CHARADE CUBES

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Charades are one of the oldest, simplest, and most amusing forms of wordplay. Charades are simply dissections of a word into two or more words, preferably unrelated to the original. Our greatest amusement derives from surprise at the buried images; for example, *leg ally* from *legally, rap a city* from *rapacity, stag nation* from *stagnation,* and either *no table* or *not able* from *notable.*

In previous articles in Word Ways, I have suggested several puzzles involving charades. All have involved flat tiles inscribed with common charade components. Each has also involved a theme. "Musical Wordboxes" in August 1990 included all the notes of the scale and other song-related words. "The Name's The Game" in May 1992 included dozens of common personal names. "Barnyard Charades" in February 1996 featured 24 farm-related words such as *moo* in *moo red, bull* in *bull ion* and *sty* in *sty my.*

Recently, my interest has switched to a more complex puzzle form: cubes. After much experimentation, the accompanying puzzle emerged. It has several deliberately chosen features:

1. The puzzle returns to a musical theme, and includes all the notes of the diatonic scale
2. All the charade beginnings are two-letter words
3. The puzzle includes only twelve charade words beginning words and twelve ending words. Each of these words occurs exactly once on each cube. The resulting simplicity combined with a profusion of combinatorial possibilities enhances of the puzzle's challenge
4. The cubic format allows a complex puzzle with fewer puzzle pieces. My earlier charade puzzles used 36 tiles; this puzzle uses only 4 cubes

To construct the puzzle pieces (Figures 2 and 3), I suggest obtaining a few children's alphabet blocks. Alternatively. I have constructed cubes by cutting and folding pieces of stiff cardboard. I prefer cubes that are about 1½ to 2 inches on each side. Then reproduce the enclosed illustrations on a copier. Many copiers have an enlargement setting, which can be set to adapt the size of the accompany-ing illustration to the size of your cubes. Cut out and paste the illustrated cube faces onto your cubes. Then you are set to solve.

As Figure 1 shows, the cubes form two distinct puzzles. They can be fitted together to form a two-by-two square or a row four cubes long. In either puzzle, the joins along the edges must form common English words along all visible faces. The two-by-two squares in Figure 1 is not a correct solution: the join BE-STY is not a common English word, although FA-ME, LA-ME and LA-DIES are. The correct solution must also have common join words on the opposite face and on all four side faces.

The four-cube row in Figure 1 is a potential solution to the second puzzle. The three joins along the face shown are all common English words: FA-ME, MI-STY and DO-UGH. If the other three long faces each included three good joins, the figure would be a solution. Solutions to the two puzzles are given in Answers and Solutions.

For younger or more impatient readers, the illustrated cubes also form several other easier puzzles. One can relax the rules for the two-by-two cube, and require only one face to form word joins. Alternatively, one can make the row puzzle, using only two or three cubes instead of four. As the puzzles in the previous paragraphs remind us, cubes aren't just for cooling drinks. Cubes can drive us to drink!

