LEXICOLOGY AND PHRASEOLOGY: FOLK ETYMOLOGY

A list of words found in Exercise 10.7 and Exercise 10.8 (Chapter 10) with etymological information from the *Oxford English Dictionary* online <https://www.oed.com/> on Nov 18 2020

**loo** n.4

**Origin:** Of unknown origin.

**Etymology:** Origin unknown.

Perhaps < French *lieux* (plural) latrines (1640), toilets (in later use short for *lieux d'aisances* : 1802), specific (euphemistic) use of *lieu* lieu *n.*; the English form *loo* may result from association with the pronunciation of the earlier borrowing lieu *n.* Use of the French word in an English context in the meaning ‘privy’ may perhaps be shown by the following:

1782 W. Mason *Let.* 14 Nov. in E. W. Harcourt *Papers* (1883) VII. 79 I am myself employed in constructing a lieu here in our great Residentiary house, & tho' I have many & great difficulties to encounter I trust it will turn out a paragon, both for sweetness, utility, & cheapness.

Alternatively, perhaps shortened < the name of *Waterloo* (see Waterloo *n.*), perhaps punningly after water closet *n.*; perhaps compare also French *water* toilet (1913, chiefly in plural; < water closet *n.*); however, similar use of *Waterloo* has not been traced.

It has also been suggested that the word is shortened from *bourdaloue* chamber pot of oblong shape ( < French *bourdaloue* (1762 or earlier in this sense) < the name of the Jesuit and preacher Louis *Bourdaloue* (1632–1704), with obscure allusion, perhaps to secrets of the confession); however, that word appears never to have had great currency in English, and is not attested in more general application to a toilet in either English or French.

It is frequently suggested that the word is shortened from gardyloo *n.*, but the assumed semantic development is considerable, and not supported by any evidence; additionally, the chronological gap is very considerable between the period when the cry would have had any contemporary currency and the earliest attestations of the present word.

The suggestion that the word is shortened from ablution *n.* 6 is improbable on chronological grounds as well as in view of the irregularity of the suggested shortening.

A number of other origins have also been suggested

**sirloin** n. /ˈsəːlɔɪn/

**Etymology:** < Old French *\*surloigne*, variant of *surlonge* , < *sur* over, above + *longe* loin *n.* The spelling *sirloin* shows the same tendency as *sirname* for *surname*, *sirples* (obsolete) for *surplice*; its final prevalence may have been largely due to the fictitious etymology variously stated in the following quotations.

1655 T. Fuller *Church-hist. Brit.* vi. 299 A Sir-loyne of beef was set before Him (so Knighted, saith tradition, by this King Henry [VIII]).

1738 J. Swift *Compl. Coll. Genteel Conversat.* 121 *Miss*. But, pray, why is it call'd a Sir-loyn? *Ld. Sparkish*. Why,..our King James the First,..being invited to Dinner by one of his Nobles, and seeing a large Loyn of Beef at his Table, he drew out his Sword, and..knighted it.

1822 *Cook's Oracle* 163 Sir-Loin of Beef. This joint is said to owe its name to King Charles the Second, who dining upon a Loin of Beef,..said for its merit it should be knighted, and henceforth called Sir-Loin.

**asparagus** n. /əˈsparəɡəs/

**Etymology:** Latin, < Greek *ἀσπάραγος* , properly *ἀσϕάραγος* , of doubtful origin. In medieval Latin often *sparagus* , *sparagi* (Old Italian *sparagi* , *sparaci* ), found in English *c*1000. Thence also modern Italian *sparagio* , German *spargen* , Middle French *esperage* , and English *sperage* , the common name in 16th and early 17th cent., occasionally, from etymological notions, made *sperach* (after *smallache* , *smallage* , etc.: see ache *n.2*), or *sparage*. About 1600 the influence of herbalists and horticultural writers made *asparagus* familiar, and this in the aphetic form *'sparagus* at length displaced *sperage*, but was itself by popular etymology corrupted before 1650 to *sparagrass*, *sparrow-grass*, which remained the polite name during the 18th cent. Botanists still wrote *asparagus*, but according to Walker *Pron. Dict.* 1791, ‘*Sparrow-grass* is so general that *asparagus* has an air of stiffness and pedantry.’ During the 19th century *asparagus* returned into literary and polite use, leaving *sparrow-grass* to the illiterate; though ‘grass’ still occurred in cookery books

