

DRAFTY DOME (solution)

by Ong Kah Kien

The first step is to solve the given Across clues to fill the grid, since the Minion clues seem to require additional information or insights first before they can be interpreted. The table below summarizes the answers to the Across clues:

Across clues	Answers
Security org. at LAX; Pertaining to Gaul	TSA; GALLIC
A sphere, globe; World's largest ethnic group; Word with or without an apostrophe	ORB; HAN; ITS
Opposite of SW; Pick from a deck of cards; "Six Million Dollar Man" org.	NE; DRAW; OSI
In operation or operational; Las Vegas attraction that featured Borg Invasion 4D, but is now closed (abbr.); A preferred gender pronoun of Leslie Feinberg, like zie	ON; STTE; HIR
Six-point scores in football (abbr.); Pointed leatherworking tool; Road gantry toll system (abbr.)	TDS; AWL; ERP
Name and language of the only subethnic group of the Dusun in Sabah who celebrate the Lunar New Year; Chilling cube	TATANA; ICE
System software (abbr.); Toothpick alternative; Juan's affirmative	OS; FLOSS; SI
Prepared, as a bed; Flax fiber cloth	MADE; LINEN
Word stated before we forget; WWII General Rommel	LEST; ERWIN

After filling in the grid with these answers, the letters in the 5 numbered cells spell in order **SSHWS**, which via an online search will yield a thematic reference for the Saffir–Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale. This is the classification of the highest wind speeds (i.e. the relative strengths/power) of hurricanes. Hence the Wind Guardian minions referenced in the flavortext are hurricanes, but where are they hidden in the grid? Hurricanes have a naming convention based on a cyclical list of pre-identified proper names. Observing the bottom of the filled grid, there are two names that stand out – LESTER and MADELINE. Hurricane winds also spin towards the storm center in a counterclockwise direction, creating arms radiating clockwise, forming the familiar spiraling hurricane shape seen in North American hurricane tracking charts. Reading the letters in the grid in a similar counter-clockwise spiral starting from the bottom-left corner (starting with the name LESTER) until the center (excluding the extracted letters), will reveal all the 12 hidden hurricane names (both North Atlantic and Eastern Pacific hurricanes are used). These hurricanes thus correspond to the 12 given Minion clues in order. Using these clues as the required year of the hurricane (since the names are repeated in multiple years based on the cyclical lists), the hinted power, or specifically the clued SSHWS category of each hurricane can be found. Using these category numbers as 1-4 indices into the hurricane names and reading in order will yield the thematic answer and the Wind Guardian's magic **TWISTER BLAST**.

The table below summarizes the hurricane names, SSHWS categories, and the indexed letters spelling out the puzzle answer:

Minion clues (Hurricane years)	Hurricanes	SSHWS Categories	Indexed letters
2016	LESTER	4	T
1983	WINNIE	1	W
1971	PRISCILLA	3	I
2016	GASTON	4	S
2016	OTTO	3	T
1976	MADELINE	4	E
1984	CHRISTINA	2	R
1973	BRENDA	1	B
1978	FLOSSIE	2	L
1998	HOWARD	4	A
2005	STAN	1	S
2018	ALETTA	4	T

Constructor's notes:

As usual, the inspiration for this puzzle was from the starting point of which puzzle type or format would be a good reference thematically to the puzzle and/or answer. In this case, the idea for a Whirlwind (similar to [Marching Bands](#), but with one set of answers going in a spiral instead of concentric rings) crossword puzzle was very thematic, even though this was a crossword type that I had not written before. As I wanted to hide the hurricane names in the spiral as the aha, this was also not a traditional crossword, as one set of clues is not solvable. However, in terms of construction, this was even more challenging than an actual Whirlwind crossword puzzle, because the crossed spiral answers were constrained to a very limited pool of hurricane names, that could also yield the required extraction letter using its SSHWS category as an index. Furthermore, Whirlwind and Marching Bands puzzles are by nature already harder to construct, as the spiral answers are fully crossed with usually multiple Across answers, and an adjustment to a spiral answer length will impact all the other spiral answers. To provide some flexibility, I used the clue phrase as wildcard inserts, which was helpful. In the end, quite a number of abbreviations were needed, which was not so ideal, but still acceptable considering the constraints for this grid.