

Greek Lessons 22 and 23

The goals of Greek Lessons 22 and 23 are much the same as in the previous two lessons. We'll begin by reviewing Latin forms — this time upping the ante a little and addressing some of the more complicated derivatives which have entered English from Latin — and in the accompanying audio presentation we'll continue our study of scientific and technical terminology. After watching this video, please don't forget to listen to that audio presentation.

In this, our second set of sentences designed to help you sharpen back up your Latin forms, I'm going to ratchet up the difficulty level. Let's see how you do.

1. The fern offers perhaps the best example in nature of the supradecomound leaf.

[By now you know how to do this, so take a moment and pause this presentation. Try to etymologize the word and, when you're done, restart the presentation. I'll give you the answers. But don't try to define the word just yet. Just etymologize it. Go ahead! Pause!]

So, find some prefixes here? You did? Yeah, there are three! I got so excited when I found this word I just about plotzed. Three prefixes? That makes us teachers slobber. The first prefix is ... *supra-*, meaning "above, further." The second is *de-* ("down"), and the third is *com-* ("with, together, very"). The base is POUND- ("put, place"). No suffix. And what part of speech is this word? That's right. An adjective. So what's the etymological definition? "Being put together down further." That sounds ... not like English.

Usually when things pile up like the prefixes here, it's because something that's already a combination of elements is being combined with other elements, so in that case it's best to work through the prefixes backwards, which means you should start with "-compound." You know what that means: "put together, assembled." Now "-decompound"? What sense does *de-* ("down") add here? Well, one metaphorical path of "down" is "less, smaller," that is, down in size. We saw that in the metaphors lecture. Now add *supra-* to that and the implication is "beyond down," i.e. further down, way on down," meaning getting smaller and smaller. So a fern leaf is "compounded down into something of smaller and smaller size." Ever look closely at a fern leaf? The branches off the main stalk look exactly like the main stalk itself, and the little branches on those follow the same pattern too, and so forth as far down as the eye can see. So supradecomound means "having many divisions that are themselves replicated multiples of the same design."

That was tough, but do you see how we got to the answer? Supradecomound is, in fact, in English dictionaries, and English words from classical roots are what we're studying here. Still, I wouldn't put anything as difficult as that on a test. However, I do expect you to be able to define somewhat simpler words by following this same process, something more like ...

2. Beekeepers assist in keeping their hives active and vital through the supersedure of an old queen with a new one.

[As with the first sentence, pause this presentation and try doing the etymology yourself. This one I think you might also take a stab at defining. When you're done, I'll give you the answer. Pause!]

Okay, is there a prefix? Yes, *super-*, meaning “above, over.” [*supra-* is different!] What’s the next element? The base, *SED-*, meaning “sit, settle.” And the next? The suffix *-ure*, meaning “the act of.” And what part of speech is supersedure? A noun. So what’s the etymological definition? “The act of seating or settling (something) over (something else).” So what’s happening here in this sentence? A new queen is doing what to an old one? It’s replacing the old one. So the definition of “supersedure” is ... replacement.

3. ... but when he reached out to his dead wife, his hands passed through the disincarnate being.

[Take a moment and do the etymology, then check the answer. You know how this works. Do it!]

Okay, here’s the answer. The first prefix is *dis-* (“apart”), the next prefix is *in-*, here meaning “in” because it’s not followed by another prefix — the rule about *in-* always meaning “not” when there are two prefixes does not apply when *in-* is the second prefix, only when it’s the first — the base is *CARN-* (“flesh”), and the suffix is *-ate* (“possessing, being” because *disincarnate* is an adjective, not a verb). So what’s the etymological definition? “Being apart from being in-the-flesh.” So what’s up with the dead wife? She’s “apart from her flesh.” She’s ... disembodied. Wooooo!

4. So spiteful an old man, he pretermitted all his children in his will and left everything to the FCC (the Friends of Climate Change).

[Let’s make this simple. We need a faster way to say “pause, etymologize and restart.” What about the acronym PER? PER! Do it! PER! Oh, wait, one more thing. What form of this word should you be etymologizing? Remember to analyze the basic form of the word by removing English affixes like *-ed*, *-ing* or *-s*. So here you should be etymologizing “pretermite,” not the past-tense form “pretermitted.” Go ahead. Now you can PER!]

Prefix? *Pre-*? Hmmm. So then what’s the base? *TERM-*? Well, there is a base in Latin *TERMIN-* but not *TERM-* [Our word “term” is a clip, not a form of the base.]. So that doesn’t work. When in trouble, try working from the back? Is there a suffix? No, because *-it-* (“to,” the verb suffix) has to be *-ite* if it’s the last suffix. And anyway, you’d still be stuck with *TERM-* as a base and we already know that doesn’t work. The same is true if you try to diagnose *-it* as the base *IT-* (“go”), which you shouldn’t ever do unless you desperate, and we’re not quite that desperate yet.

