

Holiday Hoopla 2020

Congratulations! If you're reading this, that means the hunt is over. Great job to every single person who solved anything at all! (And even if you didn't solve anything, good job!) Now comes the fun part... The wrap up!

Congratulations to the top five teams (all of these teams solved all the puzzles without any hints)!

1. Turtle Curlers
2. MysteryFunShack#1
3. Chopped Dough
4. The Lame Jar
5. sticky mittens

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Grease? No...

Answer: TINSEL

Ok, the title is weird, but please just hear us out. When you say it out loud, it sounds like you're saying... "Greece." Right? No? Sorry.

That reasoning is also a nod to how you solve the puzzle. The first letter of each line is a Greek letter. If you don't know Greek (like us), you'll have to look this next part up and figure out how the letters are pronounced.

When you say all the letters together, you should hear something that sounds like "TINSEL."

Letter	Letter Name	Letter Pronunciation
τ	Tau	"t"
ι	Iota	"i"
ν	Nu	"n"
σ	Sigma	"s"
ε	Epsilon	"e"
λ	Lambda	"l"

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Tangled Terms

Answer: EIGHT

The obligatory puzzle hunt crossword. We're sorry.

This one is pretty straightforward.

Across

2. Letter on dreidel: put one in

Shin

4. Potato pancake

Latke

6. Top that wins you money

Dreidel

8. Chocolate Coins

Gelt

Down

1. Letter on dreidel: do nothing

Nun

3. The highest candle that is used to light the others

Shamash

5. Candle holder, 8 low, 1 higher

Menorah

7. Letter on dreidel: gets the pot

Gimmel

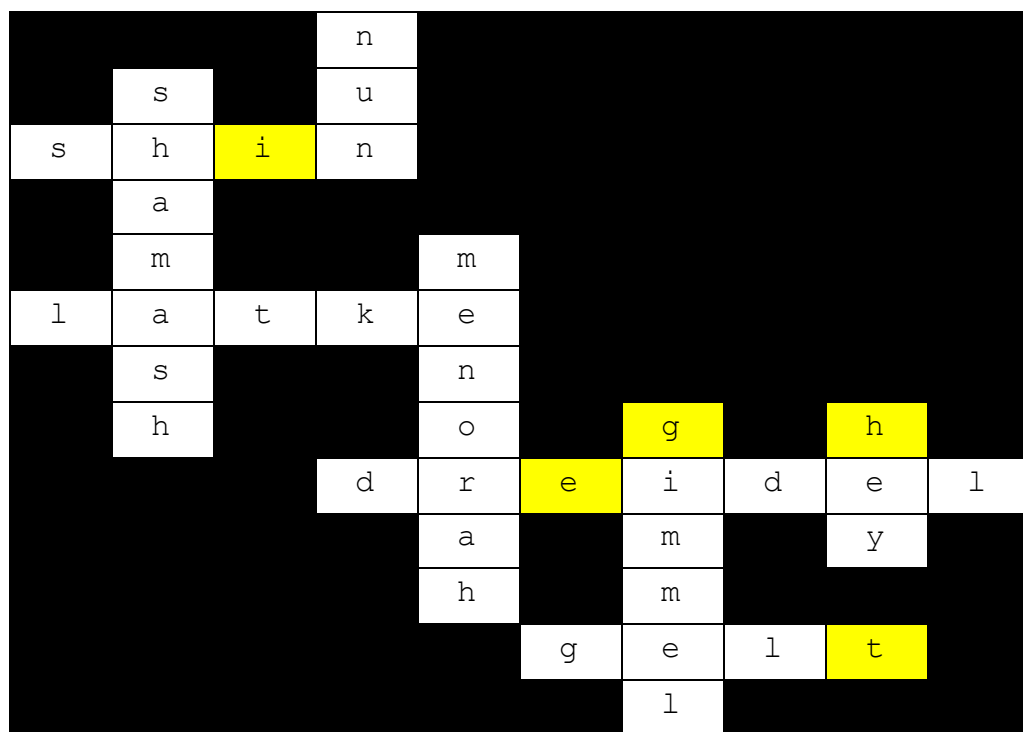
9. Letter on dreidel: take half

Hey

Then, once you have that, you'll see that certain letters are highlighted. These letters anagram to "EIGHT."

