Webster's Word Histories

A Merriam-Webster®

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Preface

When we go to our dictionaries, it is usually because we want some bit of information that is immediately useful to us: the meaning of an unfamiliar word, the pronunciation of a word we have seen but never heard, the spelling of a word we know but cannot recall the physical shape of, or an appropriate point at which to divide a word at the end of a line. We may seldom take the time to assimilate the information presented in the etymology of the word we are looking up. It is rare indeed for anyone but a scholar to have a pressing need to know the origin of a word, and the conventions by means of which the information is given may be confusing or intimidating to us.

It is nonetheless true that many of our words have interesting histories, and scholarly learning is not required to appreciate them. Once a reader's interest has been piqued by the realization that behind one English word lies a myth of the ancient Greeks, while another word can be traced to a twentieth-century American comic strip, it is perfectly easy to become addicted to the fascinating study of etymology, at least in an amateur way.

One of the aims of Webster's Word Histories is to foster the reader's interest in that study in the hope that it will deepen into fascination. Although the articles in this book have been arranged alphabetically for ease of reference, they invite browsers to move about in the book as a cross-reference or a whim takes them. Many thousands of English words have histories of more than routine interest, but only a small sampling could find space here. Still, the more than six hundred articles which form the heart of the book, many of them devoted to several etymologically or semantically related words, offer material to catch the fancy of all readers, whatever their interests. In part because throughout its history English has been highly receptive to outside influences on its wordstock, prolific in creating new words from its own familiar elements, and given to the development of new meanings over the course of time, these articles are extremely diverse. In them will be encountered several of the people, famous or obscure in their own right, whose names have become generic words. One can learn of processes of language, like folk etymology, that transform existing words into new ones and can catch glimpses of the social, cultural, and religious history, not of the English-speaking nations alone, but also of the peoples from whom we have borrowed new words. But an inventory of all the contents of these articles would soon grow tiresome. Readers are invited to discover for themselves the variety this book contains.

At the same time that Webster's Word Histories attempts to satisfy the reader's curiosity about the stories associated with many English words, it also aims to domesticate that often formidable beast, the dictionary etymology. Thus, nearly every entry, whether it includes an article or merely refers to an article elsewhere in the book, is accompanied by an etymology presented in the style of Webster's Third New International Dictionary, though with cross-references (which are likely to be more frustrating than revealing outside of the dictionary) omitted. The table of abbreviations

used in these etymologies, which begins on page xvi, will give readers much assistance with the compressed presentation of information in an etymology, and the pronunciation symbols used in several articles are explained on page xv. Finally, an interesting and helpful introduction follows this preface and discusses briefly such matters as the history of English and its relation to its language family, the sources of English loanwords, and the development of new meanings in the language itself. Its closing paragraphs are devoted to a clarification of some points about the etymologies given in this book so that the reader may know just what they say—and do not say. Everyone who reads this book will find that a careful perusal of the introduction repays the time and attention devoted to it by enhancing appreciation and understanding of both the articles and the etymologies.

The articles are essentially the work of seven members of the editorial team of Merriam-Webster, working under the direction of Dr. David B. Justice, editor of etymology. They are Dr. Justice himself, E. Ward Gilman, James G. Lowe, Julie A. Collier, Stephen J. Perrault, Michael G. Belanger, and Kelly L. Tierney. Robert D. Copeland served as copy editor for the project. Eileen M. Haraty was responsible for cross-reference. Proofs were read by many of the editors already named, and also by Kathleen M. Doherty, Daniel J. Hopkins, Peter D. Haraty, Paul F. Cappellano, and Karin M. Henry. The difficult job of typing the manuscript was ably accomplished by Georgette B. Boucher, Barbara A. Winkler, and Florence A. Fowler of the editorial department's clerical and typing staff, as well as by Helene Gingold, department secretary.

