## Summary

1. March Extra Competition
2. Clue Explanations
3. April Competition
4. Clue Explanations

The March Extra competition with a Middlemarch themed grid by Sirius and clued by Puck was won by Max Jackson of Oxford. Excellent solving!

This was a challenging puzzle as befits an Extra. Puck managed to include a large number of references to Middlemarch (possibly based on Coventry) by George Eliot (honoured by the statue in Nuneaton - see title photo). The difficulty of clues was increased by multiple definitions and several subtractive anagrams. The photo was laterally inverted for reasons of composition rather than any cryptic message.

Feedback included:
What a great (and challenging) 3-D puzzling month March 2017 has been! The March Extra was an extremely high-quality offering - a deceptively simple theme (but only in retrospect) that gave up all its secrets gradually, a very well-constructed grid with only two snakes (that were thematic anyway) and witty, excellent clueing, which is nothing less than what we have come to expect from Puck. The fairness of the clues gave me a good head start with the "cold" solving and I was grateful for the yellow shading in the grid, once I had solved MIDDLEMARCH, since it was a great help in fitting in the other solutions

My favourite clues were those to ELGAR, ICING ("me being subjected" for "I" is brilliant), RONDO and RAITA.

A real tour de force. Thank you, all. KMc
What a nice surprise, an extra puzzle! Here comes my solution, with a couple of comments on it. JM Doubts over how to enter EERIE - hope I counted correctly! Should I have entered the whole thing backwards to match the photo? JM


Here is a double whammy of March entries. The calendar puzzle was amazing: how on earth did you manage to fit so many references and links into one puzzle? The jigsaw puzzle was fun too AR
Thank you Sirius and Puck for another enjoyable romp - 'very much of its time' ho ho. I particularly enjoy a puzzle with an extra twist, such as a jigsaw. It was fabulous, thank you. JR

Herewith my March extra solution. Great fun. With the considerable help from the picture which my wife identified I managed to cold solve all but three clues. Without the picture I would have taken far longer to get the clues related to George Eliot. Having noted that George Lewes was born in April 1817 I thought at first that he would feature in the yellow squares. When this diversion didn't work the idea of MIDDLE down the yellow centre was clearly the next line to follow. With all the 5 letter "E" solutions GEORGE down the left front column too looked a good option. The rest followed reasonably quickly. The 3 clues that i found particularly tricky were 23 RONDO, 24 STAMPS and the wonderful 20 RAITA.

Thank you to you and Puck. AG
A most enjoyable puzzle - I do like a literary theme.
I was a bit daunted when I saw it was a jigsaw, but the pieces fitted in nicely.
A lot of nice clues and penny dropping moments - I particularly liked the North
East Wage!
Can't for the life of me get the 'coming to church after a little sex' part of Evans. JP

An intriguing puzzle. Another corker from the house that Sirius built! Well done Puck!
The good people of Nuneaton will be totally confused by the transpositioning of their town centre MC

Goodness Gracious me!(Day 20 - raita). I have spent the last two and a half days wrestling within a demi-quaver(Day 23 - rondo) of separating and entering in the grid the answers to these two clues, that were eluding me! To my satisfaction, I think I cracked it and scanned my finishe grid with only a few minutes to spare. GS

A lot of cold solving before grid filling. Still haven't worked out the 'killer beast' but everything else fits.
A very clever construction much enjoyed. PD

Well, this jigsaw was a bit of fun wasn't it.
I had great fun doing this over a few hours on a Sunday a few weeks ago. That weekend once a month when I find out what I failed to get on last month's Guardian Genius, and before there is another Guardian Genius to fail to finish.

I say I finished it a few weeks ago, but I've been umming and ahing about which way round to write in EERIE. It could go either way for the crossing letters so it all depends on the preamble where it says "There are seven reversals of direction". I reckon I've found all seven now, so EERIE has gone in as a straight Across light.

