Latin Lessons 22-23

The goal of Lessons 22 and 23 is to review a linguistic phenomenon we've already studied, doublets. At least I *hope* you remember we studied them. If not, you'll be learning something new and wonderful. After watching this video, don't forget to listen to the audio presentation about Lessons 22 and 23. There we'll look over the last batch of bases to be memorized in the Latin section of this course. Oh yeah!

A doublet is "a derivative which shares a common origin with another derivative in the same language but has a different meaning or connotation." But you knew that already, didn't you? Just say yes. Mr. Ayers is right to bring up doublets here as you're packaging up your understanding of Latinate words in English, because doublets are a fine way to practice uncovering the metaphorical meaning of a word. Doublets show how the same word root can come to have one meaning in one word and another in another. It's an important thing for you to practice as you're preparing for the midterm. Besides that, one half of a doublet pair will often change its form following patterns we've studied ─ apheresis, assimilation, vowel gradation ─ while its counterpart does not. It's good to revisit those processes too, since you need to know them for the test.

So let's jump right in. *Gens* is the Latin word for "a noble family, an aristocratic clan." It produced a number of English derivatives, including "genteel," meaning "well-born, from a good family." No metaphorical leap there. But following a different path, the same base generated the word "gentle." Originally, gentle meant "well-mannered, kind," because that's the way people of high birth were expected to act. We still see the "noble" sense of gentle in "gentleman." But building from its sense "kind," gentle came later to mean "domesticated" and then "mild, soft," hence "gentle" in the connotation with which we're most familiar. Thus were born the doublets "gentle" and "genteel."

This word went on to create a third "doublet" ─ one Latin word can generate multiple doublets ─ "jaunty," which like its doublet kin originally meant "well-bred," but followed a different metaphorical journey. Jaunty was used to describe how nobles dressed which was "elegant, fashionable," so jaunty came to mean "stylish," as in "That's a jaunty frock you have on, Duchess."

Another Latin word, *hostis*, created a host of doublets. [That's a pun. You're *supposed* to groan.] *Hostis* means "enemy," and from that basic sense gives us the word "hostile." But because enemies are often strangers, people you don't know well, we also get our word "host," as in "someone who entertains strangers in his house," the way innkeepers do, for instance. It makes sense, doesn't it? A host is usually a stranger to his guests. And if there's more than one stranger ─ in other words, a body of strangers ─ they become a "host," as in the "heavenly host." After all, angels are strangers to earth.

And there's a third doublet here too, "guest," which came into English along a very different linguistic path. Guest derives from the same Indo-European base as Latin *hostis* but as that base passed through Germanic. So, guest and host are originally from the same root. Makes sense. Guests and hosts are often strangers to each other, but hopefully not hostile.

The Latin verb *vitulari* means "to celebrate a victory, to be joyful." It gave us two words for musical instruments, viola and fiddle. The first, viola ("an alto or tenor violin"), was so named because it was played at celebrations of joy and victory. Note here the loss of the -t- because the word entered English through French and, like so many French forms, it lost a consonant as it crossed Gaul. In like manner, the Latin-based word fragile became frail in French, as did flagellate flail and gigantic giant. The second musical instrument from this base is fiddle. Here, as is typical of Germanic languages, /v/ becomes /f/ and /t/ becomes /d/. Thus, viola and fiddle, despite how different they look and sound, are in fact doublets.

And here's another set of musical doublets. The Romans had a word *pandurium*, "a curved musical instrument of some sort." The term actually comes from an even older Greek word *pandoura* which meant "a three-stringed lyre." Where this name came from is unclear, though it sounds like Pandora, the woman in Greek myth who released evils into the world. But nowhere in the Greek tradition is she associated with music, so the connection, if there is one, is uncertain.

By the modern age, the word *pandurium* in one form or another had permeated European culture, showing up in some places as "mandolin" ("a lute-like instrument"). To get from *pandurium* to mandolin was quite a journey. It first shows up in Italian as *pandora*, which was then handed to English where it becomes bandore. Bandore was handed back to Italian as *mandora*, which later turned into mandolin. Moreover, at the same time that bandore was bouncing around Europe, it also moved across the Atlantic to America and became "banjo" ("a guitar-like instrument with a resonating back made of parchment"), probably under the influence of African-American dialects. So banjo and mandolin are doublets, too.

