

Poly-Esther by Ucaimhu

Esther, whom we honor tonight, has also been honored in the past by having numerous women named after her. You in turn must alter sixteen Down answers before entry in honor of four such women; four will be altered in each of four ways:

Eppie Lederer (aka Ann Landers): In a pair of adjacent vowels, the second will emulate the first so that they become twins.

Essie Davis: En route from Tasmania to Hollywood, you cross the International Date Line, so that the two middle letters get turned back one.

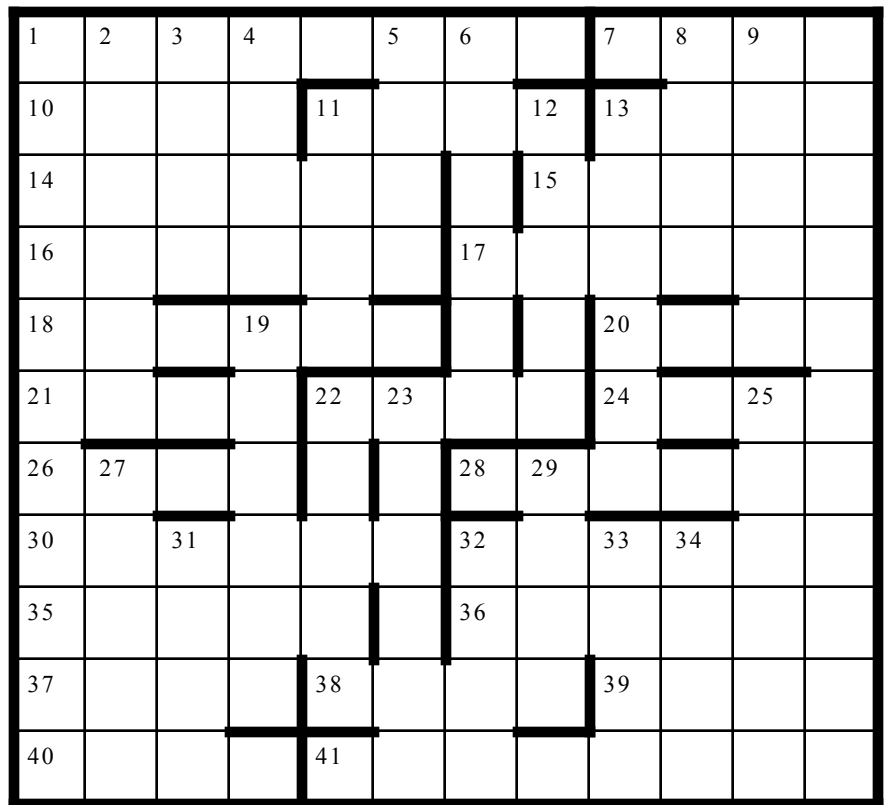
Estée Lauder: The second instance of any letter gets struck.

Hester Prynne: A neighbor of the scarlet letter shuns it by moving away two places.

(Altered entries will include two well-known surnames, two other proper nouns, and an abbr.)

For each of the other four Down answers (which will be entered normally), the clue has had one word altered phonetically, reflecting the historical evolution that changed “Esther” into one of the above given names; you must undo this change before solving. (All of the Across clues are completely normal.)

The unclued first and last columns of the grid will describe Esther. If you alter the last column’s last word in the four ways Down *answers* were altered, ordering the alterations as per the order of Down *clue* changes, these columns will instead describe another legendary figure for whom (again, after some evolution) at least one key person was named.



35. White-bread jokester’s finale is more sardonic (5)
 36. Row about (originally) what inattentive people listen with (3 3)
 37. Is Castillian, like those in Castille (4)
 38. What’s exhibited by . . . um, hugs! (4)
 39. Caesar quote spelled out in fettucine (2 2)
 40. Tailless Australian dog causes minor damage (4)
 41. Misdirected, leaderless fools incurring a Roman emperor’s anger (8)

ACROSS

1. Mostly attempts to get outside of crazy 150.3-wheeled vehicle (8)
 7. Arrangement to meet at houses very quietly (4, *abbr.*)
 10. That woman’s a Greek goddess (4)
 11. Talked about semicircles attached to lines and green spheres (4)
 13. Mistakenly oil a Chinese river (4)
 14. About to outline Earl’s old, Euchrelike game (6) [NI3]
 15. Creature with a scaly hood and cobalt underwear (5)
 16. Interviews in which Penny is beginning to trash airline (6, *abbr.*)
 17. Lamb dish is initially kept in big bins everyone has (6)
 18. Like fools, you ultimately head for islands in opposite directions (6)
 20. An opera film Spielberg made in Russian, of course (4)
 21. A school in Britain, and one in France (4)
 22. Host a princess three times a year during the life of Esther (if BCE) or the other figure (if CE), possibly? (4)
 24. Using one’s tongue, draws digits (4)
 26. Huge online movie? (4)
 28. Impression of person who imitates copper (6)
 30. Thus, hot fire will come from the right bar snacks (6)
 32. Little Rock soccer player takes shot (6)

DOWN

2. Terrance thrashed a coward
 3. Digits inscribed in some volume-changing bins (*abbr.*)
 4. 200 milligrams of calcium salt turned up
 5. Big suits Charlie put on Dawn (*abbr.*)
 6. Young man was first to be spooned in a big way?
 8. Background check Renée starts in Blois and Bordeaux, obtaining a name used by Dr Pepper’s rival
 9. Clerical worker put unnecessary words in note
 11. Places for a drunkard that smells rubbish
 12. Works like *E.T.* and *THX 1138-101-F* hidden inside raised center of canopy (*hyph.*)
 13. Orb that is hollow, lifeless, and wider at the equator
 19. Target of Chris Columbus films not made at big studios
 22. Shimmering pattern that’s all the rage in Missouri?
 23. One who gelds a rodent captured by Pollux’s brother
 25. Cold liquid corrodes shoe attachments
 27. Braces and fruit in your mouth
 29. Ivy League school’s eating empty, tubular pastas
 31. Young, who faced many a bunny with an aqualike hue
 32. Shower pipe’s west of you and me
 33. Cook Ben a legume
 34. Word said (with “noire”) to mean entity that annoys Midler in *That Holed Feeling In Your Ear*