

RETROSPECTIVE

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An Equinox Megagame by Rick Rubenstein and Joshua Kosman

After so many years of collaborating on these megagames, we decided it was time to take a trip down memory lane, turn our gaze backwards, and draw inspiration from our own past.

Each of the eight puzzles in this set shares its title with one of our eight previous megagames. (Don't worry, no knowledge of those previous efforts will be needed; but each puzzle includes some flavortext comparing the past and present to provide a bit of context.)

While the puzzles are arranged chronologically by their source material, they can be solved in any order. Each will have as its answer a single word which is (possibly loosely) related to the puzzle or its theme.

When you've completed all eight puzzles, come to us for a final set of instructions, and we'll find out what all this looking back ultimately adds up to.

ALL IN THE GENES (2008)

ANSWER: _____

Past: Analyzing your ancestry increases your knowledge (but sadly not your income).

Present: While words aren't alive, bases which trade sites might still yield novel forms.

All the genes are made up of the nucleotides A, C, G, and T, and of course we are all here because some of those letters mutated into others.

The clues at the bottom of the page all lead to words that can be arranged in pairs differing by a single mutation. Enter each word in the appropriate blank, then read the shaded letters to get a clue to the four-letter word on the left. As your last task, apply one more mutation to get the final answer.

—  — — — — —	G <=> C	— — — — — 
—  — — — — —	C <=> T	— — — — — 
 — — — — —	C <=> A	— — — — — 
—  — — — — —	G <=> T	 — — — — —
— — —  — — — — —	A <=> G	— — —  — — — — —
— — —  — — — — —	T <=> A	 — — — — —
— — — — —	T => C	— — — — —

- Ballerinas, for example
- Chief manservants
- Elegant in movement
- Feeling thanks
- Manufacturing flaws
- Military musicians
- Pants
- Perils
- Singing at Christmastime
- Stimulating types
- Vanquishes
- Word that appears twice in a list of U.S. states

MALL OF AMERICA (2009)