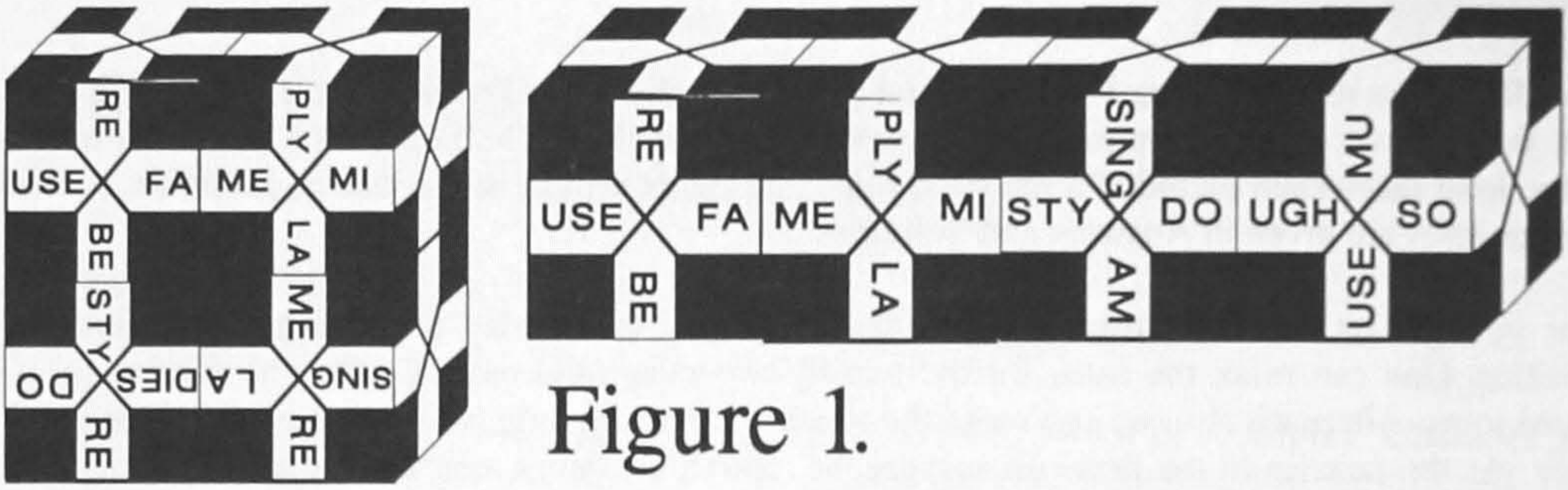

Figure 1.

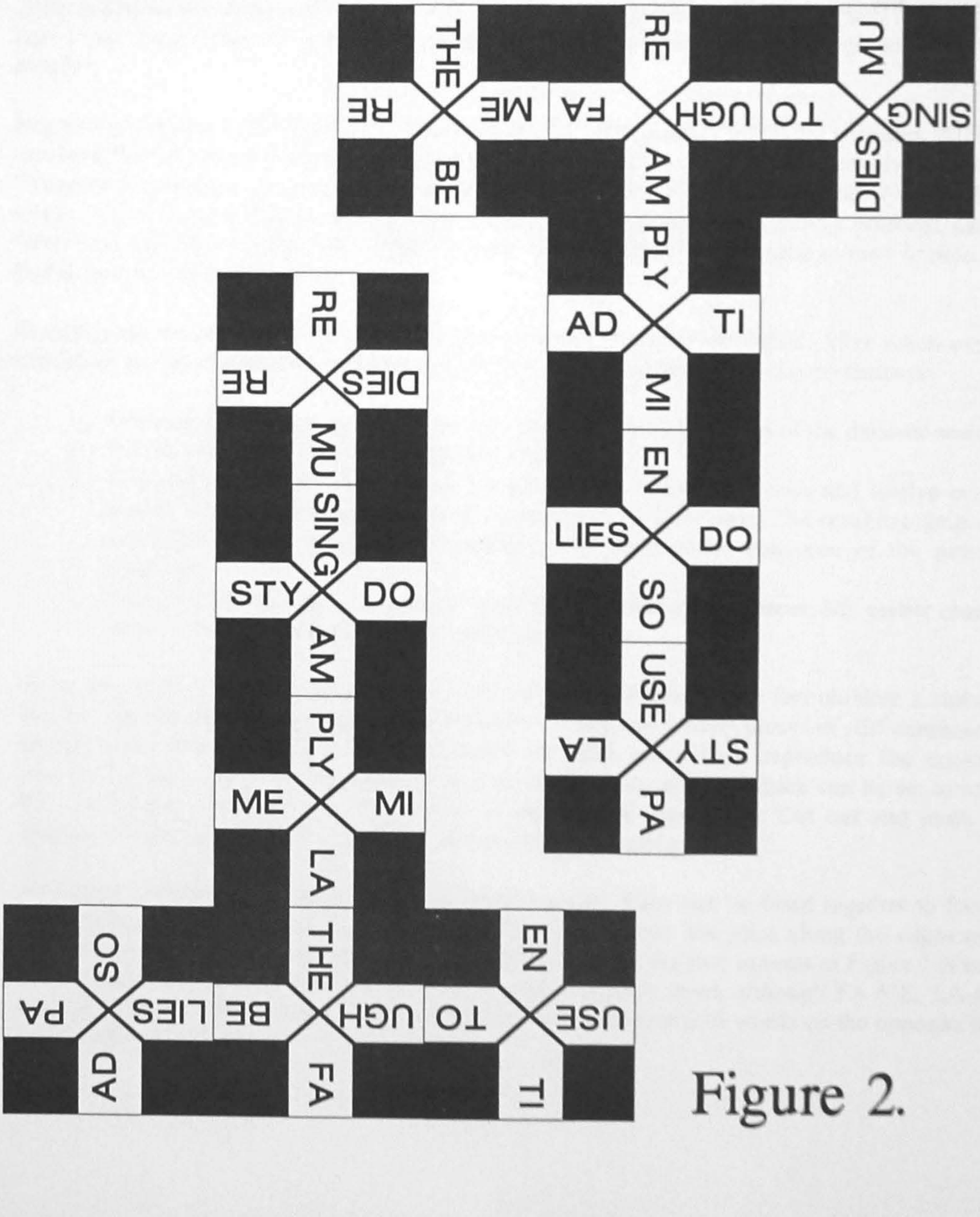

Figure 2.

