



Charity Cryptic Christmas Crossword 2024

set by Chopin - annotated solutions



Across

- 1 Nearly almost bedtime (4)
NIGHT. Nearly is our definition. 'bedtime' is synonymous with NIGHT and the word 'almost' means we need to lose the last letter.
- 3 How Grandfather's hands are supposed to move (9)
CLOCKWISE. This is a cryptic definition clue. On the surface, we're thinking of poor old Grandad, who maybe has arthritis - but a second reading refers to hands on a grandfather clock and their direction of travel.
- 9 Shy lady excitedly embraces love for festive occasions (4,4)
HOLY DAYS. An anagram (indicated by 'excitedly') of 'Shy lady' which then 'embraces' O for love (love being a synonym for nil or zero). 'festive occasions' is our definition.
- 10 Before church, sister takes a hint (6)
NUANCE. A common abbreviation for 'church' in crosswords is CE, as in Church of England. The word 'before' suggests we need to put something in front of it. That is another word for 'sister' - in this case NUN - which 'then takes a' meaning we insert the letter A. Our definition is 'hint'.
- 11 Gonzo's role scripted at last - I see chickens? Not half! (7)
DICKENS. Sometimes we need a little general knowledge to complete a cryptic, and here, it really helps if you've seen Muppets' Christmas Carol where Gonzo's role (our definition) is Charles DICKENS. 'scripted at last' tells us to look at the last letter of 'scripted' (D), 'I' gives us I, and 'see' is the phonetic spelling for the letter C. That all gives us DIC - so far, so good! Our remaining letters, KENS, come from the word 'chickens' with half removed (ie 'not half').
- 13 Cried as one in nativity's late, poorly in bed (7)
BLEATED. On the surface, this clue tells us that one unlucky child is sick and missing the Christmas show. The clue begins with the definition and is actually referring to the lamb, one of the creatures traditionally in the nativity. 'late' is anagram fodder, and the anagram is indicated by 'poorly'. The final two words tell us to insert that mini anagram (LEAT) inside the word BED.

- 15 Wise men and women hold court indoors (7)
DOCTORS. We're referring to the nativity again here. The definition is a little whimsical but true! As for the wordplay, we need to know court can be abbreviated to CT. The rest is slightly tricky. We need to 'hold' CT 'in' the word 'doors'.
- 16 Looks at ingredients of turkey escalopes (4)
EYES. Our definition is 'Looks at'. You will find EYES hidden inside the phrase 'turKEY EScalopes', which is indicated by 'ingredients of'.
- 19 Deer hates appearing red-nosed at first, self-confident in the end (4)
HART. Our solution is another name for a deer, but the surface is making us think of one specific reindeer, teased by his colleagues 'at first' - and it's these words which indicate an acrostic of 'Hates Appearing Red-nosed' - giving us HAR. 'self-confident in the end' is the letter T and completes both the story and our solution.
- 20 Like loveless editor, drunk on a donkey perhaps (7)
ASTRIDE. Poor Ed! 'Like' and AS are synonymous. 'Loveless' (love being a synonym for nil or zero) tells us to remove O from the word 'editor', before it is scrambled into TRIDE, indicated by 'drunk'. The definition features the word 'perhaps' because it is an example of being astride; you could be astride many different things.
- 23 Festive celebration starts off nicely, especially when you are dancing (3,4)
NEW YEAR. Our definition is 'festive celebration'. We take the 'starts off' the words 'Nicely', 'Especially', 'When' and 'You' to give us NEW Y. Another mini anagram follows: 'are' providing the fodder and 'dancing' telling us to create the anagram.
- 24 Apart from one star, decorations embargoed - reluctantly to begin with (7)
ASUNDER. 'Apart' is our definition and 'from' provides a link between our definition and the wordplay. 'one' is simply A, and star gives us SUN. We end with a brief acrostic - Decorations Embargoed Reluctantly (DER), indicated by 'to begin with'.
- 26 Carol's night arranging tinsel (6)
SILENT. Good old Carol getting her decorations up! This is a simple anagram of 'tinsel' indicated by 'arranging'. The definition written less succinctly would be 'in the famous carol, how is the night described?'. Note that we can use Carol with an uppercase C (to suggest a person) when the definition requires carol with a lowercase c because the word 'Carol' appears at the beginning of the clue sentence.
- 27 No room here once, sadly how trouble begins for baby Jesus? (8)
INNOCENT. The surface may lead us to read 'No room here once' as one phrase but there are two things happening: 'No room here' refers to INN, while 'once sadly' tells us to create an anagram of 'once' (OCEN). 'how trouble begins' is T, and 'for' is a link between wordplay and definition. 'baby Jesus?' is a definition, by example, of an innocent. The question mark is one way to indicate definition by example.
- 29 Treat with endless food arranged for couple's date (3,3,3)
TEA FOR TWO. Bottomless brunch anyone? This is slightly tricky anagram where we have to do a little extra work for the fodder. 'Treat' is normal fodder, 'with' is abbreviated to W, and 'endless food' provides FOO. We end up with TREAT W FOO which is jumbled up, as indicated by 'arranged'. Again, 'for' is the link word and our definition comes at the end.
- 30 Start to mime Little Donkey for midnight service (4)
MASS. 'Start to mime' indicates the letter M. Little Donkey is ASS. 'Little' could be superfluous, but here may refer to the fact that the word 'ass' is shorter than 'donkey' - as well as tying to the theme. 'for' is linking; the definition is straightforward.



