

Spiral Staircase
Crossword Puzzles & Will Shortz
by **gigi nelson**



New York Times Crossword found [here](#)

Many people have cursed WILL SHORTZ over the years. Before the hunched shoulders of the IPHONE era, there was the curved neck and tense shoulders of those dedicated to the CROSSWORD puzzle. White knuckles on a number 2 pencil, pink eraser bits, coffee rings on a Sunday morning paper; *this* was living.

Spell: IPHONE PUZZLE SUNDAY

Many are the man and woman who have cursed ____? WILL SHORTZ
What type of puzzle was mentioned in the chunk above? CROSSWORD
Name one of the descriptions of “living” given in the last sentence above.
WHITE KNUCKLES ON A NUMBER TWO PENCIL, PINK ERASER BITS,
COFFEE RINGS ON A SUNDAY MORNING PAPER

William F. Shortz was born on August 26, 1952. From an early age he knew deep down that he wanted to somehow dedicate his life to...Puzzles. When he was in 8th grade, he wrote a paper that he titled “Puzzles as a Profession.” He was so set on puzzling forever that he made up his own major at INDIANA UNIVERSITY through the “INDIVIDUALIZED Major

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Program.” He is the only person to ever graduate with a degree in ENIGMATOLOGY or, the study of puzzles.

Spell: PAPER MAJOR INDIVIDUALIZED

When was Will Shortz born? AUGUST 26 1952

He made up his own major at _____ University? INDIANA

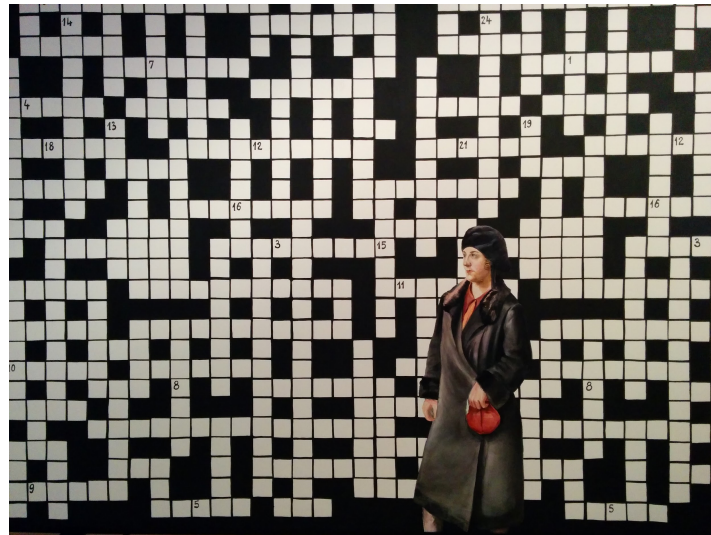
Shortz graduated with a degree in _____? ENIGMATOLOGY

Enigmatology is _____? THE STUDY OF PUZZLES

What is a more common major someone might get a degree in? ENGLISH, MARINE BIOLOGY, PSYCHOLOGY

Name another state in the U.S. besides Indiana.

Give your own definition for something that is “Individualized”



A crossword puzzle with a lady in a black coat found [here](#) On display at the Stedelijk museum

According to Wikipedia.com, “A crossword (or crossword puzzle) is a word game consisting of a grid of black and white squares, into which solvers enter words or phrases (“ENTRIES”) crossing each other HORIZONTALLY (“across”) and VERTICALLY (“down”) according to a set of clues. Each white square is typically filled with one letter, while the black squares are used to separate entries. The first white square in each entry is typically numbered to correspond to its clue.”

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Spell: CLUES GRID LETTER

A crossword is a _____ consisting of a grid of black and white squares?

WORD GAME

Name one of the colors of the squares. BLACK, WHITE

The words or phrases are called ____? ENTRIES

What is a word given for “across”? HORIZONTALLY

What word given means down? VERTICALLY

Paraphrase or describe in your own words what a crossword puzzle is and how it is played.

If a horizontal line and vertical line intersect and form a right angle the two lines are _____ to each other. PERPENDICULAR

Is there a particular game you like to play? What is it?

