



Word Origins ... and How We Know Them: Etymology for Everyone

Anatoly Liberman

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"Millions of people want to know the origin of the words they use. Word columns in daily newspapers and numerous books attempt to satisfy their curiosity. Word histories are usually digested like pills: the user is interested in getting well, not in the chemistry of the prescribed medication. Those who send letters to the Editor also want a straight answer without bothering about how "editors" come by their knowledge.

Therefore, they fail to realize that etymologies are seldom definitive and that the science of etymology is intensely interesting. Perhaps if someone explained to them that, compared to the drama of words, *Hamlet* is a light farce, they might develop a more informed attitude toward philological research and become students of historical linguistics rather than gullible consumers of journalists' pap."--Anatoly Liberman

Word Origins is the only guide to the science and process of etymology for the layperson. This funny, charming, and conversational book not only tells the known origins of hundreds of words, but also shows how their origins were determined. Liberman, an internationally acclaimed etymologist, takes the reader by the hand and explains the many ways that English words can be made, and the many ways in which etymologists try to unearth the origins of words.

Part history, part how-to, and completely entertaining, *Word Origins* invites readers behind the scenes to watch an etymologist at work.

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