

Words I Read, Heard, or Spoke

(Some New, Others Unique, And **Why Latin is Foundational**)
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Definitions from New Oxford American Dictionary

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nas·cent | 'nās(ə)nt | adjective

- (especially of a process or organization) just coming into existence and beginning to display signs of future potential: *the nascent space industry*.

early 17th century: from Latin **nascent-** 'being born', from the verb **nasci**.

ca·bal | kə'bāl, kə'bal | noun

- a secret political clique or faction: *a cabal of dissidents*.

ORIGIN late 16th century (denoting the Kabbalah): from French **cabale**, from medieval Latin **cabala** (see [Kabbalah](#)).

u·biq·ui·ty | yōō'bikwədē | noun

- the fact of appearing everywhere or of being very common:
the ubiquity of mobile phones means you don't really need a watch | the growing ubiquity of advertising.

ORIGIN late 16th century (denoting the omnipresence of Christ): from modern Latin **ubiquitas**, from Latin **ubique** 'everywhere', from **ubi** 'where'.

tryst | trist | *literary* noun

- a private romantic rendezvous between lovers: *a moonlight tryst*.

verb [*no object*]

- keep a private, romantic rendezvous.

late Middle English (originally Scots): variant of obsolete *trist* 'an appointed place in hunting', from French **triste** or medieval Latin **trista**.

flam·boy·ance | flam'boi(y)əns | noun

- the tendency to attract attention because of one's exuberance, confidence, and stylishness:
he had a reputation for flair and flamboyance | critics dismiss his flamboyance and excess as indulgent.
- the quality of being bright, colorful, and very noticeable: *the stunning tones give the show a lot of visual flamboyance.*

de·ri·so·ry | də'rīs(ə)rē, də'rizərē | adjective –

- ridiculously small or inadequate: *they were given a derisory pay rise.*
- another term for derisive: *his derisory gaze swept over her.*

early 17th century (in the sense 'derisive'): from late Latin **derisorius**, from **deris-** 'scoffed at', from the verb **deridere**

pos·se | 'päsē | noun *US historical*

- a body of men, typically armed, summoned by a sheriff to enforce the law.
- (also posse comitatus | ,kāmi'tātəs, -tātəs |) *British historical* the body of men in a county whom the sheriff could summon to enforce the law. [**comitatus** from medieval Latin, 'of the county'.]
- *informal* a group of people who have a common characteristic, occupation, or purpose: *he pompously led around a posse of medical students.*
- *informal* a group of people who socialize together, especially to go to clubs or raves.

ORIGIN mid 17th century: from medieval Latin, literally 'power', from Latin **posse** 'be able'.

jux·ta·po·si·tion | ,jəkstəpə'ziSHən | noun

- the fact of two things being seen or placed close together with contrasting effect: *the juxtaposition of these two images.*
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syc·o·phant | 'sikəfənt, 'sikə,fant | noun

- a person who acts obsequiously toward someone important in order to gain advantage: *because he is high-ranking, he's surrounded by sycophants.*

ORIGIN mid 16th century (denoting an informer): from French **sycophante**, or via Latin from Greek **sukophantēs** 'informer', from **sukon** 'fig' + **phainein** 'to show', perhaps with reference to making the insulting gesture of the 'fig' (sticking the thumb between two fingers) to informers.

mer·ce·nar·y | 'mərsən,erē | adjective

- primarily concerned with making money at the expense of ethics: *the crime was committed out of mercenary motives | society today is often accused of being too mercenary.*

noun (plural **mercenaries**)

- a professional soldier hired to serve in a foreign army: *he had planned to seize power with the aid of a group of mercenaries.*
- a person primarily concerned with material reward at the expense of ethics: *the sport's most infamous mercenary.*

DERIVATIVES **mercenaryness** | 'mərsən,erēnəs, 'mərsn,erēnəs | noun

ORIGIN late Middle English (as a noun): from Latin **mercenarius** 'hireling', from **merces, merced-** 'reward'.

gen·u·flect | 'jɛnyə, flek(t) | verb [no object]

- lower one's body briefly by bending one knee to the ground, typically in worship or as a sign of respect: *she genuflected and crossed herself.*
- [with adverbial] show deference or servility: *her party still **genuflects to her**, and a core within it reflexively venerates her.*

DERIVATIVES **genuflection** | ,jɛnyə'flekSH(ə)n | noun **genuflector** | -tər | noun

ORIGIN mid 17th century (in the sense 'bend (the knee)'): from ecclesiastical Latin **genuflectere**, from Latin **genu** 'knee' + **flectere** 'to bend'.

