
The Word Within the Word • List #70

Latin stems are in standard style, Greek stems are in *italics*, new stems are also in **bold**

• in	(in)	inchoate	• <i>ism</i>	(ine)	stoicism
• <i>peri</i>	(around)	peripatetic	• val	(re-ill)	valediction
• patein	(to walk)	peripatetic	• dic	(say)	valediction
• ambi	(around)	ambient	• tion	(act)	valediction
• ten	(thin)	tenuous	• super		supercilious
• duct	(lead)	ductile	• short	(death)	moribund
• penicillium	(eye)	supercilious		(out)	expository
	(fortunate)	fortuitous		(put)	expository
• ad	(to)	allude		(from)	dishabille
• ite	(a devotee of)	sybarite	• a	(cause)	reiterate
	(use)	surrogate	• rogat	(ask)	surrogate

inchoate (just begun) The inchoate promise of the renewal project never materialized. (in KO it)

peripatetic (walking) Don Quixote and Sancho embarked on a peripatetic adventure.

ambient (surrounding) For Hamlet, the ambient air was promise-crammed.

tenuous (thin) Researchers found only a tenuous relationship between lunacy and sunspots.

ductile (malleable) The Martian projectile was of a ductile metal, hammered into shape.

fortuitous (by chance) The fortuitous discovery of penicillin made Alexander Fleming famous.

surrogate (substitute) The baby monkey clung to the soft, carpeted, surrogate mother.

allude (indirectly refer) He cleverly alluded to their previous acerbic disagreement.

dishabille (partially dressed) In astonished dishabille, they stared down from their balcony.

Sybarite (a devotee of luxury) Rome succumbed to the Sybarites and bon vivants within.

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stoicism (indifference to sensation) With heroic stoicism, she refused to answer their questions.

valediction (farewell speech) “Look for me under your boot soles,” was Whitman’s valediction.

supercilious (scornful) “Let them eat cake,” she replied with supercilious condescension.

moribund (dying) The moribund community was replete with vacant offices and homes to rent.

expository (explanatory) Rachel Carson loved to read clear, academic, expository prose.

sub

under • beneath • below

The Latin stem *sub* which we derive as meaning *under* actually can have a wide variety of meanings, and is sometimes written as **sub**, **sug**, **sum**, **sup**, **sur**, and even **sus** in order to fit the word it is in. Although *sub* often means *under*, it can mean *beneath*, *below*, *lower*, *so*, *that*, *even infer*. Here are some of the interesting words which contain **sub** in its various shades of meaning:

- subcutaneous:** beneath the skin. He was troubled by a subcutaneous infection.
- subduct:** to draw downward. She swam against the subduction in the offshore current.
- sublunary:** under the moon. The lovers enjoyed a beautiful sublunary dance.
- sublimate:** to express acceptably. The urge of the id can find creative sublimations.
- submontane:** at the foot of the mountains. The submontane vegetation was more lush.
- subtle:** not obvious. Subtle clues told her to avoid asking about the problem.
- subvert:** to overthrow. They worked to subvert the established regime.
- substratum:** foundation. His peaceful humility was founded on a substratum of religion.
- subsistence:** bare survival. They survived at a subsistence level by gathering food.
- subaqueous:** underwater. The subaqueous habitation gradually developed into a city.
- subservient:** obsequious. The toady's subservient fawning irritated her.
- subtrahend:** number subtracted. The deduction was a fearful subtrahend from the check.
- surreptitious:** done in secret. The plans were made at a surreptitious meeting in the Alps.
- suffuse:** to fill with color. Becky Thatcher's face was suffused with embarrassment.
- suffrage:** voting. Women's suffrage began very late in American history.
- succinct:** brief and clear. Her succinct description impressed them all.
- suggest:** to mention. He suggested a solution, but no one listened.
- suffocate:** to smother. Small businesses were being suffocated by federal regulations.
- suspend:** to hang. The bridge was suspended from massive cables.
- sustain:** maintain. They were unable to sustain their initial enthusiasm.
- summon:** order to appear. The peremptory summons was ignored.

