

# **Etymology**

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# Overview

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**“Etymology is the study of the origin of words and the way their meanings have changed throughout history”.**



## لفظ 'قرنطینہ' کہاں سے آیا؟

- آج کل ہر جگہ 'قرنطینہ' کا چرچا ہے۔ بعض لوگوں کا گمان ہے کہ یہ عربی کا لفظ ہے جو انگریزی میں کورنٹائن ہو گیا ہے۔ شاید اس کی وجہ قرنطینہ میں 'ق' اور 'ط' کی موجودگی ہے۔
- 'ط' عام طور پر عربی کے الفاظ میں استعمال ہوتا ہے۔ تاہم قرنطینہ عربی سے نہیں آیا۔ یہ اطالوی زبان کا لفظ ہے اور سے QURANTA ہے جو QUARANTINA اس کی اصل ماخوذ ہے۔ اس کا مطلب ہے چالیس۔
- ا

- ہوا، اور QUARANTINE انگریزی میں یہ اطالوی لفظ ، ہسپانوی میں QUARANTAINہ فرانسسیسی میں ہے۔ QUARANTANE اور جرمنی میں QUARANTENA مشترک ہیں۔ ویسے بھی U اور Q انگریزی کے حروف لازمی طور پر آتا ہے۔ U کے بعد Q انگریزی میں قرنطینہ میں وبا زدہ علاقوں سے آنے والے مسافروں کو طبییوں کی نگرانی میں دوسروں سے الگ تھلگ رکھا جاتا ہے۔

# What is etymology ?

- “Etymology is the investigation of word histories.”
- Every word in every language has a unique origin and history; words can be born in many ways, and often their histories are quite adventurous and informative. Etymology investigates and documents the lives (mainly the origins) of words.



# The Importance of Using Etymology

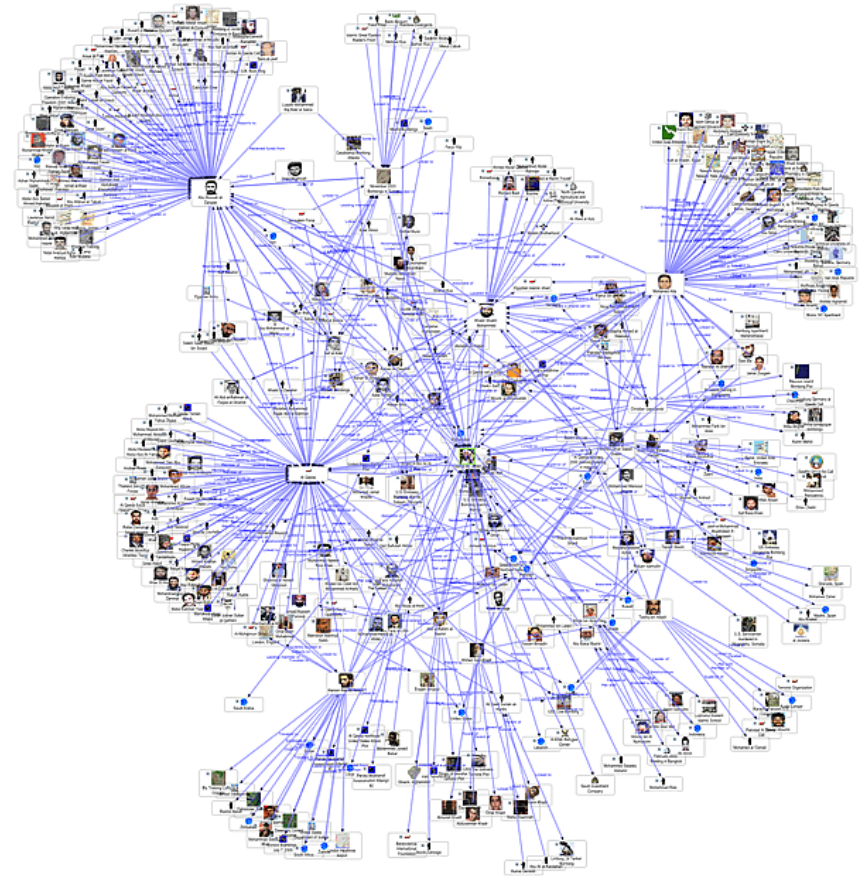
- Etymology is important because by knowing it you can become a better wordsmith. If you understand where your words came from, you understand them better and may be able to use them more effectively, precisely and beautifully. Knowing etymology will also often help you know the meanings of words you have never seen before. If you look at two people who are related, you can see their similar features and their family tree becomes obvious. In the same way, if you are familiar with word roots and know the etymologies of some words, you can infer the meanings of other words. In this way, your vocabulary can begin to grow on its own.

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# Simple & Complex Etymologies

Etymologies can be simple or complex. Much like the lives of people, it depends upon how much a word has traveled and what adventures it has had.