Come on, there has to be a base. All words have bases. So, if it’s not *IT-*, what about *MIT-*? Oh, yeah, that means “send, let go.” So if the prefix is *pre-* and the base is *MIT-*, what’s “ter” doing here? Wait a second! Isn’t there a prefix *preter-*, meaning “beyond.” Yes, that’s it: *preter-* + *MIT-*, meaning “to send or let go beyond.” And what part of speech is this word? A verb. So what word does your definition need to start with? “To.” What possible connotation could “to let go beyond” have here? Well, is this a positive or negative word? “Friends of Climate Change”? Negative! This old man was horrible. It’s a clear example of degeneration. And what’s the spiteful geezer negatively doing? He’s not giving his kids their inheritance. He’s

omitting them from his will. So, what does “pretermit” mean? “To allow to pass without mention,” that is, “to omit.”

5. With a modicum of ancient Greek, a dictionary and a good interlineary anyone can read the New Testament in the original.

[You know what to do! PER! I’ll see you on the other side.]

Got all the elements now? So here are the answers. The prefix is *inter-* (“between”), the base is LINE- (“line”) and the suffix is *-ary* (“pertaining to”). What part of speech? Well, *-ary* is an adjective-forming suffix but the word itself is clearly a noun, so what do you call that? A substantive. And what do you think an “interlineary” is? Something’s got to be “in between the lines (of something else).” What would you want between the lines of a text in a foreign language? What would help you most to have? A translation, right? So an interlineary is “a foreign language text with translation provided every other line.”

6. After the funds had been embezzled, it was very difficult to convince the council to reappropriate them.

[PER!]

I see at least two prefixes here: *re-* (“back, again”) and *ad-* (“to”). Is there a third? [Slobber, slobber.] Hmmmm. Well, if *pro-* is another prefix, then the base has to be PRI- or PRIAT-. Does Latin have any base like that? No. But it does have a base PROPRI-, meaning “(to make) one’s own,” and since the word is clearly a verb, the *-at(e)-* at the end of this word has to be the verb suffix. So the etymological definition is “to make (something) one’s own again.” Remember that with multiple prefixes what’s often happened is that a new prefix has been added to the front of a form that’s already compounded, so work backwards through the prefixes: “-appropriate” means “to make one’s own”; the *ad-* is either showing that you’re bringing it “to” yourself, or it’s just intensive. Now add in the *re-* which means “again.” So “reappropriate” means “to allocate (something for some purpose) again.” That wasn’t hard, was it? Two prefixes is easy, but three is two for one, and that adds up to ...

7. Rodolpho was saved only by the incoincidence of his wife’s and his girlfriend’s arrivals at the party.

[PER!]

All done? Three prefixes! Yum! One, *in-*, and if *in-* is followed by another prefix (or prefixes), it always means what? “Not”! Next prefix: *co(n)-* (“with, together”). Last prefix: *in-*, again, here not leading into another prefix — four would be insane! — so this *in-* means “in.” Base? CID- (“fall”). Suffix? *-ence* (“the quality of -ing”). Part of speech? Noun. Now take that base and read the prefixes backwards: “fall in (that is, among) together not.” “The quality of not falling into together.” Remember that “fall” often has a metaphorical sense of “chance, happen.” So what’s happened to the philandering Rodolpho? His wife and his girlfriend happened not to fall into

together, that is, not meet. Lucky man! So an incoincidence is “a chance failure to meet (i.e. “fall in together”).”

8. Despite his popularity at the time of his re-election, Nixon’s malversation ultimately undermined him.

[PER!]

Alright, what’s going on with President Nixon here? Does he have a prefix? No! MAL- is a base, not a prefix, and it means “bad.” What’s VERS-? Another base. It means “turn.” And remember that, when you see *-ation*,” it’s almost always *-ate* (verb suffix) plus *-ion* (“the act of”). So what part of speech is malversation? A noun. What’s it mean then? Well, ask yourself: is it a positive or negative thing? Clearly, negative. This is Nixon. What’s he done? He’s ... turned bad. And what do people do who’ve turned bad? They engage in ... “misbehavior, corruption.” If you know your American history, that should have been an easy jump to make.

9. Levi-Strauss’ work on myth is grounded in contrapletal concepts: old-young, nature-nurture, inside-outside.

[PER!]

Alright, how many prefixes are there here? Two? *Con-* and *tra-*? Well, you could diagnose the word that way, but it will throw your definition off, and remember that you’re getting points on the final exam for writing the correct definition (or a close version thereof). There’s another way to read *con-* and *tra-*. What is it? *Contra-*! One prefix, which means “against.” What’s next? The base, PLET-, meaning “fill, full.” And the suffix? Good, *-al* (“pertaining to”). So what part of speech is this word? An adjective, meaning ...? Well, it clearly has something to do with opposites, doesn’t it, at least to judge from “old-young, nature-nurture, inside-outside”? How does “fill, full” plus “against” pertain to opposites? What do pairs of opposites fill? Well, everything! In between opposites is everything else, isn’t it? That is, in between the furthest extremes of hot and cold is every other temperature: warm, cool, mild, chilly, torrid, frosty, arctic, boiling. So what must contrapletal mean? “Pertaining to a pair of polar opposites which complement each other.” Last sentence:

10. A manager’s prelation of certain employees will motivate some to do better but will engender resentment in others.

[PER!]