1. The adjective **peripatetic** does refer to walking about, but it also puts us in mind of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 B.C. to 322 B.C.) who was the pupil of Plato and the teacher of Alexander the Great. Aristotle, after receiving his education at Plato's Academy, founded the Lyceum, where he would lecture and converse with his students as he walked about. This walking, or peripatetic, style of teaching is the origin of the term **peripatetic**. Aristotle, the peripatetic philosopher. Lowercase **peripatetic** is a descriptive adjective.
2. The noun **Sybarite** is one who indulges in the pleasures of the life of luxury. Sybaris, a Greek coastal colony and trading center in southern Italy, founded about 720 B.C., was famous for its wealth, luxury, and decadence. The colony was destroyed in 540 B.C. by a rival Greek colony, Sybaris. Someone fond of decadent luxury is a **Sybarite**. The related terms are **bon vivant**, **epicure**, **voluptuary**, and **hedonist**. A **bon vivant** is a person who is especially involved in sensual pleasures; a **bon vivant** enjoys fine food and drink and luxurious eating. An **epicure** is a person who not only enjoys luxurious meals but also has exquisite taste in food, wine, and the cultivated aspects of the life of luxury. A **hedonist** is someone who pursues pleasure—which may or may not involve luxury—as the chief aim of life.
3. Why does the noun **surrogate**, meaning a substitute, contain the stem *rogat* (ask)? Because it comes from the Latin *surrogare*, to elect someone in another's place. In other words, the person is *asked* to fill in. The Latin *rogare* meant to ask or to nominate.
4. **A Micropoem:** The adjective **inchoate** means beginning, or just begun, but it comes to us from the Latin *inchoatus*, meaning in (*in*) harness (*cohum*: the strap from the plow to the yoke). Thinking of this word, we imagine the ancient Roman farmer, who is preparing to plow his field, and his project is just beginning. He has just hitched his horse to the plow under a windy, blue, Mediterranean sky.
5. **A Classic Word:** The intransitive verb **allude** means to refer to something casually or indirectly. The Latin *alludere* meant to jest, and it contained the stems *ad* (to) and *ludere* (to play). **Allude** and its noun form **allusion** have been favorite words to classic authors for hundreds of years. **Allude** was frequently used by Swift, Shelley, Cooper, and the Brontës, as well as Stowe, Melville, Dickens and Twain. We find allusions to peculiar sounds, allusions to ill health, allusions to someone's wishes, and allusions to lines and angles. In Crane's *Red Badge of Courage*, there are profane allusions to a general. In Wells's *The War of the Worlds*, a character alludes to the curious suggestions of the red weed. In Kipling's *Kim*, we learn that "*Lear* was not so full of historical allusions as *Julius Caesar*." In Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, we find an "incidental allusion, purposely thrown out." In *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, Wilder describes all "those allusions to honour, reputation, and the flame of love." Melville mentions that some "nomenclature may be convenient in facilitating allusions to some kind of whales," and refers to "a thorough appreciative understanding of the more special leviathanic revelations and allusions of all sorts." In Conrad's *Lord Jim* there are some "muttered allusions . . . to dogs and the smell of roast-meat." We find **allude/allusion** as early as *Gulliver's Travels* in 1726, and as late as *A Separate Peace* in 1959, but perhaps the most charming usage of all comes from Kenneth Grahame, in his book for children and grown-up children, *The Wind in the Willows*: Animals, it turns out, have their own rules of proper conduct, and "it is quite against animal-etiquette to dwell on possible trouble ahead, or even to allude to it."

Though it is good to have a rich vocabulary, it is not good to abuse that vocabulary by using verbose, sesquipedalian sentences (such as this one). Those who overuse their vocabulary often do so at the expense both of clarity and of others' patience.

Translate the following ostentatious, ponderous passage in English.

...stoic visage, imagining the knight to be saddled upon a swart, moribund nag, and the fellow Sanchoate adventurer. In his stout habiliments, he carried a massive staff of ductile metal and a lance of such weight and ponderosity on his old horse's back. Not being a knight, but a squire, he regarded his knight as a valiant and altruistic sacrifice to his Lady, the honorable Dulcinea, whom he had never seen but knew to be the most pulchritudinous and demure maiden in the world.

By fortuitous circumstance, his indolent but amiable neighbor Sancho was available and willing to accompany the knight and serve him, in return for being requited with wealth and power at the end of their quest—a tenuous hope.

