Greek Lessons 8 and 9

The goals of Greek Lessons 8 and 9 are threefold: one, to examine the structure of English words which come from Greek; two, to introduce the concept of words that derive from what Ayers calls "idiomatic sources" ─ that is, words based on names, places, expressions and various other aspects of human life, as opposed to words which we have inherited from an Indo-European source or borrowed from some other language ─ and three, to explore in depth one type of idiomatic source, place names. In this video presentation we'll address all three of these goals, and in the accompanying audio presentation, we'll look at the Greek suffixes and bases included in these lessons. Don't forget to listen to that audio presentation after you've finished watching this video.

As Mr. Ayers discusses in Lesson 8, the analysis of Greek-based derivatives in English follows the same rules as those you learned for Latinate words: prefixes in lower-case letters followed by a hyphen, bases in all CAPS followed by a hyphen and suffixes in lower-case letters preceded by a hyphen. Of course, as we already noted, Greek derivatives much more often combine two or more bases, but otherwise the process of etymologizing Greek words will offer you no surprises. Mr. Ayers wisely points out in this lesson that there can be difficulty in determining a word's definition from its etymology when it contains a base which looks exactly the same as another base with a different meaning. It's easy, for instance, to confuse the Greek base OD- because there are two bases from Greek which have that form: one that means "road" as in exodus and one that means "song" as in melody.

Latin can present confusion too, when it has given us a base that looks like some Greek form, for instance, TACT- which in Latin means "touch" as in contact, but in Greek means "arrange" as in tactical. Here's another: MIS(S)-. In Latin MIS(S)- means "send" as in missile, but in Greek MIS- means "hate" as in misogyny ("the hatred of women"). Latin PATRI- means "fatherland." In Greek the same base means "clan, family" and also "fatherland." Obviously these bases are cognate but the Greek now has a broader swathe of connotations. From Latin we get the base ACR- ("sharp); from Greek the same form means "the highest part of." Again, these bases are related but different implications developed in Greece and Rome. Here's an instance where the bases are *not* related but still look alike: Latin MON- ("warn") as in admonition, and its Greek twin which means "one, single" as in monopoly. Another non-cognate pair involves the base form BI-. In Latin it means "two" as in biennial, but in Greek it means "life" as in biology. One more unrelated set: PED- in Latin is "foot"; in Greek it's "child." And to all these could be added one more possible source of confusion. The Latin base PAR- ("produce") as in prepare looks exactly like the Greek prefix *par-* ("alongside"). So if you "produce something alongside something else," are you "parparing" it? No, that would be a hybrid. The horror, the horror, the hyper-horror!

But that raises an important issue you should be aware of. You'll soon see that Latin and Greek forms are often combined, especially in technical language, producing … hybrids. [They should be called "low-brids." But wait a second! That's a hybrid! Forget it.] You've seen several hybrids of this sort in the class so far, like automobile and amoral. To that could be added semicolon and Technicolor. These low-brow hybrids are a sad fact of life and eventually we're going to have to address them head on, and we will, later in the class, but be aware of this. There

will be words made of both Latin and Greek elements on your final exam which will by necessity include ─ I shudder to say! ─ hybrids, words of mixed origin, miscegenations in Greco-Roman style. If our purpose in this class is to teach you about English vocabulary, then I cannot avoid interspecial impurities forever. Yes, you will see a murky hybrid or two on your final, but not until then. And that raises another important point: don't let your Latin forms fall into complete disrepair as we journey across Greece. Go back and jog on the banks of the Tiber River occasionally, revisiting your Latin triumphs. All hail Caesar!

Now let's look at what Mr. Ayers terms "words from idiomatic sources." Besides the words we've inherited through Germanic and Latin and Greek and other Indo-European languages, there is a portion of English vocabulary ─ not as large as the Indo-European portion but still no small serving ─ that we did not get from our linguistic ancestors but is the product of some event in history. These words recall a place or person who was famous or infamous, often very briefly, or a catchphrase which was popular for a while. These words from idiomatic sources ─ "idiomatic" here in the sense of "unique and peculiar to a particular circumstance" ─ reveal and reflect the spheres of activity in which we tend to engage: religion, sports, the arts, the law, conflict and literature, among many others. This tendency makes it useful to group words of idiomatic origin into these broad categories, which is how we will proceed henceforth as we journey through Greek Lessons 9-19.

