# TRIPLETS

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TRIPLETS is a new puzzle-game we play with the help of our four good friends SAM TORCHE, ENOS TRIMBACH, NORWICH BUMSTEAD and INA CHOWBLY DUMPSTER. Readers may remember Norwich and Ina from our article "Magic Square Magic" in the May 2000 issue of *Word Ways* but Sam and Enos are recent acquaintances.

We introduce TRIPLETS with a very simple puzzle that uses nine letter tiles with the letters SAM TORCHE on them. The puzzle is to arrange these tiles in a 3x3 grid so that the words ARM, COT, MET, RHO, SAC and SHE appear in the rows and columns – or at least a set that can be transposed into these six words. There are many solutions and we expect *Word Ways* readers to be able to find one easily.

Only a bit more challenging is the 3x3 two-person TRIPLETS game employing the same nine tiles. The tiles are turned face-down and mixed in a pool. Each player draws three tiles leaving three in the pool. They will alternately place one of their tiles in the 3x3 grid forming thereby two words simultaneously, one in a row and one in a column. The words can be any bold-face, main entry of one, two or three letters in your dictionary of choice (we use NI3). Transposals are permitted but the intended word must be announced in advance. All the letters already in any row or column have to be used in the word in play. Announcing a non-listed word forfeits that player's turn. After a tile is placed the player draws a replacement tile from the pool. The game ends when no more tiles can be placed.

The game is scored by keeping a running total of the number of letters in the two words formed at each turn. Thus scoring will be from two to six points per round.

This 3x3 game plays very quickly, never taking more than five placements. It is suitable for any nine letter isogram, say, for example MOUSETRAP. We will generalize to similar puzzle-games using the names of our other three friends. For ENOS TRIMBACH we add the three tiles BIN to the former set. The puzzle is to fit the twelve tiles into a 4x4 grid forming the words (recall that we allow transposals) BAT, CON, HIT, MEN, RIM, ROB, SAC, and SHE in the rows and columns.
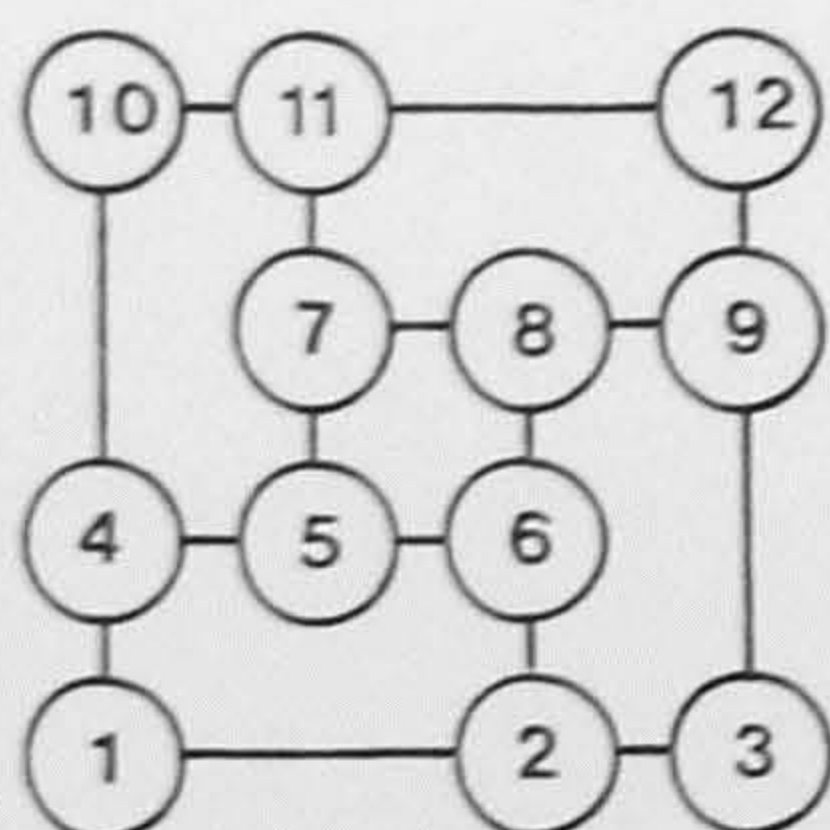

It can be rather difficult to place the tiles correctly without some clue as to where the "Blank" is in any row or column. The diagram at left can be used as a guide if desired.

As another example try to place the words CRY, FAN, FLY, GIN, GUS, LIE, RUE and SAC on the grid. This puzzle uses FLYING SAUCER as its base.

The ENOS two-person game is played like the SAM game but now each player starts by drawing four tiles from the pool. Use either a 4x4 grid or the diagram above as a playing board. At most three letters are allowed in any row or column. It will take no more than 6 rounds to complete a full game. Scoring remains the same, two to six points per round.