They had traversed some distance over the undulating landscape, with Don Quixote euphorically delivering voluminous expository lectures on the famous histories of knights-errant, and the sanguine Sancho replying with desultory remarks of his own, when Don Quixote with supercilious condescension suddenly rebuked him, "Sancho, your vacuous replies are less than profound. You are not mendacious, but your soporific pontifications on subjects unknown to you are odious. Henceforth on our peregrinations, please speak only when you are spoken to, or you will hear my valediction. The erudite histories of knights-errant to which I often allude show that the squire should be as an obsequious sycophant to his knight, and never violate protocol."

As Sancho listened with incredulity, they suddenly came upon a hillside covered with whirling windmills. "Oh, thou miscreants, thou odious and prodigious giants whose perfidious evil has achieved a hegemony over these lands," cried Don Quixote, "prepare for oblivion, for I will smite you under the banner of the sublime Dulcinea. Nothing you can do will mollify my anger." And before the nonplused Sancho could demur, Don Quixote was off, charging toward the windmills with unambivalent bravery.

In the risible but sad denouement of this altercation, Sancho attempted to help the bruised Don Quixote up after the windmill had knocked him down. The pensive knight looked at his squire: "Sancho," he said, with a serene self-confidence, "I now apprehend that these giants are assisted by evil magicians, who have cleverly transmogrified them into the shapes of windmills, in an attempt to deceive me. What animus these magicians must bear against me, the greatest knight-errant in the world!" The perplexed Sancho could not reply.

Reading Comprehension

1. The best title for Translation #70 would be:
 - A. A Poignant Psychosis.
 - B. The Objurgations of a Knight-Errant.
 - C. An Altruistic Victim of Apocryphal Histories.
 - D. An Autodidact's Epiphany.
2. With which of the following words does the author of Translation #70 most likely agree?
 - A. Don Quixote's chivalry is a waste of time and energy.
 - B. Don Quixote's idealism is a noble and worthy pursuit.
 - C. Sancho Panza's practicality is a necessary counterbalance to Don Quixote's idealism.
 - D. Don Quixote's idealism is a noble and worthy pursuit, but his lack of practicality and sympathy in the reader.

Analogies

3. **GRATE : STOICISM ::**
 - A. luxury : pleasure
 - B. pacifist : militarism
 - C. sycophant : obsequious
 - D. neophyte : inchoate
4. **SUPERCILIOUS : AMIABLE ::**
 - A. condescending : arrogant
 - B. perplexed : nonplused
 - C. patrician : friendly
 - D. moribund : inchoate

Antonyms

5. **FORTUITOUS**
 - A. weak
 - B. fortunate
 - C. designed
 - D. unfortunate
6. **TENUOUS**
 - A. substantial
 - B. tendentious
 - C. intentional
 - D. subtle

Aesthetics

The **peripatetic** philosopher, Aristotle, strolled through the Lyceum or covered walkway area, at his Lyceum in Athens. Aristotle's Lyceum was a meeting place for his students, and was devoted to the study of logic, ethics, poetics, and the natural world. In contrast to Plato's philosophically brilliant but often abstract ideas, Aristotle's thinking was often practical and aimed at understanding the world as it is. Aristotle was interested in the function of the world, not just in abstract ideas. What are the characteristics of good poetry? What are the characteristics of a good tragedy? What are the characteristics of a good comedy? Aristotle's *Poetics* is one of the most influential works of ancient Greek literature. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle discussed poetry and drama, and he defined the terms of tragedy. His comments on the nature of tragedy have guided our thinking about drama and have even changed the terms with which we debate the function of drama. Aristotle argued that the function of tragedy is to achieve a **catharsis** through the emotions of **pity and fear**, in the viewer. This is accomplished when the main character, the **protagonist**, has a tragic **recognition** which causes a **reversal** of his life (and the play ends). The protagonist is a good and distinguished man with whom we can identify, and the tragic reversal is not the result of great crime or depravity but of a **tragic flaw**, such as **hubris** (pride) which we can all possess, this brings the tragic emotions to their peak in the viewer. Aristotle says that the tragedy has two parts, the **complication** and the **denouement**, or unraveling, which occurs after the protagonist's recognition.

