

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Lesson 15: Military Terms

- another lesson in terms which come from “idiomatic” sources, in this case from the military
- fifth column
 - “enemy sympathizers within a city under siege who work as spies and saboteurs for the fall of the city”
 - from the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), as General Emilio Mola led four army columns against Madrid, he remarked that there was a “fifth column” already inside the city.
- alert
 - from Italian *all’erta* (“to the tower”; *erta* = “tower”)

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- curfew
 - from French *couvre feu* (“to cover the fire”)
 - in the Middle Ages, it was customary to hide all fires and extinguish all lights in a city by a certain hour of the night to make it harder for the enemy to aim their artillery
- foment
 - from Latin *fomentum* (“a warm bath or application”)
 - > “promote growth, foster” > “stimulate rebellion”
- subjugate
 - literally, “under the yoke”; cf. conjugal
 - from the Roman custom of making prisoners of war walk under a yoke as a demonstration of their passage into slavery

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- tattoo
 - “drum signal alerting soldiers that it’s time for them to return to their barracks”
 - from Dutch *taptoe* (“tap shut,” i.e. close the bars)
 - n.b. tattoo (skin-markings) is a homonym, from a Polynesian term
- salvo
 - “simultaneous discharge of guns from ship to ship, often used as a form of greeting”
 - from Italian *salva* (“hello”)
 - n.b. another salvo (“saving grace, reservation, out-clause”)
 - later, “excuse, quibbling evasion”
 - from Medieval Latin *salvo jure* (“with the right reserved”)

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- also know these examples from Ayers, pp. 236-238
 - harbor (“safe shelter”)
 - harbinger (“precursor, forerunner”)
 - harry (“harass, torment”)
 - salary (“fixed payment, regular compensation”)
 - interval (“the space between things”)
 - subsidy (“grant given as a means of assistance”)
 - trophy (“prize”)

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- also know these examples from Ayers, pp. 236-238
 - pioneer (“first explorer, early settler”)
 - squire (“attendant; to escort”)
 - free-lance (“not under contract”)
 - boulevard (“wide road”)
 - slogan (“catch phrase”)

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Lesson 16: Terms from the Arts

- chiaroscuro: “use of light-dark contrast in painting”
 - from Italian, literally “light-dark”
- dilettante: “an untalented person who affects to be an artist”
 - from Italian *dilettare*, “to delight in”
 - originally, “an admirer (of the arts)”
 - i.e. one who dabbles in the arts but has no real skill
 - an example of degeneration, cf. amateur
- connoisseur: “an expert in the arts”
 - from French *connôître* (“to understand”)
 - n.b. the implication that “understanding” the arts makes a person more competent than “admiring” them
 - very left-brained!

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Lesson 16: Terms from the Arts

- do-re-mi (fa-so-la-ti-do)

- from the musical scale as outlined in a Medieval hymn

UT queant laxis **RE**sonare fibris

MIra gestorum **FA**muli tuorum

SOlve polluti **LA**bii reatum

SAncte **IO**hannes

SO they can **SI**ng with strings relaxed the

WOnders of your deeds, your **SE**rvents,

EXonerate the accused of **LI**ps unclean,

HOly **JO**hn

- later, **DO** replaced **UT** (for clearer pronunciation)

- **DO** = corruption of **IO**hannes

- **SA** > **TE** (**SA**nc**TE**), to distinguish it from **SO**

- and **TE** > **TI**, again for a clearer pronunciation

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- pastiche: “miscellaneous collection of pieces of art”
 - “potpourri”
 - from Italian *pasticcio* (“pie made of various ingredients, paste”)
 - originally from Greek *pastê* (“barley broth”)
 - cf. Italian *pasta* (“flour paste”); also, pastry
- gargoyle: “grotesque statue, used as a waterspout on churches”
 - from French *gargouiller* (“to gargle”)
 - because when water runs out of gargoyles, they appear to be gargling
 - thus, gargle and gargoyle are doublets!

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- also know these examples from Ayers, pp. 240-241
 - miniature (“small”)
 - from *minium* (“red ink”), often in small pictures in Medieval mss.
 - connected to minimum/minus through Folk Etymology
 - grotesque (“bizarre, hideously distorted”)
 - from Italian “p.t. to grottoes,” i.e. where ancient art was found
 - antic (“prank, caper”)
 - again, from Italian *antico* (“ancient”), from the postures seen in ancient art
 - maudlin (“over-sentimental, teary”)
 - from the typical depiction of Mary Magdalene in artwork
 - colossal (“huge, enormous”)

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Lesson 16: Terms from the Arts

- also know these examples from Ayers, pp. 240-241
 - story (“level of a building”)
 - from the custom of depicting various stages of a narrative on each level of a building
 - flamboyant (“showy”)
 - literally “flaming,” from the frequent use of flame-like patterns in Gothic architecture
 - attic (“top floor of a building”)
 - character (“distinctive nature”)