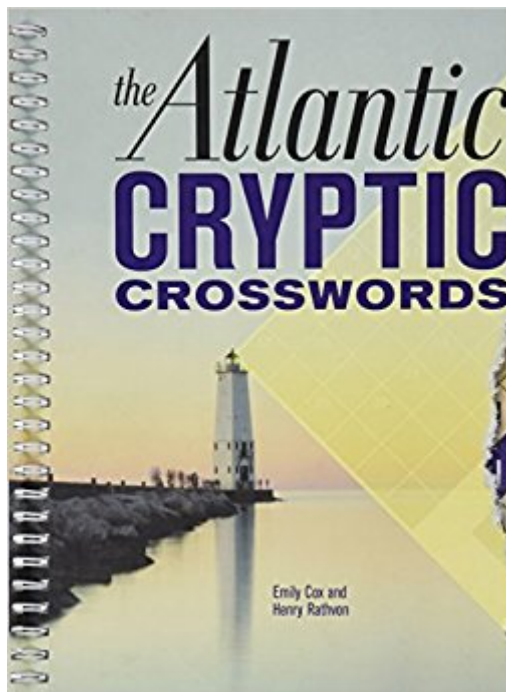


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The Atlantic Cryptic Crosswords



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Customer Reviews

I always buy cryptic crossword books (at least the American style) as soon as I see them. I probably have a big enough collection to keep me going for years, even without on-line ones. I usually switch off books for a bit of variety. But in this case, I started with the first puzzle and couldn't help myself. I just kept going. Like another poster, I wanted to "ration" them but no use - These are just too good. They are the perfect combination of tough nut, but not uncrackable, as some of the British collections are. (I still dip into the Brit books now and then but when you look up the answer and still don't get it, it's just not fun anymore.)

I've played around with a lot of puzzle books over the years and this is the best book I've ever had the pleasure to complete. The puzzles are hard, but amazingly 100% fair. There are some cryptic crosswords that take liberties with the rules, but at no point in this book did that happen. Everything was consistent, albeit difficult. Also, I didn't find a single typographical error or other mistake in the book. The puzzle instructions were precise and every word was meaningful and necessary. On top of a good cryptic crossword, each puzzle has a meta-puzzle that requires solving. These meta-puzzles were creative and some of them made my jaw drop when thinking about how hard it must have been to create the meta-puzzle. I would not recommend it for the novice cryptic crossword solver. I believe that the negative reviews on this book are caused by a lack of familiarity of how these puzzles work. Not knowing how to solve a standard cryptic crossword would make

these puzzles almost impossible to solve. If you like cryptic crosswords, you owe it to yourself to check this book out. It took me almost 6 months of relatively steady work to solve every puzzle in the book and I wish there were more of them. Kudos to Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon for a masterpiece of a puzzle book!

This spiral-bound book collects 60 cryptic crosswords by Emily Cox & Henry Rathvon. It's an easy-to-read and to use format; on long plane rides, one can just rip out a page and take that along, for instance. Otherwise, the pages open flat and are easy to read. The contents themselves are superb and thrilling. The collection highlights their remarkable and magnificent career. These are more than puzzles: they are works of art, seamlessly and playing with language to create remarkable constructions. Several features, taken together, distinguish the Cox & Rathvon work from that of ordinary constructors. - Their work is extremely accurate and error-free (*). No matter how complex their schemes are, they avoid typographical errors, printing errors, and other mistakes. I don't understand how they do it. - They are fair. Their clues always adhere to a strict, fair set of rules. For example, their &lits always read smoothly and are never forced or straining the definition of &lit, in the way some British constructors' &lits are. Cox & Rathvon firmly, and I think quite rightly, reject the loose, rambling, imprecise cluing style that some less gifted composers resort to. Cox & Rathvon clues are normally precise, clear, to the point. - They are stunningly original and interesting. They can weave together geometry, language, and humor to in novel and interesting ways. The best of the puzzles have a sort of unifying theme that emerges at the end, and it's often elegant and interesting. To solve them, one must sometimes use three or four completely different kinds of reasoning: geometric, logical, wordplay, semantic. One notable feature of the collection is that a puzzle at first might seem completely unapproachable, but always, by slowing working through the possibilities, it can be solved. This distinguishes the puzzles from ordinary crosswords, or even ordinary cryptic crosswords, which often can be unsolvable if one lacks the requisite knowledge or if one just cannot think of the right answer to a clue. Few books have ever given me as many hours of pleasure as this one, since each individual puzzle can take hours to solve. They are especially great on plane rides - instead of being bored, one doesn't want the plane ride to end too soon so that one can finish the puzzle in time! SPOILERS BEGIN HERE!!!!*) The clue "CEOs, by the way, eating liver? (10)", the puzzle "Mitosis" (#33) seemed questionable to me, however, although it was solvable given other information in the puzzles. Some of the clues were just spectacular. My favorite clue was probably "One is in orchestra? (7)" (In Musical Chairs, #50). Certainly "Dashing pigskin?? (7)" (Guided Tour, #6) was excellent as well; as was "One wearing horn that's wild? (5)" (Pairs, #18).

Another great clue was "Take a chance on a software prototype (4)" (Something Different, #39). My favorite puzzles were probably Knight's Moves, #34, in which the answers were entered in the diagram along the paths of a knight's motion on a chessboard; Asteroids (#48), which involved some logic to solve; and Flower Cuttings (#52), which had an exceptionally attractive diagram. But some of the others were, if simpler, equally pleasant to solve, e.g. Valentine (#36) brought a smile to my face. END SPOILERSThere is not much else to say here. I know of no other constructors who approach Cox & Rathvon in the depth and beauty of verbal puzzles. But it was great while it lasted.

Yikes. I'm not sure the out-of-print rarity justifies the price of this item. It came with some puzzles partly filled in with ink. Fortunately, the previous owner must have found them too challenging so most puzzles were blank. This was a gift for my cryptic-loving daughter, so I was willing to pay an exorbitant sum. Maybe The Atlantic should reissue these gems.

I love crosswords, especially the cryptic ones, but this book has even more twists which make the puzzles much more difficult. Don't buy it if you are easily frustrated (you probably wouldn't like this type of crossword anyway, if you are). I admit I work on one for a little while, then I put it away for a couple days, and then try again. Sometimes the answers "pop out" at me when I haven't looked at it for a while. Or, work on more than one at a time. I highly recommend it for those of you who are hard-core crossword enthusiasts, like word-plays and anagrams, and are blessed with patience. Have fun!

I enjoy all of the Cox and Rathvon cryptic collections but The Atlantic puzzles are the finest of them. I buy The Atlantic for the puzzles, then, if I get around to it, I might eventually read some of the articles. I'm the same way with Games Magazine. In any case, these puzzles are really really difficult, which is what makes them so amazing. I'd rank this collection with the Henry Hook books, which is high praise indeed. Unfortunately, I've got the Hook puzzles memorized. I got The Atlantic collection two days ago and I'm already four puzzles into it.

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