gen·tri·fi·ca·tion | ,jɛntrəfə'kāSHən | noun

- the process whereby the character of a poor urban area is changed by wealthier people moving in, improving housing, and attracting new businesses, typically displacing current inhabitants in the process: *an area undergoing rapid gentrification | signs of creeping gentrification are evident.*
- the process of making someone or something more refined, polite, or respectable: *soccer has undergone gentrification | Miss Havisham's plan for his gentrification.*

par·al·lax | 'pɛrə,laks | noun

- the effect whereby the position or direction of an object appears to differ when viewed from different positions, e.g. through the viewfinder and the lens of a camera: [as modifier]: *what you see in the viewfinder won't be quite what you get in the photograph because of parallax error.*
- the angular amount of parallax in a particular case, especially that of a star viewed from different points in the earth's orbit: *he succeeded in measuring the parallax of the star 61 Cygni.*

DERIVATIVES **parallactic** | ,pɛrə'laktik | adjective

ORIGIN late 16th century (also in the general sense 'fact of seeing wrongly'): from French **parallaxe**, from Greek **parallaxis** 'a change', from **parallassein** 'to alternate', based on **allassein** 'to exchange' (from **allos** 'other').

di·vulge | də'vəlʃ, dī'vəlʃ | verb [with object]

- make known (private or sensitive information): *I do not want to divulge my plans at the moment.*

DERIVATIVES **divulcation** | dī,vəl'gāSHən, də,vəl'gāSHən, ,divəl'gāSHən | noun **divulgement** noun

ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'announce publicly'): from Latin **divulgare**, from **di-** 'widely' + **vulgare** 'publish' (from **vulgus** 'common people').

sal·ly¹ | 'salē | noun (plural **sallies**)

- a sudden charge out of a besieged place against the enemy; a sortie.
 - a brief journey or sudden start into activity.
 - a witty or lively remark, especially one made as an attack or as a diversion in an argument; a retort.
- verb (**sallies, sallying, sallied**) [no object, with adverbial of direction]
- make a military sortie: *they sallied out to harass the enemy.*
 - *formal or humorous* set out from a place to do something: *I made myself presentable and **sallied forth**.*

ORIGIN late Middle English: from French **saillie**, feminine past participle (used as a noun) of **saillir** ‘come or jut out’, from Old French **salir** ‘to leap’, from Latin **salire**.

as·cet·i·cism | ə'sedə,siz(ə)m | noun

- severe self-discipline and avoidance of all forms of indulgence, typically for religious reasons: *acts of physical asceticism.*
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per·snick·et·y | pər'snikədē | adjective *North American informal*

- placing too much emphasis on trivial or minor details; fussy: *she's very persnickety about her food.*
- requiring a particularly precise or careful approach: *it's hard to find a film more persnickety and difficult to use than black-and-white infrared.*

ORIGIN late 19th century: alteration of *pernickety*.

prof·li·gate | 'prəfləgət | adjective

- recklessly extravagant or wasteful in the use of resources: *profligate consumers of energy.*
 - licentious; dissolute: *he succumbed to drink and a profligate lifestyle.*
- noun a licentious, dissolute person: *he is a drunkard and a profligate.*

DERIVATIVES **profligately** | 'prəfləgətlē | adverb

ORIGIN mid 16th century (in the sense ‘overthrown, routed’): from Latin **profligatus** ‘dissolute’, past participle of **profligare** ‘overthrow, ruin’, from **pro-** ‘forward, down’ + **fligere** ‘strike down’.

wast·rel | 'wāstrəl | noun

- *literary* a wasteful or good-for-nothing person: *I have no intention of seeing my dues gambled away by your wastrel of a son.*
- *archaic* a waif; a neglected child.

ORIGIN late 16th century (denoting a strip of waste land): from the verb [waste](#) + [-rel](#).

e·vis·cer·ate | ə'visə,rāt | verb [with object] *formal*

- disembowel (a person or animal): *the goat had been skinned and neatly eviscerated.*
- deprive (something) of its essential content: *myriad little concessions that would eviscerate the project.*
- *Surgery* remove the contents of (a body organ).

