

Caesar's English

The Latin Foundation
of English Vocabulary
for Elementary Scholars

Second Edition
Revised and Expanded

Michael Clay Thompson
and
Myriam Borges Thompson

Royal Fireworks Press
Unionville, New York

Other Works By Michael Clay Thompson

The Word Within The Word
The Magic Lens
Thinkers
Classic Words
Classics In The Classroom

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Royal Fireworks Press
First Avenue, PO Box 399
Unionville, NY 10988-0399
(845) 726-4444
FAX: (845) 726-3824
email: rfpress@frontiernet.net

ISBN: 0-88092-2087

Printed in the United States of America using vegetable-based inks on acid-free, recycled paper by the Royal Fireworks Printing Co. of Unionville, New York

Introduction
INTRO - INTO
DUCT - LEAD

Caesar's English is offered as a preparatory complement to the *Word Within the Word* vocabulary program, volumes 1-3. Of course, this elementary program works just fine as a stand-alone vocabulary program for elementary students, but it also sets the stage for the more advanced program that should come in middle or high school.

The goals of *Caesar's English* are few, and strong. First, the program will illuminate, in students' minds, the age of their language, revealing its Roman beginnings. Second, the program teaches students fifty of the greatest Latin stems in English, showing their continuing presence in a host of modern English words. These stems are among the most common and valuable, and will provide an intellectual key for young students to understand that big words aren't necessarily hard. Third, therefore, the program deliberately discards the specious confines of age-graded vocabulary, on the sound observation that even little children can give the species names of the dinosaurs—a clear proof that they can learn and understand better words than they are usually asked to learn. Fourth, the program aims to sow the seeds of intellectuality by introducing students to the drama and romance of ancient Rome, to the names of its thinkers, and to some of the fascinating facts of its history. Fifth, the program shows the Latin-English-Spanish connection, indicating clearly how the two

great languages of the United States are members of the same family and have the same old man.

Finally, in selecting example words that illustrate the use of these fifty Latin stems, we have chosen the best sentences we could find, even if a sentence was from a book students are more likely to read in high school than in elementary school. Although we deliberately included children's authors such as Sir Walter Scott, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Kenneth Grahame, and Robert Louis Stevenson, we also drew freely from famous authors generally, such as the Brontës and Jane Austen. The obvious advantage of this is that the students will see a great sentence, but a secondary advantage is that these bright elementary kids will begin to encounter famous literary names, such as Defoe and Milton, Morrison and Shelley, and subtly develop a sense of anticipation about reading these famous authors in the future.

It is our hope that teachers and students, far far away, will enjoy this book.

Michael Thompson and Myriam Borges Thompson
May, 2000

We little knew when we first released this book, how eager colleagues were for it, and how they would ask for more. Accordingly, and more quickly than is often the case with a revision, here is more. This revised edition of *Caesar's English* more than doubles the size of the first edition, complements the Latin stems with great, Latin-based, classic words from American and British literature, and increases the presence of Roman history that provides the intellectual foundation of the endeavor. Again, we hope very much that you enjoy this book.

Michael and Myriam Borges Thompson
December, 2000



Caesar's English

Once upon a time...far, far away...

Long ago, far from our New World, a great warrior civilization lived and died. Throughout the ancient world, they built roads, made laws, and wrote literature. Today, their great buildings have crumbled to dusty ruins, but echoes of their words are still heard because the English language (and others, such as Spanish) uses remnants of their language, Latin.

The vanished civilization, of course, was Rome, in Italy, and Rome rose to power over 2,000 years ago, which is more than twenty centuries.

Only 500 years ago, astonished Europeans discovered that there was an inhabited New World on the back side of the earth, and the Age of Exploration was on. Often neglected in our thoughts about these centuries is the dominant role of Spain—the oldest European settlements in this hemisphere were Spanish, the oldest city, St. Augustine, was Spanish, and the oldest documents in the United States were

written in Spanish. Many cities and towns in the United States retain their Spanish names today.

After three centuries of conflict and exploration a new nation—as Abraham Lincoln put it—was conceived on this continent.

In the 200 years since, this new nation—the United States—has conceived a new kind of English, which is a combination of Roman Latin, ancient Greek, German Anglo-Saxon, Spanish, American Indian, and many other tongues. Walt Whitman, the poet of *Leaves of Grass*, once wrote:

Thus far, impress'd by New England writers and schoolmasters, we tacitly abandon ourselves to the notion that our United States have been fashion'd from the British islands only, and essentially form a second England only—which is a very great mistake...To that composite American identity of the future, Spanish character will supply some of the most needed parts.

But even with all of these influences, Latin, the language of ancient Rome, is still the most important source of English words.

In this book, we will learn about our own English by learning about the Latin remnants inside it.