Adding the three tiles WUD reaches the 5x5 level of NORWICH BUMSTEAD. The puzzle-game board will now have exactly two blanks per row and column. The diagrams below are two examples of acceptable placements for this TRIPLETS puzzle.


A

B
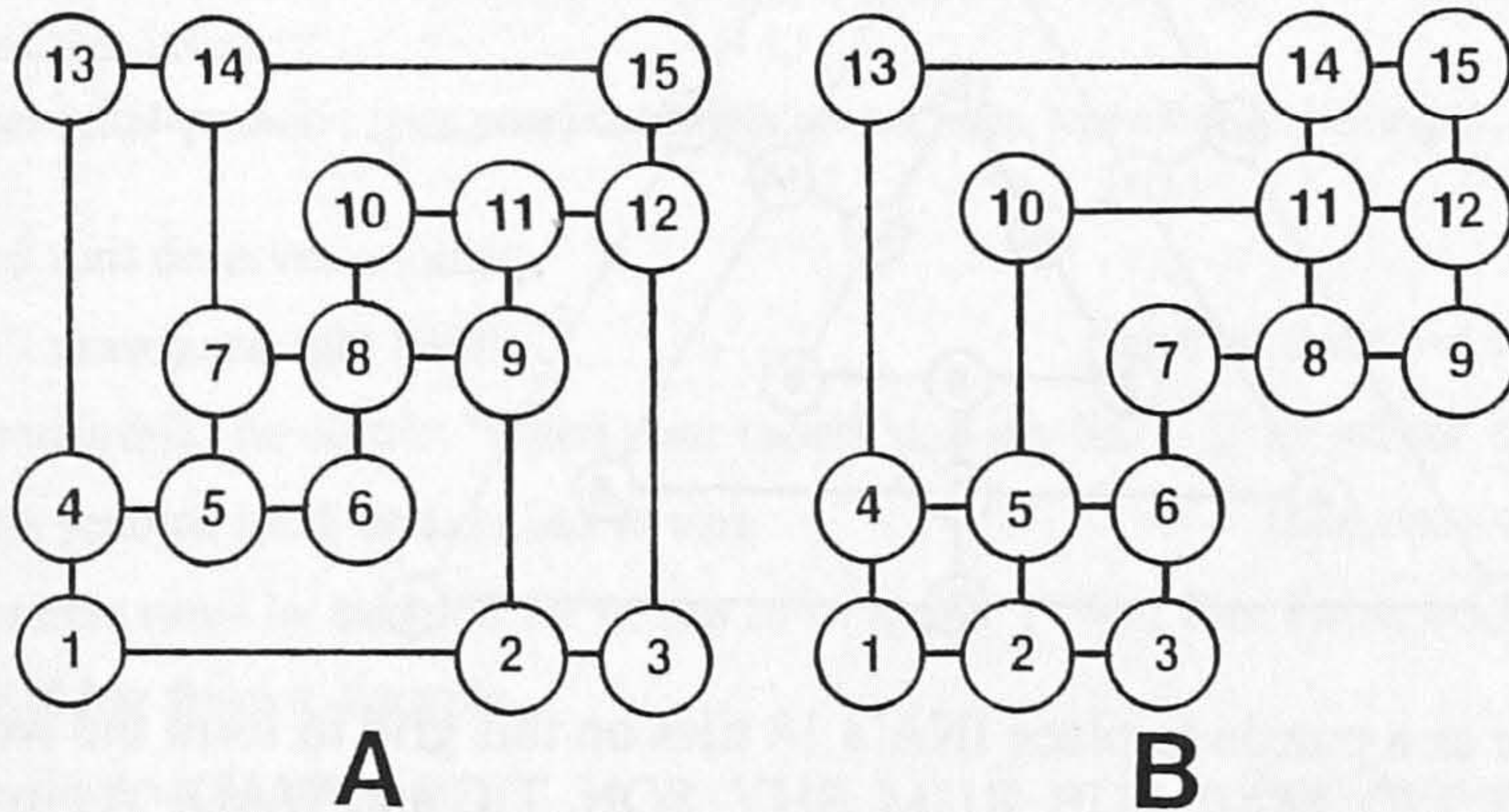
It is possible to place the set BIT, COW, CUR, DIN, HAS, HEW, MAT, MUN, RED, and SOB in one of the diagrams but not the other. The words BAN, COW, CUR, HEW HIT, MAT, NOD, RED, SIB, and SUM will solve the remaining grid. Either diagram can be used for the game version and will take at most eight rounds to play. Each player now will start with five tiles.

