# Cryptic Classroom #7:
# Deletions, Reversals, & lit.

By Odd Pfarrer

I started lessons 2 through 6 of this series with a recap of strategies we had learned so far. Since we have three different wordplay styles to master today, I will skip the recap and encourage you to read all the previous articles, which are posted on the GAMES WORLD OF PUZZLES website and in our Facebook group, Games Magazine Enthusiasts.

## DELETIONS

In this form of wordplay, some letters of a word are removed to leave a shorter word. Common deletions include removing the first letter (e.g., BRAND to RAND) or the last letter (BRAND to BRAN). Sometimes both the first and last letters will be removed (BRAND to RAN). Or, specific letters from the middle of the word will be deleted (BRAND to BAND). The wordplay will be clued accordingly with an indicator word or phrase. Try this one:

Headless merchant on Ewok's planet (5)

Another word for merchant is "vendor." The indicator word, "headless," directs us to remove the first letter of "vendor," leaving ENDOR, the home of those furry critters from *Star Wars*.

Here are four more deletion clues. Try to figure out which letters are being referenced by the indicator word.

Never-ending reproduction of police officer (3)
Unbounded religious parcel of land (4)
Orchard crop is relevant (minus one) (6)
Oddly, Ozark is acorn-bearer (3)

In the first clue, "never-ending" directs the solver to delete the last letter from "copy," leaving COP. "Unbounded," in the second clue, directs us to remove the first and last letter of "sacred" ("religious") , leaving us with ACRE, a parcel of land. For the third clue, "minus one" tells us to delete I (Roman numeral) from a word meaning "is relevant." "Applies," minus the I, leaves an orchard crop, APPLES. The fourth clue is a little different. In this case, we are directed to keep only the letters in odd positions from "Ozark" and delete the letters in even positions. Doing this yields OAK, an acorn-bearing tree.

## REVERSALS

For a reversal clue, the word suggested by the wordplay will appear backward in the answer. Reversals require indicator words, like "in reverse" or "heading back." For example, the wordplay, "time runs backward" suggests the word EMIT.

Indicator words can also be specific to the direction a word is entered in the grid, as an Across or a Down entry. For Across words, indicators for a reversal may include "to the left" or "heading west." For Down words, you may see indicators like "going up" or "rising." Try these reversal clues.

Mid-morning, French modernist painter ran back (3,2)
Overturns footrest and pilfers (5)
Upset sweetmeats sent back (8)

Did you get the three answers? First, if "Manet" is written backward (as indicated by "ran back"), we get TEN AM. Next, a footrest is a "stool," and overturned, it gives LOOTS, another word for "pilfers." Finally, there aren't a lot of common synonyms for "desserts," but when they get "sent back," I get STRESSED ("upset").

## & LIT.

In an & lit. clue, which is short for "and literally so," the wordplay is also the literal definition. In other words, solvers don't need to look for a dividing point in these clues to separate the wordplay from the literal. The entire clue stands as both parts. These clues can be easily identified because they end with an exclamation mark. Try this example, submitted by Games Magazine Enthusiast Mark Penney:

Deranged, evil! (4)

First, let's analyze this clue as wordplay. "Deranged" is an indicator word for an anagram. The letters in "evil" anagram to VILE. And as a literal clue, "Deranged, evil" may very well describe someone VILE.

Try these three & lit. clues. In each case, the wordplay is an anagram.

Am damn crazy! (6)
P to Y error?! (4)
Regal kin play! (4,4)

The answers, and their authors, are: MADMAN (David Salvia), TYPO (Wei-Hwa Huang) and KING LEAR (Roy Leban).

Try this crossword to solidify your understanding of deletion, reversal, and & lit. clues. The clues at 1-Across and 2-Down were submitted by David Binder and Mike Hausberg, respectively.

### ACROSS
1. Delicate direction! (7)
3. Automobile beheaded *Lion King* villain (3)
5. Simian rips both ends off coat flap (3)
7. Rend with no end; it can be black, green, or orange (3)
8. Indian honorific is tax collector running west (3)
9. Sentinel read ID badge backward (7)

### DOWN
1. Aspect you removed from tap (5)
2. Leads of *Sweeney Todd* and *Rent*, sometimes! (5)
4. Censor; cut 500; respond (5)
6. Water bottle flipped? So gullible (5)