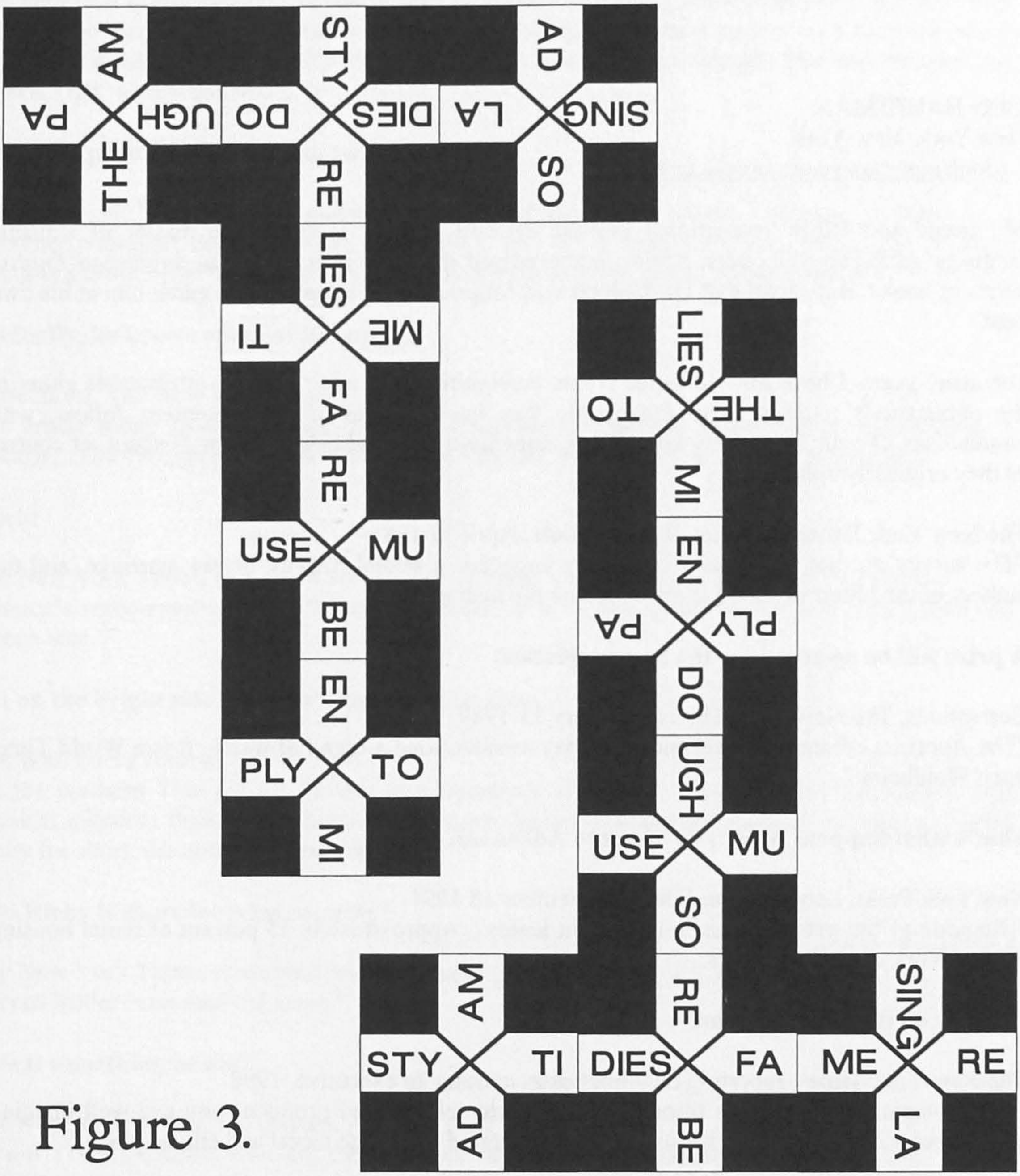
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Figure 3.