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)
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Lesson 12: Words from Non-Christian Sources

• 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”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Lesson 12: Words from Non-Christian Sources

• 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
Lesson 12: Words from Non-Christian Sources

- **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”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Lesson 12: Words from Non-Christian Sources

• **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
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Lesson 12: Words from Non-Christian Sources

- 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”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

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
Lesson 12: Words from Non-Christian Sources

- 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
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
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”
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*]