I got quite a lot of answers cold solved including the excellent (MAD[e] M[y] CHILDREN[n]) ${ }^{*}=$ MIDDLEMARCH (though the little note about posted noon March 16th was a bit of a give-away) and was bold enough to whack MIDDLE down the middle as a starter guess and MARCH in the other highlighted cells. If this was correct I thought I could then slot the answers in easily...
...not a bit of it - I soon got stuck when there were several places some could go. I did get enough in place to be convinced MIDDLE was in the Middle.
Then I had to construct a grid of the 1 st 3 rd and 5 th letters of the 5 letter words, and a sepaarate grid of the 2nd, 4th and 6th letters of the 6 letter Downs that I knew, to tick off the ones I had and work out the possibilities for the rest. The reversals in there were the thing that was the hardest to deal with.

Last clue solved was ORANGE - which I got from the crossing letters and connotation to Marches then confirmed from the sneaky wordplay ([th]E ARGON[auts])* - the reference to Jason Orange passed me by.

Actually that's not quite true - I didn't think about the two Snakes March Hare and Wedding March till after the grid was filled. Maybe it would have helped to find them in the grid earlier..

Couple of new words for me - LAHARS - I got early on, I somehow sensed that had to be a hidden answer, and GENAL which was one of the last solved - such a concise clue.

One of the most enjoyable puzzles I have done this year. Stay well. AJR

This was the most difficult poser I have ever encountered, and I pay tribute to my husband, Bob, for analysing the grid structure once I'd got (what I thought were) the answers to the clues. It was a clever theme and, as always, introduced me to a work which to my shame I have never read! Very clever - hats off to Puck and Sirius.SF

That was fun. I didn't know about the statue in Nuneaton. JBn
Here's my entry for the March extra. Oh my Goodness I never thought I'd be able to fit the answers in the grid - even if I sooved the clues and am still not sure the snake is correct. But time 'marches; on and the deadline approaches
I reckon I've really earned my hot cross buns and Easter eggs now! JBr
Jigsaws always tricky because you need to solve so many clues before getting help from checking letters. Once MIDDLEMARCH went in it becamse much easier. Good job I didn't need the snakes. MJ

We found this tricky. We are far from confident that we have got it right but, after a lot of deliberation, we have decided that this is the best we are going to come up with. It was the seven changes of direction that caused us problems.DE

Thank you Sirius and Puck for another enjoyable romp - 'very much of its time' ho ho. I particularly enjoy a puzzle with an extra twist, such as a jigsaw. It was fabulous, thank you. JR

The Middlemarch theme was very clever and pleasing, not just with the George Eliot associations, but also the various marches incorporated into the clues. JT

An extra puzzle - great. An interesting and different challenge. HB
Don't understand about the other two clues at the bottom .... So will be looking forward to Sirius's explanations. RE

Thank you once again. Especially for highlighting the key word in the puzzle which made the entry of the words much easier! I also learned the regular direction (not reversed) is away not towards! JN

Lovely little puzzle. WEDDING MARCH was key to fitting in grid while still 6 short. MIDDLE in correct place! Lewes new to me with STAMPS last in misled by DIE!. I now also know how to pronounce RAITA! Don't know why GE statue is reflected? DM

Here is my March Extra solution. I always struggle to fit these unnumbered answers into their grids, but hope I have managed. I have never particularly warmed to George Eliot, so finding the answers was interesting. Maybe I should try Middle March (again!).

## DS

Thanks for this. We were a bit confused after confidently placing GEORGE ELIOT in the highlighted slots but eventually realized our mistake. NI

Excellent puzzling as usual. I enjoyed this jogsaw very much. Correctly deducing what went into the highlighted was the first step. After that it was a case of watching out for those tricky reversals! Many, many thanks to Puck and Sirius. EL

The snakes have escaped (me) JS
I find 3D complicates jigsaw puzzles enormously compared with 2D. Relieved to find an arrangement that fits but still worried that l've missed something with reversals. Fun though. AHH

As the closing date passed without making much progress on this, I put it on one side, but as you suggested, I've had another look and have now been able to complete it. There were a few clues I hadn't got which previously prevented me getting a start, but a fresh look made it clear what was needed.. I assume that snake 1 is March Hare, with the hare running up from the h of March and then back, but l've never heard of it being a killer in the breeding season. PM