(Scroll down to see the completed crossword. We had to put it on a new page, or it would be split weirdly.)

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Caroling Craze

Answer: SOLSTICE

This was the first puzzle we wrote for Holiday Hoopla. Sisi had this idea as soon as we decided to make the hunt at all. We used indexing since it's a very common extraction tactic. The most annoying part of this puzzle was writing out the letters (credit to pdf editing, really helped us out there). The original title was "Caroling Conundrum," but we changed it to "Caroling Craze" after a test solver thought the puzzle was an actual conundrum puzzle.

To solve this puzzle, you need to look at the letters within the caroler groups. When you anagram the letters from each group, you'll get different Christmas carols:

Jingle Bells
Carol of the Bells
Santa Claus is Coming to Town
Deck the halls
Joy to the World
Silent Night
Twelve Days of Christmas
O Christmas Tree

Next, you index! Count the number of carolers in each group, and take that letter of the corresponding carol. This should get you "s," "o," "l," "s," "t," "i," "c," and "e." Put those together, and you get "SOLSTICE"!

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Angsty Emails

Answer: CHRISTMASTREEFARM

This was originally just going to be an email feud where you solve by doing something with the words. But then, we decided to make it Taylor-Swift-themed. Since Taylor Swift had a Christmas song, we just HAD to make a puzzle about it.

Each of the underlined phrases in the emails is a Taylor Swift lyric with one word changed.

1. "There's nothing I do better than revenge" → "There's nothing I do better than **crying**"
2. "I've never been anywhere cold as you" → "I've never been anywhere **happy** as you"
3. "I shake it off" → "I **rope** it off"
4. "You're tied together with a smile but you're coming undone" → "You're tied together with a **issue** but you're coming undone"
5. "This ain't a fairytale" → "This ain't a **story**"
6. "You're untouchable" → "You're **touchable**"
7. "I said remember this moment in the back of my mind. The time we stood with our shaking hands the crowds in the stands went wild" → "I said remember this moment in the back of my mind. The time we stood with our shaking hands the crowds in the stands went **murderous**"
8. "Somebody tells you they love you, you wanna believe them" → "Somebody tells you they **abhor** you, you wanna believe them"
9. "Can't breathe whenever you're gone, can't turn back now I'm haunted" → "Can't breathe whenever you're gone, can't turn back now I'm **stupid**"
10. "Standing in a nice dress staring at the sunset" → "Standing in a **terrible** dress staring at the sunset"
11. "You need to hear me out and they said, 'speak now'" → "You need to hear me out and they said, 'speak **right**'"
12. "I'm sick and tired of your attitude. I'm feeling like I don't know you" → "I'm sick and **exhausted** of your attitude. I'm feeling like I don't know you"
13. "The parties were tasteful, if a little loud" → "The parties were tasteful, if a little **embarrassing**"

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14. "I don't like your little games, don't like your tilted stage, the role you made me play. Of the fool. No I don't like you" → "I don't like your little games, don't like your tilted **face**, the role you made me play. Of the fool. No I don't like you"
15. "You're so gorgeous, I can't say anything to your face" → "You're so **annoying**, I can't say anything to your face"
16. "It isn't love, it isn't hate, it's just indifference" → "It isn't love, it isn't hate, it's just **revenge**"
17. "Devils roll the dice, angels roll their eyes" → "Devils roll the dice, angels roll their **mice**"

When you take the first letter of each incorrect word, it spells out "CHRISTMASTREEFARM".

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Dancing Drawings

Answer: TCHAIKOVSKY

The idea for this puzzle came to Sisi while researching movies for Movie Night. Sisi saw The Nutcracker and the Four Realms movie in a list of winter themed movies. Immediately we remembered the Nutcracker, and how it's a great winter themed ballet. So obviously, we had to make a puzzle based on it.