As an example of tragedy at its greatest, Aristotle repeatedly cites Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*, in which the protagonist Oedipus, King of Thebes and a brilliant man of good intentions whose excess pride prevents him from really listening to anyone else, is destroyed by the horrifying knowledge that he has unknowingly murdered his own father and married his mother, Jocasta. Having learned this, Oedipus blinds himself (Jocasta commits suicide) and is exiled in accordance with his own command.

What do you think of these ideas? It is easy to see how Aristotle's ideas help to describe and understand a classical tragedy such as Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*, but do you think that these ideas are still useful? Can you apply any of these terms to a modern novel or film in an enlightening way? Are we still concerned with hubris as a tragic flaw in otherwise excellent people? Consider and discuss these questions.

Emotion

In one famous experiment in psychology, which a friend of mine calls the fuzzy-mother-scratchy-mother experiment, experimenters constructed two **surrogate** mother monkeys for baby monkeys to choose from. Each surrogate mother had a similar monkey-like head, but one of the surrogate mothers was made of wire screen and had a milk bottle attached for the baby to feed itself, whereas the other surrogate mother was made of soft carpet and had no milk bottle. Which mother would the baby monkey cling to? It turned out that baby monkeys would cling pitifully to the soft surrogate mothers, even when they were hungry. Consider this result carefully, and then explain what you think it shows us.

Neologist's Lexicon

Use the stems in this list to create a new word (neologism). Give the word a pronunciation, the part of speech, the etymology, and the definition(s). Keep a record of the neologisms you create from list to list. Here are some examples of stems from this week's list:

morrogation (mor ro gay' shun) n. [from death + rogat (ask) + -ation] 1. behavior which invites extreme retribution 2. a request for a better or longer being to give more time and I will murder

periciliou (per ih sil' ee) [from (a) + cilium (eyelash), -ous (part of)] 1. pertentious behavior one's behavior is periciliouly attractive

sesquipedalian (ses kw ee pe di e li an) adj.

Have you read Mary Shelley's wonderful novel, *Frankenstein*? If not, you may be surprised to learn that the novel is dramatically different from most of the films that have been made of it. The plot, especially, is not the ponderous, square-shoed clod of the cinema, but is quick and smart, and wants nothing more than to be accepted by humanity, who scorn him because of his frightful appearance. In the book there is a reversal of roles: the monster is the person, and the people are monsters to him. Mary Shelley did not use quite the sesquipedalian vocabulary that we are studying (although the book is rich in strong vocabulary), but if she had, it might have read like the following passage, which you can use as a model for imitating a different novel of your choice:

The Monster's Piteous Tale

Little I remember of my inchoate moments. I awoke from oblivion, it seemed, and knew not what I was. I gradually gained an apprehension of my ambient environment, my creator's laboratory, the surrounding mountains visible through the window. How I quarreled with my maker, and escaped in ragged dishabille, is a tale too tedious to tell, but when I saw in the mirror the reflection of my odious visage, I knew I was no ordinary person, but some hideous surrogate, the *idée fixe* of my patrician master, to whom I have alluded.

Having fled the laboratory of my creation, I spent some time in pensive, peripatetic wanderings, traversing the lofty mountains and the lonely crags, breathing the salubrious, attenuated air, and learning to survive as a stoic autodidact, assuaging the pangs of my hunger with whatever berries and esculent roots fortuitous chance gave to me, and sleeping on the leafy forest floor, exposed to the night air and the dew. Often I huddled among the rocks, waiting for the cacophonous mountain storms to abate. This was no life for the hedonist or the Sybarite; with supercilious scorn for the fatuous ease of gregarious humanity, I paid my valediction to all society, and sought out the secret caves and the icy peaks, euphoric in my saturnine solitude.

Gradually, however, I began to long for amiable companionship—not a human, but a female of my own nature, to share the profound solitude, mollify the severity of my existence, and join me in my exodus, my peregrinations to the most remote reaches of the earth, where we might live undisturbed by human miscreants. Little did I know that my perfidious and mendacious creator, filled with animus against me, would rebuke me and pontificate that this was unthinkable, dashing the only tenuous hope of my miserable life.