Oh yes, with Burke! PM

|  |  | Clue | Explanation | Notes |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| ATE IN | 1 | Had no picnic - cooked tea at home (3,2) |  |  |
| CINEMA | 2 | Pictures one man Eleanor Cadwallader initially upset (6) | $(I+M A N+E+C) *$ |  |
| EERIE | 3 | Weird combination of tea, beer and wine - each on its own not odd at all (5) | Tea beer wine |  |
| ELGAR | 4 | Poor Caleb Garth, in need of cold bath once he scored (5) | (CALEB GARTH - [C BATH])* |  |
| ENDEW | 5 | Edmund's to supply Edward Casaubon, entirely discontented and contrarily married (5) | $\begin{aligned} & \text { E(dward casaubo)N + } \\ & \text { WED< } \end{aligned}$ |  |
| EVANS | 6 | Marry Ann right away at 9 , coming to some church after a little sex (5) | MAR®Y ANN; S + NAVE< | Mary Ann Evan9 George Eliot |
| GEESE | 7 | Doctor Sprague keeps out of park strewn with UPS flyers(5) | ([SPRAGUE KEEPS] [PARK UPS]*)* $=$ (GE EES)* |  |
| GENAL | 8 | Fallen Angel? Cheeky! (5) | (ANGEL)* |  |
| GEORGE ELIOT | 9 | Pseudonym of Earth goddess or 'Good Earth' poet (6,5) | $\mathrm{GE}+\mathrm{OR}+\mathrm{G}+\mathrm{E}+\mathrm{ELIOT}$ |  |
| GEORGE <br> LEWES | 10 | Philosopher from royal town in Sussex is 9's soul vmate $(6,5)$ | GEORGE + LEWES |  |
| HOW-TO | 11 | Who edited books about providing detailed and practical advice? (3-2) | $(\mathrm{WHO})^{*}+\mathrm{OT}<$ |  |
| ICING | 12 | Freezing? It's killing me being subjected to cold in Germany's capital (5) | Two defs $\mathrm{I}+\mathrm{C}+\mathrm{IN}+\mathrm{G}$ |  |
| JARROW | 13 | This 15 perhaps drink leads to disagreement (6) | JAR + ROW |  |
| LAHARS | 14 | Destructive, vol canic motions emanating from Methuselah, arseholed (6) | hidden |  |



## 3. April Competition

The April competition with clues by Nutmeg to an Isaac Asimv yhemed grid by Elijah wqs won by Robbie Etherington of Kenilworth. Excellent solving!

Feedback included:
No messing about this month! Here's my entry to this month's fairly easy but still enjoyable puzzle. Clue 4 was the hardest and isn't in Chambers but I eventually found it (after a bit of guesswork) in Wikipedia. JM

I really enjoyed this - one of my favourite authors. It brought back very happy memories of my early days of reading Sci-Fi in the 50s, 60s and 70s. Thank you to Elijah and to Nutmeg for the challenging clues. I had to look up several references.I'm not sure whether I will complete the March Extra but I will try. JBu

Nice theme and enjoyable solve with some obscure words! I thought of Tuffet minus the bottom, but couldn't relate to Will's lock until found the old English Tuffe (at least I think that's the reference!). JP

Please find attached my completed grid for April's puzzle, which I really enjoyed, after the more challenging March one that I simply did not have the time or energy or wit to do! MS

Excellent Nutmeg. I found Chicer(?) and Divehi most difficult. Always a pleasure to solve her puzzles and look forward to her next one. PC

Amazingly I 'completed' the April competition. Its my first time so not sure how to submit, so I've attached PDF. I'm off on holiday tomorrow so will be i c for next couple of weeks so if this is a problem not to worry. I just wanted to submit as I was so chuffed to finish it. The news letters, explanations and all the work that you put into this month after month is outstanding and I also wanted to show support in a way of thanking you. Best Wishes JD Another great Scrabble word - TUFFE RE

Excellent puzzle from Nutmeg - as usual! Many thanks EL
Sorry, but a nil-return on the March puzzle, despite your very helpful notes. But, to prove that at least some of my grey matter is still intact, here's my April solution! JJ


