

Historical Etymology and Lexicography

Etymology · Answer Key · 12 Questions

1. The word 'salary' derives from the Latin 'salarium', which originally referred to a stipend given to Roman soldiers specifically for the purchase of what commodity?

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

2. The English word 'quarantine' originates from the Venetian dialect 'quaranta giorni', a practice first formally imposed during the 14th century in which port city?

- A) Venice
- B) Genoa
- C) Ragusa**
- D) Naples

3. The term 'assassin' is etymologically traced to the Nizari Isma'ili sect, but the derivation is commonly attributed to a corruption of which Arabic word meaning 'users of hashish'?

- A) Hashishin**
- B) Hassasin
- C) Asassin
- D) Al-Hashish

4. The word 'candidate' comes from the Latin 'candidatus', meaning 'clothed in white', referring to the toga worn by Roman office-seekers to symbolize what?

- A) Wealth
- B) Purity of intent**
- C) Military service
- D) High birth

5. Which 17th-century term for a person who drinks excessively, 'dipsomaniac', was coined by J.E. Belville using Greek roots meaning 'thirst' and what other concept?

- A) Madness**
- B) Excess
- C) Binding
- D) Fire

6. The word 'avocado' derives from the Nahuatl word 'ahuacatl', which originally possessed what dual meaning in the Aztec language?

A) Green fruit and leaf

B) Testicle and fruit

C) Soft skin and fat

D) Tree and nectar

7. The term 'boycott' is an eponym derived from Captain Charles Boycott, an estate agent who was ostracized by the Irish Land League in which year?

A) 1870

B) 1880

C) 1890

D) 1900

8. 'Petrichor', the term for the scent of rain on dry earth, was coined in 1964 by researchers Bear and Thomas, deriving from the Greek 'petra' (stone) and what element?

A) Ichor

B) Aether

C) Geos

D) Hydor

9. The word 'robot' was introduced to the English language via Karel Capek's 1920 play 'R.U.R.', derived from the Old Church Slavonic 'robota', which signifies what?

A) Machine

B) Worker

C) Servitude

D) Automaton

10. The word 'clue' is a spelling variant of 'clew', which originally referred to what specific object?

A) A lantern

B) A ball of thread

C) A navigation chart

D) A secret map

11. The term 'bureaucracy' was coined by Vincent de Gournay in the 18th century, combining the French 'bureau' (desk) with which Greek suffix meaning 'to rule'?

A) -cracy

B) -archy

C) -nomy

D) -logy

12. The etymology of 'sycophant' is derived from the Greek 'sykophantes', literally translating to 'one who shows' what?

A) A secret sign

B) The fig

C) The truth

D) The path