

Words from Names

WORD LIST

atlas
Pyrrhic victory

epicure
quixotic

galvanize
saturnine

jovial
Sisyphean

nemesis
solecism

Many English words come from names of people and places. The *petri* dish that scientists use to culture bacteria is named for Julius Petri, the German bacteriologist who invented it. The term *Ferris wheel* comes from the American engineer, George Ferris. *Tuxedo* comes from a country club in New York.

- 1. atlas** (ăt'ləs) *noun* from *Atlas*, a mythological Greek giant
A book or bound collection of maps
• We consulted two **atlases** to chart our trip of the California coast.
- 2. epicure** (ěp'ī-kyōor') *noun* from *Epicurus*, a Greek philosopher
A person with refined taste, especially in food and drink
• The **epicure** rejected the waiter's suggestion of a cheeseburger and ordered a fine steak.
epicurean *adjective* These rare mushrooms are an **epicurean** delight.
epicurean *noun* The **epicureans** gathered at the famous restaurant.
- 3. galvanize** (găl'və-nīz') *verb* from *Luigi Galvani*, an Italian scientist
To stimulate or urge into action; to spur
• A recent increase in roadside litter **galvanized** the Keep Our Town Beautiful committee.
- 4. jovial** (jō'vē-əl) *adjective* from Latin *Iovis*, "Jupiter," king of the Roman gods
Jolly; filled with good cheer
• Plenty of food and lots of jokes contributed to the **jovial** atmosphere at the party.
joviality *noun* Ben, known for his **joviality**, always managed to cheer up his friend.
- 5. nemesis** (něm'ī-sīs) *noun* from *Nemesis*, the Greek goddess of righteous revenge
a. A source of harm or ruin; an opponent that cannot be defeated
• A harsh winter proved to be the **nemesis** of the invading army.
b. One who inflicts retribution or vengeance
• Lucy's **nemesis** spread gossip about her every day in a desperate attempt to get back at her.



Atlas

Epicureanism is the philosophy that happiness, or the avoidance of pain, is the highest good.

Jovian is an adjective that means "of or relating to the planet Jupiter."

6. **Pyrrhic victory** (pĭr'ĭk vĭk'tə-rē) *noun* from *Pyrrhus*, a king in ancient Greece
A victory that is offset by staggering losses or that comes at a huge price
• The general looked upon his few surviving soldiers and realized that he had won only a **Pyrrhic victory**.

7. **quixotic** (kwĭk-sŏt'ĭk) *adjective* from *Don Quixote*, a 1604 Spanish novel
Dedicated to unreachable goals; idealistic but not practical
• Marc spent four years in a **quixotic** struggle to block construction of a highway through his neighborhood.

8. **saturnine** (săt'ər-nĭn') *adjective* from *Saturn*, the Roman god of agriculture
Gloomy and sullen
• Sitting alone, the **saturnine** old man pondered his lifetime of bad luck.

9. **Sisyphean** (sĭs'ə-fē'an) *adjective* from *Sisyphus*, a mythological Greek king
Requiring endless effort; without result or success
• Trying to rake the leaves on a windy day is a **Sisyphean** task.

10. **solecism** (sŏl'ĭ-sĭz'am) *noun* from *Soloi*, an Athenian colony where an improper form of dialect was spoken
a. A nonstandard or improper use of language
• *Ain't* is a **solecism** in formal situations.
b. A mistake in manners or behavior
• Spearing meat with a knife and then lifting it to your mouth is considered a **solecism** in polite society.

Saturn was associated with lead, so *saturnine* can also refer to the effects produced by absorbing lead, as in lead poisoning.

WORD ENRICHMENT

How our months were named

Many of the English (and Spanish) names for the twelve months used in a calendar year come from ancient Rome or the Latin language. Janus, the Roman god of doors and gates, gives us January, the “door” to a new year. February takes its name from a purification ceremony performed by the Sabine people, who lived in what is now central Italy and who were conquered by the Romans. March, a month that often brings “violent” weather, is named for Mars, the Roman god of war. The origin of April is uncertain, but May probably comes from Maia, a goddess of fertility and spring. June comes from Juno, empress of the Roman gods.

Not all of our names for months come from mythology or ancient ceremonies. July is named for Julius Caesar. August is named for Augustus, the first Roman emperor. September, October, November, and December come from the Julian calendar, which Julius Caesar introduced in 46 BC. In this calendar, September was the seventh month, October came eighth, November was ninth, and December was tenth. *Sept-* means “seven,” *oct-* (as in *octopus*) means “eight,” *nov-* means “nine,” and *dec-* means “ten.” Though we now use the Gregorian calendar, the last four months of the year retain their names from the Julian calendar.

WRITE THE CORRECT WORD

Write the correct word in the space next to each definition.

