

2. Just Wedged In by Ucaoimhu

Though this Canadian convention is entirely online, modern technology still enables us to have the obligatory cuneiform puzzle. It's just like being there! Specifically:

(1) In each of fourteen clues, the wordplay yields a letter sequence in which one letter has been replaced by a compass abbreviation (E, SE, S, or SW). Enter the answer unaltered in the grid, and also draw a wedge:

(a) whose length (in king's moves) is given by the replaced letter (using the code A = 1, B = 2, etc.),

(b) which points in the abbreviated direction, and

(c) whose *tip* is at the center of the square where the replacement occurs — unless that puts the blunt end of the wedge outside the grid, in which case the *blunt end* should be at the square's center instead.

The result will be a real cuneiform character — a composite of two other cuneiform characters, one outside the other.

(2) In each of seven clues, one letter must be changed to a different letter before solving. In clue order, the letters *before* the change will spell out the meaning and Sumerian sign name for the *outside* character; those *after* the change will do the same for the *inside* character. (It really is just like being there!)

(3) In each of the other seven clues, an entire word, spanning a space, must be removed from the clue (thus turning two words into one word) before solving; the removed words, in clue order, will say what this character is in this modern era.

(4) Now circle each (2) clue's first letter and each (3) clue's last letter. In clue order, the circled letters will say what the first five words from (3) also are — which (in addition to being a movie reference) is, alas, irrelevant at an online convention. (In this regard, it is *not* just like being there.)

ACROSS

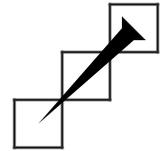
1. Automobile trip segment captivating a French Swiss psychoanalyst (4 4)
5. Inventor Thomas, Earl and Diana help (6)
9. Pitcher Hersheiser gets very loud indeed before division contest of '87 or '89, say (3-4 8)
11. Makes oneself face cot held by weird tots (5 2)
12. Trash egg rolls taking up space (7)
13. Mrs. Bunker put in changes to woo nerds with Henry (5)
15. Say, gave soup to boy, incurring Post Office charge (5-3)
18. List "tote" incorrectly as an antonym of "fiat" (8)
19. Musician Paul, receiving gold and praises (5)
21. U-shaped food processors Ace and Ned (or in Quebec, Penny) incorrectly timed (7)
23. One found inaudible or silent by the Cuban you know (7)
25. In Indiana, actress Shire egolessly rises to chant stuff over the salad course (7 8)
26. Inside of Roger Rees's lettuce and such (6)
27. Second little piggy suppresses desire for fish (8)

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Wedge examples for (1):



Length 4, East



Length 2, Southwest

DOWN

1. Director Spike, supporting less-loved cohort, expressed amusement (8)
2. One seeking change, zebra, and gold cot would encounter fog (9)
3. Heath reeds in Jersey or east York support marsupial's young (5)
4. A victory-sated emperor near America's loyal, perhaps causing tension (7 6)
6. Goofy, antic lord concerned with some crudo (9)
7. What might be a PC if ours improved, becoming a source of heavenly luminescence (5)
8. Belgian Fifi venally starts wagering part of France near the Atlantic (6)
10. Something honored soldiers wear that's no mini nor medal, foiling remote wacko (6 2 5)
14. Swiss person hides from his woeful, vile taxi again (9)
16. Midwestern city where oars hide out, reportedly? (3 6)
17. Bring up news about Gort's hormone (8)
20. Disparaging wheels having \$1000 rim (6)
22. Native Missourian Runic odeon stripped by Herb (5)
24. One who punches pennies is in Tahitian sea (5)