

The Gotham Underground

Nick Mitchell

Answer: **LIT CANDLES**

Despite the colorful boxes and underground setting, this is not a puzzle about subways. Instead, all the answers to the clues on the left share the first four letters with a geologic age, whose color code according to the International Commission on Stratigraphy is given to the right in alphabetical order.

Clue Text (Enumeration)	Answer	C:M:Y:K	Geologic Age
Old Mortality companion and carrier (4,5,4,5)	PALE HORSE, PALE RIDER	00:25:35:00	BARTONIAN
How we sing as we travel along (4,2,4)	SIDE BY SIDE	10:00:50:00	CAMPANIAN
Quebec got it six years after Marseille (4,5-4)	FORT SAINT-JEAN	00:10:30:00	CHATTIAN
Some call them soulless (4,8)	DRUM MACHINES	25:05:35:00	DRUMIAN
Department with absent partners in Oz? (4,7)	HOME AFFAIRS	40:15:50:00	FORTUNIAN
Track smuggler defying capture (4,6)	ROAD RUNNER	20:00:15:00	HOMERIAN
Formerly a Hilton location (4,5)	CAMP DAVID	00:75:00:00	PALEOARCHEAN
Sinel for one (5,2,6)	THANE OF GLAMIS	00:50:45:00	ROADIAN
He provoked a Buzz (4,6)	BART SIBREL	00:70:25:00	SIDERIAN
Do they come from talking trees? (4,4)	CHAT LOGS	00:25:50:00	THANETIAN

With the clues and eras solved for, arrange them chronologically.

PALEOARCHEAN	PALEHORSEPALE RIDER	L
SIDERIAN	SIDE BY SIDE	I
FORTUNIAN	FORT SAINT JEAN	T
DRUMIAN	DRUM MACHINES	C
HOMERIAN	HOME AFFAIRS	A
ROADIAN	ROAD RUNNER	N
CAMPANIAN	CAMP DAVID	D
THANETIAN	THANE OF GLAMIS	L
BARTONIAN	BART SIBREL	E
CHATTIAN	CHAT LOGS	S

Using the eras' lengths to index into the clues yields the final answer, **LIT CANDLES**.

Author's Notes

Nick: Camp David was formerly known as Shangri-la, after the location in James Hilton's *Lost Horizon*, and "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" is the title of a story by Katherine Anne Porter, and of the book in which it appeared along with "Old Mortality."