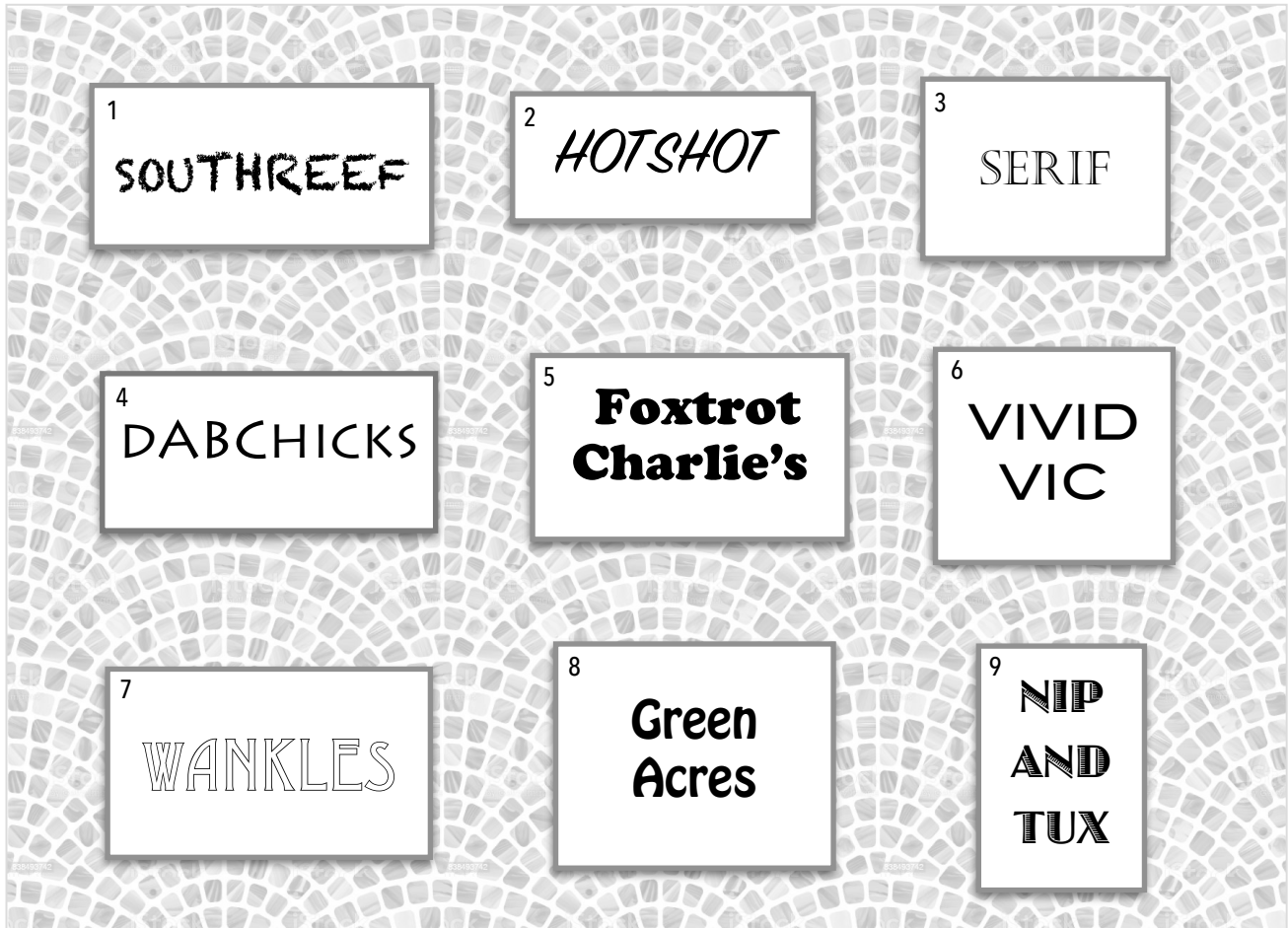
ANSWER: _____

Past: Friendly aliens visit Earth's great shopping sites and log their discoveries.

Present: True mall rats will know from each shop name just what they sell.

Each outlet at the mall depicted here sells a very specific line of merchandise. Fortunately, the six eclectic shoppers below know exactly what they're looking for.

Based on the business names, determine where each item can be purchased, then trace each shopper's route through the mall to derive a final answer. (The shop numbers are provided only for convenience.)



ALICE

WHEEL
BLUEBERRIES
GOLF CLUBS
DEFOGGER
BASKETWORK
FELAFEL

BENITO

BLACKBOARD
ANTIPERSPIRANT
STRAW
STRYCHNINE

CORINNE

SLOOP
BAYONET
CHINTZ
NEW TOP HAT
DIAPER

DAVY

RED BULL
OVEN GLOVE
TUBER
MC DIXI CD
LIMA BEANS
HOT DOG BUN

ELVIN

LES MISERABLES
PAPERWEIGHT
DINGHIES
INDIA INK
BRATWURST
CHAIR
WHITE WINE

FELICIA

ORANGE JUICE
KIT KAT BAR
DILL MIX
WHISKEY SOUR
POTATO POT
DRAWER

COLD WAR (2010)

ANSWER: _____

Past: Diplomatic tensions between NATO and the USSR leave both sides in a fix.

Present: Years after those tense times, chill winds might still bring frost.

The Cold War has officially been over for a long time, but things are still pretty chilly. Time to get rid of some of that ice!

Each of the eleven clues on the left yields a word ending in -ICE. If you replace ICE with the word that fits into the blanks to its right, the result will be yet another word. The eleven ICE replacements and the eleven resulting words are clued in mixed order at the bottom of the page.

Once you've replaced all that ice, the highlighted column will spell a clue (represented by the "?") to one more -ICE word, and the numbered letters, taken in numerical order, will give a clue to the final word you get after you replace ICE. The boxed four-letter replacement word is the final answer.

