Greek Lessons 17, 18 and 19

In Greek Lessons 17, 18 and 19 we'll end our survey of words and phrases from idiomatic sources by examining terms which come from the law, from literature and from various occupations. All those topics we'll cover in this video presentation, and in the accompanying audio presentation we'll look at a few more Greek bases to memorize, along with some other Greek words which are worth learning. Please don't forget to listen to that audio presentation when you've finished watching this one.

To conclude our survey of words which come from idiomatic sources, let's look at terms which have entered English through legal practices. A preponderance of our words having to do with law derive from Latin, for two reasons mainly: Roman law is the basis of most Western legal systems, and the Normans imposed on England a system of laws written and conducted in Anglo-Norman, as you know, a medieval dialect which was based on Latin. For that reason the vast majority of our laws, and along with that the words we use to express them, go back to Roman times and Latinate terminology.

In Greek Lesson 17 Mr. Ayers conducts an excellent overview of terms and expressions of this sort, so I feel no need to add any more to those he discusses on pages 245-247. Just be sure, as always, that you both memorize the meanings of the terms he mentions and can cite their original source as the law. You'll be asked to do that on Quiz 5 and the final exam, but only ever in matching exercises. To ensure you know which terms you are expected to know, I list them here along with some brief commentary on their legal origin. You want to pause this presentation and take a moment to review this slide and the next two.

Now that we're done here, let's move on to Lesson 18 and investigate how literature has left its trace on English vocabulary. Beginning on page 248, Mr. Ayers demonstrates the broad range of words which have come into English from literary works, particularly drama. He's right to emphasize terms which come from the theatre because drama was until recently the focus of much public attention. Plays used to engage a huge viewership and, as with all idiomatic sources, anything that popular will naturally export terms into society at large. So to Ayers' list let's add a few more of the many words we've imported from drama, beginning with ...

… "exposition," meaning "the backstory of a play or movie." You should be able to etymologize this Latin-based word: the suffix *ex-* ("out") + the base POSIT- ("place, put") + the suffix *-ion* ("act of, result of"). Thus, exposition means literally "the act of putting, i.e. laying, (something) out," in this case the plot of a play for an audience. At the beginning of a story, readers or viewers need to know where they are in the narrative, so a writer has to catch them up on that before the action can get under way. There are many ways to do it, everything from "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" to "Long long ago in a galaxy far far away…"

Dramas also as a rule build to a "climax" ("the final point of excitement and tension near the end of a play"). This, like many dramatic terms, comes to us from Greek via Latin, which makes sense. The Greeks invented modern drama, and the Romans handed it to us. Literally, climax means "ladder," which, I suppose, is an apt metaphor for escalating tension.

Once that tension is released after the climax, a play enters a phase called the "denouement," its final resolution, that happy moment when, for instance, Dorothy returns from Oz and is reunited with her family and friends and says, "There's no place like home." Denouement is a French term, clear evidence of the important role French drama played in the early modern period. It comes from a Latin word which is a combination of the prefix *dis-* ("apart") and the base NOD- ("knot"). Thus, the metaphor is one of untying a knot.

Another term which comes from drama is "farce," meaning "a short, broadly comical play, anything ridiculous." In the days when people would spend a good part of their day at the theatre, farces were often inserted between the acts of a longer drama, and that's the reason I include it here among literary source words. But the reality is "farce" actually comes from the Latin word for "stuffing," so it's a metaphor drawn from cooking. Later, its application was broadened to refer to "anything absurd," as we saw when we studied the change from concrete-to-abstract. You should be aware that "farce" can still be used as a cooking term meaning "to stuff a fowl with mixed ingredients."

