

43 Word Stories

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Preface

The book you are holding in your hands is a vocabulary book intended for upper-intermediate and advanced learners of EFL with the broad aim of enhancing their vocabulary knowledge through discussions of etymological accounts. This book is different from other vocabulary books currently available in the market from a number of perspectives. Here words are not viewed merely as symbols representing concepts; a rather comprehensive approach to vocabulary has been taken instead, i.e., it has been assumed that every word carries with it not only a set of related/unrelated meanings but also a series of grammatical features, possible collocations, usage restraints, etc. Accordingly, meaning takes up only a section of our lessons, supplemented with other parts specifically devoted to usage points, grammatical roles, pronunciation hints, mnemonic devices (memory aids), authentic examples, etc.

What makes this book really special, however, is the very use of etymological accounts at the core of the lessons with the purpose of helping learners remember the new words and their meanings more efficiently. Theoretical as well as empirical support for the effectiveness of teaching etymology in enhancing vocabulary retention has been provided in two papers published recently.*

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* - Baleghizadeh, S., & Yousefpoori Naeim, M. (2011). Promoting vocabulary retention through etymology presentation. *Journal of Theory and Practice in Education*, 7, 111 – 123.

- Baleghizadeh, S., & Yousefpoori Naeim, M. (2010). Learning vocabulary through etymology: A practical lesson. *FOLIO*, 14, 24 – 27.

What Should I Know before Starting to Use This Book?

In line with the approach we have adopted towards vocabulary learning (discussed in the Preface), each lesson comes with the following sections:

The Reading Text

This section is not titled, but it appears on a single page at the beginning of each lesson with the name of the intended word at the top. Right between the name of the lesson and the text comes a picture related to the etymology of that word. The etymological account of the word, in the form of a three- to six-paragraph text, comes next. This text informs the reader of the origin, the root word(s), and the history of the word, or any other points concerning its etymology, such as the stories related to that word or the way people have used that word throughout history. Students might find the reading text a little above their current reading comprehension level, which is quite normal. The primary focus here is on getting the gist only.

What It Means

The basic information normally expected from a vocabulary book is the meaning. All contemporary meanings of a target word are introduced in this section (usually in the form of a simple matching exercise). In the cases where a word has only one meaning or where the meaning calls for some more extensive explanation, a paragraph of medium length has been used instead to clarify the meaning. As for the matching exercises, students do not need to refer to their dictionaries to look up the new word to complete these exercises, as they should be able to correctly match the meanings with the examples after reading the text and looking carefully at the examples and definitions.

How to Use It

In this section, there are various points regarding how a word is grammatically and/or naturally used. In general, such points deal with different parts of speech, collocations, grammatical features, common patterns, related expressions/fixed phrases, pronunciation hints, etc. With regard to the word being focused on, a number of the above points are included in each lesson.

How to Remember It

As the most innovative section of this book, “How to Remember It” serves as an effective device for remembering the meanings of words through etymology. Words and their meanings would be better kept in mind when we learn about their stories of evolution throughout history or when we learn to break them down to their original root elements.

More Examples

To further familiarize the readers with the way specific words are used in real-life language, authentic examples taken from the most well-known periodicals in the recent years are presented at the end of each lesson. These periodicals are limited to the US press only. *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Associated Press*, *USA Today*, *Newsweek*, and *Cosmopolitan* are among the sources commonly referred to in this section.

As you read through the lessons in this book, you will repeatedly encounter a limited list of etymology-related words and phrases. Here we have included some of them that might be more important or less familiar to you.

Root: the main part of a word that carries the basic meaning (e.g. unbelievable)

Affix: a group of letters added to the beginning or end of a root (e.g. unbelievable)

Prefix: an affix added to the beginning of a root (e.g. unbelievable)

Suffix: an affix added to the end of a root (e.g. unbelievable)

Origin: the older (original) version of a word

Ancient: very old

Originate: come from an origin

Etymology: the study of the history and origins of words

Collocation: when two or more words tend to be used together

Lexicography: the act of writing dictionaries

Samuel Johnson: [refer to the indexed glossary at the end of the book]

Literal translation: (exact but usually unnatural) word-for-word translation

Finally, it should be noted that the words used in this book have been mostly taken from *Total English Upper Intermediate* (Students' Book and Workbook). The other point concerning the selection of our words is that we piloted all of them with a sample of 85 upper intermediate students. In all the cases, more than 90% of the students tested were unfamiliar with our words. Here you can see where our words come from exactly:

Unit 1: Authority – Expect – Medieval – Rebel – Sophisticated

Unit 2: Disaster – Enthusiasm – Extravagant – Obsess – Pant

Unit 3: Passion – Porcelain – Stereotype – Tyranny

Unit 4: Hazard – Sincere – Scandal – Yacht

Unit 5: Awkward – Catapult – Nostalgia

Unit 6: Romance – Thrill – Flora and Fauna

Unit 7: Absurd – Embarrass – Stable

Unit 8: Continent – Nutrition – Slave

Unit 9: Exotic – Tribute – Explode – Federal

Unit 10: Content – Debris – Psychiatry – Skeptical

Bonus: Accost – Homage – Hermetic – Inaugural – Candid