Frederick C. Mish
Editor

Introduction

A look at the origins of the words that make up our language involves also a look at the origins of our language itself. With the abundance of words derived from Latin and from Greek by way of Latin, the casual observer might guess that English would be, like French, Spanish, and Italian, a romance language derivative of the Latin spoken by the ancient Romans. But although the Romans made a few visits to Britain in the first century A.D., long before the English were there—before there was even an England—English is not a romantic language. In terms of its genetic stock, English is a member of the Germanic group, and thus a sister of such extinct tongues as Old Norse and Gothic and such modern ones as Swedish, Dutch, and German.

The history of English is intimately tied to the history of the British Isles over the last 1500 years or so. We may speak of English as having its beginnings with the conquest and settlement of a large part of the island of Britain by Germanic tribes from the European continent in the fifth century, although the earliest written documents of the language belong to the seventh century. Of course these Germanic peoples did not, upon their arrival in England, suddenly begin to speak a new language. They spoke the closely related Germanic tongues of their continental homelands. From these developed the English language. In fact, the words *English* and *England* are derived from the name of one of these early Germanic peoples, the Angles. From its beginnings English has been gradually changing and evolving, as language tends to do, until the earliest written records have become all but incomprehensible to the speaker of Modern English without specialized training.

By virtue of being a member of the Germanic group, English belongs to a still larger family of languages called Indo-European. The languages of this family, which includes most of the modern European languages as well as such important languages of antiquity as Latin, Greek and Sanskirt, all resemble each other in a number of ways, particularly in vocabulary. One needs no training in the fine points of philology to see that the similarities between forms like English *father*, German *vater*, Latin *pater*, Greek *patēr*, and Sanskrit *pitṛ*, all of which have the same meaning, are not likely to be the result of accident. We account for resemblances like these by the assumption that all of these languages are descended from a common ancestor. We have no written remnants of this assumed ancestral language, which was spoken thousands of years ago, perhaps in central Europe—even the location is not certain. But we can learn something about it by comparing its descendants, and it has been given a name—Proto-Indo-European. Words in the various Indo-European languages which are ultimately derived from a common ancestral word assumed to have existed in Proto-Indo-European are called cognates. The words mentioned above with *father* are all cognates. The variations between the initial *p* of some

of the words and the *f* of others is accounted for by philologists with reference to regular patterns of sound changes over long periods of time.

The oldest form of English, known as Anglo-Saxon or Old English and dating from the beginning of the language to about A.D. 1100, retained the basic grammatical properties of the Germanic branch of the Indo-European family. For example, some verbs (called "weak") formed their past tense and past participle by adding an ending with *-d* or *-t* while others (called "strong") did this by changing a vowel. Nouns belonged to one of three genders (masculine, feminine, or neuter) and appeared in one of two numbers (singular or plural) and one of five possible cases according to their function within the clause (nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, or instrumental). Adjectives not only took inflectional endings for gender, case, and number but also had different sets of endings depending on whether a word like *that* or *your* preceded them or they stood alone. To get a sense of how far evolution has taken us from the early tongue, we need only glance at a sample of Old English. Here is the beginning of the Lord's Prayer:

> Fæder ūre, þu þe eart on heofonum: si þin nama gehālgod. Tōbecume þin rīce. Geweorþe þin willa on eorþan swāswā on heofonum.

The difference between this language and today's is more radical then just a difference in spelling, since several of the letters signify sounds different from what the same letters signify today. Much of this came about during the Great Vowel Shift in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. That; the name given to a set of changes most readily recognizable in the changing values of long vowels. From the older values that resembled those of vowels in the modern continental languages ($\bar{a}$ \ä\, $\bar{e}$ \ā\, $\bar{\imath}$ \ē\, $\bar{o}$ \ō\, $\bar{u}$ \ü\) came our Modern English pronunciations (*a* \ā\, *e* \ē\, *i* \ī\, *oo* \ü\ or \u̇\ or \ˈə\, *ou* \au̇\). Thus, for example, the Old English ancestor of *five* would have been pronounced \ˈfēf\, the ancestor of *clean* would have been pronounced something like \ˈklān-ə\, and the ancestor of *root* would have been pronounced \ˈrōt\. In looking back at the Old English Lord's Prayer, we see the ninth word *þin* 'thine' characterized by two distinctive differences from modern *thine:* the first is the unusual letter þ, called thorn (which had a \th\ sound); the second ı the long *i* which had a sound closer to the vowel sound of the modern word *mean.* The next word, *nama* 'name', was pronounced something like \ˈnäm-ä\.