Here's a good example of one of those categories of idiomatic sources, words which have entered English from personal names, types of clothing, for instance, quite a few of which stem from the names of people who were associated with them, to wit, "cardigan." Do you know what a cardigan is? It's a sweater that opens down the front. It's named for James Thomas Brudenell, the seventh earl of Cardigan, who is most famous for leading the charge of the Light Brigade memorialized in Alfred Lord Tennyson's immortal poem that begins "Half a league, half a league, half a league onward, all in the valley of death rode the six hundred…" Very exciting! The whole brigade died, but apparently Brudenell's predilection for sweaters outlived his defeat in battle.

What's a "derby"? A horse race, right, like the Kentucky Derby? But it's also a type of hat which got its name from a man named Edward Stanley, the twelfth Earl of Derby and founder of a famous horse race. Hats made in derby style later became associated with this type of horse race.

Another place where personal names have produced a lot of words is botany, particularly the names of flowers, such as the "poinsettia" named for J.P. Poinsett, an American ambassador to Mexico, who first classified the flower. "Camellias" gets their name from Josef Kamel, a Moravian monk, the first person to described the flower. Michel Begon, the French ambassador to Santo Domingo and an amateur horticulturalist, gave his name to the "begonia." "Zinnias" owe their name to Johann Gottfried Zinn, a German botanist; "gardenias" to Alexander Garden, a Scottish physician who lived in South Carolina and fought for the British in the American Revolutionary War, in other words, the losing side. He eventually moved to England, bringing the flowering shrub, or at least its name, with him.

Food also attracts names. The "filbert nut," also known as the hazelnut, is the namesake of Saint Philbert, because this type of nut ripens on or near his Saint's Day (August 22) on the Catholic

calendar. “Listerine” is named after Sir Joseph Lister, an English physician who promoted antiseptic methods of surgery. Jacques Nicot, a French ambassador to Lisbon who introduced tobacco to France in 1561, gave his name to the chemical “nicotine.” Perhaps the most famous example of a word based on a personal name is “sandwich,” so called for John Montagu, the fourth Earl of Sandwich (1718-92). He was a corrupt nobleman who, it is reported, couldn’t bear to leave the gambling table even to eat and so he ordered his meat served cold between two slices of bread in order to keep sticky juices off his fingers. That way he could keep playing cards.

All sorts of other things owe their name to names. The “saxophone” was invented by Antoine Joseph Sax in 1840. The word “silhouette,” a shadow outline of someone’s profile, goes back to a French phrase *à la silhouette* so named for Étienne de Silhouette, the French finance minister in 1759 when the phrase first appears. However, this man’s connection to the silhouette is not at all clear. He did not invent this type of portraiture, nor is there any known silhouette of him. It’s a mystery. Less mysterious but equally indirect is the tale of the word “guillotine,” the notorious decapitation device made infamous in the French Revolution. It’s named for Joseph Ignace Guillotin, a Parisian physician who recommended its use in 1789 to the French National Assembly, because he preferred the guillotine’s efficacy at killing a victim quickly over the use of swords or nooses which were not always as good at getting the job done in one stroke. Guillotin, however, neither invented nor died by this device. He only advocated for its use.

The word “derrick” also goes back to a death machine and the name of the man who popularized it. Godfrey Derrick was a famous English hangman around 1606-1608. He employed a raised platform with a trapdoor and using this performed over three thousand executions. His name was henceforth connected to “any raised platform with a crane that can sustain great weight,” for instance, an oil derrick. The name Derrick itself goes back to another famous figure in early history, Theodoric, the Ostrogothic conqueror of Italy. Over time, Theodoric became Thuidareiks, then Dietrich, and ultimately Derrick.

