

Transcosia

Nick Mitchell

Answer: **CLOAKROOMS**

Playing through the text adventure, one should quickly realize that the world map is not on a typical grid layout. From the combination of the conspicuous \$10 bills and the title, Hamiltonian cycles and icosahedrons may eventually come to mind, leading towards the mathematician's original "Icosian game" of visiting every vertex of a dodecahedron. Fortunately, even if it doesn't, mapping the dungeon in 2D (and allowing for looping along one axis) is still very grid-friendly.

Experimenting with the few landmarks in the dungeon quickly establishes the order they must be visited; first you must get the hand vacuum, pick up the reverse polarizer, and then clean the coffin's ashes. With the hand vacuum full, activate the S.E.R.P. and finally use your completed Bat-Repellent Shark Spray to shoo the bats. Only one path allows you to complete these tasks in order and return to the room where you entered. The only other detail of note in the dungeon is how the various gates close; noting the first letters will suffice.

	\$170	<-	S	<-	\$160	<-	S	<-	\$150			\$20	<-	W	<-	\$10			
	P								H				H				L		
E	\$180		\$80	S	\$90	E	\$100		\$140	T	\$130		\$30	A	\$40		\$200	L	\$190
			U				D				A				T				
->	N	->	\$70				\$110	->	P	->	\$120			\$50	->	U	->	\$60	

Taking the used gates' advice, see WHAT the UNUSED PATHS SPELL, in order of sighting.

	\$170	-	-	-	\$160	-	-	-	\$150		L	<-	\$20	-	-	-	\$10	->	C
					M														
-	\$180	O	\$80	-	\$90	-	\$100	S	\$140	-	\$130	O	\$30	-	\$40	A	\$200	-	\$190
																			R
-	-	-	\$70	->	O		\$110	-	-	-	\$120		K	<-	\$50	-	-	-	\$60

This yields the final answer, and a feature of the Count's castle: **CLOAKROOMS**.

Author's Notes

Nick: The interactive fiction HTML was constructed using Twine 2.3.9 and SugarCube 2.31.1. The labyrinth is a staple of the text adventure genre. Its design in this game is based on the Icosian game of the Irish mathematician William Rowan Hamilton, whose portrait appears on the in-game currency. (The portrait of Alexander Hamilton on the U.S. \$10 bill also has him wearing a white bow tie, but not a wing-collar.)

This puzzle's original answer was VAN HELSING, which inspired its theme. The description of the castle is taken from the pages of Bram Stoker's Dracula, but the Count himself (apart from his height) was more inspired by the Sesame Street puppet. The Bat Repellent Shark Spray and the Super Energy Reverse Polarizer were inspired by elements in the 1966 Batman movie. "The Road to Reality" is the title of a book by Roger Penrose, which I hope to finish reading someday.

Finally, did you notice the IRKY CASTLE anagram?