Congratulations to Elijah on managing to include so much Asimov material in the grid and to Nutmeg on managing to produce clues for such a difficult set of words! SC

I got led up the garden path by the wrong Isaac (i.e. Newton) early on, but eventually found my way back. Impressive number of long theme words fitted into the grid. JS

Asimov was one of my favourite writers. The Three Laws have taken a bit of a battering lately HB
I read lots of Asimov (April) as a teenager and prompted by the crossword I have been digging them out again to re-read. CF

I abandoned the Extra puzzle this morning to tackle the April one. I may yet find time to go back to Extra given today's date. Only six to do but l've staring at them for five days.

April very relaxing.ET
I can just see ET relaxing to the Sci Fi theme.
Another interesting one. I can't say Asimov is my first choice at the library, but that makes it even more interesting to find out the answers! DS

Enjoyed this though it's a while since I have read Asimov NI
Really enjoyed this one as I'm a big fan of Isaac Asimov. It was also nice to have a more straightforward (but not too easy) one after the rigours of March!

Thanks GB

Thanks as always for yet another interesting puzzle with lots of clever clues that read well. CH

April entry attached. This time the theme was right up my street as I read all his fiction and a fairly large percentage of his non-fiction when I was younger. AW

Nutmeg's challenge was refreshingly straightforward after your March conundrum, so my brain doesn't ache overmuch! Nevertheless, the subject matter introduced me to some of Asimov's works, none of which I had come across before. It's just unbelievable that he died 25 years ago, as I think of him as a 'modern'.

I hope you have fully recovered from your health scare earlier this year, and have invited others in your team to share the pressure of providing us mere mortals with a brain workout each month. We are truly grateful for your efforts.

I'm looking forward to tackling May's challenge while I am in Dresden for a short break later this week. SF

A jolly puzzle it was too - Asimov not someone that I'm too well-versed on, but clues made enough sense without having to recourse to Wikipaedia. All that is except TUFFE or whatever alternative to $T^{*} F^{*} E$ presents itself as 'Will's lock' - nothing to do with Shakespeare, from what I can tell, it's a form of volcanic rock. So no, over my head this one. DIVEHI a breeze in comparison. PA

Had enough in place on first run through to get the anagram .. plenty of new words for me but most clearly clued. Only doubt 37, it must be TUFFE otherwise straightforward. DM

I've included below a link to a piece in yesterday's Guardian Shortcuts ... you probably know about this already, but just in case you missed it ... its about the background to Paul's crossword for Saturday's paper.

Best wishes
Jane
https://www.theguardian.com/crosswords/shortcuts/2017/apr/24/my-marathon-crossword-challenge-cryptic-setter-paul

This seemed quite a straightforward grid after Sirius' spinning wheels in March. I noted we were given a clue about the subject too ("a prolific author") and identifying Asimov early certainly helped. JB

## This was pleasing so pass on all our thanks to Nutmeg and Elijah

I read Asimov as a schoolboy and I think I probably devoured all his Science Fiction. So the main theme and all the associated answers such as NIGHTFALL, PSYCHOHISTORY and FOUNDATION (which was my gateway to the theme) were easily spotted.

The coloured cells making up his name were a great help in completing those last few pesky missing down/up clues.

I assumed the theme was to celebrate something like 100 years since his birth and wondered why the preamble didn't mention it but a glance at Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/lsaac Asimov tells me "Asimov was born between October 4, 1919 and January 2, 1920" ! That page is well worth a read.

A few words unknown to me till now:
PAGLE (cowslip) had me thinking of "Pogle's wood"
IRASCUND - a word I will attempt to use as often as possible.
OKTAS I feel I shold have known that
DIVENI I doubt I will have the opportunity to use this (that was one where the " V " from Asimov was a great help)

One answer held me up right ar the end: I have put 5Aw in as AGITA from G[overnment] insode AITA, but I still haven't found a definite reference to it as an Indian tree
And AITA is obscure too - it is heartburn so I guess will do for trouble. I'm surprised I haven't heard of aita before given my experience of heartburn (my doctor knows me as "The Omeprazole Kid"!)Stay well. AJR

