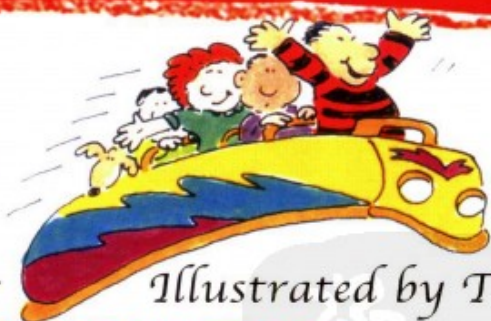


750个英文单词的来源



单词的故事



by Rosalie Baker

Illustrated by Tom Lopes

IN A WORD



750 words and their fascinating stories and origins

世界图书出版公司

单词的故事

——750个英文单词的来源



词难以捉摸!

In a Word: 探索词汇的宽义及其起源, 可以帮助我们相互之间更好地交流, 加深对语言的理解, 这个过程充满了乐趣。

In a Word: 详细阐述单词的故事和起源, 分门别类的介绍, 幽默的插图栩栩如生, 为阅读打开方便之门。它将带着你开始一段有趣的历程, 直达语言的源泉处。



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IN



ALL

WORD





作者简介

罗莎莉·贝克 (Rosalie Baker)

作为面向年轻人的世界历史杂志《卡拉培》的合作主编（和她的丈夫查理一起），她20多年致力于单词的研究，她的每月专栏“趣味单词”，以它生动地看待词汇本身及其运用的视角，吸引了众多的读者群。她是研究古典文明和罗曼语的权威，也是马萨诸塞州新贝德福德公立学校外语系的系主任。她写了7本有关古代文明的书，同时也是《挖》(Dig) 儿童杂志的主编。

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Foreword

Words are slippery things. Words are also difficult to define. They fascinate me both for themselves and for the history they sometimes reveal. We all know what a cat is, but try to define the word “cat” without either pointing to a cat or using the word “feline” in the definition. Dr. Samuel Johnson in his great dictionary of the English language defined “cat” as: “a domestic animal that catches mice.” Although his definition is true of most cats, it is not true of all; and there probably are other domestic animals that can be taught to catch mice.

Words are curious, often with curious histories, as you will learn from this book. Check out “candidate” or “senate,” for instance. My wife remarked the other day that the day was “close.” This sense of the word—hot and stifling—was popular in 1533 (and is in current use, but not commonly used). A person may be described as being “close with a dollar,” which means that he is cheap, a skinflint, or stingy. We can see how this second meaning fits with our current belief about the meaning of “close”; but connecting the word to the weather or the atmosphere in a room seems a stretch. Words can be used to convey what we might think of as many different meanings.

Words are also extremely important. If we do not know the word for a *thing*, we cannot easily talk about that *thing*—without using the word “thing” or pointing or describing what the object is used for. We’re forced to resort either to gesture or circumlocution (a lengthy way of expressing something). We cannot be ignorant of words connected with international relations or computers or the national economy or the life of the mind. If we are, we will find ourselves unable to take part in discussions of matters important to ourselves and to society.

I recently saw the word “donator” in a local paper. We all know what the word must mean, and we know that it refers to the person who donates. But does it exist in the English language? One of my dictionaries cites it, another does not. Which are we to believe? English possesses a perfectly good word (“donor”) that would seem to serve the purpose intended; or is there some distinction to be made between a (possibly one-time) “donator” and a (regular and systematic) “donor”? I do not know, and will have to wait and see.

In addition to being important, the study of words is exciting, as you will discover by reading this book. From it you will learn about many words and their history, a history that is sometimes interesting and unexpected, as with the phrase “meet the deadline.” Through these words and others you will marvel at human creativity, improve your vocabulary, and have a lot of fun.