**cockroach** n. /ˈkɒkrəʊtʃ/

**Etymology:** < Spanish *cucaracha* (*a*1565; 1535 as *cucaraza* ; perhaps 13th cent. as *cocaraxo* ), with (in β. forms) folk-etymological alteration after cock *n.1*

The vowel of the final syllable in both α. and β. forms is not easily explained; folk-etymological alteration after roach *n.1* is possible; alternatively, association with (etymologically unrelated) Portuguese *carocha*, *caroucha*, denoting various different beetles, is also perhaps possible.

Spanish *cucaracha* is perhaps an (expressive) extended form of *cuca* or *cuco* (both first attested in the 14th cent.) caterpillar, butterfly larva, bug, pest, (in Castilian dialects) cockroach, apparently ultimately of imitative or expressive origin.

**bridegroom** n. /ˈbrʌɪdɡruːm/

**Origin:** Of multiple origins. Partly a word inherited from Germanic. Partly formed within English, by compounding. **Etymons:** bride *n.1*, groom *n.1*

**Etymology:** Cognate with or formed similarly to Old Frisian *breidgoma* , Old Dutch *brūdigomo* (Middle Dutch *brudegome* , Dutch *bruidegom* ), Old Saxon *brūdigomo* (Middle Low German *brūdegam* ), Old High German *brūtigomo* (Middle High German *briutegome* , German *Bräutigam* ), Old Icelandic *brúðgumi* , Old Swedish *bruþgumi* (Swedish *brudgumme* ), Old Danish *bruthgomme* (Danish *brudgom* ) < the Germanic base of bride *n.1* + the Germanic base of gome *n.1*

In β. forms with remodelling of the second element after groom *n.1* (compare groom *n.1* 2).

**utmost** adj. and n. /ˈʌtməʊst/

**Etymology:** Old English *útemest* , *útmest* (rare, and chiefly northern, variants of the usual *ýte-* , *ýtmest* ), a double superlative (compare foremost *adj.* and *adv.*, inmost *adj.*, *n.*, and *adv.*) < *úte* or *út*, out *adv.* + *-m-est*: see -most *suffix*. Compare later outmost *adj.*

In Layamon 11023 *utemæste* probably represents Old English *ýtemeste* . The Middle English forms with *ote-* , *otte-* , *ot-* seem to imply an earlier *ŭte-* with shortened vowel (as in Icelandic *ŭtan* < *ūt* ). The shortening in *utmost* may be partly due to the double consonant, and partly to the influence of utter *adj.*

**hang-nail** n.

**Etymology:** < hang *v.* + nail *n.*; but historically an accommodated form of *angnail* ; compare agnail *n.* 3.

**agnail**

**Origin:** Probably a word inherited from Germanic.

**Etymology:** Probably cognate with or formed similarly to Old Frisian *ongneil* , *ogneil* , *ognīl* ingrowing nail, hangnail < the Germanic base of ange *n.* + the Germanic base of nail *n.* Compare (with the same initial element) Old English *angseta* carbuncle, abscess, boil, and see discussion at ange *adv.* and *n.* Compare later hang-nail *n.*

The original semantic motivation for this formation is unclear. Although all the complaints it denotes cause pain in or around the fingernails and toenails (compare nail *n.* I.), it is possible that the word may originally (in sense 1) have shown nail *n.* II., the hard, rounded external callus of the corn (and perhaps also its internal root) being taken to resemble an iron nail driven into the foot. Compare e.g. Old English *wernægel* wart, tumour on the back of cattle (see warnel *n.* and discussion at that entry), and, with similar extension of meaning, classical Latin *clāvus* (iron) nail, also ‘wart, tumour, corn’ (see clavus *n.*). Senses 2 and 3 would then show subsequent extension to other painful conditions affecting the area around the fingernail or toenail, by association with nail *n.* 1. However, this argument does not appear to be supported by the senses attested for the cognate in Old Frisian.

