

META: Firefly & Mr. Freeze

Scott Handelman & Jonah Ostroff (ft. Adam Maresca)

Answer: **SALT WEAPONRY**

The twelve answers in this round belong to six sets; pair them up accordingly. One answer in each pair contains a single “H,” the other contains a single “C”. Each of these sets also includes prominent “hot” and “cold” items that fit the red and blue thermometers. Apply the adjustments in the bulbs to the positions of the “H” and “C” letters, and read off the corresponding letters from the “hot” and “cold” items as shown in the table below.

“The Price is Right” games:		
S(H)ELL GAME	+2	HOT (S)EAT
RAT RA(C)E	+3	FREEZE FR(A)ME
Pink Floyd “The Wall” songs:		
(H)EY YOU	+9	RUN LIKE HE(L)L
(C)OMFORTABLY NUMB	+3	THE (T)HIN ICE
Shakespeare plays:		
JULIUS (C)AESAR	-3	THE (W)INTER’S TALE
OT(H)ELLO	+16	A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DR(E)AM
Tilda Swinton films:		
T(H)E DEEP END	+3	BURN (A)FTER READING
DO(C)TOR STRANGE	+2	SNOW(P)IERCER
The Gashlycrumb Tinies:		
ZILLA(H)	-3	RH(O)DA (consumed by a fire)
(C)LARA	+3	WIN(N)IE (embedded in ice)
National Hockey League Teams:		
MONTREAL (C)ANADIENS	-4	COLO(R)ADO AVALANCHE
FLORIDA PANT(H)ERS	-5	CALGAR(Y) FLAMES

Reading the thermometers in order yields something that can both melt away Freeze’s ice and smother Firefly’s flames: some **SALT WEAPONRY**.

Author’s Notes

Scott: The Freeze/Firefly meta was the first villain meta to come together as an idea and by far the last to solidify (pun intended).

The original idea was for it to be purely a Mr. Freeze meta, where solvers would be presented with a thing with a hot name (Spicy Nacho Doritos) and your goal was to find its cold counterpart (Cool Ranch Doritos). This morphed into an idea that worked both ways, similar to what the final product ended up being: solvers would receive a single member of a set, and would have to find the “hot” and “cold” member of that set. These pairs were extremely hard to find, but extremely rewarding. I remember being on a two-hour road trip and suddenly shouting “Oh my God! Winter’s Tale and Midsummer Night’s Dream! It’s so perfect!”

If you think that it's unfair to expect solvers to not only identify an answer as a member of a larger set, but be able to separate it from answers from other metas, well...you'd be right. The puzzle flopped in its first test, and we decided to provide two members of each set, splitting the C and the H between those two words when before they were both in the one answer word. This also allowed us to be more flexible with what answers we could use, so win-win!

There were so many sets out there that almost worked but didn't, either because there were two cold items, two hot items, or there weren't separate items that had one C and one H. What you see in the puzzle are most of the good ones we found (unless you're willing to deep-dive into various video games) and anything we liked that didn't work here ended up in the metameta.

Adam: Yeah, this one mutated a *lot* over time. In the event of protests: (PITTSBURGH) PENGUINS aren't by nature cold, HAIL, CAESAR! doesn't use that definition of "HAIL" for its title, and DESMOND died from the impact of the sleigh crash, not the cold. Not that their lengths would've fit thermometers, anyway, but there you have it. SNOW WHITE and [CINDER]ELLA was also toyed with, but ELSA threw a wrench in that one. Oh well!