And these drawings are actual masterpieces, aren't they? Vivi is sorry.

So, going back to the puzzle. Each of the drawings represents a song.

1. Miniature Overture
2. The Christmas Tree
3. Dance of the Sugarplum Fairy
4. The Kingdom of Sweets
5. The Battle
6. Waltz of the Flowers
7. Waltz of the Snowflakes
8. Pas de Deux

Now, we go to the second page. When you trace out each of the song names, you get letters.

(Sorry, you have to scroll down because we couldn't get the whole chart on one page and it just looked weird)

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T	A	I	N	I	M	T	L	A	W	T	H	E	C	H	Z	X
U	A	T	H	E	K	Z	R	O	O	E	Y	L	Q	R	E	A
R	M	L	E	B	B	O	W	O	T	E	E	A	U	I	E	T
E	N	T	T	A	N	F	P	A	Z	R	R	N	Q	S	M	L
O	Q	O	U	T	O	T	H	E	F	T	S	A	M	T	N	O
V	Z	L	P	H	H	F	D	E	L	O	M	O	F	K	T	M
E	R	T	U	R	E	L	L	A	O	D	F	A	S	W	E	E
X	Y	Z	U	T	K	S	R	E	W	G	L	U	W	R	A	L
E	O	F	T	L	U	M	F	H	G	N	T	Y	E	O	Y	T
C	O	Y	H	P	I	O	A	B	A	I	S	T	E	O	N	Y
N	K	A	E	R	F	Y	I	C	V	K	L	I	U	Q	W	G
A	B	U	S	A	U	C	R	Y	A	E	E	H	T	F	O	I
D	E	D	U	G	A	N	Y	A	Y	H	S	F	D	E	Z	H
T	D	E	U	X	A	T	T	O	P	T	N	W	A	L	T	U
I	S	A	D	N	A	K	L	Y	O	L	O	J	R	T	K	A
F	A	Y	O	N	N	O	X	Z	M	Q	W	H	I	S	I	M
F	P	L	N	D	W	K	W	N	O	P	F	L	A	K	E	S

When you anagram these letters, they spell out "COMPOSER," which is a clue phrase for the answer "TCHAIKOVSKY", since Tchaikovsky composed The Nutcracker.

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Movie Night

Answer: BLIZZARD

Based on your difficulty ratings, we probably should've switched this one with Common Ground in terms of difficulty, but oh well.

First, you put all the letters in each popcorn box in the order of the numbers, and you get something like this:

1. Mpg Zsetz Ghtkxau
2. Gwtdlihtg
3. Zwqn Pnvs Erekegg, Sx'l Vptswmfu
4. Mpg Cegmi Evenlm 2
5. Awoo Eehvg 4
6. Xth
7. Awnshtmm
8. Wmeu xax Pcvpl

Now, you decode each name (individually! we almost messed up the whole puzzle by not decoding each movie name individually!) using the Vigenère cipher (because of the "vinegar" in the flavor text) with keyword "ticket". Once you've decoded the letters, you'll have these holiday movie names:

1. The Polar Express
2. Northpole
3. Good Luck Charlie, It's Christmas!
4. The Santa Clause 2
5. Home Alone 4
6. Elf
7. Holidate
8. Deck the Halls

Next, you find the release dates of each of these movies:

1. 2004
2. 2014
3. 2011
4. 2002
5. 2002
6. 2003

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7. 2020

8. 2006

The next part is what confused a lot of teams. You take the release date modulo 26 (flavor text: MODulate), and then convert that to a letter using the standard system (a=1, b=2, c=3, ..., z=26=0). We didn't include the actual number "26" in the flavor text, because we figured it was fairly intuitive.

The numbers mod 26 are:

1. 2

2. 12

3. 9

4. 0

5. 0

6. 1

7. 18

8. 4

Then, you convert them to letters. When you do that, you should get "BLIZZARD".

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We Love Talking Turtles

Answer: PEPPERMINT

Ah, yes. Vivi's pride and joy.