DERIVATIVES **evisceration** | ə'visə'rāSH(ə)n | noun

ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin **eviscerat-** 'disembowelled', from the verb **eviscerare**, from **e-** (variant of **ex-**) 'out' + **viscera** 'internal organs'.

me·lee | 'mālā | (also **mêlée**) noun

- a confused fight, skirmish, or scuffle: *several people were hurt in the melee.*
- a confused mass of people: *the melee of people that was always thronging the streets.*

ORIGIN mid 17th century: from French **mêlée**, from an Old French variant of **meslee** (see medley).

re·cal·ci·trant | rə'kalsətrənt | adjective

- having an obstinately uncooperative attitude toward authority or discipline: *a class of recalcitrant fifteen-year-olds.*

noun

- a person with an obstinately uncooperative attitude: *a stiff-necked recalcitrant and troublemaker.*

DERIVATIVES **recalcitrance** | rə'kalsətr(ə)ns | noun **recalcitrantly** adverb

ORIGIN late 18th century: from French **récalcitrant** or its source Latin **recalcitrant-** 'kicking out with the heels', from the verb **recalcitrare**, based on **calx, calc-** 'heel'.

ca·pit·u·late | kə'piCHə,lāt | verb [no object]

- cease to resist an opponent or an unwelcome demand; surrender: *the patriots had to capitulate to the enemy forces.*

DERIVATIVES **capitulator** | -'lātər | noun

ORIGIN mid 16th century (in the sense 'parley, draw up terms'): from French **capituler**, from medieval Latin **capitulare** 'draw up under headings', from Latin **capitulum**, diminutive of **caput** 'head'.

ef·fi·gy | 'efəjē | noun (plural **effigies**)

- a sculpture or model of a person: *coins bearing the effigy of Maria Theresa of Austria.*
- a roughly made model of a particular person, made in order to be damaged or destroyed as a protest or expression of anger: *the senator was burned in effigy.*

ORIGIN mid 16th century: from Latin **effigies**, from **effingere** 'to fashion (artistically)', from **ex-** 'out' + **ingere** 'to shape'.

hag·i·og·ra·phy | ,hagē'əgrəfē | noun

- the writing of the lives of saints.
- *derogatory* adulatory writing about another person.
- biography that idealizes its subject: *a hagiography which is designed to serve a political agenda* | [mass noun]: *the result is not hagiography but a fitting monument to a giant of 20th-century music.*

DERIVATIVES **hagiographic** | ,hagēə'grafik | adjective **hagiographical** | ,hagēə'grafəkəl, ,hāgēə- | adjective

a·me·lio·rate | ə'mēlyə,rāt | verb [with object] formal

- make (something bad or unsatisfactory) better: *the reform did much to ameliorate living standards.*

DERIVATIVES **ameliorative** | ə'mēlyərədɪv, ə'mēlyə,rədɪv | adjective **ameliorator** | -,rātər | noun

ORIGIN mid 18th century: alteration of [meliorate](#), influenced by French **améliorer**, from **meilleur** 'better'.

pro·di·gious| prə'dijəs | adjective

- remarkably or impressively great in extent, size, or degree: *the stove consumed a prodigious amount of fuel.*
- *archaic* unnatural or abnormal: *rumors of prodigious happenings, such as monstrous births.*

DERIVATIVES **prodigiously** | prə'dijəslē | adverb [*as submodifier*]: *a prodigiously gifted artist* **prodigiousness** | prə'dijəsnəs | noun

ORIGIN late 15th century (in the sense 'portentous'): from Latin **prodigiosus**, from **prodigium** 'portent' (see [prodigy](#)).

flab·ber·gast| 'flabər,gast | verb [*with object*] informal

- surprise (someone) greatly; astonish: *news that activists could be fined for protesting against the policy will flabbergast most people.*

ORIGIN late 18th century: of unknown origin.

un·fold·ment| ,ən'fōldmənt | noun

- the gradual development or revelation of something: *his spiritual unfoldment.*

mael·strom| 'māl,sträm | noun

- a powerful whirlpool in the sea or a river.
- a situation or state of confused movement or violent turmoil: *the train station was a maelstrom of crowds.*

ORIGIN late 16th century: from early modern Dutch (denoting a whirlpool in the Arctic Ocean, west of Norway), from **maalen** 'grind, whirl' + **stroom** 'stream'.

con·done| kən'dōn | verb [*with object, often with negative*]

- accept and allow (behavior that is considered morally wrong or offensive) to continue: *the college cannot condone any behavior that involves illicit drugs.*
- approve or sanction (something), especially with reluctance: *the practice is not officially condoned by any airline.*

DERIVATIVES **condonation** | kən,dō'nāSH(ə)n | noun **condoner** noun **condonable** | kən'dōnəb(ə)l | adjective

ORIGIN mid 19th century: from Latin **condonare** 'refrain from punishing', from **con-** 'altogether' + **donare** 'give'.

suc·cor| 'səkər | (*British succour*) noun

- assistance and support in times of hardship and distress: *the wounded had little chance of succor.*
- (**succors**) *archaic* reinforcements of troops.

verb [*with object*]

- give assistance or aid to: *prisoners of war were liberated and succored.*

DERIVATIVES **succorless** (*British succourless*) adjective

ORIGIN Middle English: via Old French from medieval Latin **succursus**, from Latin **succurrere** 'run to the help of', from **sub-** 'from below' + **currere** 'run'.

e·gre·gi·ous | i'grējəs | adjective

- outstandingly bad; shocking: *egregious abuses of copyright*.
- *archaic* remarkably good.

