

The King Edward VI School
Survey of Word Origins

Based on *Wordly Wise*
By James McDonald

Summarised by the young people of the
A-level English Language course 2010-11

And amply illustrating Mr B's well-known motto:
"Isn't language fascinating?"

The body
Summarised by: Giles

| Word or phrase | Original meaning | Notes about its origin (Fr, Latin, Old English, etc) |
|----------------|--|---|
| Finger | To seize | Fangen was the original word – Anglo Saxon roots |
| Pancreas | Pan (all) kreas (flesh) – All flesh | Latin |
| Sanguine | Implies a courageous and hopeful disposition | Latin – meant people who were ‘influenced by the blood’ such as hot blooded people nowadays |
| Complicate | Literally ‘to plait together’ | Derived from the Latin verb <i>complicare</i> |
| Cordial | A hearty reception | Derived from the Latin word <i>cor</i> , which means heart. Therefore a heart drink is called a cordial, and the very heart of an object is called core |
| Doctor | To lead or teach | Latin word – adapted by medical universities to describe the holders of certain degrees |
| Hostel/hotel | Denoted a place of rest | Latin – the word <i>hospitalis</i> meant a place you were able to rest and view some form of entertainment |
| Muscle | ‘Little mouse’ | Latin word – <i>musculus</i> . So named because the Romans noticed how a muscle moves under the skin |
| Placebo | ‘I shall be acceptable’ | Latin phrase – now, when there is no convenient pill to offer, a placebo pill is offered to keep the patient quiet but has no physiological benefit |
| Clinic | Bed | Greek word – derived from the word <i>kline</i> as <i>klinikos</i> meant ‘confined to bed’ |
| Migraine | ‘Half skull’ | Latin – the word is formed from the middle section of the word hemicrania |
| Syphilis | Syn (together) phileein (love) | Greek and was formed in the sixteenth century |
| Malaria | ‘Bad air’ | Greek – thought to be formed by marsh vapours |

Theme of your chapter: Body
Summarised by: Eve Chancellor

| Word or phrase | Original meaning | Notes about its origin (Fr, Latin, Old English, etc) |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Finger | From <i>fangen</i> , to seize | Anglo-Saxon |
| Belly | From <i>belig</i> , a bag or bellows | Anglo-Saxon |
| Cor | Heart | Latin |
| Cordial | Hearty drink | From Latin <i>cor</i> |
| Humid | From <i>humidus</i> , meaning moist | Latin |
| Humour | The name of the four principle bodily fluids: blood (<i>sanguis</i>), black bile (<i>melankholia</i>), yellow bile (<i>cholera</i>) and phlegm (<i>phlegm</i>). | From Latin <i>humidus</i> , meaning moist |
| Muscle | From <i>musculus</i> , meaning "little mouse." This was the name the Romans gave to muscles after noticing how they move under the skin. Similarly, <i>mussel</i> is name for a little sea mouse. | Latin |
| Temperament | From <i>temperare</i> , meaning "to mix." Somebody who was of a good temperament would have been thought to have had a good mixture (balance) of humours. An unbalanced mixture might cause an affliction such as <i>distemper</i> . | Latin |
| Sanguine | From <i>sanguinis</i> , meaning bloody. Those who were thought to be influenced by the blood more than by the other three humours were said to be sanguine. | Latin |
| Cholera | Diarrhoea. From <i>chole</i> , meaning bile. | Greek |
| Melancholy | A combination of <i>melas</i> , black, and <i>chole</i> , bile. This was thought to have been caused by an excess of black bile in the liver. Such an excess caused a depression, sadness and a generally gloomy outlook. | Greek |
| Typhoid (also Typhus) | From <i>typhos</i> , meaning smoke. From the idea of clouding the mind. | Greek |
| Rabies | From <i>rabidus</i> , meaning mad or furious. | Latin |
| Hysteria | This was thought to affect only women, so it comes from <i>hystera</i> , meaning womb. | Greek |
| Surgeon | A corrupted form of <i>chirurgion</i> , which comes from <i>cheiroutgos</i> . This is made up of <i>cheir</i> , meaning "hand," and <i>ergon</i> , meaning "work." A surgeon is simply one who works with his hands. | Greek |