To this litany of words based on personal names could be added many others, including watt, volt, zeppelin, derringer and crisscross which was originally “Christ’s cross.” In early printed books, multiple cross patterns (“Christ’s cross rows”) were often put on the front of primers (reading textbooks). Another example that could be added is “sadist,” meaning “a very cruel person,” from the Marquis de Sade, a French nobleman who was infamous for indulging in excessive and savage sexual behavior. Another notorious Frenchman is Nicolas Chauvin who lent his name to the term “chauvinism” meaning “excessive partisanship.” Chauvin was notable and is remembered for his aggressive, almost ridiculous French patriotism. The term found new meaning in the 1960’s when feminists extended its sense to sexist behavior ─ which is a good example of generalization ─ and created the phrase “male chauvinist pig” in reference to men who refuse to acknowledge women’s rights. Finally, to “mirandize,” that is, to warn criminal suspects in police custody about their legal rights, such as the right to remain silent, is a stipulation of the Supreme Court’s Miranda ruling ─ Miranda was the name of the defendant in that case ─ and thus “mirandize” is yet another word created from a personal name.

Words like these from idiomatic sources are not susceptible to etymological analysis in the same way vocabulary is which we’ve inherited from Latin and Greek roots. All the same, words such as these are important to know so I’ll ask that you learn the meaning of any which I or Mr. Ayers

mentions. To be sure you're clear about which terms you need to know, I've created a series of handouts containing all the words you will be asked to learn. You'll find links to those handouts on the course syllabus under the headings of Greek Lessons 9-19. You can access the first such handout, a list of terms from place names, by following the link attached to Greek Lesson 9. The other terms derived from place names which you need to learn are in the introduction to that same lesson in the textbook. About each term I expect you to recognize two things: the definition of the term and its general source, e.g. law, sports, the arts, and so on. You will never be asked to give the definitions or sources of any of these words, only recognize them in a matching exercise. That is, in the case of definitions, you will only have to match the term to its definition. For the sources, you will always have three examples of terms which belong to the same category.

So let's begin by looking at some words which derive from the names of places. I'll expect you to recognize the meanings of these words and understand that they all belong to the category "words from place names." Please also be sure to learn the place-name words Mr. Ayers discusses in the introduction to Lesson 9.

The first word is "sherry," meaning a strong, non-sparkling Spanish wine. The word comes from Jerez, a city in Spain where sherry was once famous for being made. The name Jerez itself is interesting. It goes back to the Latin name of the city *Urbs Caesaris* ("Caesar's City"). The high-quality porcelain tableware known as "China" also recalls a place ─ that should be obvious ─ the country where it was invented. "Attic," meaning "top story of a house," has a very interesting history. The term originally referred to the area around the city of Athens in Greece. In antiquity to call someone or something Attic meant "Athenian." Since all things classical fascinated the Europeans during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, people there began constructing houses that had elements of classical architecture. They referred to these spaces as having been built in "Attic style," that is, designed to look like ancient Greek buildings. Ultimately, only the top story of such structures which seemed particularly Greek in appearance, especially the triangular pediments under the roof, retained the name "attic."

As you can see, place-words often have a foreign feel, and the next word is no exception: "arabesque" which has several meanings. In ballet it denotes "a complicated movement"; in art and architecture it betokens "an elaborate design of flowers, leaves and geometric shapes." Originally from an Italian word *arabesco* ("Arabic"), arabesque reflects the Islamic custom of forbidding the creation of realistic art, based on a very strict interpretation of the second commandment ("Thou shalt not make graven images"). Because of this, many Moslem artists were forbidden from depicting any realistic image, not people's faces or historical events, not even leaves or birds, and so Moslem artists instead focused on intricate, geometrical patterns like these seen on the Alhambra in Spain, a castle built by the Moors (Islamic rulers).

Another place-word is "blarney," meaning "smooth, deceitful talk; flattery." Derived from a village named Blarney in Ireland, the term is best elucidated by C.T. Onions in his Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology:

> . . . in the castle of which there is an inscribed stone of difficult access; the popular saying is that anyone who kisses or licks this 'Blarney stone' will ever after have a flattering tongue and the capacity for shameless lying.