Crosswords can be found in magazines and newspapers. In America, probably the most famous ongoing crossword puzzle is found in the NEW YORK TIMES. The puzzles follow a pattern. The easiest is Monday and they get harder each day until Saturday. The Sunday crossword is larger and about the same difficulty as a Thursday. Puzzlers use shorthand to describe the difficulty of other puzzles by saying “oh, that was like a Wednesday” for a medium difficult puzzle. Will Shortz is the editor of the New York Times crossword puzzles.

Spell: AMERICA DIFFICULTY DAY

Crosswords can be found in _____? MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS

In America, probably the most famous ongoing crossword puzzle is found in the _____? NEW YORK TIMES

The puzzles follow a _____? PATTERN

Name a day where on which you might find a medium difficulty puzzle published. TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY

What type of publication is the New York Times? NEWSPAPER

Using puzzler days of the week shorthand, describe the difficulty of this lesson so far.

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The size of the crosswords also follow a pattern in the NYT. Weekdays are usually 15 x 15 while weekend puzzles could be 21 x 21, 23 x 23, or 25 x 25. According to GUINNESS, the largest published crossword has 66,666 clues! The puzzle has 33,018 across and 33,648 down and was published in 2016 in TOKYO, Japan. The massive game spanned 129.61 square feet which is about the same size as an average apartment bedroom!



Will Shortz at the 2023 American Crossword Puzzle Tournament found [here](#)

As the caption above suggests, there is an American Crossword Puzzle Tournament that, you guessed it, Will Shortz founded (1978). He also created the World Puzzle Championship (1992). His favorite puzzle? A crossword published on November 5th (Election Day) 1996. One clue had two possible answers. The clue: “Lead story in tomorrow’s newspaper.” The two answers were BOB DOLE ELECTED or CLINTON ELECTED.

Will Shortz also has a favorite clue of all time. The clue: “It might turn into a different story.” Can you think of a possible answer?

Spell: FAVORITE PUBLISHED ANSWER

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What is one of the events mentioned that Will Shortz founded? AMERICAN CROSSWORD PUZZLE TOURNAMENT, WORLD PUZZLE CHAMPIONSHIP

How long ago did Will Shortz create the World Puzzle Championship? Your Year 2024 - 1992 = 32 YEARS AGO

What day is Election Day above? NOVEMBER 5

Give one of the answers to "Lead story in tomorrow's paper." CLINTON ELECTED, BOB DOLE ELECTED

What is Will Shortz favorite clue? IT MIGHT TURN INTO A DIFFERENT STORY

Do you have any ideas as to what the solution to the clue "it might turn into a different story" might be? What do you think? Answer on last page.

While people might get frustrated when they are stumped by Will Shortz and his clues, one thing is UNCONTESTED (undeniable, irrefutable). Without him, crosswords wouldn't be what they are today. Some believe that the mental stimulation of solving puzzles can even help people stay sharp as they age! But, even if solving clues doesn't stave off old age, for many, it is a challenging and enjoyable pastime worth sharpening a few pencils for.

Spell: STUMPED PENCILS TODAY

What word means undeniable or irrefutable? UNCONTESTED OR

What is one synonym given for uncontested? UNDENIABLE, IRREFUTABLE

Some believe that the _____ of solving puzzles helps people stay sharp? MENTAL STIMULATION

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VAKTIVITY: Work on solving your own crossword:

<https://www.onlinecrosswords.net/printable-daily-crosswords.php>

Or download an app to play NYT puzzles!

CREATIVE WRITING:

What word is embedded into the degree Enigmatology? Think about the word ENIGMA. What does it mean? Define (look up definition if needed). Give a brief explanation of why you think “the study of puzzles” is called Enigmatology. Now create your own Individualized Study Field. What would it be called? Why?

Will Shortz is probably in the minority in that he knew what he wanted to be and do from a very young age. Did you have certain passions and inclinations from a young age? Did they stay the same or change as you got older? If you could be anything or do anything professionally, what would it be?

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References:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Will_Shortz

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<https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/largest-published-crossword>

<https://www.nytimes.com/crosswords>

Clue Answer: SPIRAL STAIRCASE

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