- | | |
|--|---|
| _____ 1. a person with fine taste in food | _____ 6. a very costly success |
| _____ 2. requiring endless, useless effort | _____ 7. an opponent or a force that can't be conquered |
| _____ 3. improper language | _____ 8. seeking an unrealistic goal |
| _____ 4. a book of maps | _____ 9. gloomy |
| _____ 5. cheerful | _____ 10. to spur to action |

COMPLETE THE SENTENCE

Write the letter for the word that best completes each sentence.

- _____ 1. Nature-lovers hope that their attempts to prevent mass extinctions are not _____.
- a. galvanized b. jovial c. saturnine d. quixotic
- _____ 2. None of us knew exactly where Timbuktu is, so we consulted a(n) _____.
- a. atlas b. epicure c. solecism d. nemesis
- _____ 3. The only good thing about the oil spill is that it could _____ leaders to improve shipping safety.
- a. galvanize b. saturnine c. epicure d. nemesis
- _____ 4. Every day there are more and more dirty dishes to wash—truly a(n) _____ task.
- a. epicurean b. jovial c. Sisyphian d. galvanized
- _____ 5. Committing a(n) _____ can be very embarrassing, especially at formal gatherings.
- a. nemesis b. solecism c. atlas d. epicure
- _____ 6. His _____ expression was fitting for a person scarred by life's hardships.
- a. epicurean b. jovial c. saturnine d. quixotic
- _____ 7. Most popular superheroes have at least one evil _____.
- a. epicure b. atlas c. solecism d. nemesis
- _____ 8. The family reunion was a _____ event with much laughter and happiness.
- a. jovial b. Sisyphian c. quixotic d. saturnine
- _____ 9. Uncle Marcel is a master chef who prepares foods that are _____ treats.
- a. Sisyphian b. solecistic c. jovial d. epicurean
- _____ 10. The wealthy businessman's success was a _____ because his complete devotion to work cost him his family's love.
- a. Sisyphian task b. Pyrrhic victory c. quixotic quest d. jovial solecism

Challenge: The _____ appearance of the tall, lanky stranger contrasted sharply with the _____ of the others, who chatted happily at the dinner table.

- _____ a. quixotic...nemesis b. epicurean...solecism c. saturnine...joviality

History Lives in Language

History comes alive through words whenever we use an *atlas*, read about a *quixotic* campaign, or find ourselves in a *jovial* mood. Many of our words are taken from the names of people, places, ancient gods, or fictional characters.

(1) The word *jovial* comes from Jupiter, the Roman king of the gods. (His Greek name was Zeus.) The planet named after him was supposed to have been the source of joy. Perhaps this is because the god Jupiter enjoyed playing practical jokes, which certainly amused him, if not always his victims.

In contrast, Saturn, the Roman god of agriculture, was thought to be stern and serious. (In Greek mythology, his name was Khronos.) (2) The planet named for this god was believed to spread a *saturnine* mood. The word *Saturday* also comes from Saturn.

According to Greek and Roman mythology, those who offended the gods suffered horrible punishments. Sisyphus was a cruel king who mocked the gods. (3) As a result, he was doomed to a *Sisyphean* task: endlessly rolling a heavy boulder up a hill. Each time he reached the top, the boulder came crashing down. Atlas, a Titan (a mythological giant) who fought the gods and lost, was made to carry the world on his shoulders. In 1636, mapmaker Gerhardus Mercator put a drawing of Atlas, supporting the world, on the front of his books of maps. (4) As a result, this type of reference work has come to be called an *atlas*.

In Greek mythology, Nemesis was a goddess who personified righteous anger and revenge against those with too much pride. Because she had much work to do on Earth, she lived among the people rather than on Mount Olympus. (5) Ancient Greeks feared the goddess as much as people today might fear a modern-day *nemesis*.

The names of historical figures have also become words used in modern-day English. The Greek

philosopher Epicurus, who lived about 2,300 years ago, emphasized the importance of enjoying life. He once said, "The root of all good is the pleasure of the stomach." (6) Modern-day *epicureans* would obviously agree.

In 280–279 BC, Pyrrhus, a Greek king, defeated the invading Romans at Heraclea and Asculum. Unfortunately, the loss of life that his troops suffered was so great that he said, "One more such victory and we are lost." (7) This gave rise to the term *Pyrrhic victory*.

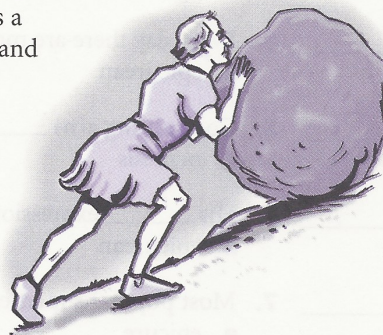
The city of Soloi was a colony of ancient Athens, probably located in present-day Turkey. The Solois people developed their own dialect, which was regarded with great scorn by the Athenians. (8) The Athenians coined the term *solecism*, to emphasize their displeasure.

Literature and science have also contributed words to English. In the 1700s, Italian scientist Luigi Galvani discovered that he could make the legs of a frog "jump" by applying an electrical charge to its spinal cord.

