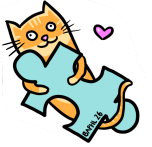




SOLUTION: Th? Arbo?etum



The first step is to solve all of the crossword grids. Grids are attached at the end of the solution document. All of the grids have “tree” rebuses: 1 or 2 of ASH, FIR, or ELM. In the Normal version, the clues for these rebus-containing entries are in bold.

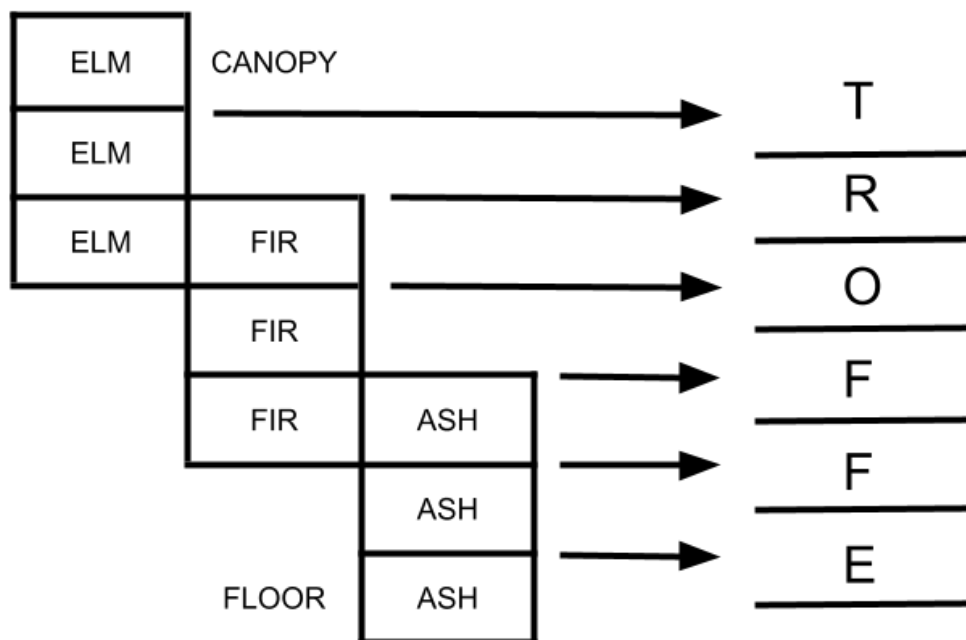
Each of the grids have an out lining of dotted lines. Furthermore, the flavor text suggests “stack[ing] the trunks,” which clues that the grids need to be overlaid, such that the matching tree rebuses are on top of each other, which may be easiest if the grids are cut out (as explicitly told to Normal teams).

The *order* of this stack is provided by two specific entries: in provided order, the first grid contains the entry FLOOR, with “(A ways to go!)” in the clue, and the sixth grid contains the entry CANOPY, with “(Check out the view!)”, which tells us what grids should be at the bottom and top of the “forest,” respectively. These grid entries are explicitly highlighted in the Normal version.

This allows us to stack the grids in the following order of rebuses and bonus entries: ASH (with FLOOR), ASH, ASH+FIR, FIR, FIR+ELM, ELM, ELM (with CANOPY). Notably, the flavor says to “stack the trunks—shifting the layers as needed,” which helps suggest that specifically the tree rebuses should be stacked on top of each other, not just every grid 7x7.

After we overlay the “tree trunks,” the flavor text then suggests looking for “overlapping branches.” This clues looking what letters match between each pair of grids, going from bottom to top. In fact, there is only *one letter* that matches for each pair of grids when properly overlaid. Extracting those letters yields the answer EFFORT.

Your Final Tree:



All complete grids with tree rebuses in green and overlapping letters in matching colors:

Level 1

A	T	E		U	P	S
S	H	Y		P	I	E
S	E	E	D	L	E	T
	F	L	O	O	R	
F	L	ASH	C	A	R	D
R	O	E		D	E	A
O	P	S		S	S	N

Across

- Consumed
- High times
- Sheepish
- Easy as ____
- Tiny start of a plant
- Elevator stop (*A ways to go!*)
- 12. Memorization tool**
- Fish eggs
- Traffic cops, briefly?
- Brief follower of special or photo
- 1040 fig.

Down

- Jerk
- Trio in Texas Hold 'em (or a dance everyone is encouraged to do in the asdf movies)
- 3. They can be batted**
- Shares online, maybe
- General store in Stardew Valley
- It typically precedes a spike
- "What's up, ____?"
- Partner of to
- Brown who wrote "The Da Vinci Code"

Level 4

F	L	U		I	K	R
O	O	P		W	E	E
E	X	T	R	A	FIR	M
		I	N	N		
N	E	G	A	T	E	S
B	A	H		I	D	O
A	R	T		N	U	N

Across

- Seasonal ailment
- Texter's agreement
- Alley-____
- Zoo ____ Mama (Diary of a Wimpy Kid catchphrase)
- 9. Like some stiff mattresses**
- Cozy evening stop
- Cancels out
- "____ humbug"
- Union statement?
- Museum of Bad ____ (Boston's own!)
- Character in "Sister Act"

Down

- Opposite of friend
- Fishy bagel topper
- Tense
- "Meow" or [Scratch]
- 5. Fermented milk drink**
- Dream stage of sleep
- It has messenger and small interfering varieties
- Jazz group, for short?
- Floppy part of a beagle
- College email ender
- "____ of a gun!"