Between the vocabularies of Old English and Modern English, there is a certain continuity at the core, since something over half of the thousand most common words of the Old English poetic vocabulary have survived into Modern English more or less intact, apart from normal sound change. And of the thousand most common Modern English words, four-fifths are of Old English origin. But away from this ancestral core of words like *be, water,* and *strong,* the picture is one of radical change. Perhaps five-sixths of the Old English words of which we have a record left no descendants in Modern English. And a majority of the words used in English today are of foreign origin. Of the foreign languages affecting the Old English vocabulary, the most influential was Latin. Ecclesiastical terms especially, like

priest, vicar, and *mass,* were borrowed from Latin, the language of the Church. But words belonging to aspects of life other than the strictly religious, like *cap, inch, kiln, school,* and *noon,* also entered Old English from Latin. The Scandinavians, too, influenced the language of England during the Old English period. From the eighth century on, Scandinavians raided and eventually settled in England, especially in the north and the east. This prolonged, if frequently unfriendly, contact had a considerable and varied influence on the English vocabulary. In a few instances the influence of a Scandinavian cognate gave an English word a new meaning. Thus our *dream,* which meant 'joy' in Old English, probably took on the now familiar sense 'a series of thoughts, images, or emotions occurring during sleep' because its Scandinavian cognate *draumr* had that meaning. A considerable number of common words, like *cross, fellow, ball,* and *raise,* also became naturalized as a result of the Viking incursions over the years. The initial consonants *sk-* often reveal the Scandinavian ancestry of words like *sky, skin,* and *skirt,* the last of which has persisted side by side with its native English cognate *shirt.* (See the discussion at SKIRT.)

The Middle English period, from about 1100 to 1500, was marked by a great extension of foreign influence on English, principally as a result of the Norman Conquest of 1066, which brought England under the rule of French speakers. The English language, though it did not die, was for a long time of only secondary importance in political, social, and cultural matters. French became the language of the upper classes in England. The variety of French spoken then is now called Anglo-Norman or Anglo-French. The lower classes continued to speak English, but many French words were borrowed into English. To this circumstance we owe, for example, a number of distinctions between the words used for animals in the pasture and the words for those animals prepared to be eaten. Living animals were under the care of English-speaking peasants; cooked, the animals were served to the French-speaking nobility. *Swine* in the sty became *pork* on the table, *cow* and *calf* became *beef* and *veal.* (See the article at PORK.) Anglo-French also had an influence on the words used in the courts, such as *indict, jury, oyez,* and *verdict.* (See the article at JUDGE.) English eventually reestablished itself as the major language of England, but the language did not lose its habit of borrowing, and many foreign words became naturalized in Middle-English, especially loanwords taken from Old French and Middle French (such as *date, escape, infant,* and *money*) or directly from Latin (such as *alibi, library,* and *pacify*).

Modern English, from about 1500 to the present, has been a period of even wider borrowing. English still derives much of its learned vocabulary from Latin and Greek. And we have also borrowed words from nearly all of the languages in Europe, though only a few examples can be given here. From Modern French we have words like *bikini, cliche,* and *discotheque,* from Dutch, *easel, gin,* and *yacht,* from German, *delicatessen, pretzel,* and *swindler,* and from Swedish, *ombudsman* and *smorgasbord.* From Italian we have taken *carnival, fiasco,* and *pizza,* as well as many terms from music (including *piano*). Portuguese has given us *cobra* and *molasses,* and the Spanish of Spain has yielded *sherry* and *mosquito,* while the Spanish

of the New World has given us *ranch* and *machismo*. From Russian, Czech, and Yiddish we have taken *czar, robot* and *kibitz.*