Theme of your chapter: The family pedigree

Summarised by: Ashlea Smith

| Word or phrase | Original meaning | Notes about its origin (Fr, Latin, Old English, etc) |
|----------------|--|--|
| Mother | "married woman" | Anglo Saxon "moder" |
| Father | "Fatherhood/patriotism" | Anglo Saxon "faeder" |
| Infant | One who cannot speak | Latin "infans" |
| Child | Womb | ? |
| Twin | Two-ness | ? |
| Cousin | Same as present meaning | From Romanian traveler |
| Grandson | Small son (petit fils) | French |
| Granddaughter | Small daughter (petit fille) | French |
| Grandmother | "Beldame"- beautiful lady | Latin (Dame) |
| Wench | "weak" (was unisex term previously also) | Anglo Saxon |

Theme of your chapter: Ye Goode Olde Dayes

Summarised by: Abi Ladd

| Word or phrase | Original meaning | Notes about its origin (Fr, Latin, Old English, etc) |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Cobweb | 'Poison Head' | Anglo Saxon from the root <i>attercoppe</i> |
| Mad as a hatter | 'Angry as a viper' | Changed by Lewis Carol from the origin 'As mad as a Natter' |
| Poke | 'A Bag' | Old Norman French word <i>Poque</i> |
| Quick | 'Living' | Anglo Saxon root <i>Cwick</i> |
| Porridge | 'Mess of Pottage' | Biblical |
| Ajar | 'a-turning' | Derived from <i>a-char</i> Anglo Saxon. |
| Sad | 'Heavy' (bread which did not rise) | Anglo Saxon |
| Quick Silver | 'Living Silver' | Anglo Saxon word <i>Cwick Seolfor</i> |
| Hosiery | 'Leg Covering' | <i>Hosa</i> from Anglo Saxons |
| Hob-Nob | 'Have, Not Have' | Old English <i>Hab-Nab</i> |
| Dodge | Illicit drinking place which 'Evaded' the law | Elizabethan root <i>Jook</i> |
| Shambles | 'bench upon which meat was displayed' | Anglo Saxon Derived from <i>Sceamul</i> |
| Anon | 'On One Course' (directly) | <i>On + Ane.</i> Anglo Saxon. |
| Wales | 'Land of the Foreigners' | Anglo Saxon word <i>Wealas</i> |
| Pucker | 'To Crumple up like the top of a Bag' | Medieval times - French |

Theme of your chapter: Rude Words

Summarised by: Calum

| Word or phrase | Original meaning | Notes about its origin (Fr, Latin, Old English, etc) |
|----------------|---|---|
| Bollock | Liable to be used for a convenient secondary name for a man or what would be now a surname, abandoned in the 9 th century. | Derived from an old English word for `round`. So have words such as Ball and Balloon |
| Pintle | Means Penis and was standard English until the late eighteenth century. Now means a pin or bolt. | Anglo-Saxon word pintel which evolved into Pintle. |
| Penis | Meant tail, in respectable English. | Firstly originated from the Latin for tail. |
| Prick | Idea of piercing or penetrating | Became an acceptable term in the middle ages for what was already called a Pintel |
| Cock | Derived from the word cock as used for a water tap. | Same as Prick |
| Cunt | Wasn't particularly insulting or offensive. Either meant `tail` `rump` or `female genitals`. Only seen in offensive nature in the 20 th century. | Anglo-Saxon meaning for the word `Cunnus` which derived from Latin, the Greek `Kuthos`, Persian and Hittite kun, Old Norse `Kunta` and Anglo Saxon `Kunte`. |
| Berk | Same meaning as now, fool or idiot. | Came from the Cockney slang for cunt, or `Berkeley Hunt` |
| Fuck | Verb meaning was `to strike`, which has been adapted to mean `to copulate` | Latin word `futuere` and German word `ficken` have coupled together |
| Arse | Always has meant bum, however it was very acceptable to use until the 17 th century, where the word `aers` was very commonly used. | Relatives from a number of languages, although did have connections to other words of the same meaning such a `bum`. |
| Bum | Lived a blameless life meaning `behind` until the Nineteenth century. | An uncertain source in Middle English. It is thought to not be a contraction of `bottom` but have a connection with the word `boom`, which originally indicated a buzzing noise. |
| Fart | Same meaning to pass wind or used to mean `bottom` or `bum` | First recorded in Middle English but almost certainly older. In fact, is thought to be one of the oldest words in the English vocabulary. Corresponding French word meaning to fart is `peter`. |
| Raspberry | Blowing a Raspberry, or a fart. | Came from cockney rhyming slang for Fart, or Raspberry tart. |