Thus, the gift of "blarney" signals a talent for story-telling and other nonsense.

To "meander" was originally to "wander aimlessly" like a river in ancient Asia Minor (modern Turkey) which follows a winding course to the sea. "Parchment" (animal skin prepared as a writing surface) is another word created from a place name in the same region, Pergamum, a city in what is now northwest Turkey. A doubtful legend claims parchment was invented there because the people of Pergamum during a period of hostility with Egypt were cut off from any papyrus supply ─ papyrus which grows mainly in Egypt was the most common writing material in classical antiquity ─ so the people of Pergamum started using animal skins to write on. However, there's good evidence that skins were being employed as a writing surface much earlier and all over the ancient world, so the connection between parchment and Pergamum is all but certainly a historical fiction. The word "papyrus" could also be included in the place-name source group since it derives from the name of city Byblos (the modern port of Jebeil in Lebanon) where the Greeks bought most of their papyrus. Byblos has also given us the word "bible," even though scriptures were more often written on hardier material than papyrus.

One last place-name word is "cologne," a term for "scented water." This word goes back to the name of a German city which was originally a Roman military outpost named *Colonia Claudia* for the family of the Roman emperor Claudius whose wife Agrippina was born there. Much later, an eighteenth-century chemist living in Cologne concocted a new type of perfume composed of alcohol and citrus oils which became very popular with European aristocrats who always wanted to smell better than their subjects. Never a difficult thing to do! In France this perfume was known as *eau de cologne* ("cologne water"), and today there's a town in Texas named Cologne. It's situated near a slaughtering plant. That's a euphemism if there ever was!

And that's also it for this video presentation covering Greek Lessons 8 and 9. Next you should listen to the audio presentation on the prefixes and bases 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 8 and 9. Please open your textbook to page 202 and look at the Greek suffixes listed there. Notice anything familiar? You should! They're all cognate with Latin suffixes you've already learned! Not only that, their meanings are exactly the same as their Roman compadres. They even share tendencies, such as the propensity for *-an*/*-ian* to form substantives ("one connected with"). So let's just go ahead and make all these Greek suffixes identical to their Latin kin and add the definitions "having, having the character of" to the Greek version of *-ous*/*-ious* since that's what its Latin counterpart means. And that's all I have to say about that. It's too easy.

On to the bases! To CHROM-/CHROMAT- add the meaning "colorful." In music, the chromatic scale (see sentence 8 on the next page) uses all the notes between C and high C for instance, not just the eight notes in the do-re-mi octave. Instead of calling the chromatic scale jarring or

dissonant which is the way it sounds to many people, we say it's "colorful." A little euphemism going on there, you think?

CRI-, the next base, at heart signals the moment when everything changes, be it for the better or worse, that critical moment of crisis when the patient, for instance, will live or die. From this "turning point" sense, CRI- can also represent a system that turns things on and off and regulates the level of, say, bodily secretions ─ thus, the endocrine system which regulates chemicals inside (*endo*-) your body.

ETHN-, the next base, means "race, cultural group," but because we are more likely to notice people who do not belong our own "ethnicity," the base often betokens "a distinct cultural group," one that's different from the perceived majority. So add the meanings "foreign, foreigners."

The following base LECT- is related to another base we've already studied, LOG-, which is why they share the sense "speak, speech." How would linguists refer to the difference in these bases? That's right! LECT- is the e-grade; LOG- is the o-grade.

To PHA-/PHAN- add the e-grade form PHEN-, as in phenomenon which means literally "a thing that appears." Also, be careful not to confuse this base with PHA-/PHE- meaning "say," which we'll learn in Lesson 11. If PHA-/PHE- has a -N on the end of it, it's "appear."

Dropping down a bit, be sure to note that POLY- ("many, much") is not a prefix but a base! It can be the root of a word like "polyp." In the next lesson Mr. Ayers introduces a base that looks lot like this one, POL-/POLIS- meaning "city." Don't confuse them. If it's got a -y, it's "many." There's also another base you could confuse here, POL-/POLE- which means "buy," as in monopoly where only one entity controls a market. Ayers never gives you this "buy"-base and I won't either. But it's good to know.