And in the modern period the linguistic acquistiveness of English has found opportunities even farther afield. From the period of the Renaissance voyages of discovery through the days when the sun never set upon the British Empire and up to the present, a steady stream of new words has flowed into the language to match the new objects and experiences English speakers have encountered all over the globe. English has drawn words from India (*bandanna*), China (*gung ho*), and Japan (*tycoon*), as well as a number of smaller areas in the Pacific (*amok* and *orangutan* from the Malay language and *ukulele* from Hawaiian). Arabic has been a prolific source of words over the centuries, giving us *hazard, lute, magazine,* and a host of words beginning with the letter *a*, from *algebra* to *azimuth.*

English has also added words to the vocabulary in a variety of ways apart from borrowing. Many new words are compounds of existing words (like *humble pie*) or coinages without reference to any word element in English or other languages (like *googol* and *quark*). Many words derive from literary characters (like *ignoramus* and *quixotic*), figures from mythology (like *hypnosis* and *panic*), the names of places (like *donnybrook* and *tuxedo*), or the names of people (like *boycott* and *silhouette*). The Roman emperor Julius Caesar has lent his name to a number of English words, including *cesarean, czar, July,* and *kaiser.* Still other words have come to us through the processes discussed at FOLK ETYMOLOGY, CALQUE, BACK-FORMATION, BLENDS, CLIPPING, and similar entries.

Whether borrowed or created, a word generally begins its life in English with one meaning. Yet no living language is static, and in time words develop new meanings and lose old ones. There are several directions in which semantic development frequently moves. Two common tendencies of language are generalization and specialization. A word used in a specific sense may be extended, or generalized, to cover a host of similar senses. Our *virtue* is derived from the Latin *virtus*, which originally meant 'manliness'. But we apply the term to any excellent quality possessed by man, woman, or beast; even inanimate objects have their *virtues*. In Latin, *decimare* meant 'to select and kill a tenth part of' and described the Roman way of dealing with mutinous troops. Its English descendant, *decimate*, now simply means 'to destroy a large part of'. Perhaps more frequent in its operation than generalization is the phenomenon of specialization, or narrowing, in which a word of general application becomes limited to a small part of its former wide range. *Tailleur*, the Old French ancestor of our *tailor*, first meant simply 'one who cuts', whether the cutting was of stone, wood, or cloth. Gradually the meaning was restricted to cloth, and the word came into English with that sense. *Deer* once meant 'animal'. Now only the members of a single family of mammals are called *deer*.

In addition to what could be thought of as a horizontal dimension of change—the extension or contraction of meaning—words also may rise and fall along a vertical scale of value. Perfectly unobjectionable words are sometimes used disparagingly or sarcastically. If we say, "You're a fine one to talk," we are using *fine* in a sense quite different from its usual meaning.

If a word is used often enough in negative contexts, the negative coloring may eventually become an integral part of the meaning of the word. A *villain* was once a peasant. His social standing was not high, perhaps, but he was certainly not necessarily a scoundrel. *Scavenger* originally designated the collector of a particular kind of tax in late medieval England. *Puny* first meant no more than 'younger' when it passed from French into English and its spelling was transformed. Only later did it acquire the derogatory meaning more familiar to us now. Euphemism too, though very well-intentioned, has caused many a word to take on a pejorative meaning. People are often reluctant, from a sense of decency or prudery or even simple kindness, to use a word whose denotation is unpleasant. Eventually, however, the good new word may become as unloved as the bad old one, and a new euphemism must be found. *Cretin* originally meant 'Christian' and was used charitably for a kind of mentally deficient person. The Modern English word retains no trace of its etymological meaning.

