

# Latin and Greek Elements in English

## Lesson 5: Homonyms

- **HOMONYM**: “a word having the same pronunciation as another word but a different origin and meaning, and often also a different spelling”
  - in fact, the term encompasses TWO separate linguistic phenomena
    - homographs vs. homophones
  - **homographs**: words having the same spelling and sound, but a different meaning and origin, e.g.
    - rail:
      - “bar of wood”: Latin *regula* (“staff, rod”)
      - “utter abusive language”: Latin *rugire* (“bellow”)

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- **homographs**: words having the same spelling and sound, but a different meaning and origin, e.g.
  - counter:
    - “table in shop”: Latin *computare* (“count, add up”)
    - “oppose(d)”: Latin *contra* (“against”)
  - tense:
    - “nervous”: Latin *tensus* (“drawn tight”)
    - “verb form indicating time”: Latin *tempus* (“time”)
  - n.b. all these homographs are the product of the chance conflation in spelling

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## Lesson 5: Homonyms

- **homophones**: words having the same sound, but a different spelling, meaning and origin
  - e.g., I/eye/aye; do/due; some/sum; rain/rein/reign; slay/sleigh; freeze/frieze; by/buy/bye; flea/flee; there/their
  - n.b. in certain regions, some homophones are not homophones
    - hoarse/horse: “hoar + s” vs. “hoss”
    - morning/mourning: “mahnin” vs. “more + ning”
    - for/four: “fer” vs. “foar”

# Latin and Greek Elements in English

## Lesson 6: Reduplication

- **REDUPLICATION**: “repetition of a sound or syllable within a word, often at the beginning of the word,” e.g. tintinnabulation
  - e.g. tom-tom, go-go, murmur, hush-hush, hubba-hubba, same-old same-old
  - also, chit-chat, fake-bake, ship-shape, monkey-junkie, bruhaha, clap-trap, helter-skelter, higgledy-piggledy
- often used in nonsense words today

# Latin and Greek Elements in English

## Lesson 6: Reduplication

- but in Indo-European, reduplication was used to indicate grammatical forms, e.g.
  - past-tense verb forms
    - Latin *pello* (“push”): *pepuli* (“pushed”)
    - also, *sto* (“stand”): *steti* (“stood”)
    - cf. memento/memory: IE \*mer (“ponder”)

# Latin and Greek Elements in English

## Lesson 6: Reduplication

- but in Indo-European, reduplication was used to indicate grammatical forms, e.g.
  - repetitive action
    - Greek base DIDAC- (“teach”)
      - cf. Latin DOC-
    - also, LAL(A)- (“talk, babble,” lit. “go lalala”)
      - *lalageo*: “chatter”
      - *lalia*: “babble”
      - *lallai*: “pebbles in a brook”
      - also, lallation: “childish utterance”
        - saying “l” for “r”; also called lambdalallia
      - glossolalia: act of speaking in tongues ?

# Latin and Greek Elements in English

## Lesson 6: Reduplication

- but in Indo-European, reduplication was used to indicate grammatical forms, e.g.
  - repetitive action
    - Latin SIST- (ST[A]-): “stop,” e.g. resist, desist
      - lit. “stand-stand,” i.e. “continually stand in place”
    - Greek CYCL-: “circle, wheel”
      - < IE \*qweqwelo-
      - \*qwelo-: “move around”
        - cf. colony: lit. people who have been “moved around”
      - -CL- = cognate with Germanic -(W)HL-: wheel ?

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## Lesson 6: Reduplication

- in English, reduplication often represents silliness, e.g.
  - baby-talk: mama, papa, bye-bye, boo-boo, doo-doo, pee-pee, cutesy-wutesy, palsy-walsy, lullaby
  - nicknames: Mimi, Didi, Bibi, Gigi, Fifi, Lulu, Jojo, Bubba, John-John, Bam-Bam
    - namby-pamby: nickname of Ambrose Phillips, an 18<sup>th</sup>-century poet who wrote very sentimental poetry

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## Lesson 6: Reduplication

- in English, reduplication can also have a derogatory sense, e.g.
  - fru-fru, bon-bon, chi-chi, pooh-pooh, dillydally, manly man
  - cf. Dadaism: art movement (Tristan Tsara, 1916-1922) which focused on formless expression and nihilistic satire
    - from dada, a meaningless word imitative of a child's cry

# Latin and Greek Elements in English

## Lesson 6: Onomatopoeia

- **ONOMATOPOEIA**: “the formation of words through imitation of natural sounds associated with an object or action involved”
  - lit. “word-making”: ONOMATo- + POE- + -ia
  - cf. POE-try: “act of making (verse)”
  - e.g. snort, harumph, grunt, va-room, bonk, splat, squish, swish, snap, slurp, champ, chomp
    - cf. ralph: “In 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, I ralphed all over Peggy Simmon’s new pencil case.” (Dave Barry)
    - also, animal sounds: moo, meow, woof, baa, caw, coo, buzz
    - with reduplication: hurdy-gurdy, ping-pong

# Latin and Greek Elements in English

## Lesson 6: Onomatopoeia

- onomatopoeia is hardly restricted to English, however
- it is seen in many languages, e.g. “bow-wow”
  - French: *oua-oua*
  - Italian: *bu-bu*
  - Korea: *mung-mung*
  - Japan: *wan-wan*
  - ancient Greek: *how-how* (Aristophanes, **Wasps**)
  - Latin: *car-car*

# Latin and Greek Elements in English

## Lesson 6: Onomatopoeia

- n.b. there is a tendency visible in English words to associate certain sounds with certain meanings, e.g.
  - sp- = wetness
    - splash, spray, spit, sprinkle, splatter, spatter, spill, spigot
  - cr- = break/buckle
    - crack, crumble, cramp, crash, cream (into), cringe, crinkle, crumple, crooked, crouch
  - fl- = quick/frantic movement
    - flail, flap, flip, flop, flicker, flounce, flee, fly, flutter, flash, fleet, flinch, flurry

# Latin and Greek Elements in English

## Lesson 6: Onomatopoeia

- “bow-wow” theory of language origin: all languages are in origin imitative
  - cf. bird-names: crow, whip-poor-will, bobwhite
  - Welsh “owl”: goody-hoo
- it is clear from this that some words are clearly onomatopoeic in origin, especially those belonging to certain classes (e.g. sp- words, names of birds)
  - but it’s a stretch to assert that ALL words/language derive from onomatopoeia
  - it’s better to say that onomatopoeia is and always has been a force in shaping language