

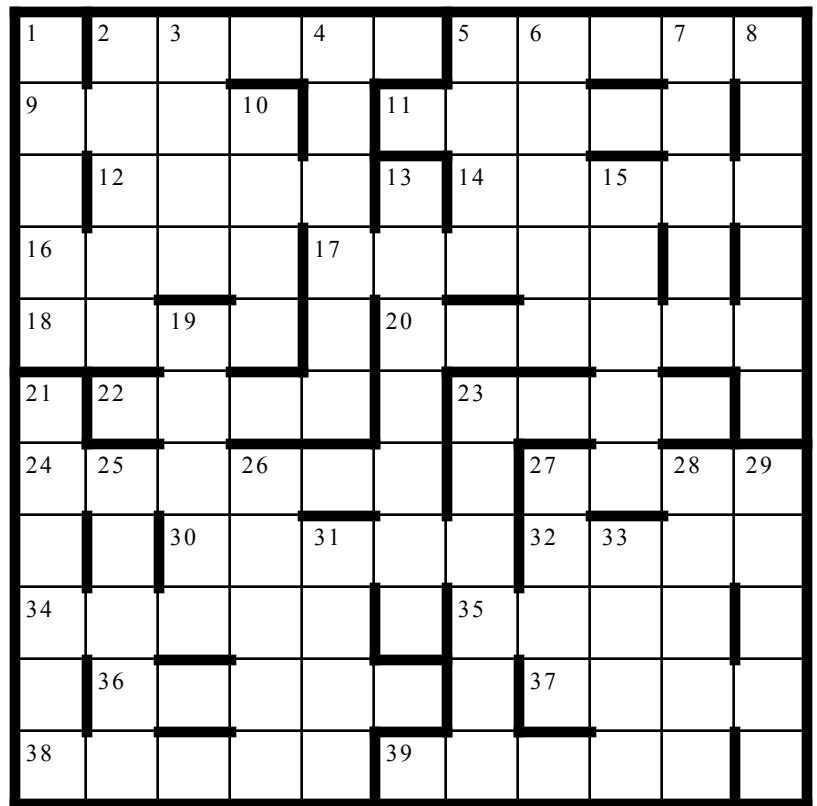
We Three Things

by Ucaimhu

Since Hanukkah is over, the Down clues are at rest; they all work normally and have normally-entered answers. However, as Christmas approaches, some trios of Across answers have started “exchanging gifts.” Specifically, when you enter them in the grid, each member of a trio will “give” one of its letters to another member, and replace it with the letter it “receives” from the third member. (One of the words resulting from these letter substitutions is hyphenated, one is a variant spelling, and one is an author.)

The triples of exchanged letters should be familiar; if you locate all of these triples in their usual location, they will form one specific letter. In each trio of answers as it appears in the grid, connect all instances of that letter in a triangle, and shade in that triangle.

For each Across clue that is *not* involved in any trios, the answer will be entered normally but the cryptic part will yield one extraneous letter. These letters, in clue order, will spell out what appropriate item you have just drawn.



ACROSS

2. Polo horse becomes old in a month (5)
5. What one must pay to orbit northeastern star (5)
9. Erica cooked grain (4)
11. Looked lasciviously at Dotty Lodge (5)
12. “Go away!” a loafer perhaps shouted (4)
14. Five-part segment in *Xena* tests buttocks (5)
16. Appear to be observed by mole (4)
17. Doughnut is in your mouth? Bull (5)
18. Equipment in an alley near one Italian city (4)
20. One Parisian at each bishopric shows anxiety . . . (6)
22. . . . or is smashing Kia automobiles (4)
23. Scuttles around small party with Henry (4)
24. Priest from Hibernia embraced by 150,100 (6)
27. Iron hitting pal results in enmity (4)
30. Altos kissing Ronald and Moses’s brother (5)
32. Pale as dried grass (4)
34. Remarkably pure ad for curtain (5)
35. Associates tail of duck with MIT Hunt, at first (4)
36. Perverse author of *The Wasteland With Linen* (5)
37. Wander over aimlessly (4)
38. Railroad in Monopoly is bad? No, *terrible* (1 3 1)
39. Light nonsense about church (5)

DOWN

1. Seize the top of George’s file (5)
2. Japanese-American joint, for example, is discussed (5)
3. Hurt a revolutionary from Argentina (4)
4. Coagulate on top of Harriet’s fabric items (6)
5. Christian who designs climbing, headless bot (4)
6. Make happy naked men tardy (5)
7. Elysian locales will be well-packed, bottom to top (5)
8. Perhaps try to get a tan alien container (6)
10. *Mame* rewritten as a Jane Austen novel (4)
13. A little bit of broth with Parmesan (7)
15. Dates mistranscribed in Hebrew letter (5)
19. That woman originally built a biblical queendom (5)
21. Low-pH current among three currents (6)
23. Game involving sign on green tree (6)
25. Tomb raider Croft holds very young insect (5)
26. After criticism, I would fast (5)
27. Beautiful opportunity for commerce (4)
28. Yes, unless he happens upon her initially (2-3)
29. Takes in food using one’s tongue and small amounts of force (5)
31. “Move,” in a Realtor’s jargon-twisting lore (4)
33. Portico where Zeno preached and chewed oats (4)