The opposite process seems to take place somewhat less frequently, but amelioration of meaning does occasionally occur. In the fourteenth century *nice,* for example, meant 'foolish'. Its present meaning, of course, is quite different, and the attitude it conveys seems to have undergone a complete reversal from contempt to approval. *Pioneer* now has overwhelmingly favorable connotations. A pioneer leads ordinary people along the way to new territory or new realms of knowledge. When the word first appeared in English, however, a pioneer was only a common foot soldier who performed such unexalted tasks as digging trenches. Another word that has followed the course of amelioration is *urbane.* In its earliest recorded occurrences in English, its meaning was the same as that of its etymological twin *urban.* Yet within a hundred years *urbane* had taken on the honorific sense of 'smoothly courteous or polite' in which we know it today.

We must not suppose, however, that these processes of semantic development are mutually exclusive or that a word must move neatly and consistently along a single path. The history of a word like *yen,* which began as 'a craving for opium or other narcotic' and later developed the sense 'a strong desire or propensity', clearly shows the forces of generalization at work but could also be considered to exemplify amelioration and a general lessening of intensity as well. *Sad* is a word whose semantic history is rather complex and not easily classifiable. Its earliest sense is 'sated'. The development of the sense 'firmly established or settled' does not clearly exemplify any of the processes just discussed; yet, that sense was current for more than three centuries, only to yield finally to several meanings still in use, such as 'mournful' and 'deplorable'. Whatever the history of their meanings, words are finally as individual—even sometimes eccentric—in their development as people.

The words discussed in this book reflect the diverse origins of the English vocabulary. They also indicate some of the ways in which words change in meaning. Each article traces the history of a word as far back as we have been able to follow it. The evolution of English words from their earliest use in English into modern times is given in great detail, with

a wealth of quotations, in the Oxford English Dictionary. We have, of necessity, made use of this monumental work in the preparation of the articles. Frequently we quote instances of a word's use in English. Many of these quotations are drawn from the Oxford English Dictionary; others, especially the more modern ones, come from our own files. Occasionally, in the discussion of a word's history, we say that a word entered the language in some specified century. By this we mean only that the earliest attested use of the word occurred during that century. For only a few words, especially coinages like *jabberwocky* and *googol,* can we be certain of the actual date of first use. Other words may well be years, perhaps even centuries, older that their first citations.

Etymology is not an exact science. Many times we are unable to discover the origin of a word. Unproved but often ingenious etymological theories are put forward frequently, some plausible and very attractive, some wildly improbable. For *posh* and *ofay,* two words of obscure origin, explanations are regularly offered, but Merriam-Webster etymologists have compelling reasons for rejecting these suggestions. Sometimes, even when a word's origin is fairly certainly known, an unlikely story catches the popular imagination. For the expression *tinker's damn,* we offer an explanation of why a rather mundane theory of origin is to be preferred to a more popular story. (See disussion at TINKER.)

Recall always that we, like all other etymologists and most other human beings, are imperfect. The articles in this book are to the best of our present knowledge, accurate. But approach them with caution. Any day, new information may come to light that could prove us wrong. Consider the word *OK.* Time and again, etymologists have felt that they had reached the final answer, only to find themselves faced with new evidence and so forced to revise their explanations.

At the end of each article in this book, and at each cross-referenced entry, there is a bracketed etymology, which is a compact statement of the history of the entry word. An article that treats two or more homographs—words with the same spelling—is followed by a bracketed etymology for each. The style in which these etymologiges are written is based upon that used for the etymologies in Webster's Third New International Dictionary. The etyma of the word are printed in italics, preceded by appropriate language labels. An italicized word is followed by its meaning, printed in roman type:

hoosegow . . . [Sp *juzgado* panel of judges, tribunal, courtroom . . .]

If no meaning, form, or language label is given for a word cited in an etymology, then the meaning, form, or language of the word is identical with that of its immediate descendant, the word that precedes it in the etymology:

panache . . . [earlier *pennache,* fr. MF, fr. OIt *pennacchio,* fr. LL *pinnaculum* small wing]

The earlier *pennache* cited is a Modern English word, like its descendant *panache,* and has the same meaning. The Middle French word is identical in form and meaning with English *pennache.* Old Italian *pennacchio* means, like its Middle French and Modern English descendants, 'panache'. Its Late Latin ancestor, however, had a different meaning.

