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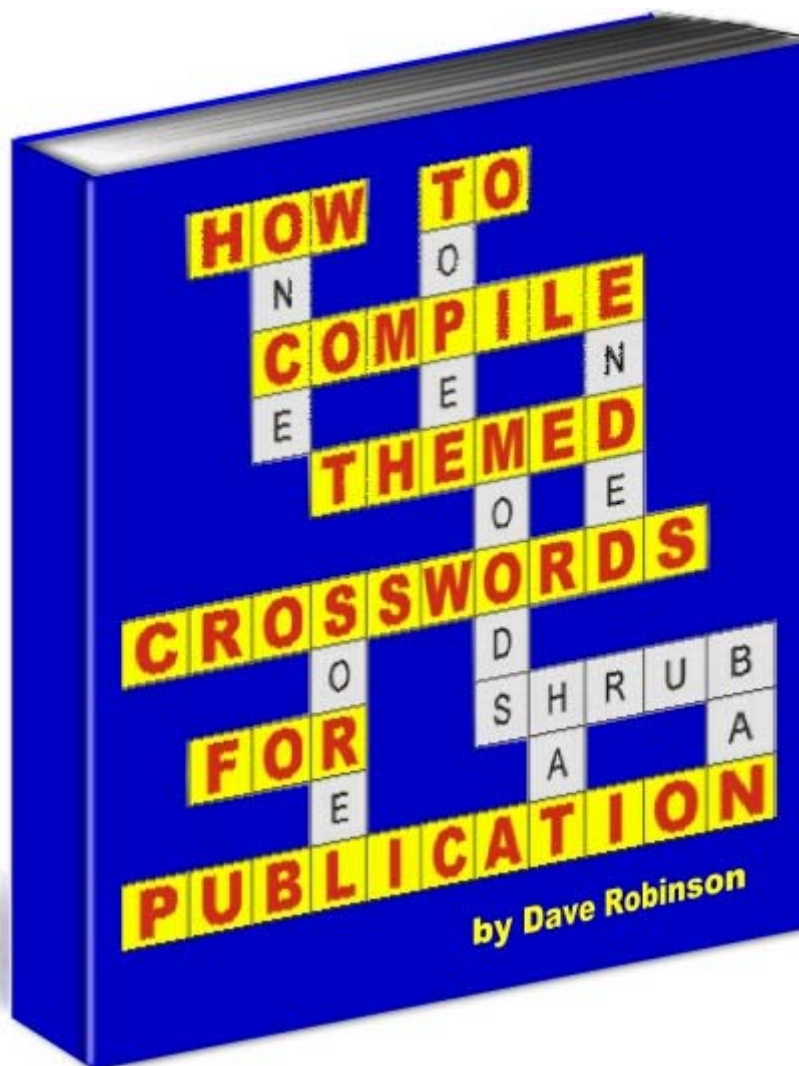
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How To Compile Themed Crosswords For Publication.

By Dave Robinson

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history word games have been popular. Readers interested in the evolution of the crossword will find some absorbing articles online and indeed in bound book form.

It is generally accepted that the crossword as we know it first appeared in the public arena around 1913. In nearly 100 years there have evolved many variations on the theme with some varieties being quite rule-bound in their presentation and traditions whilst others adopt a less stringent approach.

The home computer and the Internet have created opportunities for talented and enterprising 'amateur' compilers to make their presence felt in their own chosen field of crossword compiling.

This manual is concerned with a quite particular form of crossword, the theme or themed Crossword. These crosswords are aimed quite squarely at readers of special interest magazines, newsletters and publications. A theme crossword should educate and entertain the solver rather than hone their skills as a crossword solver.

Theme crossword content and clueing are quite different to the cryptic style crosswords we see in the broadsheet newspapers. We're interested in testing people's knowledge of their topic or theme rather than their skill in decoding clues. The only common ground is that a theme crossword should not only look good on the page when published, but follow certain style rules to ensure that users can solve them.

These 'rules' aren't definitive, and in practice may be liberally interpreted by compilers and publishers at will, but it's my experience and that of other compilers to recommend certain attributes are incorporated into your puzzles thus leading to a greater possibility of them being published.

These attributes are discussed at some length in later this manual.

All information in the manual is provided in good faith and is sound to the best of my knowledge. I welcome feedback from readers, and am quite open to learning from the experiences of others when revising this document to reflect new trends and experiences.

This manual is based on my personal experiences in making the transition from writing theme crosswords as a pastime to creating a product for commercial consumption. Individual compilers and publications will probably have their own take on the details and therefore any advice must be treated as subjective. However I believe the principles and techniques outlined hold good for all theme compilers.

It follows that the information and techniques discussed should be viewed as an informational resource and do not impart any legal or financial advice. Similarly no guarantees can be made that a reader of this publication will be fortunate enough to attract paid compiling commissions.

My experience is primarily in the United Kingdom arena, however I believe, the information to be valid for other countries with a crossword publishing tradition.

In writing this manual I was compelled to choose or even devise some words and terms when making reference to certain aspects of the crossword compiling environment. To be honest I'm not completely at ease with some but they serve their purpose until such time as I can devise or readers suggest something better.

There aren't many such terms, but I'll introduce them now to avoid any possibility of confusion later.