And to end our discussion of this lesson, put a star by TAUT- ("the same"), not because it's hard to learn but for some reason it's tough for English speakers to remember. Derivatives like tautology ("a needless repetition of words, redundancy" ─ see sentence 7 on page 203) just don't help. Most people don't know that word or indeed any taut-based word. But you need to know it, so make a point of learning it.

Now let's move on to Lesson 9, starting on page 208 where you'll find another set of Greek suffixes. The first one, *-ician*, is a compound of the suffix *-ic* ("pertaining to") and another suffix *-ian* ("one concerned with"), but *-ician* is more than the sum of its parts. Put together, these suffixes create the idea of "specialist, practitioner." If you etymologize a word with *-ician* as "pertaining to one connected with," I'll still give you full credit on the etymology but, if you don't incorporate the "specialist" sense into your definition, you'll be missing an important part of the meaning of the word. For that you could lose points on the definition. Fair warning!

Put two stars beside the next suffix *-ism*. It shows up in a lot of Greek-based words. To the definitions Ayers gives you ─ "belief in, practice of, condition of" ─ you might add "example of" (as in truism), "theory of" (relativism), "action of" (heroism), "characterization of"

(Americanism) and, in a medical sense, “abnormal condition of” (as in alcoholism, embolism). Some hideous hybrids there!

The next suffix *-ist* (“one who believes in, one engaged in”) is closely related to *-ism*. Both are compound suffixes: *-ism* is a combination of *-ize* (the verb suffix meaning “to do”) and the noun-suffix *-m* (“the result of”); *-ist* is *-ize* plus *-t* (“one who”). Often *-ist* is used in reference to an “expert in (some subject)” ─ botanist, pianist ─ so please add that meaning.

To the last suffix in this lesson, *-ite* (“one connected with, inhabitant of”) add the variant form *-ot*(*e*), as in patriot, zealot.

Now on to the bases beginning at the top of page 209. To the first AGOG(UE)-, add the meaning “leader.” What does a pedagogue lead? Look below! Further down this list of bases you’ll find PED-, which means … “child.” So pedagogues “lead children.” Originally, they weren’t teachers but slaves who escorted children to school, ensuring the child wasn’t abducted and held for ransom. Only rich people in antiquity could afford to educate their offspring.

COSM- is one of my favorite bases. It produces two derivatives which seem hard to connect, but they are: cosmic and cosmetic. I’m sorry but by no one’s standard should makeup be cosmically important! What both words share is a sense of “order.” Cosmetics make your face look well-ordered, and the cosmos is the way everything is ordered. Isn’t it hilarious how “ordered” ended up meaning such different things?

To the next base HETER- put a “the” in front of the meaning “other.” It means “*the* other, one of two.” Heterosexuals like “the other” of the sexes, and there are only two of those.

NE-, the next base, has a scientific sense, “the most recent (form of),” as in Neolithic (“belonging to the latest of the three stone ages”). In biology NE- can refer to “young” things. You should add that meaning, too.

I’ve already talked a little about PED- (“child”) when we discussed pedagogue before. Just be sure not to confuse this base with its Latin homonym which means “foot.” The Latin base is unrelated to its Greek twin, which means there’s no linguistic rationale for kicking children. If that’s your habit, you didn’t learn to do that in this class.

I love the next base PEDIA-, essentially “the act of ‘childing’.” Isn’t it lovely that to the ancient Greeks to “child” someone was not to treat them like a child or talk down to them but to “educate” them? The assumption that children are by definition to be educated is beautiful and says much about the Greeks’ humanity, generosity and capacity for love.

And to the last base on this list, POL-/POLIS- (“city, state”) add the variant forms POLI-/ POLIT-/POLIC- as in polity, politician and police. And put some stars next to this base too. It shows up in a lot of English derivatives.

And that’s the end of this audio presentation. Happy Etymologizing!