

Etymological Origins and Linguistic Roots

Etymology · Answer Key · 20 Questions

1. The word 'salary' derives from the Latin 'salarium', which was an allowance given to Roman soldiers specifically for the purchase of what commodity?

- A) Grain
- B) Salt**
- C) Leather
- D) Oil

2. Which language serves as the ultimate etymological root for the word 'alphabet', derived from the first two letters of its script?

- A) Phoenician
- B) Greek**
- C) Latin
- D) Sanskrit

3. The English word 'disaster' is etymologically derived from an ancient belief linking misfortune to what?

- A) Witchcraft
- B) Earthquakes
- C) Negative stellar alignment**
- D) Plagues

4. The term 'robot' was first introduced in the 1920 play 'R.U.R.' by Karel Capek, and it originates from a Slavic word meaning what?

- A) Worker/Forced labor**
- B) Automaton
- C) Metal man
- D) Assistant

5. The word 'candidate' comes from the Latin 'candidatus', meaning 'clothed in white', referring to Roman office-seekers wearing what type of garment?

- A) A wool toga
- B) A silk tunic
- C) A bleached toga**
- D) A purple cloak

6. The term 'vaccination' etymologically traces back to the Latin 'vacca', meaning what?

- A) Disease
- B) Cow**
- C) Needle
- D) Protection

7. Which language group is the primary source for the vast majority of scientific and medical terminology used in English today?

- A) Old Norse
- B) Greek and Latin**
- C) Germanic
- D) Arabic

8. The word 'clue' originally referred to a 'clew', which is a specific object used in mythology to navigate a labyrinth; what was it?

- A) A torch
- B) A ball of thread**
- C) A bronze key
- D) A map

9. 'Sherpa' is a word originating from the Tibetan language that translates literally to what?

- A) Mountain guide
- B) Eastern people**
- C) High-altitude dweller
- D) Snow climber

10. The word 'quarantine' is derived from the Venetian dialect word 'quaranta giorni', which means what?

- A) Forty days**
- B) Strict isolation
- C) A period of sickness
- D) The waiting time

11. The term 'sarcophagus', meaning 'flesh-eater' in Greek, originally referred to a specific type of what?

- A) Limestone**
- B) Hardwood
- C) Ivory
- D) Marble

12. What is the etymological origin of the word 'algebra'?

A) Ancient Greek

B) Arabic

C) Persian

D) Sanskrit

13. The word 'muscle' is derived from the Latin 'musculus', meaning what?

A) Powerful

B) Little mouse

C) Strong limb

D) Flexing

14. 'Trivial' etymologically derives from the Latin 'trivium', referring to the place where what met?

A) Three roads

B) Three rivers

C) Three kings

D) Three temples

15. The word 'umbrella' comes from the Latin 'umbra', which means what?

A) Rain

B) Shadow

C) Shield

D) Covering

16. The English word 'decimate' originally referred to a military punishment that involved the killing of what percentage of a group?

A) 5%

B) 10%

C) 20%

D) 50%

17. The word 'synergy' has its roots in Greek, where 'syn' means 'together' and 'ergon' means what?

A) Force

B) Movement

C) Work

D) Energy

18. The term 'glamour' is an etymological variant of which word, originally referring to magic or enchantment?

A) Glimmer

B) Grammar

C) Glory

D) Golden

19. The word 'nostalgia' is a compound of the Greek 'nostos' (return home) and 'algos', which means what?

A) Memory

B) Pain

C) Longing

D) Time

20. The term 'mercury' (as in the element or planet) is derived from the Roman god of trade, but what was his primary role in mythology?

A) God of war

B) Messenger of the gods

C) God of the underworld

D) God of the sun