Intent to cause harm	— — — I C E	10 — — —
Meet the current need	— — — — I C E	— — — 2
Crafty trickery	— — — — I C E	4 — —
Flatfish	— — — I C E	— — — 5
Watery city	— — — I C E	— 6
Artificial water channel	— — — — I C E	— — 11
A couple of times	— — — I C E	7 — — — —
Carroll heroine	— — — I C E	9 — —
Volcanic rock	— — — — I C E	1 — — —
Pie portion	— — — I C E	— 8 — — —
Lure	— — — — I C E	— — 3 —

?

_____ I C E

— — — —

Animal fat

Archaeologist's find

Brown pigment

Cadge, as a cigarette or ride

Cause for Susan B. Anthony

Collection of music

Disorder

Dozens

Fantasy folk

Filling your tank or tires

Fury

Goddess of love

Introverted

Kind of duck

Like melting snow

Mercury, et al.

Perform a role

Sinewy

Sleep

Sonar sound

Tennis court dividers

You and me

ELVIS IS LEAVING THE BUILDING (2013)

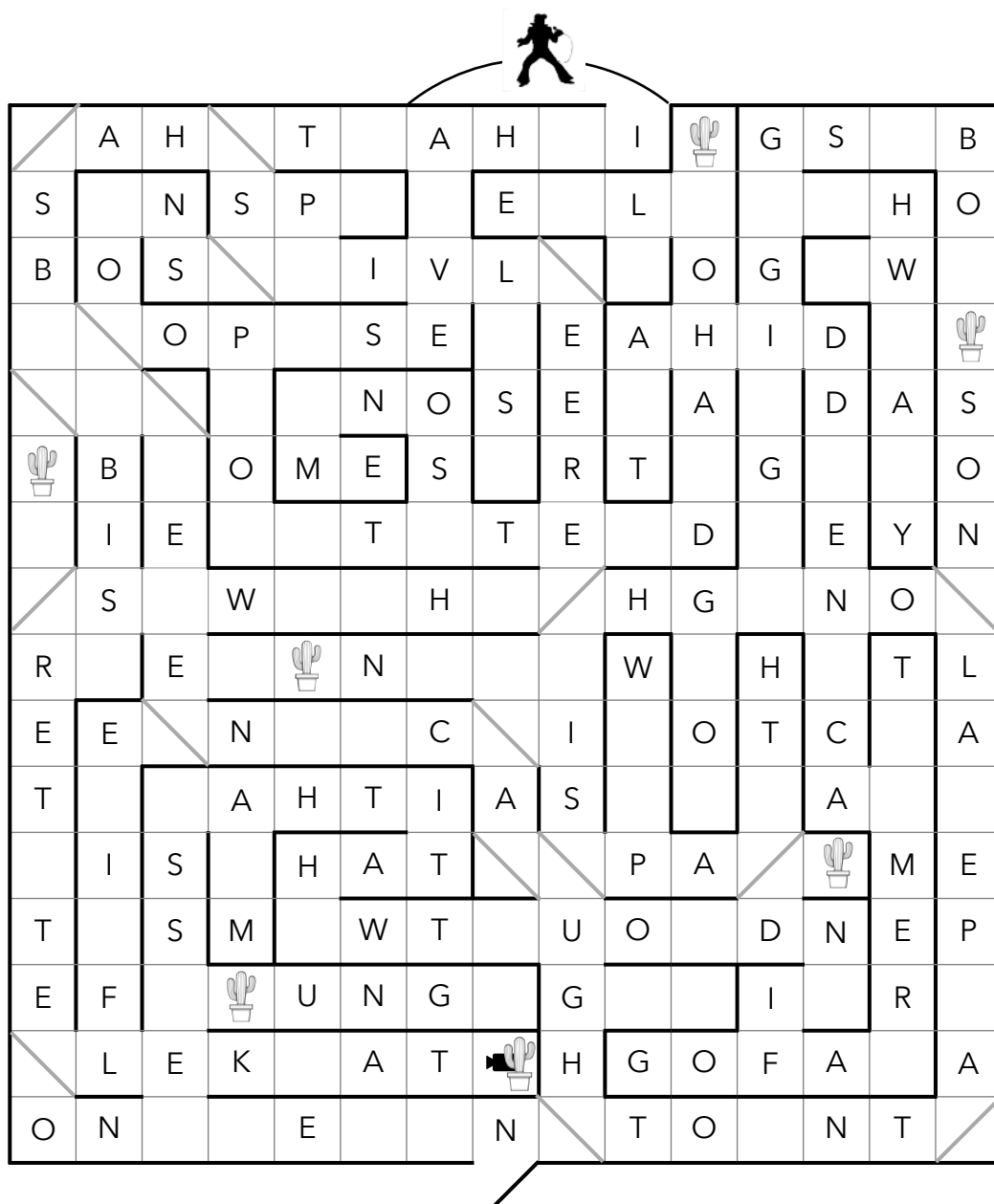
ANSWER: _____

Past: Mr. Costello somehow detarnishes his reputation by making it worse.

Present: Help this rock star "king" slip away from this show ASAP!

Elvis has finished his concert, and now needs to get away without the paparazzi catching him. The maze of corridors should help, but those angled mirrors seem a tad suspicious...

Help Elvis find his way to the rear exit without getting lost. If you take the right path, the King will let you know what to do next.



THE TREASURE OF TRIPLE SIXTY (2015)