Theme of your chapter: Magic
 Summarised by: Chris Pitt

| Word or phrase | Original meaning | Notes about its origin (Fr, Latin, Old English, etc) |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Dismal | Unfortunate happenings. | Latin for unlucky: <i>Dies Mal</i> |
| Fate | In accordance with the divine. | Latin: <i>Fas</i> |
| Weird | Supernatural fates of mythology. | Anglo Saxon: <i>Wyrd</i> |
| Sorcerer | Chance in life. | Latin for chance: <i>Sors</i> |
| Project | Inspection before an event. | Latin: <i>Pro - Forward. Jacere - Throw</i> |
| Predict | To tell before. | Latin: <i>Praedicere</i> |
| Forebode | Foretell | Anglo Saxon: <i>Bodian - to announce</i> |
| Monster | Warning of appearance | Latin: <i>Monare -Warn Monstrare - Show</i> |
| To have a hunch | The idea it was lucky to touch a hunchback led to the phrase. | Anglo Saxon |
| Pontiff | Roman Chief - Pontifex | Latin |
| Temple | Heavenly space marked off at the top of a hill by a prophet. | Latin - <i>Templum</i> |
| Oracle | Little Mouth | Latin - <i>Oraculum</i> |
| Omen | To hear | Latin |
| Thumb | Swollen Finger | Anglo Saxon - <i>Thuma</i> |
| Hierarchy | Sacred rule | Greek - <i>Hieros - Sacred.</i> Archy - Rules. |

Theme of your chapter: The Naughty Bits
 Summarised by: Georgia Lau

| Word or phrase | Original meaning | Notes about its origin (Fr, Latin, Old English, etc) |
|----------------|---|--|
| Bollock | Derived from an ancient word meaning 'round' | Ancient Latin |
| Pintle | Derived from 'pintel' meaning pin, or pencil | Anglo-Saxon |
| Cock | Derived from 'cock' meaning water tap | Old English |
| Cunt | Derived from 'kusthos' meaning rump | Ancient Greek |
| Fuck | Derived from 'futuere' and 'ficken', both meaning to strike | Ancient Latin and Germanic |
| Arse | Derived from 'aers' meaning fundament | Anglo-Saxon |
| Bum | Derived from 'boom' meaning a buzzing noise | Middle English |
| Skeet | Derived from 'skytta' meaning to project, or move quickly | Old Norse |
| Shit | Derived from 'schitte' applied directly to mean diarrhea | Middle English |
| Piss | Derived from 'pisser' meaning to urinate | French |

Theme of your chapter: 'Moonshine'

Summarised by: Jess Dye.