# Etymology of Etymology (Complex)

- ***Example 1***
- The etymology of the word 'etymology' is complex, as follows:
- *ethimologia* “facts of the origin and development of a word,”
- *from Old French etimologie, ethimologie (14c., Modern French étymologie)*
- *from Greek etymologia* “analysis of a word to find its true origin,” properly “study of the true sense (of a word)”

**etymos**

**Greek**

true, real actual

**-logia**

**Greek**

study of, a speaking of

**etymologia**

**Greek**

analysis of a word to find its true origin; study of the true sense (of a word)

**etymologia**

**Latin**

**etimologie, ethimologie**

**Old French**

**ethimolegia**

**Middle English**

facts of the origin and development of a word

**etymology (n.)**

# Simple etymology

- ***Example 2***
- The etymology of “show-and-tell” is much more simple:
- *show-and-tell (n.) elementary school teaching tool, 1948, American English.*
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# Interest in Etymology

- There is a long history of interest in etymology, in 'where words have come from', and many large dictionaries of English include etymological information (see McArthur 1992, pp. 384--6, Landau 1989, pp. 98--104, Green 1996, esp. pp. 337--48).



# Meanings of Words Change from Time to Time

There are older Senses and New  
Senses of Words

# Older Senses and New Senses of Words

- Sometimes an older sense of a word survives in limited contexts, while the most frequent meaning has changed. The word *meat*, for example, now has the common meaning of ‘animal flesh used as food’, but its Old English antecedent was a word that had the more general meaning of ‘food’. Traces of the older more general meaning can be seen in phrases and sayings like *meat and drink* (i.e. ‘food and drink’) and *one man’s meat is another man’s poison* (i.e. ‘one man’s food is another man’s poison’). The word *sweetmeat* also demonstrates the older sense. Other than in these restricted contexts, the older meaning of the word has become not only obsolete but also irrelevant to modern usage. If you ask today whether a certain supermarket sells meat, or talk about the amount of meat consumed in Western Europe, or have an argument about what kind of meat is in a meat pie, no one who speaks English pauses to wonder whether you really intend *meat* to mean ‘food in general’ rather than ‘animal flesh’.

# Older Senses and New Senses

- Indeed, older meanings become lost from view, and phrases and sayings may even be reinterpreted to suit the new meaning. The word *silly* had an older sense of ‘happy’ (compare German *selig*, ‘blessed’) but this sense has been ousted by the current meaning of ‘foolish’ or ‘absurd’. A phrase sometimes applied to the country of Suffolk in eastern England, *silly Suffolk*, dates from the days when Suffolk was one of the wealthier countries, and therefore ‘happy’ or ‘fortunate’. But if the saying is quoted at all these days, either it has to be explained, as we have just done here, or it is taken to be an allegation of foolishness or backwardness.



# Older Senses and New Senses

- The word *prove* once had the sense of ‘try’ or ‘test’ but the most common modern meanings are, of course, ‘show beyond doubt’ (as in ‘we all suspect him of corruption but no one has been able to prove it’) and ‘turn out’ (as in ‘the book proved to have lots of useful information in it’). The saying *that the expectation proves the rule* shows older sense – an expectation indeed ‘tests’ whether a rule is really valid or needs to be reformulated. But the saying is often reinterpreted, with *prove* taken in its modern sense, to mean that an odd expectation actually confirms a rule. This is clearly not true – an expectation doesn’t support a rule, it challenges it – but such is the power of current meaning to efface the old.

# Speculative Etymology

- Unfortunately, until the development of methodical historical linguistics in the nineteenth century, much etymology was highly speculative and often erroneous. Misguided guesswork about the origins of words can be found in ancient Europe - - for example, in the work of Varro, a Roman grammarian active in the first century BC (Green 1996, p. 41) - - and the practice of trying to relate as many words as possible to a relatively small number of allegedly simple or basic words were common until the mid-nineteenth century.

# Speculative Etymology: An Example

- Green cites a classic example from the late nineteenth century, in which a whole array of English words were claimed to be derived from or based on the word *bar*: thus a *bar* is a kind of defense or strengthening, and a *barn* is a covered enclosure to protect or defend what is stored in it, a *barge* is a strong boat, the *bark* of a tree is its protection, the *bark* of a dog is its defence, and so on (Green 1996, p. 353). In fact, careful historical research indicates that the word *bar*, as in the bars in a fence or across a window, came into English from Old French, while *barn* is from an Old English compound meaning 'barley store', *barge* is related to an Old French word for a kind of boat, the *bark* of a tree is a word of Scandinavian origin, and the *bark* of a dog goes back to the Old English verb *beorcan*, 'to bark', which is not related to the other *bark*. These various words are of different origins, there is no evidence that they are all based on *bar*, and the idea that they are all clustered around the notion of defense is pure speculation.

# Folk Etymology

- Occasionally, an erroneous origin has become enshrined in the language by a process of 'folk etymology', in which the pronunciation or spelling of a word is modified on a false analogy. The word *bridegroom*, for example, has no historical connection with the *groom* employed to tend horses. The Old English antecedent of *bridegroom* is *brydguma*, where *guma* is a word for 'man'. The word ought to have become *brideg`oom* in modern English, but as the word *guma* fell out of use, the form *goom* was popularly reinterpreted (with a change in pronunciation and spelling) as *groom*.

Thank you