The word *literally,* abbreviated "lit.," indicates that the word that precedes it has the same meaning as its immediate descendant but also has the more literal meaning that follows:

canapé . . . [F, lit., sofa . . .]

The French word *canapé* is used in the same sense as its English borrowing, but its literal meaning is 'sofa'.

Often several different spellings, separated only by commas, follow a single language label. These are not distinct words, descended the one from the other, but simply variant spellings of a single word. Earlier writers of English and other languages did not insist, as we do today, on uniformity of spelling:

ferret . . . [ME *feret, ferret, furet,* fr. MF *furet, fuiret* . . .]

Some of the languages from which English words are derived are not commonly written, like English, in the Roman alphabet. Words belonging to such languages as Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, Chinese, and others are cited in standard Roman transliterations of their own alphabets or other writing system. In tone languages, variations in tone distinguish words of different meaning that would otherwise sound alike. For words cited from such languages, a small superscript number indicates the tone of the word it follows:

tycoon . . . [. . . Chin (Pek) *ta⁴* great + *chün¹* ruler]

Common English prefixes and suffixes occasionally appear in the bracketed etymologies. An English affix may be cited as a component of the etymologized English word:

stentorian . . . [*stentor* + *-ian*]

English affixes are also used to translate affixes in other languages:

animal . . . [L, . . . fr. *anima* breath, soul + *-alis* -al]

The articles tell the stories of the words in greater detail than the short space allotted to the bracketed etymologies permits. But the bracketed etymologies often add some information which is not included in the text. In particular, the brackets are often lists of cognates, following the phrase "akin to":

sad . . . [akin to OGH *sat* sated, ON *sathr, saddr,* Goth *sads,* L *satur* sated, *satis* enough, Gk *hadēn* to satiety, enough, Skt *asinva* insatiable]

A few words used in the etymologies may require some explanation. An *augmentative* indicates large size, as a *diminutive* indicates small. The *frequentative* of a verb indicates repetition of an action or recurrence of a

state. The *inchoative* of a verb indicates the beginning of an action, state, or occurrence. *Denominative* means 'derived from a noun or adjective'. Other possible sources of confusion in a bracketed etymology should be clarified by the text of the article.

Pronunciation Symbols

ə ....**a**but, c**o**llect, s**u**ppose

ˈə,ˌə ....h**u**mdr**u**m

ə ....(in ᵊl, ᵊn) batt**le**, cott**on;** (in lᵊ, mᵊ, rᵊ) French tab**le**, pris**me**, tit**re**

ər ....op**er**ation, furth**er**

a ....m**a**p, p**a**tch

ā ....d**ay**, f**a**te

ä ....b**o**ther, c**o**t, f**a**ther

a ....a sound between \a\ and \ä\, as in an Eastern New England pronunciation of **au**nt, **a**sk

au̇ ....n**ow**, **ou**t

b ....**b**a**b**y, ri**b**

ch ....**ch**in, ca**tch**

d ....**d**i**d**, a**dd**er

e ....s**e**t, r**e**d

ē ....b**eat**, **ea**sy

f ....**f**i**f**ty, cu**ff**

g ....**g**o, bi**g**

h ....**h**at, a**h**ead

hw ......**wh**ale

i ....t**i**p, ban**i**sh

ī ....s**i**te, b**uy**

j ....**j**ob, e**dge**

k ....**k**in, **c**ook

k̲ ....German Ba**ch**, Scots lo**ch**

l ....**l**i**l**y, coo**l**

m ....**m**ur**m**ur, di**m**

n ....**n**i**n**e, ow**n**

ⁿ ....indicates that a preceding vowel is pronounced through both nose and mouth, as in French bon \bōⁿ\

