

Choose Your Path

by Level 51

Undertale was released for the Switch this year, and *Deltarune* was released recently too! This puzzle revisits the *Undertale* universe, with all of its zany characters and morally challenging plot routes—as we know, there's three general routes you can take in *Undertale*: the Pacifist Route, the Genocide Route, and the Neutral Route. I followed one of these routes, and each of the clues in this puzzle has also followed one of these routes.

(1) The 20 clues on the Pacifist Route have each made friends with an *Undertale* character, with 4 clues for each of the 5 characters. For each of these clues, taking the n -th letter from the front of the clue, where n is the number associated with the character, will tell you why I couldn't follow these clues along the Pacifist Route.

- Toriel** thinks that cryptic clues are too hard, so she's added an extra definition to try to hint them better.
- Papyrus**: NYEH-HEH-HEH!! I'VE TURNED ALL MY ENTRIES BLUE!!
- Undyne**'s been throwing her spears in all directions, especially unconventional ones, and she might have thrown some entries too.
- Alphys**, as addicted to social media as always, can only find the time to transmit the clues over the phone.
- Asgore** still feels bad about the time he broke the SPARE button, so he's added SPARE letters to one word in each of his clues. They might have gotten a bit messy in the process, though.

(2) Instead, I followed the Genocide Route, along with 21 clues: each of them has had a visit from Sans, who's up to his practical jokes, as always. Each clue's wordplay produces a string which is one letter longer than its definition (and may or may not be a word). The string you need to enter in the grid is this string, *sans* that extra character. Taking the extra characters, in clue order, will tell you the equally bad line I delivered once I defeated Sans at the end of that route.

(3) Finally, the remaining 17 clues in the puzzle followed the Neutral Route—they function as normal clues.

(4) *Undertale* is all about exploring where the line between right and wrong or good and evil lies, in order to find out what's truly important: to do so, highlight each cell on the grid which lies on the intersection between a Pacifist and Genocide entry. In grid order, from top to bottom, these will spell out the wordplay half of a final cryptic clue, which will show what's truly important in *Undertale*, depending on which path you've taken.

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10
11								12			
13							14				
	15		16		17			18			19
20				21			22			23	
24					25			26	27		
		28				29			30		
31		32	33		34	35					36
37	38				39			40			
41					42	43				44	
45					46						
47						48					

ACROSS

- Servant's failure to gain river land
- MBA, for example, hosts empty time for everyone (hyph.)
- Current, fashionable model entering car
- Attempt to take in love for wait system
- Character with speech impediment to go back in time by infinitesimal amount
- Magician Geller, formerly known as "Waste Material"
- POOCH GROOVE appears in odd meta
- Informally tell on in Australia home, heading out back
- Recess time's right to follow clubs
- Leading man journalist gazed at
- Japanese hot spring's on mountain base, filled with brine
- Professor with grand shadow
- Selected column to showcase ancient architecture, ultimately
- Ruins chocolate bar brand
- Notes sea-scaper of legal importance
- Employment of wise man after unemployment starts
- Grants revolutionary sight to follow augur regularly
- Sorcerers trap soldier
- Establish group to chase thieves on the inside
- Defeat—also, behead—soldiers from both sides
- Mats rearranged to cover Regina's fly sting
- Dynamic, pivotal role, but losing at club
- In the middle of ammonia derivant
- Thieves air gun, breaking into Sorre composition
- "Plane": the composition's 23 by 28 inches
- One in front of the other: time and—

DOWN

- Vis-à-vis being eaten by leopards: man's fear
- Hack advertising by the Ocean State

- Spike drink with drugs, essentially, to be set up with thirst
- Covered in gold—"shame!", we hear
- Artist Schieren, of old Tokyo
- Noble gas returning zero effects, briefly
- Upset, primarily, engaged in cold complaint to duelist Aaron
- Morale raised by excursions
- Spaces containing negative ages
- Color of flag on the radio
- Crazy rant about Vietnamese dynasty
- "Heartbreak! Paupers imprisoned by woman," Tom cries
- "Introduction to Animation" to follow "Body Art Brief" later
- British military award for ultimate selflessness in act (abbr.)
- Outcomes of Erin neatly dusting staircases, from tops to bottoms
- Wear clothing, heading out
- Scored zero—it can be relied on (hyph.)
- Blunt blades were sharp once, too; edge softens, in the end
- Raffle to give away a, er, musical instrument
- Currency related to nervous system
- Plastered and drunk, initially, rush to welcome ship
- That head covering!
- A profit, once more
- Belt brief dirge out
- Prohibitionist carrying, initially, expensive champagne to wrap
- Twitch's Spring Sale market opens
- Working plan to support personae: 1,000 rounds
- Auditor's pen is cause of sore eyes
- Tag, with front scratched off, for first murder victim
- Blue's Clues* ending with commercial
- In the spotlight: Psy's latest books
- Before queen and her heart