

Etymological Origins and Linguistic Roots

Etymology · Answer Key · 12 Questions

1. The word 'naughty' originally meant what in the 14th century?

- A) Having nothing**
- B) Being mischievous
- C) Being arrogant
- D) Being poor

2. Which language is the ultimate source of the English word 'alphabet'?

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

3. The term 'robot' was first introduced in a 1920 play by Karel Capek; what is the Czech root word 'robota' synonymous with?

- A) Mechanical device
- B) Forced labour**
- C) Automaton
- D) Thinking machine

4. Which Indo-European language family does the word 'mother' trace its cognates back to?

- A) Proto-Indo-European**
- B) Proto-Germanic
- C) Old Norse
- D) Sanskrit

5. The word 'salary' derives from the Latin 'salarium', which refers to an allowance given to Roman soldiers to buy what?

- A) Bread
- B) Wine
- C) Salt**
- D) Sandals

6. What is the etymological meaning of the word 'quarantine'?

- A) Forty days**
- B) Isolation period
- C) City gate
- D) Blocked path

7. The English word 'assassin' is derived from a 12th-century group of Nizari Ismailis, but what is the literal meaning of the Arabic 'hashshashin'?

- A) Dagger wielder
- B) Secret killer
- C) Hashish user**
- D) Mountain dweller

8. Which ancient language provided the root for the word 'disaster', implying an 'ill-starred' event?

- A) Latin
- B) Greek**
- C) Arabic
- D) Persian

9. The word 'sarcasm' finds its origin in the Greek verb 'sarkazein', which literally translates to what?

- A) To bite the tongue
- B) To tear flesh**
- C) To speak in riddles
- D) To mock the gods

10. 'Trivia' is derived from the Latin 'trivium'; what does it literally describe?

- A) A place where three roads meet**
- B) A collection of small facts
- C) A scholar's basic curriculum
- D) A trivial argument

11. The word 'curfew' comes from the Old French 'couvre-feu'. What is the literal meaning?

- A) Darkness falls
- B) Cover the fire**
- C) Night watch
- D) Evening bell

12. Which language group does the English word 'skirt' originate from, reflecting its historical link to the word 'shirt'?

- A) Old French
- B) Old Norse**
- C) Latin
- D) Celtic