And here's another pair of musical doublets. Latin passed its verb *pipare*, meaning "to cheep, to peep" like a bird, to both its daughter Romance languages and some Germanic tongues where the word became "pipe," like eleven pipers piping. Down a different track, the same base gave us the word "pigeon," etymologically "a peeper." In some Germanic languages this base produced fife which is *pfeife* in German, hence the name Pfeiffer meaning "fifer, a person who plays the fife." So pigeon and fife are doublets? How odd.

Here's another even more surprising doublet pair. Ancient Greek had a word *spongos*, later *sphongos*, which meant "sponge." Remember that Greeks have always been good sponge divers. The same word evolved into a different form with a new meaning, fungus which originally meant "mushroom" ─ they are kind of spongy ─ and later any sort of spongy excrescence, thus fungus. So sponge and fungus come from the same word.

Here's a religious doublet pair. In ecclesiastical Latin ─ that is, Latin as it was used in the early Christian church ─ there was a term *unio* meaning "the number one." From this we get our word "union," literally "the act of being combined into one, a unity." This sense is seen in the British term the "Union Jack." Do you know what that is? The flag representing the united crowns of England and Scotland. "Jack" is slang for "a ship's flag, usually a small one." But from the same term *unio* also comes the word "onion." Onion originally referred to a large pearl, later to the pearl-like bulb of a plant, in particular, the onion. So why isn't the onion on the Union Jack?

And here's another semi-ecclesiastical duo. The Latin word *taberna* means "booth, hut, tent." Following one path it produced "tavern," originally "a shack in which drinks are sold." Along another path, however, it produced "tabernacle," a term for "the tent containing the Ark of the Covenant," or any such canopied, moveable structure. Later, it came to signal any place of worship that was not a church, often one having a pointed roof like a tent. The *-cle* on the end of tabernacle is, as you know, a diminutive suffix meaning "little." So, tavern and tabernacle are etymologically related? Hmmmm.

Here's another doublet pair. The Latin adjective *supranus* ("higher") gives us the word "sovereign" ("ruler"). Note the folk etymology here. The word should be "soverane," but because "soverane" people are usually rulers, the word was misdiagnosed as if it were based on "reign," like a king's reign. Thus, the spelling was changed to sovereign. Through another etymological conduit *supranus* produced "soprano," the highest singing voice. Thus, sopranos are truly sovereign. And they are. Ask any opera director.

Here's a wild set of doublets. From Latin *nescius* ("ignorant") ─ a combination of the negating prefix *ne-* + the base SCI- ("know"), literally "not knowing" ─ comes our word "nice," as we saw in Lesson 10. But through a less convoluted journey it also produced our word "unscientific." So does that mean it's nice to be unscientific? In this case perhaps, etymology is not necessarily "true."

One last doublet pair. The Greek word *acme*, meaning "top point, peak," came directly into English as such ─ we can call something the "acme" of excellence, meaning "of the highest quality" ─ but by another route this word gave us our word "acne," little pointed inflammations which are the bane of many teenagers. Acne is not the acme of life.

One final point to make before we leave this presentation. In the next set of lessons, in particular on pages 137-138 (Exercise 1 of Lesson 25), Mr. Ayers introduces words which have entered English directly from Latin, which means you'll see some unfamiliar suffixes there because the ends of these words reflect grammatical endings necessary in Latin. Do not try to etymologize those endings. Analyze the prefixes and bases only.

And that's it for this presentation. Only two more lessons to go in the Latin half of this class! You're almost there! Hang tough!

ASSIGNMENT

This is the audio presentation covering the exercises in Latin Lessons 22 and 23. Please turn to page 126 and the next-to-last list of Latin bases to memorize. To the first base GRAT- please add the form GRATI- (with an -i at the end). You'll need that -i to etymologize ingratiate in sentence 20 on page 128.

About the next base MISC-/MIXT- make a note that the -t at the end of the second form MIXT- is optional. Put it in parentheses. You'll need the form MIX- to etymologize our word mix which comes from this base. Note also that this base has a sexual sense. Mixing can imply … well, you

can see what it can imply in words like promiscuous and miscegenation. If you don't know what those words mean, look them up in the dictionary. That's the point of this class.

