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”)
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Lesson 15: Military Terms

• 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
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Lesson 15: Military Terms

• 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”)
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Lesson 15: Military Terms

- 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”)

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Lesson 15: Military Terms

• 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”)
Latin and Greek Elements in English

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 *connôitre* (“to understand”)
  – n.b. the implication that “understanding” the arts makes a person more competent than “admiring” them
    • very left-brained!
Latin and Greek Elements in English

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
  **MI**ra gestorum **FA**muli tuorum
  **SO**lve polluti **LA**bii reatum
  **SA**ncte **IO**hannes

  **SO** they can **SI**ng with strings relaxed the
  **WO**unders of your deeds, your **SE**rvants,
  **EX**onerate the accused of **LI**ps unclean,
  **HO**ly **JO**hn

  – later, **DO** replaced **UT** (for clearer pronunciation)
  • **DO** = corruption of **IO**hannes
  – **SA** > **TE** (**SA**ncte **TE**), to distinguish it from **SO**
    • and **TE** > **TI**, again for a clearer pronunciation
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Lesson 16: Terms from the Arts

• **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, gargoyle and gargle are doublets!
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Lesson 16: Terms from the Arts

• 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")
Latin and Greek Elements in English

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”)