order), will give two alternative phrases describing another team of five to which the boldfaced words apply (though the boldfaced numbers are too small by 7316). The first phrase is general enough also to describe Drax, Rocket, Groot, Gamora, and Quill, but the second (which refers to one puzzle answer) is a very specific proper name for this new team — which was the basis for the image from the other movie.

## ACROSS

1. Elitist turned to vacuous ninnies, swallowing ego
5. A biblical king's bored by tired-out 2500-year-old history writer
11. Serve perhaps 152 pounds to the rural observer
13. Tungsten and each element southwest of 3a on the periodic table might ultimately erode (2 wds.)
14. Kevin's 14 upset a southeast Asian marsupial
15. Third of do's written by that guy you know brings joy
16. Y'all might do this to some weed — our pot is lousy
17. Clean hero clings to sail of unhygienic radical
20. For example, "quiche" with no "q" is inscribed in these French porcini mushrooms
21. Swell vessel containing Leon's uranium



22. Sacks un-un-unhearable person southwest of Iowa
24. Sore possibly afflicting a gorier and weirder cluer
26. Poe, who wrote about Delaware and Georgia at night
30. Some tart's inside a sticky, tree-derived substance
31. Benches of closely related species enrage ape
32. Legislature left unenthusiastic after loss of tower
33. Hold fast antelope where you'll find evergreens
34. To dance with smuggler Solo and Edouard, who studied nebulae and made many observations thereof

## DOWN

1. Bit of fish, by one name!
2. Under no circumstances is Verne mistaken
3. Is higher than octet from covert op squad
4. Initially inspired that weird and slightly self-referential response to "Is 4 Down unsolved?" (2 wds.)
5. Workers with incubators in France loved to wear things like a kepi or fez
6. Two couples north of an ancient city
7. Grasslike plant Buck perhaps raised
8. Two cups having zero purpose
9. Hands stop going into your ears
10. Descartes has time to build new birdhouses?
12. Ran to get potassium put into a support frame
18. Exuberant colt joins an SNLer (2 wds.)
19. Get some booze bottles
20. Clio & Ira flustered a king of Romania (2 wds.)
21. Without a yellowed cert. that subs for an HS's (abbr.)
23. Reflective nickel, yarn, and green, wobbly protein
25. Quiet, cunning character in a play
27. Put liquid on a passport or driver's license
28. Offer by multiple people to help with, say, the dishes  
Green leaves on the stereo (2 wds.)
29. Current outwardly Romano-Greek prefix for "high"