Some very obscure words in this one. Learning something new! NC
An enjoyable SF-themed puzzle with Nutmeg's typically fair and elegant clueing, ensuring relative obscurities like 'PAGLE' and 'POUDRE' weren't as troublesome as they might have been. (I enjoyed the recent Q\&A on The Guardian blotg).
Plenty of 'space' in my abandoned February and March too! MLJ A thoroughly enjoyable puzzle, so thanks to all. My first guess after getting NIGHTFALL was Arthur C Clarke, but the letter count didn't agree. Asimov came soon after, one of my favourite authors when I was younger. His Foundation series was, literally, epic and this puzzle brought back fond memories. DHe

Top of the May to you, Eric
I hope there is a maypole with red and white ribbons on the village green in Longford around which you and your fellow villagers will be cavorting merrily in the morn.

Thank you and Nutmeg for another enjoyable and enlightening crossword on the theme of Isaac Asimov. I didn't find it quite so challenging as others recently but appreciated some recherché solutions, at days 17 and 24 for example. MC

Here's my solution: not much to say this time, as I quickly saw that the puzzle was going to be about one of my favourite authors, who I did once get the chance to have a few words with and shake his hand.
Although I solved all but half a dozen clues for the March extra, I never did succeed in fitting them together, though I assume the yellow cells were there to show where the two instances of the word MARCH go. PM

A straightforward offering this month and none the worse for that, after March's doubly demanding challenges.

Asimov is not a writer I have ever read, since "serious" science fiction does not appeal to me, much to the disgust of my wife, who thinks I am a philistine. The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, on the other hand, is a favourite book of mine.

Sound clues, an accessible theme and few obscure solutions made this eminently solvable, without having to resort to Google for more than a word or two. Thanks then, Nutmeg, for an enjoyable puzzle.
KMc
OK, so maybe I missed the deadline by a few hours, but at least I solved this one. I rather enjoyed it - that was a fantastic grid with the Asimov theme and Nutmeg's clues are as always fun and fair. Hopefully the scan and my handwriting are legible (and the right way up). GH

Hope I'm in time with April's crossword.
Very pleased with this one as I got through it pretty quick (compared to last month's beast of a thing). Favourite clue this month was 33 ( 4 d - tench), firstly because it was the first one I got, and secondly because my mum didn't get it at all (had to give her a hint), which is probably the only time l've got one and she hasn't for any clue that doesn't relate to pop music or tv. TC

|  | SOLUTION | Direction Clue enumeration | Explanation | Notes |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 1 | ACTED | 15d Characters regularly leaving dance they'd performed (5) | alternate letters |  |
| 2 | AGILA | 5aw Trouble with government cutting a tree in India (5) | G in ail, + a |  |
| 3 | CHICER | 29ac-2,30aw More trendy churches, two retaining current rector (6) | i in ch CE, + R |  |
| 4 | DIVEHI | 36to-2,34up "D $\qquad$ " - Nutmeg's greeting for Asian islanders (6) | d l've Hi | (non-Chambers, is in Collins, Wikipedia) |
| 5 | EIDER | 14d Duck about to snuff it, keeling over (5) | < (re die) |  |
| 6 | EMPIRE DAY | 37ac How we celebrated British rule? Mince pie, my dear! $(6,3)$ | pie my dear* | Galactic EMPIRE series |
| 7 | ENDS UP | $7 \mathrm{to}, 1 \mathrm{~d}$ Eventually finishes drink on boundary (4,2) | sup after end |  |
| 8 | ENURED | 19ac-2,20aw Limitless penury with which journalist's accustomed (6) | (p)enur(y) Ed |  |
| 9 | FOUNDATION | 24ac,27up-2 XX's series discovered a great deal, I admitted (10) | found, + I in (a ton), famous Asimov series | FOUNDATION series |
| 10 | FUSES | 24to Fellow employs timing devices (5) | F uses |  |
| 11 | GALACTICO | 32ac Soccer superstar coming from outer space with ball (9) | galactic + O | GALACTIC Empire series |
| 12 | GANESH | 8to,5d Retiring witch grabs small coin, one much valued in India (6) | $<($ sen in hag) |  |
| 13 | GAS JAR | 32up,9aw-2 Going back to sink, shake flask in lab (3,3) | <sag, + jar | (clue could reference chemistry, Asimov was a biochemist and published books about chemistry) |
| 14 | GLOIRE | 3aw, 13ac-2 Grand French wine-growing region gets great acdaim there (6) | G Loire |  |
| 15 | GRIMY | 3d Filthy space station rotating in fringes of galaxy (5) | <MIR in g(alax)y |  |