So, this puzzle was entirely based on the flavor text idea of Mario saying "It's a-ffine!" That was the entire idea. We know, it's a bad joke, and we're sorry. We saw the chance and we grabbed it. (You know, because, like, "It's-a-me! Mario!")

So now that you've figured out that the puzzle is an affine cipher, you need an a and b value to decode the affine. These are given to you by the flavor text as 3 and 4, respectively, and then you go to your favorite cipher solver and plug it in.

Now, you get a weird looking mix of numbers and letters that should be something like:

```
Lu8g8
Wa68o
Do9key Ko9g
(1,3,4) (2,5)ach
7ar8o
Da8sy
Bowse6
Yosh8
Walu8g8
(10)oad(2,5) (10) (10) (2,5)
```

Each of those lines is the name of a Mario character with some letters missing. The complete names are:

```
Luigi
Wario
Donkey Kong
Peach
Mario
Daisy
Bowser
Yoshi
Waluigi
Toadette
```

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When you look closer, the "i"s are all replaced by "8"s, the "r"s are all replaced by "6"s, the "n"s are all replaced by "9"s, the "p"s are all replaced by "1"s, "3"s, and "4"s, and so on. Putting these missing letters in order, you get:

1-P
2-E
3-P
4-P
5-E
6-R
7-M
8-I
9-N
10-T

So the answer is "PEPPERMINT"!

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Not Morse Code

Answer: HANUKKAHLIGHTS

If you REALLY want to know, this puzzle was written 90% out of spite. We've tried solving puzzles with morse code SO MANY TIMES, but that's rarely ever the solution (this is @ a crossword-esque puzzle that we never solved but spent WAY too long working on). So, Vivi initially set out with the idea of writing something that was solved with morse code. But that was kind of boring.

The responses to this puzzle were so mixed--people either loved it or hated it, but there was no in between.

So, we started by adding the morse code touch to this puzzle, just as a little tip of the hat to any teams who tried using morse code to solve it. When you take each black square as one unit, and then take each row to be its own letter, it spells out "WE TOLD YOU SO."

Now we were tasked with making this into an actual puzzle. We wanted to use morse code elements, so here's how you get the ACTUAL answer:

You add all the numbers in each row, except the numbers immediately after a block of three black squares. The numbers you get, when converted to letters (A=1, B=2, C=3, ..., Z=26), spell out "HANUKKAHLIGHTS" (which is not a clue phrase--sorry to everyone who thought it was!).

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Mutiny

Answer: TWELVE

You may think that you hate this puzzle more than anyone else possibly could--you would be wrong. We hate this puzzle more than literally anyone. It is the worst thing we have ever created and still haunts us.

Originally, this puzzle was wayyy easier. It was the easiest puzzle (rivaling Grease? No...). Here's the original version if anyone wants to try to solve it: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RHzzTmJo2_0Q-ycr5XSttZOete4riMOa/view?usp=sharing. But we already had too many easy puzzles, and we needed another hard one, so we had to think of a new puzzle, and accidentally made it one of the hardest puzzles in the whole hunt.

So we rewrote it, and accidentally missed a bunch of illegal moves. Oops. Sorry to all our test-solvers!

The night of December 26th (aka, the night before the actual puzzle hunt), we were literally on a call together until 1 a.m., just trying to rewrite this puzzle because it wasn't necessarily solvable. Now that we fixed it, it's just a bit weird. And it was crazy hard to write, since every mistake could potentially change the rest of the puzzle.

