

2. Texas 741-Step by Ucaoimhu

This puzzle depicts a seven-step journey. Seven Down answers will have two letters replaced with two other letters before being entered in the grid; each such replacement represents one step. Among the other Down clues, seven sets of 1–3 consecutive clues will have one extra word in each clue, to be removed before solving; the extra words from each set will define one of the aforementioned altered entries, and the sets will be in the correct order for the journey. Finally, in each of the remaining Down clues the sequence of letters the wordplay gives contains one extra letter; in clue order, these say where the journey started from.

(PS: Weren't the above directions marvelously concise? In writing them, I obeyed the following important rules:

- I. You should be organized, A to Z.
- II. You should be short.
- III. You should avoid repetition.

Alas, I broke a fourth rule, not listed above. Of the Across clues in this puzzle, 11 must be corrected before solving by changing one letter to a new letter; all the old letters, followed by all the new letters, will describe my transgression. The answers for the 16 other Across clues must all be altered before entry; four alterations will reflect each of Rule I, Rule II, Rule III, and my violation of "Rule IV." Applying these alterations in order (I through IV) to the starting point of the journey (the intermediate stages will not be words) will get you to the ending point in only four steps!

(PPS: If even four steps are too many, you can find, in a straight line centered on the central square of the grid, a way to get from the starting point to the ending point in only one step!)

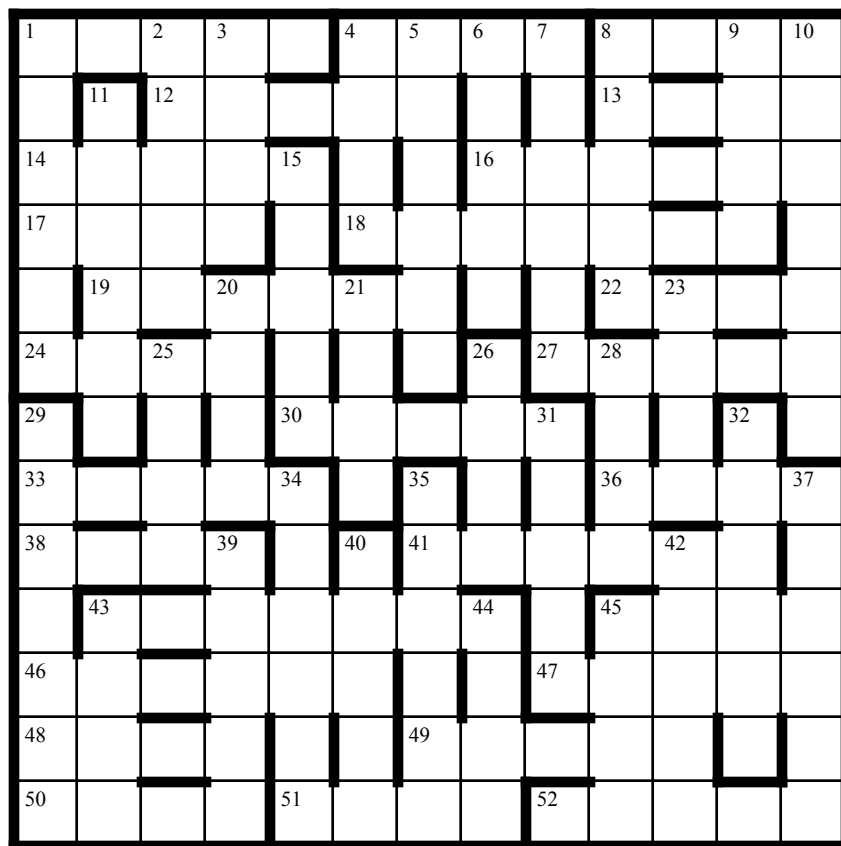
ACROSS

1. Couple of spoilsports eating Bill's partner's serving of ice cream
4. Origins of *Cheers*
8. Random, unfinished silicate in flat elates enthraling leader of scientists (*abbr.*)
12. Horse controls showers vocally
13. Pant of a peeper you've antagonized somewhat
14. At first, we're more like crumpled balls of paper
16. One who engraves vehicle that carries camper close to herd
17. Ian's primary agent is ready
18. Ascribes godhood to dun from Denmark prior to his nakedly disapproving remarks
19. Manager gets chamber maid to start displaying small brushy plant [NI3] (2 wds.)
22. Variant musical scale a Stoooge had sung
24. Bug one person in the opposition
27. Intermeshed model and one holy person
30. Train is boarded by Ms. James, who sang about a cat, often
33. Dee understood fear
36. Cans Edward "liberated"
38. Draws people close to Bangkok when converging
41. Moistureless cud June & I chewed [NI2]
43. Gandhi and W got it in Montana and Massachusetts

45. Flatfish will be unpredictable things
46. Flightless bird put one ion into uncovered crates
47. Watt, stuck in Hines's directionless Caribbean nation
48. "Huzzah!" Abbie Hoffman, say, shouted
49. Large hotel possessing excellent sheets
50. Snoozes in Italian city after taking the Parisian hut
51. Small pigment particles in water drop
52. Allow words to be uttered by scold holding 100 teas after school

DOWN

1. British legislator stops having both men and women admitted free (6)
2. Mounted one ridge with no good road, initially (5)
3. Marshmallow treat seen on Easter clothing of people with psychic ability (4)
4. Pale Draco's first magic item (4)
5. Riot destroyed Roman runes and cross (6)
6. Diplomat's skill gets island goddess to be silent (5)
7. Pick up mostly safe margarine and butter sticks (6)
8. On a Jovian moon, a dog is an unusual thing (5)
9. Boxes reportedly hold spies (4)
10. Swallowlike birds damage cans (7)



11. Related strip contains blue-and-indigo plastic doll (6)
15. Rude to wacko snaring minute object (5)
20. Native American mice ought to thrive, ultimately (4)
21. Mr. Garciaparra, who used to hit General Bradley (4)
23. Comment by Caesar when stabbed, mutated, rotated, and undressed (2 2)
25. Jog after getting rid of German legume painting, perhaps (4)
26. Japanese coin, essentially, can't bring forth young the way a goat does (4)
28. Emma Peel finally kisses semi-clumsy defender of rights (4, *abbr.*)
29. Director Bigelow gutted theory adopted by philosopher Immanuel (7)
31. First alphabetize letters from rather annoying jerk about his king in India (5)
32. Clever ex-Beatle Sutcliffe goes in for water after stripping (6)
34. One example is bound with Ms. Moreno's ropes (6)
35. Muse gripping cups filled with 1000 puffy clouds (6)
37. Dotty or Gina propelling a boat (6)
39. Emulates a firefly and moves suddenly aside, like a startled horse (5)
40. Shilling wood and assessing meat (5)
42. Chuck Lorre's chief duty will be feeding Carol (5)
43. Groups of related organisms inside eat a Xanax (4)
44. I agree with that Spielberg pic, dudes (4)
45. Sol's predecessor Dione unveiled an archaic term for "preferably" (4)