| 16 | INEARTH | 2ba-2,1aw,12ac-2 Bury, traditionally where the rain's terrible (7) | the rain* | Foundation and EARTH; also important in other stories especially the Robot and Empire series. |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 17 | IRACUND | 18aw,25ac-3 Uncontrolled acid run inclined to be volatile (7) | acid run* |  |
| 18 | LAIRS | 6d Duke abandoning Scots gentry retreats (5) | lair(d)s |  |
| 19 | LISTS | 6aw Leans over catalogues (5) | 2 meanings |  |
| 20 | LLANO | 33up Recalled regarding everyone as plain in S America (5) | <(on all) |  |
| 21 | NIGHTFALL | 1ac "Fanlight left undone" - XX's winner in "The Twilight Zone" (9) | fanlight $L^{*}$, def=twilight zone; Asimov short story | Asimov's most celebrated short story, anthologised many times and later adapted into a novel |
| 22 | OKTAS | 35up At least 25\% of sky fine - many thanks (5) | OK ta's (ie thanks, several times) |  |
| 23 | OSRIC | 11d Mercian prince in charge after very great king (5) | i/c after OS R, ref Osric prince of Mercia | (non-Chambers, a character in Hamlet) |
| 24 | PAGLE | 28aw Countryman's cowslip left with single leaf covering (5) | L in page |  |
| 25 | PALSY | 38to Intimate disabling affliction (5) | 2 meanings, intimate=like a pal |  |
| 26 | POUDRE | 38up,13ac-2 Rode up, scattering ancient dust (6) | rode up* |  |
| 27 | PSYCHOHISTORY | 28ac,31aw Oscar-nominated film man's attempt to capture love (13) | no def; Psycho, his, + O in try | The fictional science featured in the Foundation books. In Chambers and Collins with different definitions, COED includes the Asimov definition. |


| 29 | ROBOTICS | 10ac Steals from nurses dealing with ears (8) | no def; otic in robs | Coined by Asimov, Robot series |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 30 | SCIENCE FICTION | 17ac,22aw,27up-2 XX's main genre, in which remarkably scenic earth lies $(7,7)$ | scenic $\mathrm{e}^{*}+$ lies | The genre most associated with Asimov and that of all the thematic answers (clue below) |
| 31 | SNOWY | 16d Type of owl currently nesting in Seychelles (5) | now in Sy |  |
| 32 | STARRIEST | 23ac Hangs about in street with best lighting after dark (8) | tarries in St | David STARR, hero of Asimov's series for juveniles under the pseudonym Paul French |
| 33 | TENCH | 4d Nasty niff when son's dropped off fish (5) | (s)tench |  |
| 34 | THEBES | 26 to, 21 d-2 Greek city well-nigh supreme (6) | the bes(t) | (clue could include a reference to The Greeks, a history book by Asimov, who was influenced by classical history especially in the Foundation and Empire series) |
| 35 | THREE LAWS | 12ac Was there, swimming across lake (5,4) | no def, Lin (was there)* | The THREE LAWS of Robotics. To be clued as Clue for three : clue for laws (5:4) |
| 36 | TROPE | 4aw Figure of speech majority of reporters rejected (5) | <hidden | (clue could include a thematic hint at literature) |
| 37 | TUFFE | 12d Grass whence Miss Muffet fled, having bottom pinched (5) | tuffe(t) |  |

Finally, thank you for supporting our project to help youngsters in need.
Best wishes Eric Westbrook
Registered Blind RNIB Member \& Public Speaker
3D Crossword Designer Sirius