For INA CHOWBLY DUMPSTER we add the three new tiles PLY. A 6x6 diagram that can be used for the puzzle follows.
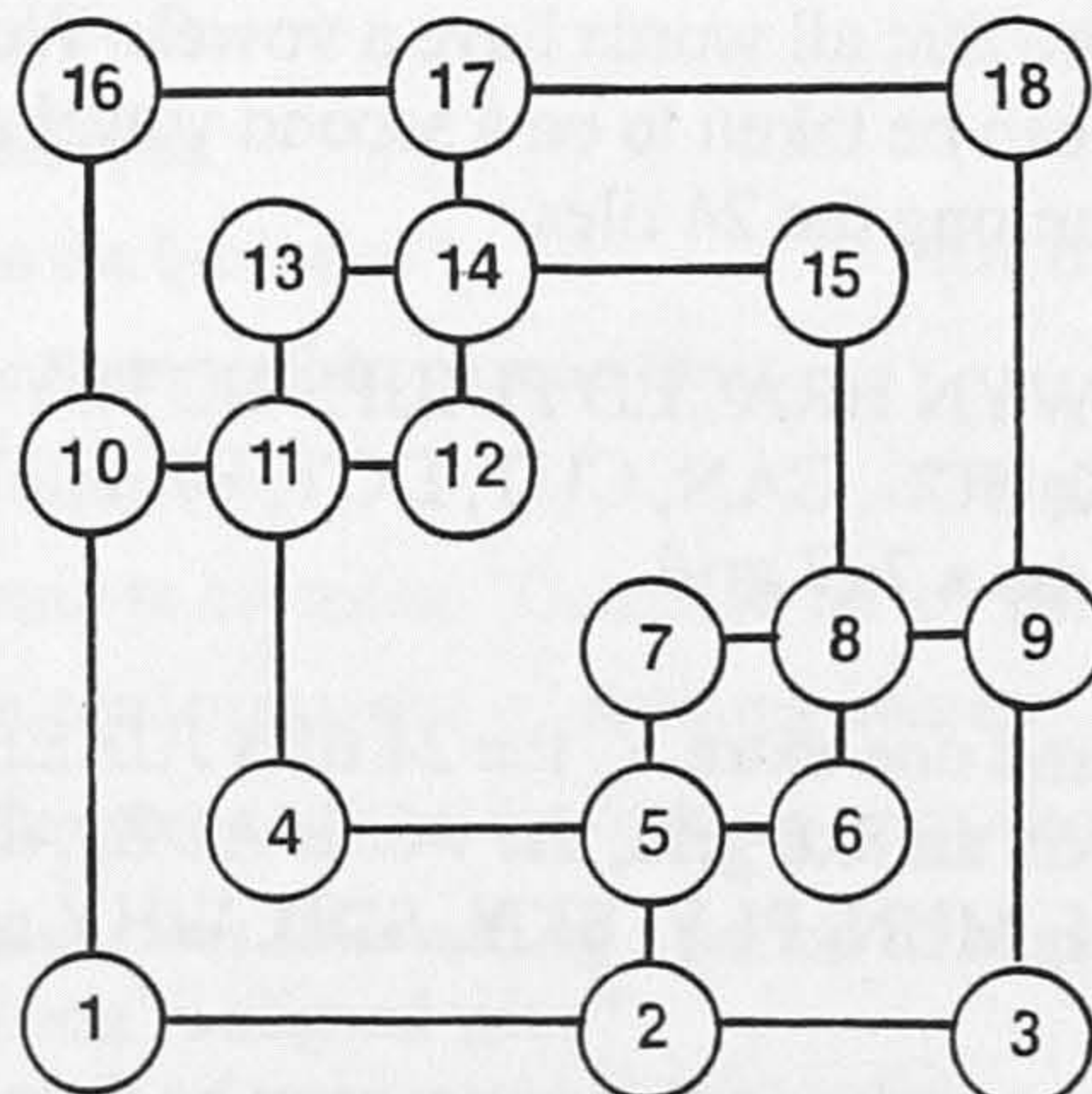
For the puzzle, the words BUS, COW, CRY, DIN, HER, HUN, LIT, MAT, MOP, PLY, SAD, and WEB can be placed. After drawing six tiles the game version is played as usual. It could take as many as nine rounds.