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Down

- 1 Hideaway that is for hanky-panky (6)
NOOKIE. 'Hideaway' is NOOK. 'that is' gives us a little Latin 'id est' or as it's more commonly written IE. 'hanky-panky' is the def. There are many possible synonyms but this clue is helped by keeping a similar tone between definition and solution.
- 2 Flamboyant granny empty inside - adopting a ... (3)
GAY. We begin with our definition as adjective, lesser used in the 21st century, but not quite archaic yet! We had poor Grandad earlier, and now here's poor lonely granny. 'empty inside' means we remove all the letters inside the word, resulting in GY. 'adopting' then instructs us to refill with A. The elipses at the end of this clue link this surface to the next one..
- 4 ... girl from Los Angeles with only two dollars (4)
LASS. ... where we find a happy ending! 'girl' is our definition which we get 'from' abbreviating Los Angeles to LA (no need for that to be indicated, as the abbreviation itself is synonymous). 'with' is asking you to add what follows on the end. The dollar sign is an S, therefore, 'only two dollars' provides the SS we need.
- 5 Exotic dance left one aflame during carol service (6)
CANDLE. A mostly straight-forward anagram of DANCE and L for left. The rest is definition. The surface, however, tells quite another story!
- 6 Singing 4d, 14d, 30a, 16a, 2d, 25d, 1a, 19a may cause someone to mistakenly exclaim this (11)
WHAMAGEDDON. The puzzle within the puzzle! The key to this rather silly joke is 'Singing' which suggests a sound-a-like clue. Put together all the solutions to those clues into a sentence and read it out loud. For anyone unfamiliar: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whamageddon>
- 7 Caroller on vacation in Ely, perhaps, with cuddly toy stashed away (8)
SECRETED. Ely cathedral is surely beautiful at Christmas! 'Caroller on vacation' means that we should 'vacate' the word by removing the letters inside, which provides CR. 'in Ely, perhaps' instructs us to put CR inside SEE (Ely is an example of a see). 'with' connects the final part, which is a lovely 'cuddly toy' or TED. 'stashed away' is the definition.
- 8 Surprise police turning up for festive snack (7)
WALNUTS. 'Suprise' is STUN and 'police' is LAW. 'turning up' instructs us to reverse the order of STUNLAW to WALNUTS. It's relevant that 'turning up' is used - this is a down clue, so we're flipping the word vertically in the grid. 'festive snack' is the definition.
- 12 Shy folk went off to get sage advice (4,7)
KNOW THYSELF. 'sage advice' indeed. This is an anagram of SHY FOLK WENT, indicated by 'off'. The link between wordplay and definition is 'to get' and the definition is at the end of the clue.
- 14 Description of Wenceslas' snow - cold, right? Wispy, boundless? (5)
CRISP. Some basic knowledge of Christmas carols needed here, specifically "Good King Wenceslas". For the definition, we have to pick one of the adjectives used to describe snow in the song: "deep and crisp and even" - fortunately only one of those is 5 letters long. The wordplay starts with two common abbreviations, C for 'cold' and R for 'right'. 'Wispy' is 'boundless', so we remove it's bounds (ie letters at either end of the word) to get ISP.
- 17 Find opportunity to capture Marceau's art for Spooner (4,4)
MAKE TIME. 'Find opportunity' is the definition. Spoonerisms (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spoonerism>) ask us to swap the first sounds or letters of a phrase to make another one. 'to capture' is TAKE, 'Marceau's art' is MIME, referencing the famous French mime artist. When we ask the notorious Spooner to attempt that, he might mistakenly utter 'MAKE TIME'.
- 18 Trump maybe forfeits passport here (7)
PRESENT. Trump for better or worse is an example of a PRESIDENT. The instruction 'forfeits passport', mean we then remove a word that is a synonym for 'passport' - in this case ID. The definition is 'here', as if we're taking the school register.
- 21 Trees American ordered for festive period (6)
EASTER. This is a Christmas crossword and that's what the surface is suggesting, but it's a trick. 'ordered' tells us to make an anagram from TREES and A (a common abbreviation of American). 'for' once again provides a link between wordplay and definition, which in this case is 'festive period'.
- 22 Sport ridiculous ties around November more than once (6)
TENNIS. The definition is 'Sport'. There's a tricky shift here from the verb in the surface to the noun we need for the definition. 'ridiculous' indicates an anagram of 'ties' to give us TEIS. This mini anagram goes 'around' November, which in the NATO alphabet is N. 'more than once' allows us to double our stock of N.
- 25 Compete with attitude (4)
VIEW. As an Olympic sprinter might? 'Compete' is VIE, 'with' is abbreviated to W. The definition is 'attitude'.
- 28 Tea dance's repetitive section dropped (3)
CHA. The 'dance' in question is the CHA CHA, and we must lose the repeating part to leave us with only one CHA. To spot the gap between definition and wordplay the solver must not read 'Tea dance' as one thing.

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