DERIVATIVES **egregiousness** noun

ORIGIN mid 16th century (in *egregious*): from Latin *egregius* 'illustrious', literally 'standing out from the flock', from *ex-* 'out' + *greg, greg-* 'flock'. Sense 1 (late 16th century) probably arose as an ironic use.

in·con·gru·ous | in'känGgrōəs, iNG'känGgrōəs | adjective

- not in harmony or keeping with the surroundings or other aspects of something: *the duffel coat looked incongruous with the black dress she wore underneath*.

DERIVATIVES **incongruousness** noun

ORIGIN early 17th century: from Latin *incongruus* (from *in-* 'not' + *congruus* 'agreeing, suitable', from the verb *congruere*) + *-ous*.

sab·o·tage | 'sabə,täZH | verb [*with object*]

- deliberately destroy, damage, or obstruct (something), especially for political or military advantage: *power lines from South Africa were sabotaged by rebel forces*.

noun

- the action of sabotaging something: *a coordinated campaign of sabotage*.

ORIGIN early 20th century: from French, from *saboter* 'kick with sabots, wilfully destroy' (see *sabot*).

ker·fuf·fle | kər'fəf(ə)l | noun [*in singular*] *British informal*

- a commotion or fuss, especially one caused by conflicting views: *there was a kerfuffle over the chairmanship*.

ORIGIN early 19th century: perhaps from Scots *curfuffle* (probably from Scottish Gaelic *car* 'twist, bend' + imitative Scots *fuffle* 'to disorder'), or related to Irish *cior thual* 'confusion, disorder'.

fod·der | 'fädər | noun

- food, especially dried hay or feed, for cattle and other livestock.
- a person or thing regarded only as material for a specific use: *young people ending up as factory fodder*. See also *cannon fodder*.

verb [*with object*]

- give fodder to (cattle or other livestock): *the animals need foddering*.

ORIGIN Old English *fōdor*, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *voeder* and German *Futter*, also to *food*.

skir·mish| 'skərmiSH | noun

- an episode of irregular or unpremeditated fighting, especially between small or outlying parts of armies or fleets: *the unit was caught in several skirmishes and the commanding officer was killed.*
- a short argument: *there was a skirmish over the budget.*

verb [no object]

- engage in a skirmish: *the two powers have fought three major wars and have skirmished continually | protesters skirmished with a group of bystanders opposed to their march.*

DERIVATIVES **skirmisher** | 'skərmiSHər | noun

ORIGIN Middle English (as a verb): from Old French *eskirmiss-*, lengthened stem of *eskirmir*, from a Germanic verb meaning 'defend'.

con·tri·tion| kən'triSH(ə)n | noun

- the state of feeling remorseful and penitent: *to show contrition for his crime he offered to do community service.*
- (in the Roman Catholic Church) the repentance of past sins during or after confession: *prayers of contrition.*

ORIGIN Middle English: via Old French from late Latin *contritio(n-)*, from *contrit-* 'ground down', from the verb *conterere* (see [contrite](#)).

sur·rep·ti·tious| ,sərəp'tiSHəs | adjective

- kept secret, especially because it would not be approved of: *they carried on a surreptitious affair.*

DERIVATIVES **surreptitiousness** noun

ORIGIN late Middle English (in the sense 'obtained by suppression of the truth'): from Latin *surreptitius* (from the verb *surripere*, from *sub-* 'secretly' + *rapere* 'seize') + *-ous*.

de·vi·ous| 'dēvēəs | adjective

- showing a skillful use of underhanded tactics to achieve goals: *he's as devious as a politician needs to be | they have devious ways of making money.*
- (of a route or journey) longer and less direct than the most straightforward way: *they arrived at the town by a devious route.*

DERIVATIVES **deviously** | 'dēvēəslē | adverb **deviousness** | 'dēvēəsnəs | noun

ORIGIN late 16th century: from Latin *devius* (from *de-* 'away from' + *via* 'way') + *-ous* The original sense was 'remote'; the later sense 'departing from the direct route' gave rise to the figurative sense 'deviating from the straight way' and hence 'skilled in underhand tactics'.

mottled | 'mäd(ə)ld | adjective

- marked with spots or smears of color: *a bird with mottled brown plumage.*

42 New or Unique Words from January