The 18 nodes of INA can be used in an adaptation of a nineteenth century puzzle called SIXPENNY MADELL. It is described by David Parlett in *The Oxford History of Board Games*, Oxford University Press, 1999, where he uses the diagram:
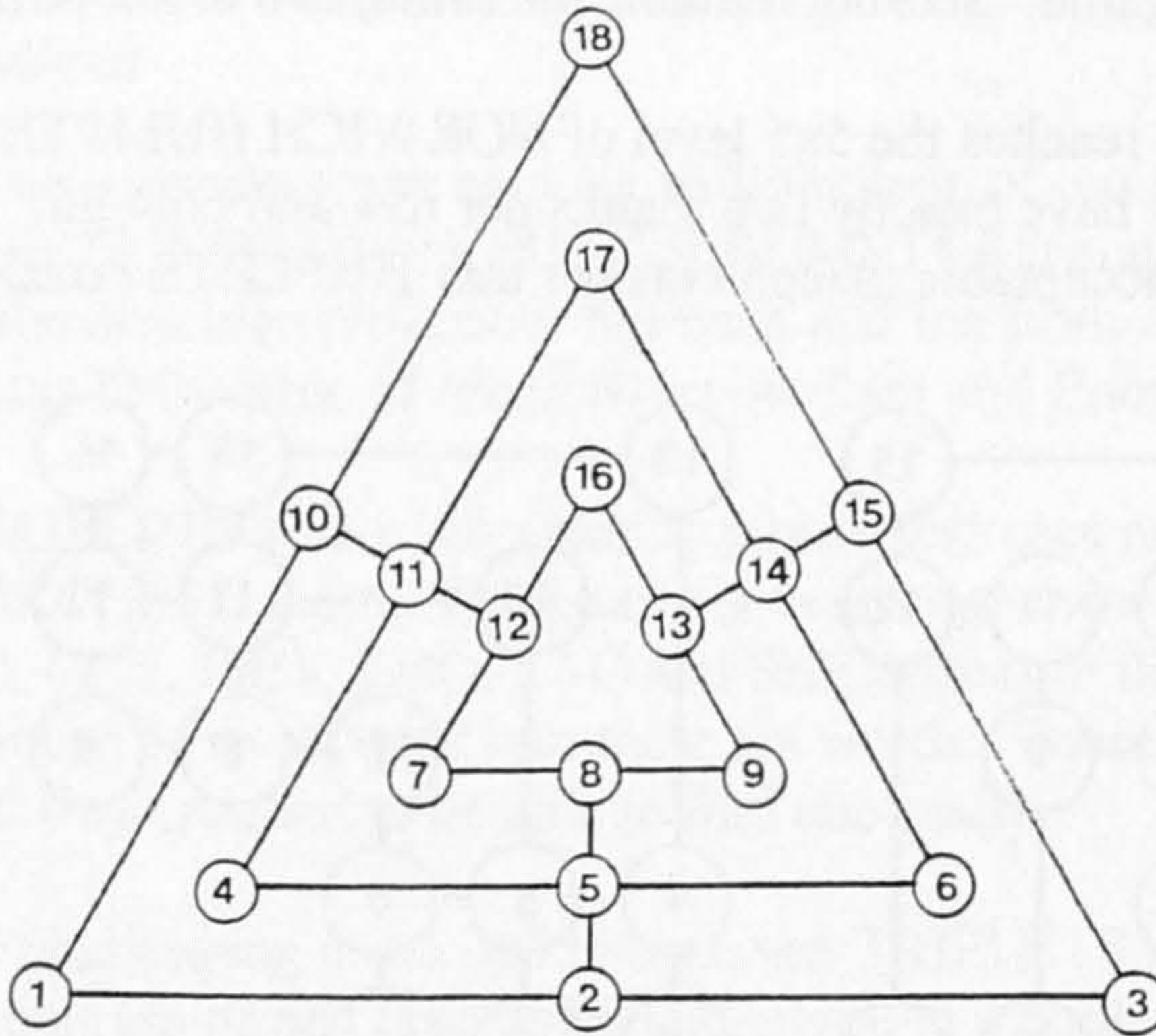
We ask the reader as a puzzle to place INA's 18 tiles on this grid to form the words BEN, CRY, HOW, LET, LID, MAP, PUB, RUM, SHY, SON, TIC and WAD. As in the case of NORWICH, the two 12 word sets can only be used on the proper diagram – they cannot be made to fit on the other.

All our puzzles were constructed to be well-balanced. That is, each word used has exactly one vowel, one consonant from the first half of the alphabet and one from the second half. It is possible to add this requirement for the word games as well but this makes them much harder.

Our ideas can be extended. To get to the 7x7 level we need to add three tiles and would like one to be a vowel to ensure that all words have a vowel. We use 21 tiles in this case that include one blank which can be taken to be a second vowel of one's choice. In the 8x8 case, we use two blanks among the 24 tiles.

For example, the 21 letters GWYN BRACED FIXUPS HOTLY uses two Ys and these tiles can form the words BOX, BUS, CAN, CUT, DOT, DRY, FEN, FIX, GYP, HIP, REL, SLY, WAG, and WHY on a 7x7 grid.

Similarly, using one extra A and one extra Y, the 24 tiles JUKEBOX NYMPH'S FRIDAY WALTZ can form, on an 8x8 grid, the words ADZ, ARK, DRY, FEN, FIX, HUB, JAW, JET, LOT, MAX, MUN, PLY, SKY, SOB, WHY and ZIP.

Answers to these and all other puzzles in this paper may be found in the "Answer and Solutions" section.