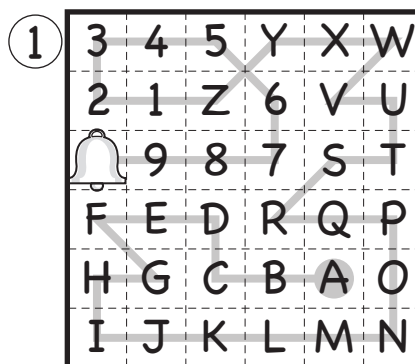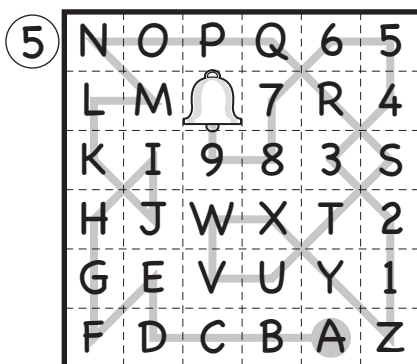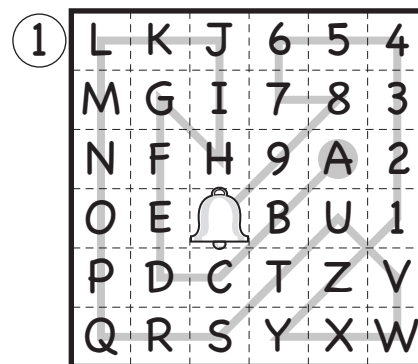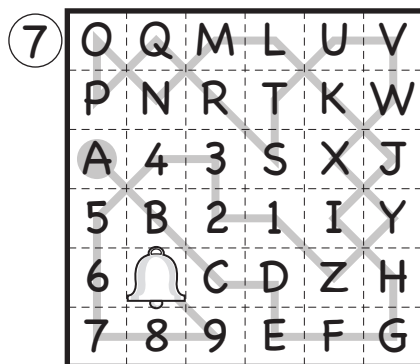# THE MICE IN COUNCIL

SOLUTION:

The grids can be filled with strings as shown below. The oldest rodent is described as comparing the five plans, eying the bells. If one looks at the position of the bell on each plan, the letters of the other plans falling in the the same postion spell out fragments of a clue. The fragments, in puzzle order, are DEGR, 2WDS, RIZE, ANKP, and EYBL. Rearranging these spells the clue "De Grey BLANK prize (2 wds.)" Note that applying this same technique to the sample grid spells the word "Close."

A quick Google reveals that gerontologist/longevity expert Aubrey de Grey is behind the METHUSELAH MOUSE prize.

(7)

O	Q	M	L	U	V
P	N	R	T	K	W
A	4	3	S	X	J
5	B	2	1	I	Y
6	(bell)	C	D	Z	H
7	8	9	E	F	G

(1)

L	K	J	6	5	4
M	G	I	7	8	3
N	F	H	9	A	2
O	E	(bell)	B	U	1
P	D	C	T	Z	V
Q	R	S	Y	X	W

(5)

N	O	P	Q	6	5
L	M	(bell)	7	R	4
K	I	9	8	3	S
H	J	W	X	T	2
G	E	V	U	Y	1
F	D	C	B	A	Z

(1)

3	4	5	Y	X	W
2	1	Z	6	V	U
(bell)	9	8	7	S	T
F	E	D	R	Q	P
H	G	C	B	A	O
I	J	K	L	M	N

(3)

N	L	K	J	I	H
O	M	E	F	G	2
P	D	5	4	3	1
C	Q	S	6	U	Z
B	R	7	T	Y	V
A	8	9	(bell)	X	W
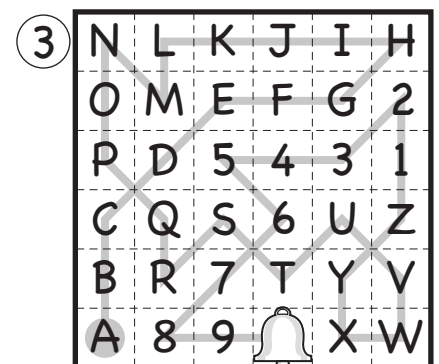
Each plan shows a different configuration of the mice's string and bell, as in the diagram shown to the right. The string is made up of the letters A-Z in order, followed by the digits 1-9 in order, ending with the bell. Each character is to be entered in a grid square orthogonally or diagonally adjacent to the one preceding it. The number accompanying each plan indicates the number of times the string crosses itself.

(2)

Q	P	Z	1	2	4
R	Y	O	N	5	3
S	W	X	M	7	6
T	V	L	K	J	8
U	C	F	G	I	9
A	B	D	E	H	(bell)