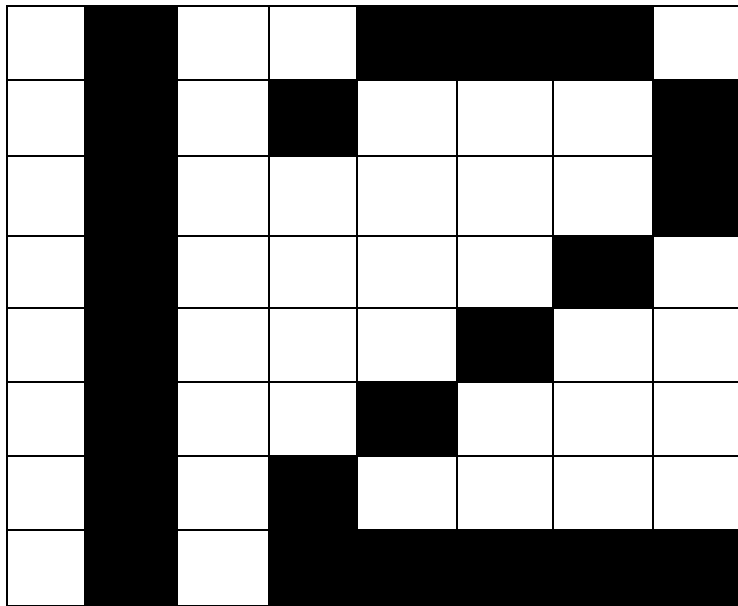
And yes, there was still one move wrong, but it was thankfully at the end of the puzzle so it didn't change too much and people were still able to solve it.

Moving on from us ranting about how much we despise this puzzle, here's how to actually solve it. We knew we wanted to make something that had to do with mapping out certain spots of the chess board (We're unoriginal). However, this is a very easy puzzle, and we wanted to change it a bit. We remembered something we'd read about "cheating chess," and decided to incorporate that type of concept into the puzzle.

The body of the puzzle contains the moves for White and Black pieces. If you play through the moves, you'll see that some of them are illegal. For example, there are pieces moving in ways they aren't allowed to move in, white moving a black piece, or white taking a white piece (therefore "mutiny"). When

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you map out the end positions of these illegal moves, the board will look something like this:



Do you see it? It looks like the number 12, so the answer is "TWELVE." Because, well, "twelve days of Christmas."

Also, the flavor text seems a bit strange at first, but you have to take each phrase literally and then it makes sense. The first part said, "pretty sure that's not how chess works," and that's very much correct. The phrase points to the illegal moves being important. The second part said "the ends will justify the means," which is also fairly literal. The end (singular, as is used in the typical version of the phrase) is the answer, and the means are the illegal moves. And, "ends" is plural, meaning that you're using the end of more than one thing. Put that together, and it tells you that you get to the answer by using the ends of the illegal moves. Basically, it makes sense, but just requires a bit more thinking than some of the other puzzles.

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Common Ground

Answer: DIADELOSREYES

So if you just read the Mutiny solution (We know. We're sorry.), you probably saw that there was an old version of the chess puzzle. The answer for that is kind of connected to the answer for Common Ground (it was just "REYES").

When we set out to make this puzzle hunt happen, we already knew that these puzzles weren't just going to be focused on Christmas. We tried to include a variety of holidays and themes, and we hope to include more if we manage to pull this off again next year (hopefully it'll be less chaotic!). So, when we started to make this puzzle, we already knew we wanted the answer to be "DIA DE LOS REYES." Now came the hard part: actually making the puzzle.

One of our original puzzle ideas was basically just the phrase "something related to an airport," since so many people fly and travel during the holidays (well, when there isn't a pandemic) and so we pulled that idea to make this tragedy of a puzzle.

Basically, if you put the terminals in order of the corresponding times from earliest to latest, it spells out "THREE KINGS DAY."

Now, you read the flavor text one more time, which says that you shouldn't speak English. When you map out all the flights listed (yes, those are all airport codes), they all fly over Spain. So, this means you have to find the Spanish name for the holiday, which is "DIADELOSREYES."

Shoutout to all the teams that anagrammed the letters that spelled "THREEKINGSDAY" without actually trying to solve it, and then just looked up words relating to that which fit the answer. Or, to the teams who just looked up the date of "January 6, 2021" and found the holiday that matched. Those are both perfectly valid solutions.

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Here are all the hints!