But literature outside of drama has also given us many terms too, such as "bohemian," meaning "a person who lives an unconventional lifestyle, usually an artist." Bohemian is probably most closely associated today with Puccini's famous opera *La Bohème* about young, impoverished artists living and loving in turn-of-the-century Paris. So this is also a term we could put into a different idiomatic source category, place names, since it's a reference to Bohemia which was once a kingdom in central Europe. After the kingdom's demise, the literary sense of the word eclipsed its geographical connotation, and today it's come to be used mainly in reference to any people, not just those of Bohemian extraction, who live an unconventional lifestyle, often featuring the exotic dress and wild customs which were once associated with gypsies. The word gypsy itself is another place-name term, an aphetic form of Egyptian, in spite of the fact gypsies do not come from Egypt or Bohemia. As one linguist notes, "The gipsies seem doomed to be associated with countries with which they have nothing to do."

Please learn these words, both their meaning and origin, along with those literary terms which Mr. Ayers discusses on pages 248-250: hypocrite, episode, chorus, orchestra and so on, through limelight, robot and romance.

Finally, let's turn to the last lesson in this textbook about words from idiomatic sources, Greek Lesson 19 which addresses terms and expressions from what Mr. Ayers calls "various occupations." I won't add any words to those in Ayers' lesson. There he focuses on words that come from weaving, commerce and trade, hunting and shepherding, all activities which consumed much energy from people in the past. Please learn these terms to the extent that you're able to match them to their definitions and source category.

To end this video presentation, let's look ahead briefly to the last six lessons in Ayers' textbook where he discusses the many English scientific and medical terms which are based on Greek and Latin roots, Greek mainly. You are required to know the bases and affixes listed in these lessons (Lessons 20-25, pp. 257-280) *on a "matching" basis only*. So for these lessons please do the following: first, review the affixes listed at the beginning of each lesson, then look over the bases listed after those affixes. You do indeed need to memorize all those forms but only as potential

elements in matching exercises and, to practice them, please do the matching exercise at the end of each lesson. You'll find one such exercise on pp. 262, 265, 268, 272, 276 and 279. On the final exam, you'll be asked to complete the same sort of matching exercise as you see at the end of these lessons.

And that's it for the video presentation for Greek Lessons 17, 18 and 19. Next you should listen to the audio presentation on the forms and words introduced in these lessons. You'll find a link to that audio presentation on the course web site.

Happy etymologizing!

ASSIGNMENT

This is the audio presentation covering the assignments in Greek Lessons 17, 18 and 19. Please open your textbook to page 247 and look at the bases listed there, the last bases to be learned for use in full etymological exercises like word analysis and sentences. Oh happy day!

The first CHORE- is a base meaning "dance." To that definition add "sing" as well as "sing and dance." The ancients almost never did one without the other, but today we often separate those activities. Choruses tend to sing but not dance, and choreographers usually direct dancers, not singers. So this word specialized in two different directions.

To ER(OT)- ("love") add the sense "sex." You're in college. There's no point in being coy. That's what it means. And note that you've already encountered another Greek base for "love," PHIL-, in Lesson 8. As a general rule, EROT- is used in reference to sexual attraction, and PHIL- to non-sexual love ─ philanthropy, philately (stamp collecting), Philadelphia (the city of brotherly love) ─ though there are exceptions: pedophilia, zoophily, philander. If you're interested, look those words up in the dictionary, but for the record, I didn't teach them to you.

I have nothing of import to add the rest of the bases in this lesson, other than in NAUT- ("sailor") you might recognize its Latin cognate NAV- ("ship"). Mr. Ayers didn't include that base back in the Latin section of the textbook, but it's not hard to remember: navy, naval, navigate. So you really don't have to learn it. You know it already.

Greek Lessons 18 and 19 entail a different sort of memorization from what we've been doing so far in the second half of the class. In the same way the first part of the course, the Latin section, ended with a look at terms and words which come straight from Latin and employ roots rarely seen elsewhere in English, here Mr. Ayers does much the same with Greek. Beginning on page 250, he cites a number of Greek-based words ─ and in some cases pure Greek ones with their original ancient endings ─ that are built on roots seldom seen in English outside of that particular word. That makes the base not worth memorizing. Instead, just learn the word itself.