ŋ ....si**ng**, si**ng**er, fi**ng**er, i**n**k

ō ....b**o**ne, holl**ow**

ȯ ....s**aw**

œ ....French b**oeu**f, German H**ö**lle

œ̄ ....French f**eu**, German H**ö**hle

ȯi ....t**oy**

p ....**p**e**pp**er, li**p**

r ....**r**a**r**ity

s ....**s**our**c**e, le**ss**

sh ....**sh**y, mi**ss**ion

t ....**t**ie, a**tt**ack

th ....**th**in, e**th**er

t̲h̲ ....**th**en, ei**th**er

ü ....b**oo**t, few \ˈfyü\

u̇ ....p**u**t, p**u**re \ˈpyu̇r\

ue ....German f**ü**llen

ūe ....French r**u**e, German f**üh**len

v ....**v**i**v**id, gi**v**e

w ....**w**e, a**w**ay

y ....**y**ard, cue \ˈkyü\

ʸ ....indicates that a preceding \l\, \n\, or \w\ is modified by having the tongue approximate the position for \y\, as in French di**gn**e \dēnʸ\

z ....**z**one, rai**s**e

zh ....vi**s**ion, plea**s**ure

\ ....slant line used in pairs to mark the beginning and end of a transcription: \ˈpen\

ˈ ....mark at the beginning of a syllable that has primary (strongest) stress: \ˈshəf-əl-ˌbōrd\

ˌ ....mark at the beginning of a syllable that has secondary (next-strongest) stress: \ˈshəf-əl-ˌbōrd\

- ....mark of syllable division in pronunciations (the mark of end-of-line division in boldface entries is a centered dot •)

( ) ....indicate that what is symbolized between sometimes occurs and sometimes does not occur in the pronunciation of the word: **fac•tory** \ˈfak-t(e-)rē\ = \ˈfak-tə-rē, ˈfak-trē\

Abbreviations

ab.............about
abbr...........abbreviation
abl.............ablative
accus...........accusative
act.............active
A.D.............anno Domini
adj.............adjective
adv.............adverb
AF.............Anglo-French
Alb.............Albanian
alter...........alteration
Am.............American
AmerSp......American Spanish
Ar.............Arabic
Arm.............Armenian
art.............article
aug.............augmentative
Av.............Avestan
AV.............Authorized Version
b.............born
B.C.............before Christ
Bret.............Breton
Brit.............British
c, ca.............circa
CanF.............Canadian French
Cant.............Cantonese
Catal.............Catalan
Celt.............Celtic
cent.............century
Chin.............Chinese
comb.............combining
compar.............comparative
contr.............contraction
Corn.............Cornish
D.............Dutch
Dan.............Danish
dat.............dative
def.............definite
dial.............dialect
dim.............diminutive
E.............English (since A.D. 1500)
Egypt.............Egyptian
Eng.............English
esp.............especially
F.............French (since A.D. 1600)
fem.............feminine
ff.............and the following ones
fl.............flourished
Flem.............Flemish
fr.............from

Fr.............French
freq.............frequentative
Fris.............Frisian
G.............German
Gael.............Gaelic
gen.............genitive
Ger.............German
Gk.............Greek (to A.D. 200)
Gmc.............Germanic
Goth.............Gothic
Heb.............Hebrew
Hitt.............Hittite
IE.............Indo-European
imit.............imitative
imper.............imperative
incho.............inchoative
indic.............indicative
interj.............interjection
Ir.............Irish
IrGael.............Irish Gaelic
irreg.............irregular
ISV.............International Scientific
                   Vocabulary
It.............Italian
Jn.............John
Jp.............Japanese
L.............Latin (to A.D. 200)
Lev.............Leviticus
LG.............Low German
LGk.............Late Greek (A.D. 200-600)
lit.............literally
Lith.............Lithuanian
Lk.............Luke
LL.............Late Latin (A.D. 200-600)
masc.............masculine
MBret.............Middle Breton
MD.............Middle Dutch
ME.............Middle English (A.D. 1100-
                   1500)
MexSp.............Mexican Spanish
MF.............Middle French (A.D. 1300-
                   1600)
MGk.............Middle Greek (A.D. 600-
                   1500)
MHG.............Middle High German
MIr.............Middle Irish
ML.............Medieval Latin (A.D. 600-
                   1500)
MLG.............Middle Low German