(9) His name lives on in the word *galvanize*.

In Miguel Cervantes's classic Spanish novel, *Don Quixote*, the hero develops an overactive imagination from reading romantic novels. He decides to become a knight who travels the world, performing noble deeds.

(10) But he is a *quixotic* character. He rides a broken-down horse, is crowned with a washbasin, mistakes a windmill for a giant, and rescues a peasant girl whom he believes to be a noble lady. Assisted by the ever-practical Sancho Panza, Quixote has come to symbolize blind idealism.



Each sentence below refers to a numbered sentence in the passage. Write the letter of the choice that gives the sentence a meaning that is closest to the original sentence.

- _____ 1. The word for _____ comes from Jupiter, the Roman king of the gods.
a. secretive b. powerful c. cheerful d. fierce
- _____ 2. The planet named for this god was believed to spread a(n) _____ mood.
a. gloomy b. silly c. relaxed d. idealistic
- _____ 3. Sisyphus was doomed to a(n) _____ task.
a. simple b. short-lived c. difficult, unwelcome d. endless, unsuccessful

- _____ 4. As a result, this type of reference work has come to be called a _____.
 a. map collection b. public library c. practical choice d. strong opponent
- _____ 5. Greeks feared her as much as people today might fear a modern-day _____.
 a. book of maps b. unbeatable foe c. Luigi Galvani d. impossible dream
- _____ 6. Modern-day _____ would obviously agree.
 a. mapmakers b. food lovers c. sociable philosophers d. idealists
- _____ 7. This gave rise to the term meaning "_____ victory."
 a. barely a b. overwhelming c. endless d. costly
- _____ 8. The Athenians coined the term for _____.
 a. unbeatable enemy b. similar language c. unreachable goal d. unacceptable language
- _____ 9. Thus, his name lives on in the word meaning "_____."
 a. stimulate to act b. slow down c. challenge to race d. mistake in manners
- _____ 10. But he is a(n) _____ character.
 a. devoted b. realistic c. impractical d. comic

Indicate whether the statements below are TRUE or FALSE according to the passage.

- _____ 1. According to myth, both Atlas and Sisyphus were punished by the gods.
- _____ 2. Athenians regarded citizens of the Soloi colony as models of proper language.
- _____ 3. Greek philosophers were devoted solely to the life of the mind, not to the pleasures of the senses.

FINISH THE THOUGHT

Complete each sentence so that it shows the meaning of the italicized word.

1. The *nemesis* of the superhero _____

2. A *quixotic* venture would be _____

WRITE THE DERIVATIVE

Complete the sentence by writing the correct form of the word shown in parentheses. You may not need to change the form that is given.

- _____ 1. Whenever we travel, Dad likes to take along several _____. (*atlas*)
- _____ 2. Professor Moriarity was Sherlock Holmes's _____. (*nemesis*)
- _____ 3. When a commander succeeds in taking control of an enemy fort while losing most of his soldiers in the process, he has won a _____. (*Pyrrhic victory*)

- _____ 4. When in a foreign country, it is easy to commit _____. (*solecism*)
- _____ 5. The chef traveled the world seeking _____ delights. (*epicure*)
- _____ 6. Because of his _____, Jose was invited to a lot of parties. (*jovial*)
- _____ 7. Joan is a _____ character; she is always taking up lost causes. (*quixotic*)
- _____ 8. The coach's pep talk _____ the team's defense. (*galvanize*)
- _____ 9. Because of my uncle's _____ personality, I usually avoided him at family gatherings. (*saturnine*)
- _____ 10. Last winter, keeping the driveway clear of snow was a _____ task. (*Sisyphean*)

FIND THE EXAMPLE

Choose the answer that best describes the action or situation.

- _____ 1. A result of *galvanizing*
a. rest b. life c. action d. sleep
- _____ 2. A common *solecism*
a. I don't need any. b. I don't got none. c. I don't have any. d. I don't want it.
- _____ 3. A frequent feature of *joviality*
a. deep sleep b. annoying whine c. sour expression d. hearty laughter
- _____ 4. A task for which you'd likely use an *atlas*
a. planning a trip b. pressing flowers c. leveling a table d. lifting weights
- _____ 5. The most likely place to find an *epicure*
a. five-star restaurant b. pizza place c. fast-food restaurant d. hot-dog stand
- _____ 6. Likely result of a *Pyrrhic victory*
a. joyful dancing b. mixed emotions c. widespread smiles d. lottery tickets
- _____ 7. Something a *nemesis* wants
a. revenge b. athletic ability c. good food d. help
- _____ 8. Something a *saturnine* person does often
a. laughs b. relaxes c. jokes d. mopes
- _____ 9. An example of a *Sisyphean* task
a. writing a story b. dancing a jig c. running a mile d. filling a leaky barrel
- _____ 10. The best description of a *quixotic* person
a. negative b. average c. unrealistic d. achievable