

General Malpractice

Nick Mitchell

Answer: **CLARA**

The rhythm and (partially hidden) rhyme scheme of Pyg's spiel and the title point to one thing and one thing only: that's right, folks, it's Gilbert and Sullivan time! Sort of. Eventually.

Ciphertext Chunk	XKCD Cell	Lehrer Element	Yield	A#	Read in G&S	G&S Syllable
OFTEACHINGIT	22	nobelium	No			
EVERY	24	tungsten	W			
YLACETATE	4	uranium	U			
TICALITY	1	selenium	Se			
SOMETHINGLIKE	6	astatine	At			
UNCONSTRAINED	2	oxygen	O			
SWILLMAKE	15	manganese	Mn			
OTHERCHOICE	6	osmium	Os			
GUARANTEES	7	indium	In			
YOULLACHIEVE	7	gallium	Ga			
MAJORSJUSTATHING	3	neodymium	Nd			
SAYTO	21	sulfur	S			
AMYSTERY	5	vanadium	V			
MOLOGY	13	erbium	Er			
ANYONE	11	silicon	Si			
UNCONSTRAINED	2	oxygen	O			
PRECEPTSOF	2	nitrogen	N			
DAYAQUEST	15	mercury	Hg	80	Line 5 Syl 16	cal
NOSTICATE	13	helium	He	2	Line 1 Syl 2	am
SOCIAL	10	boron	B	5	Line 1 Syl 5	ry
HISTORY	6	radium	Ra	88	Line 6 Syl 8	both
NEVERGET	16	cerium	Ce	58	Line 4 Syl 10	or
FINDYOURSELF	21	fermium	Fm	100	Line 7 Syl 4	no
RATHEREAT	9	yttrium	Y	39	Line 3 Syl 7	land
CHEMIS	4	iron	Fe	26	Line 2 Syl 10	an
FINDYOURSELF	21	fermium	Fm	100	Line 7 Syl 4	no
HUGAGAIN	16	cesium	Cs	55	Line 4 Syl 7	ter
PAIRABLE	23	rhodium	Rh	45	Line 3 Syl 13	his
CIDED	24	copper	Cu	29	Line 2 Syl 13	and
FINDYOURSELF	21	fermium	Fm	100	Line 7 Syl 4	no
T	17	lead	Pb	82	Line 6 Syl 2	un
MA	24	tin	Sn	50	Line 4 Syl 2	Mar
IFYOUCANT	13	holmium	Ho	67	Line 5 Syl 3	ry
UNDERWA	8	thulium	Tm	69	Line 5 Syl 5	ac
PREPARESYOUFORALIFE	17	praseodymium	Pr	59	Line 4 Syl 11	der
RECOG	23	argon	Ar	18	Line 2 Syl 2	in
T	17	lead	Pb	82	Line 6 Syl 2	un
NOT	23	zinc	Zn	30	Line 2 Syl 14	min

The long surface string is comprised of syllables from the [XKCD parody about college majors](#), which can be paired with another variant libretto: Tom Lehrer's take on the elements of the periodic table. Matching and reading the element symbols gets a nice confirmation message "NoW USe AtOM nOs In G aNd S VErSiON" in the top section, and more elements below.

To use the G&S version, the element numbers from Lehrer's version are now pointers to the syllables of the original "Modern Major General" song; taking the first letters of these syllables spells out "carbon lanthanum radium" which can be symbolically compressed to the final answer, **CLARA**.

Author's Notes

Nick: I get lots of enjoyment writing puzzles using G & S, but in this case I didn't write the flavortext, I must confess.