Dr. William F. Wyatt
Professor of Classics, Emeritus
Brown University

序 言

单词难以捉摸。单词也难于界定。它们之所以令我着迷，不仅因为其本身，也因为它们所蕴含的历史。大家都知道猫是什么，但是试试在不指着一只猫或者在定义中不用“猫科动物”一词的情况下来解释“猫”这个词？塞缪尔·约翰逊博士在他伟大的英语语言字典中将“猫”定义为“一种捕捉老鼠的家畜”。尽管他的定义对于大多数猫来说都是准确的，但是并不能囊括所有猫的情况。可能会有其他的家畜也学习了捕捉老鼠的本领。

从这本书中你能了解到，单词往往伴随着不同寻常的历史而令人惊奇。举个例子，看看“候选人”（candidate）或者“参议院”（senate）这两个词。我的妻子前几天用“close”一词来形容天气闷热。单词“close”的这一释义在1553年被普遍采用，现在尽管仍在使用，但是已经不常见了。我们可以用“与一美元很亲近”（close with a dollar）来形容一个人吝啬（cheap），是个吝啬鬼（skinflint）或者小气（stingy）之类的。可以发现，此处的第二种含义与人们现在对“close”一词意思的理解多么相符；但是，把这个单词与形容天气或者屋内环境这样的意思联系起来似乎有些牵强。单词可以用来表达很多不同的意思。

单词也相当重要。不知道一个事物所对应的单词，我们就不能轻松地谈论那个事物——当然，是在不用“东西”（thing）这个词，不用手指着该事物或不描述该物体用途的情况下。此时，我们不得不诉诸于肢体语言或者采用累赘的表述。对于与国际关系，计算机，国民经济，或者精神生活有关的单词，我们不能一无所知。否则，我们会发现自己无法参与有关我们自身或者社会重大问题的讨论。

不久前，我在一张地方报纸上看到了“捐赠者”（donator）一词。我们都知道这个单词的含义，它指的是对别人予以赠予的

人。然而，这个词在英语中确实存在吗？我的一本字典援引了这一词条，但是另一本字典中却没有。该相信哪一本字典呢？英语中有一个很好的单词“donor”表示捐赠者的意思，这一个单词似乎已经足够表达该意义了，或者是“donator”（可能指偶尔一次的捐赠者）和“donor”（定期的捐赠者）两个词的意义应该区分开？我不清楚，让我们拭目以待吧。

你们在阅读的过程中会发现，对于单词的研究不仅重要，而且是一件令人兴奋的事。从中你将学到很多单词以及它们演变的历史知识。它们的历史不仅有趣，而且出人意料，这一点从“meet the deadline”（赶上最后期限）这个短语中可以看得出来。通过这些和其他的单词你将会惊叹人类的创造力，提高你的词汇量，并且从中获得很多乐趣。

威廉 F. 怀亚特博士

古典学荣誉教授

布朗大学

Introduction

Every since my first week in 9th-grade Latin class, I have enjoyed dissecting words. I enjoyed learning just what words really mean and how these meanings had evolved. I already spoke English and Portuguese, so Latin seemed to fill a “gap” of understanding. It allowed me to see the relationships between words and the people who speak them today, and the people who used them in the past. My love of languages continued through high school and into college and graduate school. As I studied French, German, and Greek, each again broadened my perception of language and how words reflect a people’s beliefs and customs.

In 1981, when my husband, Charles Baker, and I started the monthly magazine now called *Calliope*, we decided to include in each issue a column on words and their origins. That column, “Fun With Words,” still appears in each issue of *Calliope* today. “Fun With Words” became a mini-education for me as I researched words in languages that I did not speak or read. I had long known that “fossil” traced its roots to the Latin noun *fossa*, which translates “ditch” and symbolized something that had been dug up from the ground. But I had no idea that “bandanna” and “bungalow” each traced its roots to Hindi, a language spoken in India, or that “typhoon” was an adaptation of the Chinese phrase *taifeng*, meaning “great wind.” Another surprise was discovering that the cloth named “mohair” was an adaptation of the Arabic word *mukhayyar*, meaning “fine cloth.”

It is a treat for me to research new words for each issue of *Calliope*, but, as the years passed, I wanted to find a way to gather together all I’d learned and pass it on to new readers. We decided to create this book, which features not only a lively discussion of word

origins, but also new information that is related in some way to the word derivations on a particular page. We call these tidbits PS, as in "postscript" (you can see its origin on page 15).

