SHORT STORY (A MORAL DILEMMA)

SOLUTION:

Once answers are obtained for the individual puzzles, the should be entered into the grid shown with the Introduction. However, two things must be determined before this can be accomplished:

A) The correct ordering for the answers, and B)How to "double" the answers as instructed in the Intro.

The ordering may be found in the Intro. The final line of it states that "as for the rest of it...I learned some real lessons". The fables themselves as presented are pretty straightforward; i.e., they don't diverge from Aesop's originals aside from modern colloquialisms. However, the morals given are all clearly bogus. So where are the "real lessons" to be found (the subtitle "A Moral Dilemma" also nods at this)?

The Intro itself encapsulates the actual morals or lessons for the six fables. In order:

"Had I worked on it steadily a little at a time... I'd have succeeded..." = Tortoise/Hare

"it's certainly easy to suggest some monumental enterprise like that when you're not the one who has to write it" = Mice

"I may just feel very negatively about it because I know such a project is well beyond my reach" = Fox

"I think if I tried to go for more than that, I'd risk screwing up the whole thing" = Dog

"Serves me right for counting on having that many complete before they'd actually materialized" = Milkmaid

"Necessity is the mother of invention" = Crow

This gives the order for the answers:

WEEKEND WARRIORS METHUSELAH MOUSE VITRIOL NICKELODEON MINIMUM WAGE SPIN THE BOTTLE

Each answer contains the name for something specific that may be doubled to obtain something with another specific name. The "doubled" answers are:

[FORTNIGHT]END WARRIORS [BALTHAZAR] MOUSE (sizes of champaigne bottles) VI[SEXTET]L [DIME]ODEON [SEMIBREVE]UM WAGE (minim = half note, semibreve = whole note) S[QUAR T]HE BOTTLE

Entering these answers in order into the grid and reading the letters falling on the numbered squares spells the lesson learned by the characters in the opening story: ONE OUGHT TO HAVE GOOD FABLE MANNERS.