

Collapsed Domes (solution)

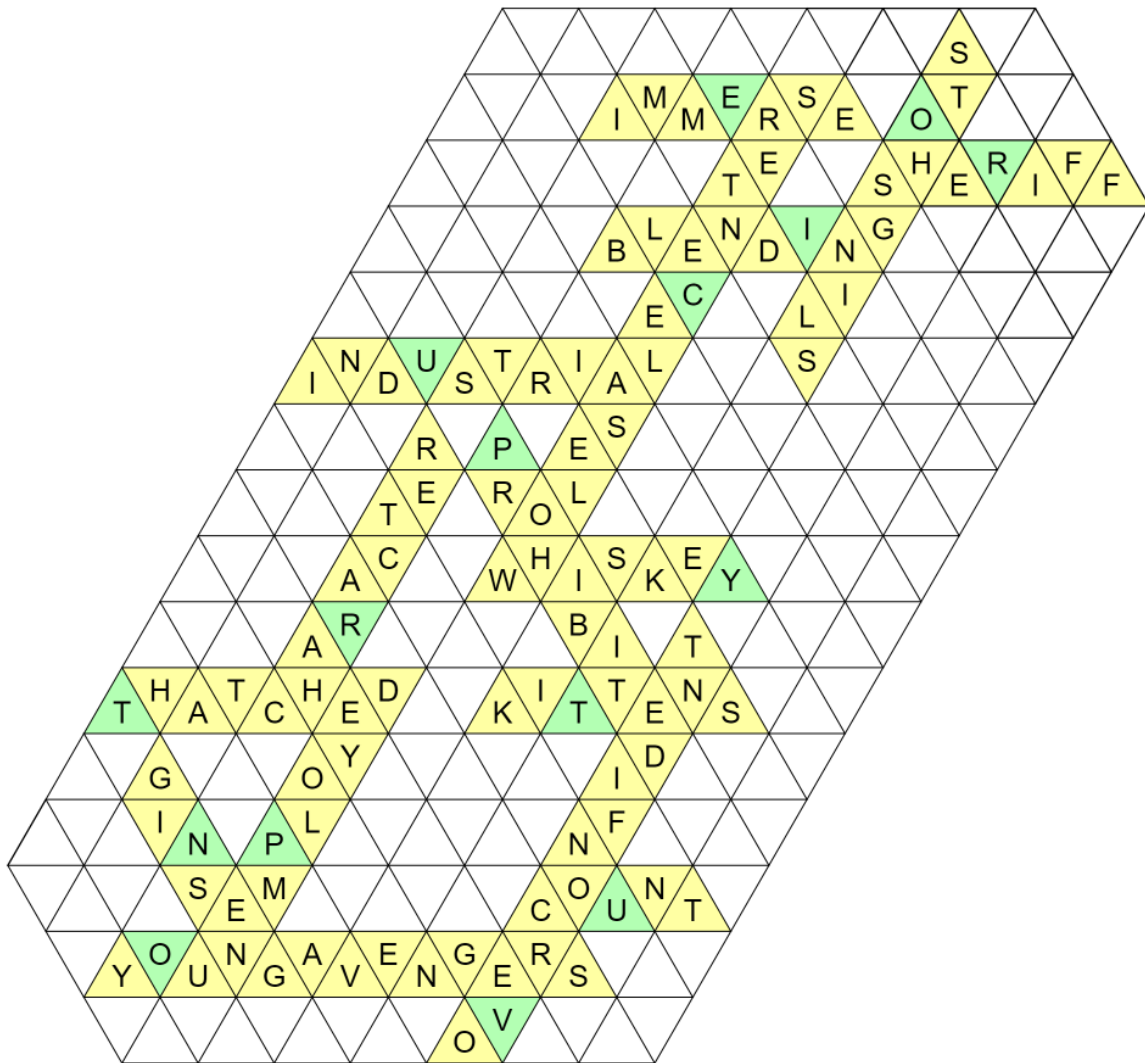
by Ong Kah Kien

This puzzle is a diagramless criss-cross. Solvers need to fit the 16 answers to the clues into the given triangular-cell grid. There are 16 given numbered extraction cells with two sets of numbers in white and black circles – the number in the white circle matches the given clue numbers and lets solvers know only that clue answer passes through that cell, while the number in the black circle gives a unique ordering for the extracted letters from those cells. Because of the triangular-cell grid, words intersect/overlap over a bigram instead of a single letter. The potential intersecting bigrams further constrain the possible fit for the answers, which also help solvers to disambiguate between potential clue answers.

The clue answers have given enumerations, and are in alphabetical order of clues. However, there is a thematic aha/twist clued by the puzzle title and hinted in the flavortext. Each of the 16 clues contains a word which has “collapsed”, or contracted like a collapsible ladder, trekking pole or tripod leg. The corresponding wordplay is that the doubled-letters in the word has been changed to a single letter instead. And this may not be immediately evident, as the clues with the collapsed words still read meaningfully. Though they would not all have a possible answer that fits their given enumeration, which is another hint that something is afoot.

The table below summarizes the clues with the expanded collapsed words and their answers, while the completed grid below shows how these answers fit and the extracted letters from each:

Clues	Answer
The process of making something become pureE (8)	BLENDING
A cartoOn often has more than one _____(9)	CHARACTER
To do an adD (5)	COUNT
A kind of dry roOt (7)	GINSENG
To steEp in something, like oil (7)	IMMERSE
Word to describe areas where BoOtS are often used for safety (10)	INDUSTRIAL
Things that come in a litTer (7)	KITTENS
Word to describe a presumptuous moOd that can sometimes end up causing an accident (13)	OVERCONFIDENT
BarRed (10)	PROHIBITED
Someone who can form a good posSe (7)	SHERIFF
These are well-established canNons in the “Angry Birds” universe (10)	SLINGSHOTS
A type of traditional house with a reEd roof (8)	THATCHED
How you are after getting canNed (10)	UNEMPLOYED
Something you might receive in a saloOn (7)	WHISKEY
Hubs where many different goOdS are gathered on a large scale (9 7)	WHOLESALECENTERS
Team of teEn Marvel superheroes (5 8)	YOUNGAVENGERS



Extracting the letters in the given cells in order yields the answer for this puzzle **OPPORTUNITY CURVE**.

Constructor's notes:

The answer for this puzzle was a particularly challenging one to think up of a thematic puzzle for, and this was one of the last puzzles written. It was only by observing the Inside Out map that I chanced upon a link/reference between the curves of the domes with this answer, and using the shape as a grid for a diagramless criss-cross. The thematic aha/twist was inspired by the Inside Out map depicting the domes as collapsed, which yielded a potential wordplay. However, there were a very limited number of collapsed words which had a meaning of the same form as its original. The clues also had to be worded in a specific way, so as to sound meaningful in their given form. That ruled out the used of self-confirming cryptic clues, and solvers were expected to use the grid fit to help disambiguate potential answers in the 1-2 cases where the clues had to be less specific. A mapping of the clue answers to the extraction cells was later added to make the grid fit easier for solvers, in case they had any incorrect clue answers. An initial idea was to extract the letters from the grid using the path of a glass crack intersecting with the answers, which would have been ideal as this method does not give away the length of the answer, the extraction cells, and the letter positions of the cells extracted. But this proved impossible with the placement of the letters in the grid.