

A Modern Major Puzzler Solution

Puzzle: Miranda Derossi

Solution: Miranda Derossi

Answer: CLOVER

This puzzle presents a list of definitions. While some are single words, most are a collection of words and word fragments in quotation marks, all joined together by addition or subtraction signs. The title of the puzzle and the mention of Major-General Stanley in the flavor text point to the song “I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major-General,” from *The Pirates of Penzance*. Each definition or collection of definitions refers to words in this song. The definitions with a number and asterisk next to them indicate that the intended word is the nth appearance of that word in the song.

Major-General Stanley spent a while tabling the many elementary words he knows, but eventually decided it was an evening wasted.

(Relating to a minute or microscopic animal) - (“an”)

ANIMALCULOUS - AN = IMALCULOUS

(A large number of + Noticeably happy and optimistic) - (“ful”)

MANY CHEERFUL - FUL = MANY CHEER

(Used by a speaker to refer to themselves) + (Be able to) + (Mark on paper with a pen, pencil, or similar implement) - (“write”)

I CAN WRITE - WRITE = I CAN

(Knowledge obtained from investigation, study or instruction) - (“tion”)

INFORMATION - TION = INFORMA

(Accompanied by) + (Affairs or topics) + (Relating to arithmetic) - (“thematical”)

WITH MATTERS MATHEMATICAL - THEMATICAL = WITH MATTERS MA

6*(To a great degree or extremely)

VERY

(Article) + (Tailless amphibians) + (A function word) + (“ar”)

THE FROGS OF + AR = THE FROGS OF AR

3*(To a great degree or extremely) + (Not evil)

VERY GOOD

(The study of past events)

HISTORY

(“tial”) + (The branch of mathematics that deals with derivatives and integrals of functions)

TIAL + CALCULUS = TIAL CALCULUS

The second part of the flavor text mentions “an evening wasted”. A quick Google search reveals an album of the same name by Tom Lehrer. On this album, there is a song titled, “The Elements,” which is a parody of “I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major General”. Putting the two songs side by side (and eliminating the chorus parts of Modern Major General), the words found from the definitions on the puzzle page correspond with element names in the parody song. (An effective way of finding what element the clue lines up with is to count the syllables.)

IMALCULOUS

I'm very good at integral and differential calculus

I know the scientific names of beings an~~imal~~culous

In short, in matters vegetable, animal, and mineral

I am the very model of a modern Major-General

There's yttrium, ytterbium, actinium, rubidium

And boron, gadolinium, niobium, iridium

And strontium, and silicon, and silver, and samarium

And bismuth, bromine, lithium, beryllium, and barium

The element symbol for iridium is Ir, which begins the final clue to the answer. Lining up the symbols for all the definition clues results in:

IrISH LuCKY HeRb

From this final clue, the answer **CLOVER** can be derived.