

# Latin and Greek Elements in English

## Lesson 12: Words from Non-Christian Sources

- continuation of the study of words which comes from “idiomatic sources”
- fate
  - from Latin, “thing(s) spoken,” i.e. by the gods
  - thus, “thing(s) destined to happen”
- magic
  - from Persian *magus*, “priest, fire worshiper”
    - > Greek “wizard, juggler” (hence, the English word)

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- immolate
  - from Latin *immolare*, “sprinkle meal (= grain) on,” i.e. prior to a sacrifice
    - > the modern sense of “murder”
- bless
  - from Old English *bledsian*, “consecrate with blood,” i.e. make a blood sacrifice
    - > the modern sense of “consecrate”

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- paradise
  - ultimately, from Persian *firdaus*, “garden”
    - > Greek (Xenophon) *paradeisos*, “parks belonging to Persian nobles”
    - > the modern sense of “the blissful, intermediate state (between life and death),” cf. Luke 23.43
- amen
  - from Hebrew “certainly, in truth”
  - used at the conclusion of a prayer to affirm its validity, cf. Deut. 27:15-26, 1 Kings 1:36

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- pagan
  - from Latin *paganus*, “country person, bumpkin”
    - > term of contempt from late Latin (“slacker who refuses to enlist in the army”)
    - > later Christian sense, “one who refuses to enlist with Christ’s proponents”
      - later, “heathen”
      - n.b. people living in the country resisted the spread of early Christianity more eagerly than their urban counterparts
    - > the modern sense of “non-Christian”

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- Satan

- from Hebrew *satan*, “opposer, one who plots/argues against someone else”
- ?originally inspired by the Persian god of darkness
  - an important component of the Zoroastrian duality religion
  - n.b. Satan is popular in Hebrew culture after the Babylonian Captivity (586-539 BCE)
- Greek translation: *diabolos* (“slanderer”)
  - hence, diabolical and devil

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- fanatic/profane
  - from Latin *fanum*, “shrine, temple”
    - > fanatic: originally, “religiously inspired or enthused”
      - later, “highly enthusiastic”
      - then clipped to “fan”
    - > profane: originally, “(set out) in front of a temple”
      - because something was not appropriate to put inside the temple
        - > the modern sense of “not holy, impure”

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## Lesson 12: Words from Non-Christian Sources

- also know these examples from Ayers, pp. 220-222
  - abominate (originally, “omen off”; i.e. consider a bad omen)
  - inaugurate (“call the augurs in”)
    - augurs are Roman priests who read omens
  - auspicious (“bird-watching”)
  - monster (“omen”)
  - enthusiasm (“state of the god coming inside a person”; i.e. divine possession”)
  - oracular (“little speak”)
    - i.e. having the god speak through a person somehow

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- also know these examples from Ayers, pp. 220-222
  - termagant (“violent, quarrelsome bully”)
  - juggernaut (“irresistible force which blindly runs over anything in its way”)
  - thug (“brutal attacker, assassin, cutthroat”)
  - mufti (“civilian clothes”)
  - fetish (“mysterious object; object of excessive devotion”)
  - taboo (“prohibition”)

# Latin and Greek Elements in English

## Lesson 13: Sea-Terms

- because of the importance of the sea through much of history, terms and expressions derived from various naval and maritime activities are found throughout English
- come down on
  - literally, attack on the windward side (cf. downwind)
  - “censure, ridicule”
- son of a gun
  - originally a positive term (“thoroughbred”)
    - literally, a son born at sea to the wife of a British sailor
    - from the British custom of sailors taking their wives with them when they went to sea

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## Lesson 13: Sea-Terms

- cut and run
  - literally, cut the cable that holds up the sail and row away unseen
  - “leave hastily”
- by and large
  - literally, ships that could sail either of two ways:
    - “by the wind”: with the sheet close-hauled
    - or “large”: < French *largue* (“slacked off”)
  - “this way or that way” > “in any way” > “mostly”

# Latin and Greek Elements in English

## Lesson 13: Sea-Terms

- hand over fist
  - literally, in the manner of hauling ropes quickly
  - “fast and easily”
- with flying colors
  - literally, when a victorious ship sailed away from a naval battle with its “colors” still on the mast
    - “colors”: the flag that had been raised to signal the beginning of battle
  - “triumphantly”
  - so does a loser have “sinking colors”?

# Latin and Greek Elements in English

## Lesson 13: Sea-Terms

- also know these examples from Ayers, pp. 227-228
  - aloof (“remaining at a distance, appearing unsympathetic”)
    - from Dutch *loef* (“the side [of a ship] which faces the wind,” i.e. the side which had to be kept far from shore so that the wind would not run the ship aground)
  - to be taken aback (“to be stunned with shock”)
    - when the sails were pressed against the mast by a sudden blast of wind
  - rummage (“p.t. unclaimed or cluttered items”)
  - junk (“useless item/s”)
  - filibuster (“block legislation, usually with a long speech”)
  - leeway (“margin for error”)

# Latin and Greek Elements in English

## Lesson 13: Sea-Terms

- also know these examples from Ayers, pp. 227-228
  - careen (“rock to the side violently”)
  - tide over (“cover a temporary lack”)
  - mainstay (“principal means of support”)
  - make headway (“progress, advance”)
  - arrive (“reach”)
    - originally, land on the bank of a river [Latin *ripa*]