So we'll end this audio presentation by reviewing some of the words in these lessons. Only the ones I mention below do I expect you know. Moreover, all you'll be asked to do on the final exam is match these words to their definition. So let's start with Section 1 on page 250:

- The first word I want you to learn is number 2, *elegiac*, a word that means "expressing sorrow";
- next is number 3, *catharsis*, meaning "purification";
- then, number 4, *onomatopoeic*: "sounding like what it means" ─ surely, that comes as no surprise;
- at the top of the next page, number 5, *panegyric*: "a speech in praise of a person or thing";
- and number 8, *prosody*: "the rules of poetry and poetic meter."

That's it for that section. Please note you're not required to know the words I didn't mention here, that is, those in sentences 1, 6 and 7.

In Section 2, please learn the following words:

- number 2, *bucolic*: "rural, typical of country life";
- number 4, *cynosure*: "the center of attention," literally "a dog's tail," that is, what catches your attention ─ what a great word! Someone with real imagination made that one up!;
- number 5, *didactic*: "intended for instruction";
- number 6, *hedonism*: "the pursuit of pleasure";
- number 7, *hegemony*: "superior leadership or authority" ─ it's usually employed in a political context;
- number 9, *peripatetic*: "wandering, itinerant";
- and finally number 10 (at the top of the next page), *polemic*: "an aggressive attack."

That's it for Section 2. Remember you need to know only the words I just mentioned. None of the others! In Section 3 please learn the following words:

- number 4, *deleterious*: "harmful";
- number 5, *diatribe*: "invective, tirade";
- number 6, *empirical*: "based on experiment or observation";
- number 8, *esoteric*: "understood by only a few, belonging to an inner circle";
- number 9, *ethereal*: "light, airy, delicate";
- number 11, *anodyne*: "a medicine that relieves pain";
- number 12, *paroxysm*: "an attack, a sharp spasm";
- number 14, *sardonic*: "mocking";
- and finally number 15 (at the top of page 253), *sycophant* (let's use the simpler form, not the adverb "sycophantically"): "flatterer, toady, kiss-up."

That last word (*sycophant*) has a fascinating, if somewhat problematical history. In Greek "sycophant" means literally "fig (*syco-*) informer or shower (*-phant*)." One etymological explanation runs like this. The reference is to a period in Athenian history when it was illegal to import figs, a luxury item. Before Europe had contact with the far East and sugarcane, the ancients used honey and sweet fruits like figs to improve the taste of various food and drinks. Figs, in Athens an imported commodity, bled a lot of money from the city ─ at least according to this etymology ─ so importing figs was made a crime. Now, if you had a beef with someone and

wanted to see him arrested but he was innocent of any offense, you could always say you saw him importing figs, but you'd need a witness, a role which was filled by a particular type of underhanded con man willing to do anything for money, a so-called "fig informer" who for a fee would agree to back up your false charge in court that the person you wanted to bring down was importing figs. That's quite an etymology, so specific and complicated that it's inspired the skepticism of more than one expert. Another, very different explanation provides a much simpler history for the word. "Showing the fig" is said to have been a crude gesture, because of a purported resemblance between figs and female genitalia. "Fig showers" were thus low-class political hangers-on famous for using that gesture. I guess we'd call them "the finger wing" of their party. It's unclear which etymology is valid, perhaps neither, perhaps both. Words, as we've noted before, don't have to have only one source.

To end this catalogue of words to memorize, please turn to page 255 and look at the list of sentences with Greek words in them. These terms have come into English directly from ancient Greek, so you'll see all sorts of suffixes here you don't recognize. They're really the original endings required by the Greek language. Let's examine a few of these, beginning with …

- number 4, *bathos*, meaning "sentimentalism";
- number 9, *encomium* (learn the singular, not the plural "encomiums"): "glowing praise";
- number 10, *enigma*: "riddle";
- number 12, *hoi polloi*: "the masses, the common crowd";
- number 15, *miasma*: "a bad smell";
- on the next page, number 17, *panacea*: "a remedy for all difficulties";
- and finally number 21, *plethora*: "an oversupply of something."

Please memorize the definitions of the words above, but know that I'll test your knowledge in matching exercises only. You won't have to give me the definitions on your own.

And that's it for this audio presentation.

Happy Etymologizing!