With sense 2 perhaps compare also French *angonailles* (1611 in Cotgrave, glossed as ‘botches, (pockie) bumps, or sores’) and post-classical Latin *anghiones* , *anguinalia* , carbuncles (attested in undated saints' lives).

The forms in *n-* and *gn-* show metanalysis (see N *n.*). The regional variant *angernail* apparently shows remodelling of the first element by association with anger *n.*

Senses:

**1.** A corn on the toe or foot. In later use also: a bunion; an ingrowing or deformed toenail. Now *English regional* (*northern*), *rare*.Some early examples may belong at sense 2.

eOE—1901

†**2.** A painful swelling, ulcer, or sore under or around a toenail or fingernail; a whitlow. *Obsolete* except as passing into sense 3.

1562—1886

**3.** A small strip of skin partially detached, but hanging by one end, near a fingernail; = hang-nail *n.*

**humble pie** n.

†**1.** = *umble-pie*, a pie made of the ‘umbles’ or inwards of a deer (or other animal). *Obsolete*.

a1665—a1665

 **a.** ***to eat humble pie***: to be very submissive; to apologize humbly; to submit to humiliation. [From humble *adj.*, perhaps with jocular reference to sense 1 here. Compare *to eat rue-pie* (Lincolnsh.) to rue, repent.]

1830—1883

**b.** In other analogous expressions.

**umbles** *n.* /ˈʌmb(ə)lz/

**Etymology:** variant of numbles *n.*: see also humble *n.2*

**1.**

**a.** The edible inward parts of an animal, usually of a deer.

14..—1826

 **b.** *transferred* and *figurative* (of persons).

1536—1826

**2.** *attributive* in ***umble-pie***. (Cf. humble pie *n.*, and *numble pie* *n.* at numbles *n.* Compounds.)

1663—1864

**terrapin** n1. /ˈtɛrəpɪn/

**Origin:** Either (i) formed within English, by derivation. Or (ii) a borrowing from Virginia Algonquian, combined with an English element. **Etymons:** torup *n.*, Virginia Algonquian *\*tōrəp* , -ine *suffix4*.

**Etymology:** < either torup *n.* or its etymon Virginia Algonquian *\*tōrəp* + a suffix of uncertain origin (probably -ine *suffix4*).

The forms with *e* reflect an early regional pronunciation; some of these forms are perhaps also influenced by classical Latin *terra* earth (see terra *n.*).

**Welsh rabbit** *n.* /ˌwɛlʃ ˈrabɪt/

**Origin:** Formed within English, by compounding. **Etymons:** Welsh *adj.*, rabbit *n.1*

**Etymology:** < Welsh *adj.* + rabbit *n.1*, probably humorously. Compare slightly later later *Scotch rabbit* *n.* at Scotch *adj.* and *n.3* Compounds 2.

 = Welsh rarebit *n.*

**Origin:** A variant or alteration of another lexical item. **Etymon:** Welsh rabbit *n.*

**Etymology:** Alteration of Welsh rabbit *n.*, apparently after rare *adj.1* and bit *n.1*, probably with the sense ‘delicacy’.

There is no evidence of the independent use of a simplex *rarebit* , except later as a shortening of this compound (see rarebit *n.*).

**woodchuck** n. /ˈwʊdtʃʌk/

**Origin:** A borrowing from a Southern New England Algonquian language.

**Etymology:** < a Southern New England Algonquian language (compare Narragansett *ockqutchaun*), with loss of the initial vowel, and subsequent remodelling of the remaining syllables after wood *n.1* and, apparently, *chuck* (although it is unclear which of the various English words with this form).

The second syllable of English *woodchuck* has subsequently given rise to analogous formations, such as †*ground chuck* groundhog (1828) and *rockchuck* *n.* at rock *n.1* Compounds 2b.