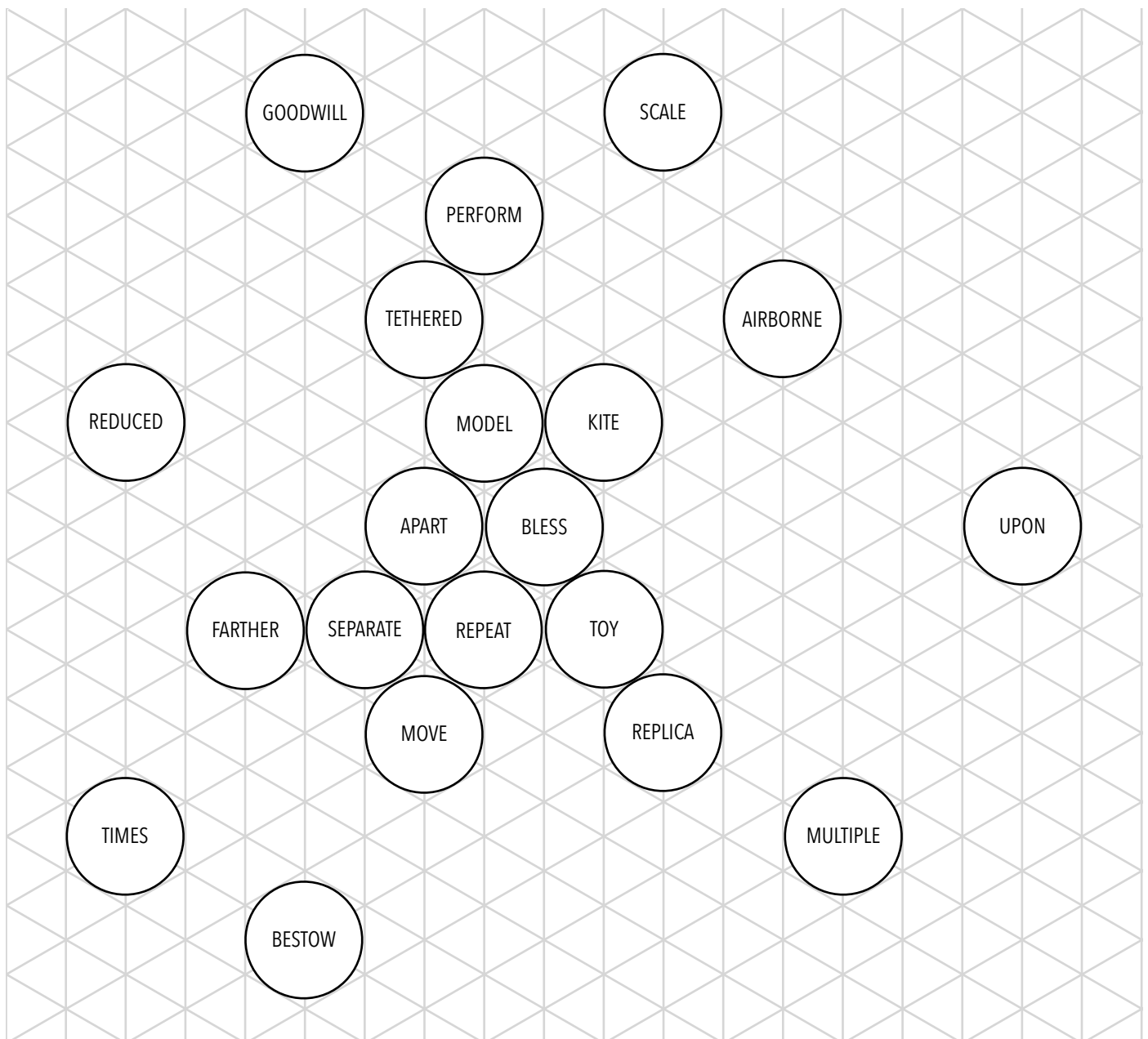
ANSWER: _____

Past: A series of strange maps gives rise to a series of strange puzzles.

Present: Find some sets, join some dots. (What does that even mean?)

The diagram below contains five three-word clues. In each clue, the three words form an equilateral triangle, with the answer at the center of that triangle. The clue may start at any vertex and read clockwise or counterclockwise.

When you've identified the clues and the answers, take the first letter from the answer in the smallest triangle, the second letter from the answer in the next smallest, and so on, to get the puzzle's final answer.

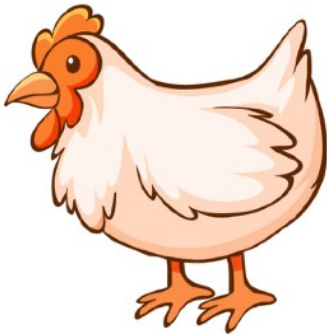


Past: A mysterious phone number leads to genuinely unexpected revelations.

Present: Item fail? Save time with this easy help line!

When something goes wrong with an item in your life, first you have to figure out who to contact (tech support? doctor? vet?), and then how to navigate their confusing options. What a hassle! Instead, dial our Universal Help Line™ (page 2), answer a few simple questions about whatever object is giving you trouble, and your problem will be fixed in a jiffy. If you're still left with any outstanding issues, ring us up one more time and we're sure you'll hang up satisfied (and have your four-letter answer).

Problem items:



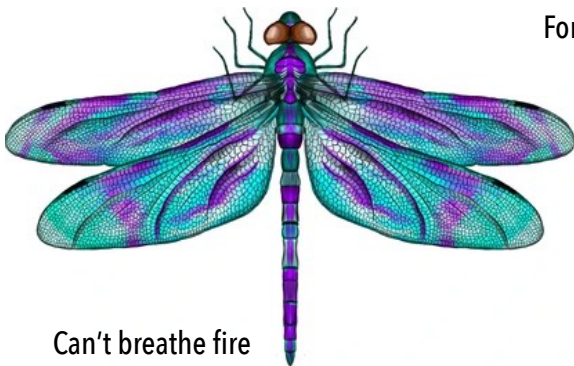
Pecking is out of order



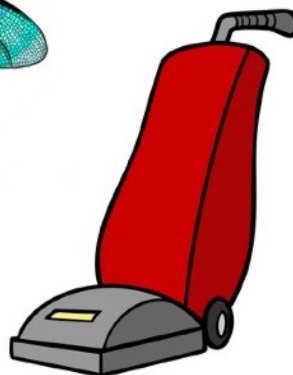
Forgot what's wrong



Unable to count past one



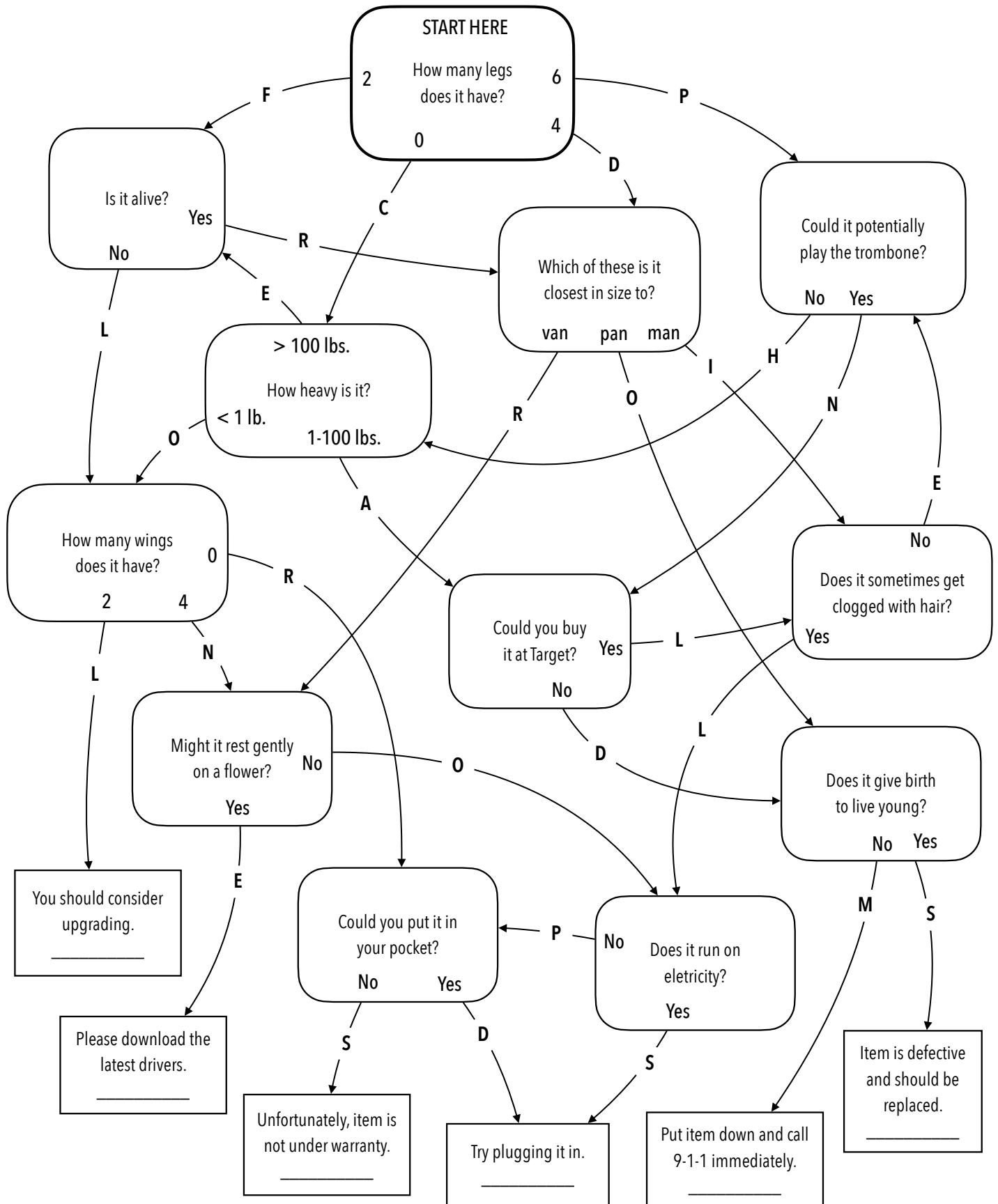
Can't breathe fire



Doesn't suck



Stuck in airplane mode



CHESSBOXING (2017)

ANSWER: _____

Past: Two activities can fit into a single grid if you shrink them down enough.

Present: Keen eyes will spot many mind/body duos with this word grid game.