- ❖ Angsty Emails
 - Now we got bad blood. You know it used to be mad love.
 - Maybe we should... put the words in order?
- ❖ Caroling Craze
 - Can you put them back in order?
 - Count your carolers...
- ❖ Common Ground
 - What's the common ground covered by these flights?
 - Which comes first?
- ❖ Dancing Drawings
 - A tough nut to crack! Nutcracker!
 - Trace a path and it'll all make sense
- ❖ Grease? No...
 - These letters sure aren't english.
 - That meal doesn't sound too good.
- ❖ Movie Night
 - Many things can be hidden within the vinegar. Oh, wait, did we spell vinegar wrong?
 - Modulating your volume can be difficult... especially when you're waiting for your favorite movie to be released.
- ❖ Mutiny
 - No one likes a cheater.
 - The ends of the middles.
- ❖ Not Morse Code
 - It doesn't ADD up...
 - After the three... Three of what? Three black squares?
- ❖ Tangled Terms
 - The internet will be your best friend for this puzzle.
 - Anagrams are fun.
- ❖ We Love Talking Turtles
 - A-ffine! Affine!
 - Mario's friends are always there to support him.

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Our Favorite Wrong Answers:

Yes, we could see all your answer submissions. Not discouraging guessing was one of the best decisions we made when creating this hunt.

Some puzzles didn't have very many funny answers, so we didn't include those here. But, Mutiny has more than enough good wrong answers to make up for that. Oddly enough, the answer to Mutiny was not "SAUTEED".

The correct answers are in parenthesis, and anything in bold is our commentary.

❖ **Caroling Craze (SOLSTICE)**

➤ JINGLEBELLSCAROLOFTHEBELLSANTACLAUSISCOMINGTOTOWNDECKT
HEHALLSJOYTOTHEWORLD
SILENTNIGHTTWELVEDAYSOFCHRISTMASTO
CHRISTMASTREE

■ "No, it's not like there might be another step!"

❖ **Angsty Emails (CHRISTMASTREEFARM)**

➤ KITTY

➤ And now, all by the same team who guessed every single Taylor Swift-related phrase except the song that's **ACTUALLY ABOUT A HOLIDAY** (and a Shakespeare sonnet, because why not?)...

- DEAR JOHN
- CARDIGAN
- FOURTEEN
- JOHN HARDING
- BETTY
- AUGUST
- 1989
- FOLKLORE
- LOVER
- RED
- SPEAK NOW
- FEARLESS
- LOOK WHAT YOU MADE ME DO
- REPUTATION

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- GORGEOUS
- TAYLOR MOMSEN
- SHAKESPEARE
- SHAKESPEARE SONNET ONE
- HOUSE ON THE COAST
- ❖ **Movie Night (BLIZZARD)**
 - HEELFLIP
 - PHAROAH
 - SCRPZXOYFTOUXWHUHVOVUUGWYOV
- ❖ **We Love Talking Turtles (PEPPERMINT)**
 - CORNBREAD
 - CRABTREE
 - CRABAPPLES
 - CRABSPIDER
- ❖ **Not Morse Code (HANUKKAHLIGHTS)**
 - WALNUTS
- ❖ **Mutiny (TWELVE)--Brace yourselves. This puzzle had a LOT of funny wrong answers.**
 - **One team submit these five answers in a row:**
 - CABBAGEFACE
 - FACADEFACED
 - FACADE
 - DECADEADDED
 - DECADEAHEAD
 - BUDAPEST
 - "Just like Budapest all over again."
 - "You and I remember Budapest very differently."
 - CONSEQUENTIALISM
 - SAUTEED
 - MINCE PIE
 - This was when we gave up.
 - MACHIARELLI
 - HEDGEPIG
 - **Um? How did so many teams get these answers?**
 - BATTLEOFCHRISTMASISLAND
 - CHRISTMASISLAND
 - THEBATTLEOFCHRISTMASISLAND
 - MACKINAC
 - FORTMACKINAC

