Latin and Greek Elements in English

Lesson 10: Words from Expressions

• this lesson continues our study of words derived from idiomatic sources

• in this case, we’ll study terms that have come from popular expressions
  – these popular expressions are usually relics of some past cultural phenomenon
  – often they’ve been affected by other linguistic processes
    • in particular, Folk Etymology
    • e.g. forlorn hope (“desperate venture”; cf. Ayers, p. 212)
      – < Dutch verloren hoop (“lost troop,” i.e. a battalion missing in action)
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Lesson 10: Words from Expressions

• examples of terms drawn from the general suspicion and contempt with which the Dutch were held in early America
  – cowardice:
    • Dutch courage (1812): “bravery stimulated by alcohol”
    • Dutch leave (1898): “a soldier’s failure to return to duty”
    • to do the Dutch act: “to escape” (1900)
      – “to commit suicide” (1920)
  – cheapness:
    • Dutch auction: “a sale in which the price is lowered (not raised) until there is a bid, whereupon the item is sold”
    • Dutch date: “a date in which the woman pays her own way”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

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• examples of terms drawn from the general suspicion and contempt with which the Dutch were held in early America

  – strangeness:
    • that beats the Dutch: “it is highly unusual and surprising”
    • it’s all Dutch to me: “it is gibberish”

  – bluntness:
    • to talk like a Dutch uncle: “to speak bluntly and inelegantly”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Lesson 10: Words from Expressions

• know these examples from Ayers (pp. 211-212)
  • sold down the river (“exploit horrifically”)
  • look a gift horse in the mouth (“be critical of a gift”)
  • crocodile tears (“lament falsely”)
  • swan song (“last book or farewell speech”)
  • lick into shape (“revise with effort”)
  • curry favor (“gain friendship through flattery”)
  • forlorn hope (“desperate venture likely to fail”)
  • flash in the pan (“short-lived triumph”)
  • red-letter day (“date memorable for some reason”)
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Lesson 11: Words from Christian Sources

• know these religious terms we’ve already encountered in Ayers (see pp. 281-284)
  • Gnostic (“early Christian mystical and philosophical heresy ”)
  • agnostic (“one who holds that God’s existence is unknowable”)
  • Apocrypha (“spurious writings”)
  • apostle/apostolic (“those whom Christ ‘sent out’ to preach”)
  • apostate (“rebel, deserter”)
  • canonical (“accepted as genuine”)
  • exodus (“departure, usually of a large group”)
  • encyclical (“a papal letter ‘circulated’ to bishops”)
Lesson 11: Words from Christian Sources

- know these religious terms we’ve already encountered in Ayers (see pp. 281-284)
  - evangelical ("p.t. those Protestant sects which stress atonement through faith")
  - synod ("church council")
  - synoptic ("having a general or wide view of a subject")
  - orthodox ("conforming to established doctrine or procedure")
  - heterodox ("contrary to the standard opinion")
  - iconoclast
    - (1) “one who attacks est'd beliefs”;
    - (2) “one who destroys religious artwork"
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Lesson 11: Words from Christian Sources

- also, know these examples from Ayers (pp. 215-217)
  - scapegoat (“a person or thing blamed for something”)
  - the handwriting on the wall (“an ominous sign”)
  - talent (“native ability”)
  - shibboleth (“password or watchword”)
  - to orient (“to place in a proper position”)
  - dirge (“funeral song”)
  - adieu (“good-bye”)
  - carnival (“festival, merriment”)
  - bonfire (“large, ceremonial fire”)
  - lewd (“lascivious, obscene”)
  - miscreant (“rascal”)