The next base MOV-/MOT- has both a physical sense "move" and a mental sense "feel, affect," as in "motive, emotional." We noted that in the metaphors presentation. Please add the meanings "feel, affect" to this base.

At the bottom of the list is VULG- meaning "ordinary, common." "Common" here often implies "the common people, the mob" so add those senses to the other meanings of this base.

And to end this lesson, let's add one more base here, PROL- meaning "offspring." It gives us words like "proliferate," literally "to bear (FER-) offspring (PROL-)" and "prolific" meaning "making (many) offspring," that is, "very productive." Another derivative of this base is proletariat, a term for "the lower classes," built on the implication that their contribution to society is having many children.

And that's it for Lesson 22. Now let's look at Lesson 23, where Mr. Ayers addresses one of my favorite aspects of etymology, how it enhances a person's understanding of the poetry composed by great writers like William Shakespeare. If there was ever an A+ student in this class, it was Big Will whose writing shows a deep and broad understanding of the Latin roots infusing English. The same was, no doubt, true of many in his audience. He and they both benefited from an education which began with learning Latin, often at a very early age, and so most Elizabethans had some understanding of the impact the Romans' language had had on English. Thus, Shakespeare ─ being the imaginative poet he was! ─ often plays with the very bases and affixes we've been studying, frequently using a word's elements to give it a novel sense.

For instance, look at the first quotation from Shakespeare on page 129: "The people love me, and the sea is mine. My powers are *crescent* …" "Crescent" here clearly does not mean what it usually means to us "having a curved shape." What does it mean? Well, what's the base? CRESC- which means "grow," plus the suffix *-ent* meaning "-ing." So what does crescent mean here? "Growing."

Now go down to sentence 5: "The Turk with a most mighty preparation makes for Cyprus. Othello, the *fortitude* of the place is best known to you." If you know the word fortitude, you probably understand it as "bravery, stamina," but here Shakespeare wants you to hear "strength." After all, as you know and many in the Elizabethan audience did too, the base FORT- means "strong."

Let's go to the next page and look at quotation 8: "Abate the edge of traitors, gracious Lord, that would *reduce* these bloody days again." "Reducing" bloody days sounds like lessening or diminishing them which would be a good thing, wouldn't it? But that's clearly not what the speaker means. What does the prefix *re-* mean literally? "Back"! And what does the base DUC- mean? "Lead"! So Shakespeare is using this word in its literal sense, "lead back, bring back."

Two more. In Exercise II, sentence 1 reads: "Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth; with *cadent* tears fret channels in her cheeks." Etymologize cadent: the base CAD- ("fall") and the

suffix -*ent* ("-ing"), so cadent means … "falling." The tears are falling down her cheeks. And sentence 6: "… stubbornly did he *repugn* the truth." What did he do? He fought (PUGN-) it back (*re*-), never a wise thing to do with the truth. Extra credit to you, Mr. Shakespeare. Some very happy etymologizing!

Let's end this audio presentation by looking at the bases in this lesson. First, to CORD- (at the bottom of page 130) add the meaning "feelings." The heart is the home of your emotions, and you'll need the sense "feelings" to interpret words like "concord, accord."

The base MANU- on the next page means "hand," but that also implies what you do with your hands, for instance, till the ground or handle something. Thus, "handwork" would be in Latinate terms "maneuver": MANU- + OPER- ("work"). In this case, the -p- has become -v-. Long story. Let's just say it's French. More important, a doublet of maneuver is manure, what farmers work into the soil by hand. Gross! Also, another derivative of this word is manatee, a "sea-cow," one of those big mammals which swim in the rivers of Florida. To early European explorers their fins looked like hands, thus the name. I can't see it.

Next is the base PORT- ("carry") which also produces some interesting derivatives. If you "report" something, you'll literally "carrying (PORT-) it back (*re*-)." So what are you doing if you disport? What does the prefix *dis*- mean? "Apart, in different directions." So etymologically, if you're disporting, you're "carrying apart, in different directions," the implication being "yourself." So by disporting yourself, you're carrying yourself hither and yon, that is, running around. This produced a clip in English, our word "sport," as in "sports" where people certainly do carry themselves around in all sorts of different directions a lot. Perfect description!

With that I shall disport myself from your company and bid you adieu. That's it for this audio presentation.

Happy Etymologies!