

Etymological Explorations: Eastern European Innovations

Etymology · Practice Test · 18 Questions

1. The word 'robot', coined to describe an artificial worker, is derived from a Slavic word meaning what?

- A) Machine
- B) Labor or forced work
- C) Cleverness
- D) Servant

2. Which Eastern European inventor is credited with the development of the 'dynamo' or electrical generator, leading to the word 'dynamo' itself?

- A) Nikola Tesla (Serbian-American)
- B) Emil Bárta (Czech)
- C) Mikhail Lomonosov (Russian)
- D) Igor Sikorsky (Russian-American)

3. The term 'vodka,' referring to the distilled alcoholic beverage, is etymologically linked to the Slavic word for what?

- A) Grain
- B) Water
- C) Fire
- D) Spirit

4. The invention of the ballpoint pen is largely attributed to László Bíró, a Hungarian journalist. The word 'biro' became a generic term for the pen in some regions. What was the original motivation for its invention?

- A) Faster writing for newspapers
- B) Durable writing for field use
- C) Cleaner ink for portraits
- D) Permanent ink for legal documents

5. The discovery of the antibiotic penicillin is famously associated with Alexander Fleming, but the first mass production and clinical trials were conducted in the United States. However, the foundational research into antibiotics was significantly advanced by earlier discoveries. What does the etymology of 'antibiotic' suggest?

- A) Against life
- B) For life
- C) Life-giving
- D) Life's essence

6. The 'Sputnik' program, which launched the first artificial satellite into orbit, gave us the word 'Sputnik.' What does the Russian word 'sputnik' mean?

- A) Star
- B) Voyager
- C) Fellow traveler or companion
- D) Orbit

7. The term 'kibbutz,' referring to the collective communities in Israel, while not an Eastern European invention, has roots in the Hebrew word for 'gathering' or 'coming together.' The concept itself was influenced by ideas brought by immigrants from Eastern Europe. What is the closest English translation for the Hebrew root of 'kibbutz'?

- A) Farm
- B) Community
- C) Harvest
- D) Unity

8. The invention of the contact lens is often credited to Adolf Fick in Germany, but early concepts and experimental lenses were developed by individuals like Leonardo da Vinci. What is the etymological basis for the term 'contact lens'?

- A) It makes contact with the eye
- B) It is made of contact material
- C) It corrects vision by contact
- D) It is a contact with light

9. The development of the 'tank' as an armored fighting vehicle during World War I was a British innovation. However, the term itself was chosen as a code word to mislead enemy intelligence about its true purpose. What was the intended implication of the word 'tank'?

- A) Water carrier
- B) Fuel storage
- C) Machine gun emplacement
- D) Communication device

10. The word 'biochemistry,' the study of chemical processes within living organisms, draws its roots from Greek. What does the prefix 'bio-' etymologically mean?

- A) Small
- B) Life
- C) Earth
- D) New

11. The 'Bolsheviks,' a faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, derived their name from the Russian word for what?

- A) Minority
- B) Majority
- C) Revolution
- D) Union

12. The discovery of radioactivity is credited to Henri Becquerel in France, but the term 'radioactivity' itself was coined by Marie Curie, a Polish and naturalized-French physicist and chemist. What does the etymology of 'radioactivity' refer to?

- A) The emission of rays
- B) The transformation of elements
- C) The energy of particles
- D) The decay of atoms

13. The development of the 'kolkhoz,' a collective farm in the Soviet Union, is reflected in its name. What does the Russian word 'kolkhoz' etymologically combine?

- A) Collective + Economy
- B) Collective + Farm
- C) Cooperative + Labor
- D) Communal + Dwelling

14. The first successful powered flight by the Wright brothers in the United States gave us the term 'airplane.' What is the etymological origin of the word 'plane' in this context?

- A) Flat surface
- B) Wing
- C) Airfoil
- D) Altitude

15. The invention of the 'periscope,' used for observation from a concealed position, is attributed to German inventors. What does the Greek etymology of 'periscope' suggest?

- A) To see around
- B) To look afar
- C) To watch secretly
- D) To view from above

16. The term 'serf,' referring to a person in a state of servitude, especially one attached to land, has roots in Old Church Slavonic. What was the primary meaning of the original Slavic word?

- A) Slave
- B) Worker
- C) Peasant
- D) Tenant

17. The invention of the electric light bulb is a complex history with many contributors, but Thomas Edison is widely credited with its commercial success in the United States. The term 'bulb' etymologically relates to what shape?

- A) Sphere
- B) Cylinder
- C) Cone
- D) Globular or onion shape

18. The concept of 'glasnost' and 'perestroika,' key policies of Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, have distinct etymological meanings in Russian. What does 'glasnost' etymologically mean?

- A) Restructuring
- B) Openness or publicity
- C) Reform
- D) Renewal