Okay. Prefix? Yes, *pre-*, meaning “before, in front of.” Base? LAT- (“bear, carry”). Suffix? *-ion* (“the act of”). Part of speech? Noun. That was easy. So what’s the manager doing? “Bearing certain employees forward.” How does a manager “bear his employees forward”? Carry them on his back? No, the sense here is advancement, isn’t it? What’s he doing? Well, remember always to try an alternate form of a base, if there is an alternate. What’s the alternate of LAT-? FER-! Substitute FER- here and you get ... pre-FER-ment, meaning “favoritism.” The manager is showing favor to some employees. There are kiss-ups in every company. Makes me sick.

And that's it for the video presentation for Greek Lessons 22 and 23. Next you should listen to the audio presentation on the scientific and technical forms discussed 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 22 and 23. Please open your textbook to page 265 and let's look at some more medical suffixes, beginning with *-path* ("one who suffers from a disease of, one who treats a disease"), which you should recognize from the base *PATH-* which we studied in Greek Lesson 10. This suffix *-path* is actually a back formation of the next suffix *-pathy* ("disease of, treatment of disease of or by"). [Do you remember what a back formation is? A shortened form of a word. You need to know that term for the final!]

On the next page you'll see *-iasis*, another "diseased condition" suffix, an extension of the suffix you've already learned *-sis*. Note that it can sometimes mean just "the process of," as in odontiasis, "the process of creating teeth (ODONT-)." In other words, this suffix doesn't always undergo degeneration, another term you need to remember.

Next is the suffix *-therapy*, meaning "treatment of or by." As you might guess, there's a base *THERAP-* which we did not study, meaning "treat, attend to." In ancient Greek a *therapon* is an attendant.

That's it for the suffixes in Lesson 22. As you did in Lessons 20 and 21, please pause this presentation and peruse the bases here, starting with *BRACHY-* ("short") and running through *XANTH-* ("yellow"), then do the matching exercise on page 268. When you're done, restart this audio and I'll give the answers. Ready, set, stop!

And here are the answers: 1 (eurythermic) is d (as in decisive), 2 is g (as in good for you), 3 i (as in isn't orthodolichocephalus a great word? But how would you ever use it in normal speech, except as an insult?), 4 h (as in hospital), 5 c (as in critical), 6 b (as in broken), 7 a (as in as in), 8 j (as in Jumping Jehoshaphat), 9 e (as in easy as pie) and 10 f (as in finally done).

In the next lesson, Lesson 23, guess what we're going to do! That's right. More suffixes: one that's medical (*-emia*, "condition of the blood") and one that's geometrical (*-hedron*, "a solid figure with a [specified] number of faces").

You know the routine: pause, peruse the bases on pages 269-272, and then do the matching exercise on page 272. Go on! Do it!

[And while you're doing it, I'll chatter a little. I love the base *MY(S)-* which gives us the word "muscle." It comes from a Greek base that means "mouse" (*MY-*). So what's a muscle, etymologically? Well, the suffix *-cle* is a diminutive, so a muscle is "a little mouse," probably

because of the resemblance of muscles to mice. Think of muscles as mice running under rugs and creating little moving bumps. Someone was having linguistic fun that day. My favorite part is the “little mice”! Not just regular mice? Well, my “little mice” are certainly diminutive. Still, think about the fact that the words “muscular” and “mousy” are cognate. And what does that say about “muscle cars”?

Also, way at the bottom of the list is the base TON- (“a stretching, tension”) which gives us the word “tonic.” The connection is that tonics supposedly tone your muscles. That is, just by drinking them it makes you stronger. Snake oil and other fake medicines have been around as long as humans have been trying to cure anything. TON- can also refer to vocal pitch, as in “tone.” Here the connection is based on the straining of the vocal cords as they stretch to create higher sounds. Indeed, some singers’ tones make me want to drink a tonic.

Okay, you done with the matching yet? Well, go do it then! Pause and match! Then restart the presentation.]

La la la! Oh, sorry, just practicing my tone. And here are the answers: 1 f (as in fabulous), 2 d (as is dynamic), 3 g (as is go for it), 4 i (as in irritating), 5 h (as in has he stopped yet), 6 j (as in judgmental), 7 b (as in you’re breaking my eardrums), 8 c (as in can you hear me?), 9 a (as in all the world can) and 10 e (as in end this pain).

Time for this audio presentation to conclude and die. Only two more lessons to go! Stay strong!

Happy Etymologizing!