Remnants? Yes. Many of our words are made of two or three fragments of Latin. We sometimes call these pieces *prefixes*, *suffixes*, or *stems*, but to make things easy, we will usually just call them *stems*.

The stem **sub**, for example, is part of many English words. **Sub** means under, and we find **sub** in words like *submarine*, *submerge*, and *subtract*. We also find sub in harder words, such as *subterranean*, *subordinate*, *substantial*, and even *subterfuge*.

Even though words like these seem hard at first, the truth is that they are not as hard as they look—if you know the Latin stems. The word *subterranean*, for example, is only a combination of **sub**, under, and **terr**, land. A cave, in other words, is subterranean, because it is underground!

So most of what we call big words or hard words are really not so difficult after all, if you know the Latin stems that are in them.

Each time you learn one easy stem, you have learned an important part of dozens of English words; so learning Latin stems is *power-learning*, because you only have to study one small thing in order to learn part of dozens of things!

In this book, you are going to learn lots of Latin stems. As you learn more and more, you will begin to notice them everywhere you go. You will find Latin stems in the words of newspapers, books, and news programs. You will hear educated adults use words that have Latin stems. You will sometimes hear a word for the very first time, but you will know what it means anyway, because you know all of the Latin stems in it.

You now see why this book is part of a series of books called *The Word Within the Word*—because our modern English words have these ancient Latin words inside them. There are ancient words inside our modern words.

And we are going to find out what they are.

A second feature of this book is a series of words that are prominent in the great books of American and British literature. These classic words are almost all of Latin origin (we have included a few from other sources), which is yet another indication of the powerful importance of Latin to the modern English language. In chapters that feature these great Latin-based words, you will see that they have been used by famous writers of English literature for many centuries, and have formed a central core of advanced literary language. The words you will learn are so central that you will find them again and again, in almost every good book you ever read.

The definitions you will learn of these classic English words are only a beginning. When you learn the word *exquisite*, and the definition we use here (beautifully made), it is important to realize that

like most words *exquisite* has other related meanings; it can also mean intricate, delicate, flawless and other similar things. Think flexibly.

All of the quizzes in this book are cumulative. In other words, the quiz on lesson four is really on lessons one through four; you must prepare yourself to be a proud, disciplined student, reviewing all lists for all quizzes. The point is to learn these stems and words now, and to know them for the rest of your life. That is a good idea, because they are of such high quality that you will always need them.

We have taken pains in this book to frame this vocabulary study in its true light, the light of a vanished, Roman culture. You will see images from Rome, read quotations from Roman philosophers, and read Roman facts. Always remember that this is not just an imaginary fiction; the language you speak and think with is truly a collection of echoes from the ancient past, from Caesar's world.

Have fun.

Grammar Review

In *Caesar's English*, the use of words is explained in the language of grammar. To be specific, most words are discussed in terms of their parts of speech. The parts of speech are the eight kinds of words in English. Did you realize that there are only eight kinds of words?

The eight parts of speech (kinds of words) in English are:

NOUN - the name of a person, place or thing.

PRONOUN - a word that takes the place of a noun.

ADJECTIVE - a word that modifies a noun or a pronoun.

VERB - a word that shows action, being, or links a subject to another word. Jumped, is.

ADVERB - a word that modifies a verb, adjective, or another adverb.

PREPOSITION - a word that shows the relationship between its object and another word in the sentence.

CONJUNCTION - a word that joins two words or two groups of words.

INTERJECTION - a word that shows emotion but has no grammatical function.

Examples:

Yes, he suddenly saw the tall Roman and the short Gaul.

interj. pron. adv. v. adj. adj. n. conj. adj. adj. n.

Caesar's English
Ancient Latin Stems
Lesson One

Latin Stems

| <i>stem</i> | <i>meaning</i> | <i>modern examples</i> |
|--------------|----------------|-------------------------------|
| bi | (two) | bicycle, biped, bilateral |
| sub | (under) | submarine, submerge, subtract |
| de | (down) | descend, deposit, deduce |
| pre | (before) | predict, prepare, prelude |
| super | (over) | supervise, superior, superb |

Latin Stem Talk

BI means two. A *bicycle* has two wheels, a *biped* (like you) has two feet, *bilateral* means two-sided, and a *bimonthly* magazine comes out every two months!

SUB means under. A *submarine* goes under the sea, to *submerge* is to pull something under the surface, and to *subtract* is a kind of arithmetic where you take away (pull under) one number from another!

DE means down. To *descend* is to go down, to *deposit* is to put down, to *deduce* is to think your way down from a big truth.

PRE means before. To *predict* is to announce something before it even happens; to *prepare* is to get ready before an event; a *preschool* is an early school before first grade, and a *prelude* is the music before a performance.

SUPER means over. To *supervise* is to watch over people; a *superman* is someone with powers over and above the norm; *superior* means over others in quality, and so does *superb*. Notice that **super** and **sub** are opposites!