Each clue below indicates one CHESS term and one **BOXING** term (in either order) which can be found in the grid. Draw a line connecting the two terms; the line will always be horizontal, vertical, or at 45 degrees. The endpoints and all words the line passes through are considered crossed off and will not be used again.

After you've joined all nine pairs, some words will remain unused. Going from top to bottom, take the first letter from the first unused word, the second letter from the second unused word, and so on, to reveal the final answer.

Two words differing by only the first letter

A one-pronged implement, and something you might do with it

A form of payment, and somewhere you might keep it

A shape with corners and a shape without corners

Two items a musician might strike to make a tone

Two words that begin with a silent letter

Two words crossword-cluable as "Fabric"

An occupation/title, and a symbol associated with it

A building, and someone who might dwell in it

FORK	KNIGHT	REFEREE	PAWN	KNOCKOUT	PUNCH
PURSE	PROMOTE	RING	UPPERCUT	ZUGZWANG	SQUARE
CAPTURE	HOOK	MATE	RANK	CROSS	MATERIAL
BRAWL	SKEWER	BOUT	FILE	JAB	BLOW
CHECK	WEIGHT	BISHOP	ROOK	BELL	GAMBIT
COUNT	BOB	GLOVES	CASTLE	BOARD	CANVAS

HITCHIN' A RIDE (2018)

ANSWER: _____

Past: Getting rides with strangers yields surprising insights into their lives.

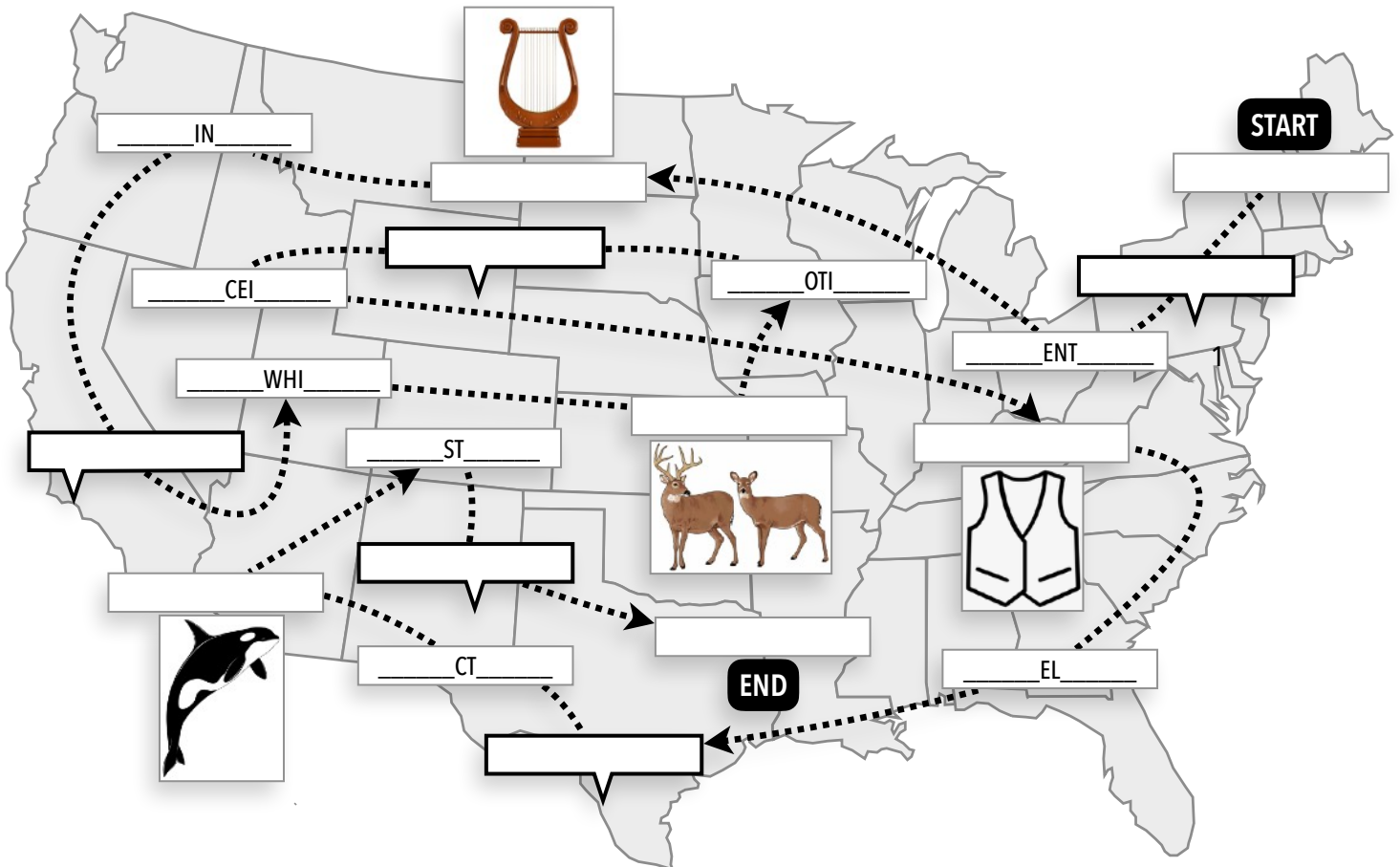
Present: See the USA – our new map will get you all the way!