modif	modification	*perh*	perhaps
mt	mountain	*pers*	person
Mt	Matthew	*Pg*	Portuguese
n	noun	*pl*	plural
neut	neuter	*PM*	post meridiem
NGk	New Greek (since A.D. 1500)	*pres*	present
		prob	probably
NGmc	North Germanic	*pron*	pronoun, pronunciation
NL	New Latin (since A.D. 1500)	*Prov*	Provençal
		Ps	Psalms
nom	nominative	*RSV*	Revised Standard Version
Norw	Norwegian	*Russ*	Russian
obs	obsolete	*Sc*	Scots
OBulg	Old Bulgarian	*Scand*	Scandinavian
OE	Old English (to A.D. 1100)	*ScGael*	Scottish Gaelic
OF	Old French (to A.D. 1300)	*Scot*	Scottish
OFris	Old Frisian	*Sem*	Semitic
OHG	Old High German	*Serb*	Serbian
OIr	Old Irish	*sing*	singular
OIt	Old Italian	*Skt*	Sanskrit
OL	Old Latin	*Slav*	Slavic
ON	Old Norse	*Sp*	Spanish
ONF	Old North French	*St*	Saint
OProv	Old Provençal	*subj*	subjunctive
OPruss	Old Prussian	*suff*	suffix
orig	originally	*superl*	superlative
ORuss	Old Russian	*Sw, Swed*	Swedish
OS	Old Saxon	*trans*	translation
OSlav	Old Slavic	*US*	United States
OSp	Old Spanish	*v*	verb
PaG	Pennsylvania German	*var*	variant
part	participle	*VL*	Vulgar Latin
Pek	Pekingese	*W*	Welsh
Per	Persian	*WGmc*	West Germanic

+	plus sign joins words or word elements
†	dagger precedes a death date
*	asterisk precedes a hypothetical reconstructed form

A

abigail   See LOTHARIO.
[after *Abigail,* serving woman in the play *The Scornful Lady,* by Francis Beaumont †1616 and John Fletcher †1625 Eng. dramatists]

abound   See ABUNDANCE.
[ME *abounden,* fr. MF *abonder,* fr. L *abundare* to abound, overflow, fr. *ab-* ¹ab- + *undare* to rise in waves, fr. *unda* wave]

abundance   Images of flowing water are at the origin of several of our Latin-derived terms for abundance. *Abundance* itself goes back to Latin *abundantia,* whose most basic meaning is 'overflow'. It is a derivative of *unda* 'wave', which, focusing on a different property of waves, is also at the root of our word *undulate.* The related verb *abundare* 'to overflow, be plentiful' is the ultimate source of our word *abound.*

Affluence meant 'plentiful flowing' or abundance in general before it came to mean specifically 'wealth'. Its Latin source *affluentia* is derived from the prefix *ad-* 'towards' and *fluere* 'to flow' (this last, despite appearances, bears no relation to English *flow,* which is rather related to Latin *pluere* 'to rain'). The original sense is thus close to another Latin-derived term whose root is *fluere,* namely *influx.*

Profusion, finally, is ultimately derived from Latin *profundere* 'to pour forth'. *Fundere* 'pour' also had a more literal English offspring, namely the verb *found,* in the foundry sense, 'to melt (metal) and pour into a mold'.

[ME *abundaunce, habundaunce,* fr. MF *abundance,* fr. L *abundantia,* fr. *abundant-, abundans* + *-ia*]

academy   When Helen was only twelve years old (long before she ran away with Paris to become the cause of the Trojan War), she was abducted by Theseus, who hoped eventually to marry her. But her brothers, Castor and Pollux, went in search of her. It was a man named *Akadēmos* who revealed to them the place where Helen was hidden and won for himself a place in Greek mythology.

The *Akadēmeia,* a park and gymnasium located near Athens, was named in honor of the legendary hero Akademos. It was there that Plato established his school, which is, in name at least, the grandfather of all modern academies. English *academy* was first used in the fifteenth century simply to refer to Plato's school. But in Italian, and later in French, the