

SYLAS' MOUNTAIN CRYPT (meta solution)

by Ong Kah Kien

The meta puzzle shows the familiar map of the land of Square Grid, now with a literal square grid superimposed over it. The locations for all the 12 encounter puzzles also lie neatly within a grid square. This hints that their answers need to be somehow filled into the grid one letter per square, starting from its location square. However, an attempt to use the puzzle answers directly in this manner soon runs into issues, as they would not be able to all fit into the grid. This suggests that other words related to these answers need to be used in the grid fill instead.

The 6 Guardian puzzles, being more unique in needing to be unlocked, also yield answers which are two-word phrases. Other than thematically sounding like magic spells, they are actually clues for wordplay transformations to be applied to 2 of the encounter puzzle answers each. This would transform each encounter puzzle answer into a new word, and all these new words can now fit nicely into the grid. So, the first step is to figure out which 2 encounter answers should be paired with each Guardian answer, to satisfy the transformation clue. This is helped by the location of the Guardian puzzles in the map, which lie at the crossing square of the 2 encounter puzzles (when words are filled across and down from those starting squares) paired with it. Each pair of transformed words cross at the location of the Guardian puzzles, with the letter corresponding to the double initials of its puzzle title.

The tables below summarize the wordplay transformations and pairs of transformed answers for each Guardian puzzle:

Guardian Puzzles	Answers	Clued Wordplay Transformations
Abaddon Abyss	SOLAR SEAR	Sun-dry the answer
Overlooking Outcrop	STONE SHATTER	Annihilate gem found within answer
Sparkling Summit	ENERGY DISCHARGE	Get rid of capital E from answer
Rimy Ravine	DEEP FREEZE	Frozen version of answer
Isolated Islands	EXPANDING SWELLS	Change answer to larger fluid capacity
Drafty Dome	TWISTER BLAST	Transpose answer

Guardian Puzzles	Paired Answer 1	Transformed Answer 1	Paired Answer 2	Transformed Answer 2
Abaddon Abyss	SEAWATER	SALT	GRAPE	RAISIN
Overlooking Outcrop	PHOSPHENE	PHO	PROPAGATE	PROP
Sparkling Summit	EASTER	ASTER	EREBUS	REBUS
Rimy Ravine	YOGURT	FROYO	PLAIN	TUNDRA
Isolated Islands	PONY	JIGGER	SCHOONER	PINT
Drafty Dome	SEDGE	EDGES	LAMED	MEDAL

The map on the next page shows the grid with the transformed words filled in. The white path showing the journey of the party passes through several of the squares with letters. Reading these letters (in green) in reverse order starting from Syllas' Mountain Crypt (hinted by the flavortext "looking back at your journey") gives the thematic pun answer to this meta of what else the party had for help – ELEMENT OF SURPRISE

Singapore Puzzle Hunt 2024 – Puzzle Fantasy X



Constructor's notes:

Because the hunt structure comprises many puzzles in a single round, the meta needed to be one that uses all these answers in a meaningful way. Two usual meta construction approaches in such cases would be either matching the pool of answers to clued wordplays and perform those transformations (which is what I did here), or grouping the pool of answers based on clued wordplay properties (which was somewhat used in SGPH 2023). So, fitting with the concept of the puzzles being locations in the world map, I wanted the map to also be an integral part of the meta in that the pairings and transformed words would go into a square grid version of the map. This happened to pun nicely as the world name with the creators of Final Fantasy. The use of a path as the extraction mechanism is also thematic use of the heroes' journey (as well as a reference to the literary device behind this year's narrative). In terms of the choice of wordplay transformations used, it was intentional to have thematic ones that were a mix of both semantic as well as pure wordplay, which would be more varied and force solvers to think more broadly. The challenge was to come up with phrases that sounded like thematic spell names, while sufficiently clueing the transformations. It was also the intent to make this meta (aha) relatively straightforward, so that solvers could enjoy the steps of figuring out the clued transformations and transformed words, as well as the satisfaction of solving the meta and completing the hunt.