| Word or phrase | Original meaning | Notes about its origin (Fr, Latin, Old English, etc) |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Lunatic | Derived from 'Luna' – Latin for moon. 'Lunatic' describes the insane . | Latin. |
| Simpleton | Derived from the word 'Simple' - it originally meant 'uncomplicated'. | Comes from the Latin word, Simplus. |
| Daft | Meant gentle, meek or harmless | Originally from Anglo-Saxon word 'Gedaefte', however it lost the prefix, becoming 'Daft'. |
| Mad | Originally meant 'crippled'. | Originated from the Anglo-Saxon word 'Gemad'. |
| Imbecile | Once meant 'helpless'. The Latin pieces of the word show that it means 'without a walking stick'. | Latin. |
| Moron | Was originally used to describe a person with a retarded mental development. | Greek. |
| Idiot | Used as a term for the insane. It comes from the Latin 'idiota'- which denoted an ignorant person. It also comes from the Greek word 'idios' – which means 'own', or 'peculiar'. | Latin and Greek. |
| Cretin | A person who suffered from a certain physical disability, as well as idiocy. It was used commonly within the Swiss Alps, due to the dietary deficiencies. | French – they created it from the Swiss 'Creitin', or 'Chrestin'. These were Latin adaptations 'Christianus'. Both 'Cretin' and 'Chrisitan', have the same origin. |
| Stupid | It comes from the Latin word 'Stupere', meaning to stun or strike senseless. | Latin. |
| Frenzy | A person described as being in a 'frenzy', may be said to be 'beside themselves'. It was as though some part of their mind or spirit had been removed from the body. | Old French. |
| Ecstasy | From the Greek word 'ekstasis', which means both trance, and displacement. | Via the Old French and Latin, from the Greek. |
| Psychologist / Psychiatrist | 'psyche' originally meant breath of life. | Greek. |
| Phantom | Derived from the Greek word 'phantasia'- which means nightmare. | Greek. |
| Succubus | Was the name given to a phantom seducer. It is from the Latin 'suc' – under, and 'cubare'- to lie. This gave the Romans 'succuba' – a strumpet and the modern term 'Succumb'. | Latin. |
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Theme of your chapter ... Holy
Summarised by: Georgie

| Word or phrase | Original meaning | Notes about its origin (Fr, Latin, Old English, etc) |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| Carnelevarium (CARNIVAL) | Carno → flesh Levare → to remove or put away | Latin elements to create the compound word CARNIVAL |
| Shrove Tuesday | Shriventide → customary to have confessions heard, to be 'shriven' | Romans French → MARDI GRAS (fat Tuesday) Lest before the beginning of Lenten fasting, all meat has to be removed or eaten by the end of it |
| Libertines | Libertinus, denoting a freedman, | Latin |
| Heretics | Hairesis → choice | Greek |
| Bulgarian | Bulgarus → French bougre → English bugger | Latin, old French and english |
| Infidel | In (not) fidel (faithful) | Latin |
| Bull | Bulla or seal, an absurd or ludicrous statement | Latin root of BILL and BULLETIN |
| Inquisition | Inquisitio, 'an enquiry' | Latin/ Romans |
| Patronage | Due from a father pater (father) | Latin |
| Parish | PAROCHIAL para (around) oikos (a house) | Greek |
| Bonfire | Bone-fire | French |
| Golly/Gosh | God; drat it God rot it | |
| Gor blimey | (may) God blind me | |
| Fiddle de dee | Fedidio, fed i Dio, (by the faith of God) | Italian |
| Dear me | Dio mi (Salvi) → God (save) me | Italian |
| Jeez/Geewhiz | Jesus | American Reflecting Shakespearian GIS and earlier GYSE |

Theme of your chapter: *Entering into the spirit of it*→ Alcoholic and non- alcoholic drinks/
other related words

Summarised by: Jasmine Moore

| Word or phrase | Original meaning | Notes about its origin (Fr, Latin, Old English, etc) |
|----------------|--|--|
| Whisky | <i>Uisge beatha</i> meaning <i>water of life</i> | Gaelic, changed from <i>uisge beatha</i> to <i>usquebaugh</i> , then into <i>whiskbae</i> in around 18 th century, then finally <i>whisky</i> or <i>whiskey</i> |
| Brandy | <i>Brandewijn</i> meaning <i>burned (distilled) wine</i> | Dutch, changed from <i>brandewine</i> to <i>brandywine</i> to simply <i>brandy</i> |
| Vodka | <i>Voda</i> meaning <i>water</i> | Russian |
| Alcohol | <i>Al-koh'l</i> was a fine metallic powder used cosmetically | Arabic, first denoted a powder, then a powdered essence or spirit, then any liquid essence, then a pure liquid spirit |
| Rum | <i>Rumbullion</i> meaning <i>fine hot drink</i> | Origin of <i>rum</i> unknown, <i>bullion</i> is from French word <i>boullion</i> meaning hot drink |
| Punch | <i>Panch</i> meaning <i>five</i> | Arabic, five ingredients in punch (alcohol, water, lemon, sugar and spice) |
| Wine | <i>Vinum</i> | Roman |
| Port | | Named <i>port</i> as it was shipped from Oporto in Portugal |
| Sherry | | Comes from <i>sherris</i> after Spanish <i>vino de Xeres</i> (<i>X</i> pronounced <i>Sh</i> in England) |
| Lager | <i>Lager bier</i> referring to a beer made to be kept/ stored, <i>lager</i> meaning <i>store</i> | German |
| Mead | <i>Medu</i> | Anglo- Saxon, from Indo- European <i>med^hu</i> meaning <i>sweet drink</i> |
| Liqueur | <i>Liquor</i> | Old French <i>licur</i> meaning <i>liquid</i> |
| Pot | <i>Potare</i> meaning <i>to drink</i> | Latin |
| Intoxicate | <i>Intoxicare</i> meaning <i>to poison</i> | Latin |
| Bottle | <i>Bota</i> meaning thick skin or hide | Latin, first bottles were made from leater |