Lou Waryncia, the editorial director at Cobblestone Publishing; Marc Aronson, the publisher of Cricket Books; Ann Dillon, the art designer at Cobblestone Publishing; and Carol Saller, editor at Cricket Books, encouraged me. I wish to thank all four for their support and input.

Just as the "Fun With Words" column cannot include all words related to the theme of a *Calliope* issue, so this book cannot include the origins of all English words and phrases. I have included my favorites and encourage all of you to use them as a starting point for investigating the fascinating history contained within every word we read and write. You will soon find that an awareness of what word or phrase is appropriate and effective in a particular situation gives you a distinct advantage in school, on the job, and with your friends.

This book is a result of my lifetime of journeying through the words we use into the lives and history of people all around the world. I hope it is also the beginning of your quest to look inside words to the stories they tell.

Rosalie Baker

前言

自从九年级第一次上拉丁语课以来，我就开始沉醉在分析词语的乐趣当中。我乐于了解词语的确切含义以及这些意义的演变过程。我能说英语和葡萄牙语，所以拉丁语似乎填补了一个理解上的空白。它让我了解词语和现在以及过去使用这些词语的人们之间的关系。我对于语言的热爱一直延续到了高中、大学以及研究生阶段。学习法语、德语和希腊语的时候，每一种语言都再一次拓宽了我对语言以及词语如何反映一个民族的信仰和习俗的理解。

1981年，当我和我丈夫查尔斯·贝克开办现在命名为《卡拉培^①》的月刊时，我们决定在每期杂志中开辟一个关于词语以及词源的专栏，称做“趣味词语”。该专栏如今仍然出现在每一期的《卡拉培》当中。当我研究自己不会说或者不会阅读的语言时，它成为了我的老师。很久以前，我就已经知道“化石”（fossil）的词根可以追溯到拉丁语名词 fossa，译作“沟渠”（ditch）并表示从地表下挖掘出来的事物。然而，我并不知道“印花大手帕”（bandanna）和“有凉台的平房”（bungalow）的词根来自于印地语，一种在印度使用的语言；我也不清楚“台风”（typhoon）是由汉语中的“台风”一词演变而来的，意思为“巨大的风”。另一个惊奇的发现是称做“马海毛”（mohair）的布料来自阿拉伯词语 mukhayyar，意思为“精美的织物”。

对于我来说，为每一期《卡拉培》研究新的词汇是一种乐趣，但是，随着时间的流逝，我渴望找到一种途径将我所学的知识积累起来，并将它传授给新的读者。因此，我们决定写作这本书，它不仅生动地讨论了词汇的来源，而且探讨了与某一页中派

^① Calliope，希腊神话中掌管史诗的缪斯神。

生词相关的新信息。我们将其称之为小品附录 (PS); PS 是 “postscript” (该词词源见 15 页) 的缩写。

鹅卵石出版公司的主编 Lou Waryncia, 板球图书出版社的出版人 Marc Aronson, 鹅卵石出版公司的艺术设计 Ann Dillon 以及板球图书出版社的编辑 Carol Saller 在本书的创作过程中给予我莫大的鼓励。在此我感谢他们的支持和投入。

正如“趣味词语”专栏不能囊括与一期《卡拉培》的主题相关的所有词语, 本书也不能包含所有英语单词和短语的来源。我收录了我最喜爱的词语, 并鼓励所有读者把它们用做研究我们读到和用到的每一个词汇所包含的动人历史的一个起点。不久, 你们将会发现一旦在特定的情况下能够意识到哪一个词或者短语最适当并有效, 在学习、工作以及朋友中间你们就会有明显的优势。

终此一生, 我都在词语中跋涉, 希望由此能够探究世界上不同地区人们的生活和历史; 本书就是我长期以来探索的结果。我谨希望它也能够成为你们探寻词语及其所述说故事的一个开端。

罗莎莉·贝克

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Cultural Creations

文化创作

Ever wonder how the word “orchestra” evolved to mean both the location of the best seats in a theater and a large group of musicians who play together? You may consider yourself a “maestro” of arts and literature information after you have read this chapter.