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➤ **These two puns:**

- ITCAMEUPONAMIDKNIGHTCLEAR
- OHOLYKNIGHT

➤ SEAWOLF

➤ GEORGEWASHINGTON

➤ CROSSINGTHEDELAWARE

- **Seriously, how do you get these answers?**

➤ WETHREEPAWNS

➤ PAWNSWILLJUSTIFYTHEMEANS

➤ ALLIWANTFORCHRISTMASISCLUE

➤ SNOWBLOWER

❖ **Common Ground (DIADELOSREYES)**

➤ WAROFTHEROSES

- **"Yes, that is a logical holiday-themed answer"**

➤ MANOFTHEEARTH

➤ ELFONTHESHELF

➤ **There are two types of people...**

- JOYTOTHEWORLD
- ENDOFTHEWORLD

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People this couldn't have happened without:

- Matthew
 - Thank you so much Matthew! We definitely couldn't have run this hunt without your help. From setting up the leaderboard to finding us test-solvers to test-solving yourself to fixing the leaderboard when we repeatedly broke it, we really appreciate everything that you've helped us with!
- Ellie
 - Test solver! Ok Ellie -- thank you so much. All the puzzles would be weird and probably unsolvable without your feedback. Thank you for dedicating your free time (and civics-paper-writing-time) to solving the tragedies that we tried calling "puzzles."
- Julie
 - Julie! Thank you so much! Always guessing how to solve the puzzle immediately, then circling back to it 5 minutes later after every other avenue had been exhausted... Thank you for spending your time solving our puzzles and helping us make them better!
- Vishal
 - Thank you Vishal! We really, really appreciate you spending the time that you could've used to solve real puzzles to solve our "puzzles" instead. Your feedback is one of the only reasons this puzzle hunt was actually possible.
- Zain
 - Poor Zain, sacrificing yourself to the pitfalls of Mutiny all alone at first... Your feedback on Common Ground made it actually solve-able! Thank you Zain!
- Laura
 - Thank you Laura! You helped these puzzles make actual sense to solvers, and this hunt wouldn't have been the same without your help. Thank you for giving us your time!
- Ethan
 - Ethan! Thank you! You helped us so much with trying to get the leaderboard actually working! We really

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appreciate you being willing to spend your time helping Holiday Hoopla's leaderboard get up and running!

- (and Adam, who we didn't actually meet, but who said that the Mutiny solution looked like a giraffe and led us to consider changing the answer to "GIRAFFE")
 - You are a legend, Adam.

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Extra

First of all, shoutout to Team Cheatahs, because they went FULL Sherlock-Holmes-mode on Mutiny. Like, almost 700 lines of code and a full simulator that plays through the game, written in HTML, CSS, and Javascript. We basically sat there in shock for about 10 minutes looking at their simulator and code, because WOW.

One day, we'll learn how to code a professional website and not just strange-looking unpublished websites about orangutans. This was not that day. So, we just want to say thank you for being patient with us! We know there were a lot of hiccups, and we really appreciate you waiting it out!

Quick P.S.A.: We have decided that ":)" is a new type of punctuation. Approximately half of all our sentences that we wrote and sent people on Slack ended with ":)". We are very sorry to anyone who had to deal with that.

Puzzle Stats!

	Greas e? No...	Tangle d Terms	Carol in g Craze	Angst y Email s	Dancin g Drawin gs	Movie Night	We Love Talkin g Turtle s	Not Morse Code	Mutiny	Common Ground	Total
Total Solves:	103	100	87	79	94	57	74	40	10	74	718
Total Attempts :	241	254	177	158	302	220	263	127	666	220	2628
% Correct	42.73 85892 1	39.370 07874	49.1525 4237	50	31.125 82781	25.909 09091	28.136 88213	31.496 06299	1.5015 01502	33.636 36364	27.321 15677

(Congratulations to everyone who contributed to the 656 wrong answers for Mutiny. That's a lot of words to think of that aren't "TWELVE.")

We're going to try to pull this off again next year, but we'll need your help to do that. Could you please fill out this feedback form for us: <https://forms.gle/SjO7mKiLdHsWoBYCA?>

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Finally, thank you to everyone who participated. This hunt definitely couldn't have happened without you!