Theme of your chapter: Health
Summarised by:

| Word or phrase | Original meaning | Notes about its origin (Fr, Latin, Old English, etc) |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| Lunatic | A word to describe the insane | From the Latin Luna. |
| Loony (slang) | Mentally deranged | Slang for lunatic |
| Moonshine | Foolish talk | From the association with the moon and mental health |
| Moon (verb) | To move around aimlessly as though moonstruck | From the association with the moon and mental health |
| Mooncalves | Shapeless abortions | |
| Licked into shape | Bear cubs were thought to be born with no form and had to be licked into shape by their mothers | |
| Simple, daft and innocent | Anyone who was uncomplicated, ingenuous were thought to be foolish. | |
| Simpleton | 'uncomplicated' | From the word simple, Latin simplus |
| Daft | Gentle, meek or harmless | Anglo Saxon word gedaefta – lost its prefix. |
| Innocent | 'not to injure' or 'to do no harm' | From the Latin in or nocere |
| Nincompoop | fool | In France nicodème denotes simpleton |
| Silly | Harmless and before that blissful or blessed | |
| Mad | Crippled | Anglo-Saxon gemad |
| Imbecile | Helpless | From Latin components meaning without a walking stick |
| Insane | Not well | From Latin sanurus meaning healthy |
| Moron | Title for people with a retarded mental development | Greek |
| Idiot | Insane or ignorant person | Old French and Latin idiota |
| Cretin | Someone who suffered from a certain physical disability | French and Swedish creitin or chrestin |
| Christian | | Adopted from Latin christianus (from Swedish creitin) |
| Stupid | To stun or strike senseless | Latin verb stupere |
| Bedlam | Frenzied activity befitting a mad house | Originally from the mental hospital of St Mary of Bethlehem Patients had to beg to be let out the hospital became well known |
| Frenzy | Someone beside themselves , as if some part of them were removed | Old French |
| Ecstasy | Trance and displacement | Old French and Latin from the Greek work ekstasis |
| Delirium | | From the Roman words de and lira |
| Screw loose | The Romans believed that insanity came from the brain being dislodged | |
| Off their trolley | The Romans believed that insanity came | |

