

# Cryptic Classroom #4: Charades

By Also, Club Average, Right?

Since September 2021, we've explained three very accessible types of wordplay found in cryptic crossword clues: anagrams, hidden words, and double definitions. This month, we'll explore a more challenging type of cryptic clue: charades.

First, some basics:

1. A cryptic crossword clue always consists of two parts. One is a literal definition of the answer. The second is some kind of wordplay. Both the literal and wordplay parts adequately clue the answer independently, but both parts together lead you to a common answer.
2. The literal and wordplay segments, when combined effectively, appear to have surface meaning.
3. It is up to the solver to determine the dividing point between the literal and wordplay parts.
4. Sometimes the literal part is at the beginning of the clue, and sometimes the wordplay comes first.
5. Punctuation and capitalization can usually be ignored.
6. The length of the answer (shown in parentheses) is sometimes a helpful hint as to what type of wordplay is being used.
7. Some clues include an indicator word that suggests the type of wordplay being used.

In the parlor game of charades, players act out a common phrase or title, one word at a time. In a cryptic charade clue, the answer is broken down into pieces that are represented by synonyms, abbreviations, or even exact words found in the clue. For example, the answer ABSOLUTE could be separated into ABS, O, and LUTE, and these three pieces could be clued as "stomach muscles, oxygen, and a Renaissance instrument." Luckily, our literal clue for ABSOLUTE could be something like "nonrelative" or "independent." Our complete clue could be "Unrelated: stomach muscles, oxygen, and a Renaissance instrument (8)."

Charade clues don't require an indicator word, but sometimes you'll see the various pieces connected with "and," as in the previous example. Try to solve this charade clue:

Lincoln (Republican) allows a fixed number of deviations (11)

Can you find the dividing point between the wordplay and literal portions of this clue? One way to identify the wordplay is to look for something that seems unusual in a typical crossword clue. To me, "Lincoln (Republican)" stands out, so I'd suspect the wordplay starts this clue. This means "deviations" (and possibly some of the words preceding it) is the literal clue. Can you think of an 11-letter word that means "deviations?" If not, let's start breaking down the charade. "Lincoln" represents ABE, "Republican" can be abbreviated with R, and "allows a fixed number" means RATIONS. Our charade is ABERRATIONS. I added the word "of" in the clue to connect the wordplay and literal segments with some grammatical smoothness. Here's another:

Former spouse writes, "I've cost a lot of money" (9)

I craftily used punctuation to create surface meaning and blur the dividing point between the literal and wordplay segments in this clue. In fact, this is the reason why cryptic clues are so challenging for beginners: It's hard to ignore the surface meaning in a well-crafted clue. Here, the wordplay comes first. I used two synonyms and one exact word in this clue. The charade consists of "former spouse" (EX), "writes" (PENS), and the exact word "I've," to form EXPENSIVE. The literal clue, "cost a lot of money," flows nicely with the wordplay without a connector word.

Give this puzzle a try. Every clue is a charade. Remember, they're tricky, so don't be discouraged if you don't get them all.

## ACROSS

1. Character for each male offspring landed on club (11)
7. Behold, Oklahoma style (4)
9. Conclude musical, gift charm (6)
11. Survey me, France, e.g., for flower fertilization (11)
12. Consume gerund suffix, hyperbole suffix (6)
15. Late princess of Wales and Virginia is a prima donna (4)
18. Under Blanchett, bloody division (11))

## DOWN

1. Hoffman longs for Manila home (11)
2. About negative makeover (4)
3. Individual working energy (3)

4. Turing assembled a home network (4)
5. Is France the home for Gilligan? (4)
6. Vote yes: aired irrational art movement, yes, for ages (4,3,1,3)
8. Kentucky deception: one of the Jenners (5)
9. Painter Max from Sea Eagle Street (5)
10. Was extremely fond of act, Danson (5)
13. Food family rating barbecue season (4)
14. Turf a beverage (4)
16. First person before Shakespeare villain (4)
17. Imitate a gym class (3)

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