It's time to hitch up that old trailer and go on a road trip! Appropriately, your route will consist of words which are themselves nicely hitched together.

As you meander around the country, you'll pass through three kinds of locations: Cities (bold boxes with pointy bits), which point to the approximate locations of actual U.S. cities; Sights and Souvenirs, clued by pictures; and Open Road (everything else), clued below the map.

Every word on the route fully overlaps those before and after it, with two exceptions: each Open Road word (other than the start and end) has 2-3 given letters which aren't overlapped by its neighbors; and each City includes *exactly one* letter which likewise has no overlap. These five City letters, in route order, will provide the final answer.

To make this clearer, here's a short, solved example route (which would give a final answer of TM):



Biden's VP

Former Cuban leader

Grasp by way of the senses

Hole dug for water or oil

In a way that demands immediate attention

Medical professional

Pertaining to stars, or outstanding

Pornography, more genteelly

Untanned leather

What you don't want to do to the wheel

Don't look at this before solving all 8 puzzles!

RE: EVERYTHING

Past: Once a meal, now merely leftovers.

Present: Can we somehow depict those leftovers as *haute cuisine*?

It was fun to revisit our old megagames and try to reframe them as refreshing new puzzles. But were we revitalizing them, or merely retreading? Were we being resourceful, or just rehashing old ideas? How would we be remembered? Would we be revered, or reviled? We were reluctant to admit it, but should we have reconsidered the whole idea?

Our minds reverberated with conflict and potential regret. But we remained hopeful that we would be redeemed, for when we reviewed our work, we realized that recontextualization could lead to remarkable results.

Take the PAST itself. If you try to repeat it (using a bit of prefixing), you don't get a redo, but something else entirely – something which, as it happens, has a synonym in the "Past" flavortext at the top of this page. The PRESENT is no different: apply the same trick (hereafter referred to as "the trick"), and you get something for which you can find a synonym in the Present flavortext above.

Furthermore, applying the trick to all the previous puzzle answers will yield some surprising results.

Follow these instructions carefully:

1. Gather all the previous puzzles.
2. For each puzzle, apply the trick to its answer.
3. Pick any puzzle; we'll call it Puzzle A. In its *Past* flavortext, find a synonym for the *post-trick* answer to a *different* puzzle (Puzzle B).
4. Puzzle A's *Present* flavortext, upon inspection, should suggest a number; use this as an index to take a letter from Puzzle B's (again, post-trick) answer.
5. Write this letter on Puzzle A.
6. Repeat steps 3-5 for all the puzzles.

Finally, sort the puzzles in reverse chronological order, from newest to oldest. The letters you've found will spell out what you now (hopefully) have. And applying the trick one last time will show what we have (hopefully) achieved.