Level 2

		F	R	E	D	
	C	R	I	M	E	A
W	ASH	E	D	O	F	F
A	C	E		T	I	A
G	O	D	T	I	E	R
S	W	O	O	N	S	
	S	M	O	G		

Across

1. Famous Flintstone or Rogers
5. Ukrainian peninsula whose largest city is Sevastopol
- 7. Rinsed clean with water**
8. High card
9. Aunt, in Acapulco
10. Above all else, in gaming terms
12. Acts like a superfan, maybe
13. Air pollution portmanteau

Down

1. One of five guaranteed by the First Amendment
2. Purge
3. Using character animations to celebrate after a Fortnite W, maybe
4. Stands up to
- 5. Major money makers**
6. Distant
7. Shows excitement, as a dog's tail
11. Also

Level 3

	N	E	O			
K	I	M	N	G		
F	E	D	O	R	A	
C	L	ASH		A	T	F
	S	E	T	S	FIR	E
		S	A	S	S	Y
			N	Y	T	

Across

1. Keanu Reeves's role in "The Matrix"
4. Groundbreaking Miami Marlins GM (first woman in any Big Four league!)
6. Part of an Indiana Jones or Blues Brothers outfit
- 8. Something between clans, perhaps**
9. Traffic cops, briefly?
- 11. Begins to burn, as Adele does to the rain**
13. Cheeky or fresh
14. Long-standing XW source

Down

1. Physics Nobel Laureate Bohr
- 2. Punctuation overused by LLMs (that I will still use anyway—sue me)**
3. Musician Yoko
4. Fast food chain selling "finger-lickin' good" buckets
5. Like meadows or some knolls
- 7. Near the start**
10. Tina of "30 Rock"
12. Light brown

Level 5

N	O	T	S			
E	D	H	ELM	S		
K	D	R	A	M	A	
O	L	E		I	F	S
	Y	E	L	L	FIR	E
		S	E	E	M	E
			T	Y	S	M

Across

- Haves and have ____
- 5. Portrayer of Andy in "The Office"**
- Squid Game or Queen of Tears, for example
- Chant heard at a fútbol game
- No ____, ands, or buts
- 12. You can't do it in a crowded building**
- Frightening note at the top of an assignment
- Texter's note of appreciation

Down

- Japanese word for cat
- Abnormally
- Long-range shots in basketball
- 4. 1965 Alabama civil rights march location**
- :)
- 8. Endorses or empowers**
- Appear
- "__ It Be"

Level 7

		P	A	L	S	
	C	A	N	O	P	Y
G	O	R	I	L	L	A
A	B	A		C	A	L
L	A	B	ELM	A	T	E
A	L	L	O	T	S	
	T	E	S	S		

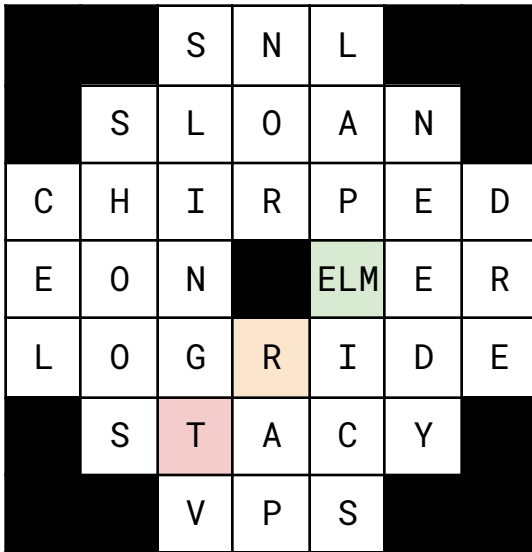
Across

- Friends
- It can throw shade (*Check out the view!*)
- Harambe, e.g., (never forget)
- Lawyers' grp.
- "Iron Man" Ripken of baseball
- 10. Olivia Rodrigo, to BTS and Nirvana, for example**
- Earmarks
- "__ of the D'Ubervilles"

Down

- "The Good Samaritan" or "The Prodigal Son"
- Alex and ____ (jewelry company)
- Memes with text over feline pictures, such as "I can has cheezburger?"
- Food fight sounds
- Metal used in blue pigments
- Harvard's rival
- Met's ball?
- 11. St. __ Fire**

Level 6



Across

1. Sketchy show, for short?
4. MIT's business school
6. Asked for a feeder to be restocked, maybe
8. Long time
9. Fudd who's "huntin' wabbits"
10. Amusement park attraction that's a splash?
12. "___, can't you see, you're just not the girl for me" (why is this song so popular)
13. Some corporate bigwigs, for short

Down

1. Streaming service that is a subsidiary of Dish Network
2. Neither's partner
3. **Hands-free audio devices attached to your jacket**
4. Tries to swat away a fly, maybe
5. Demanding attention and effort
6. Animation frame
7. Dr. ___ of the album "The Chronic"
11. Genre of music for 7-Down