| | | |
|-------------------|---|---|
| | from the brain being dislodged | |
| Off their rockers | The Romans believed that insanity came from the brain being dislodged | |
| Enthusiasm | Applied to people possessed by a God | Greek components en, in and theos |
| Berserk | People went berserk when in the clutches of gods | Norsemen |
| Fanatic and Fan | Religious maniacs tended to manifest their symptoms at or near temples | From Latin fanum |
| Giddy | A god- held man | Anglo – Saxon word gydig |
| Fit or Fight | A man fighting against possession may appear to be fighting himself | Anglo Saxon word fitt meaning conflict |
| Psych(ologist) | Breathe of life | Greek word psyche |
| Inspire | One who experienced the breathe of god | From Latin in (into) and spirare (breathe) |
| Conspire | Breathe together | Latin spirare to breathe |
| Respire | Breathe again | ^^ |
| Aspire | Breathe forwards | ^^ |
| Perspire | Breathe through | ^^ |
| Expire | Breathe out (possibly for the last time) | ^^ |
| Transpire | Breathe across | Latin word transpire to go across. applied to the crossing of the soul from life to death |
| Trance | Crossing of soul from life to death | ^^ |
| Rapture | To be carried off to heaven | Latin word rapere to seize |
| Rape | Forceful seizure | ^^ |
| Spirit | Breathe of life | Latin word Spiritus |
| Animal | breathing | Latin word anima |
| Ghost | | Anglo saxon gaest |
| Ghoul | Evil demon thought to seize and eat humans | Arabic ghul |
| Poltergeist | A noisy spirit | German – poltern meaning to be noisy |
| Phantom | nightmare | Greek word phantasia |
| Pant | One who awakes from a nightmare breathing heavily | ^^ |
| Mare | Demon | Sanskrit mara - destroyer |
| Mares nest | A demons nest | |
| Succumb | Men were troubled by a phantom seducer making sexual advances | Roman word – succuba from the Latin suc (under) and carbare (to lie) |
| Incubus | Women were troubled by the same phantom | Latin incubare meaning to lie upon. |
| Incubate | Birds lying on eggs | ^^ |
| Oaf | Originally an elf's child whom the elves swapped for a human baby. These children would be stupid and ugly. | Dutch word ouph |
| Ugly | Meaning elf | Anglo-Saxon oughlic, ough and lic meaning like |
| Ugh! | Fear | Old Norse meaning fear. |

Theme of your chapter: Modes of travel

Summarised by: Lucy

| Word or phrase | Original meaning | Notes about its origin (Fr, Latin, Old English, etc) |
|----------------|---|---|
| Automobile | Self moving. | Greek <i>automatos</i> (<i>move by oneself</i>) |
| Car | A wheeled vehicle. | Latin <i>carrus</i> (<i>vehicle</i>) |
| Caravan | A group of travelers that might group together to cross a dangerous desert. | Persian <i>karwan</i> |
| Career | A race track along which horses and chariots charged. | Latin <i>carruss</i> |
| Caricature | Exaggerated pictures of people loaded onto and carried around in carts for public approval or ridicule. | Latin <i>carrus</i> |
| Chauffer | A driver of an early steam engine vehicle who would usually stoke the engine himself. | Latin (<i>to make hot</i>) |
| Hack (Hackney) | A type of horse from the place of the same name which were often hired out and subjected to tiring, repetitive, dull work. | Old English |
| Jeep | General purpose vehicle (GP). | (American English military slang-assimilation) |
| Juggernaut | A huge wagon designed to carry an idol of the god Krishna in India. Devotees of the God sacrificed themselves under its wheels. | Hindi <i>jagannath</i> |
| Limousine | A motor car with a closed body and separate hood. | French <i>limousin</i> (<i>French province in which people were fond of wearing hooded coats</i>) |
| Litter | A bed. | Anglo- French <i>litere</i> Old French <i>litiere</i> Latin <i>lectus</i> |
| Tandem | Carriage pulled by horses harnessed one behind the other. | Latin <i>tandem</i> (<i>at length</i>) |
| Tractor | Something that pulls. | Latin <i>tractus</i> |

Theme of your chapter: Time
Summarised by: Scott Willett

| Word or phrase | Original meaning | Notes about its origin (Fr, Latin, Old English, etc) |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. Spring | To burst forth | Old English |
| 2. Summer | Half year | Anglo-Saxon (<i>sumer</i>); but also Sanskrit <i>sama</i> meaning half-year |
| 3. Autumn | Drying up season | Latin |
| 4. Winter | To be wet | Anglo-Saxon |
| 5. Yule | To make merry | Anglo-Saxon |
| 6. Holiday | Holy day | Anglo-Saxon |
| 7. Day | To burn | Anglo-Saxon |
| 8. Night | Evening | Anglo-Saxon |
| 9. Ephemeral | Of one day's duration | Greek |
| 10. Diurnal | Daily | Latin |
| 11. Anniversaries | To turn years | Latin |
| 12. Era | A number expressed in figures | Latin |
| 13. Sabbath | Rest | Hebrew |
| 14. Minute | Small | Latin |
| 15. Millennium | One thousand | Latin |

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