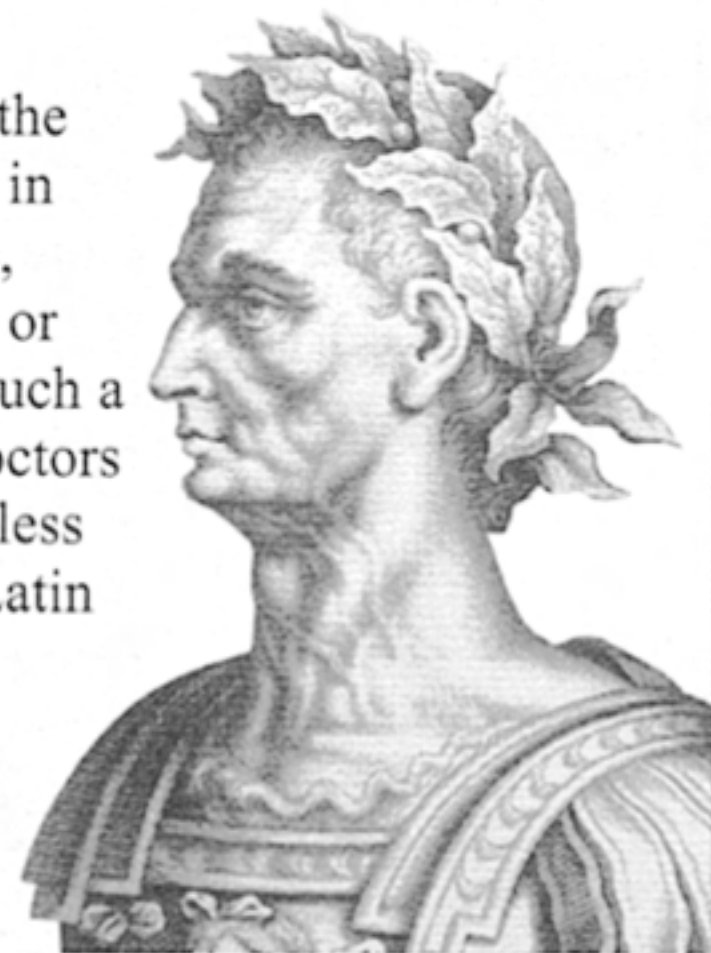


LATIN—A LIVING LANGUAGE

This reader, and many others I'm sure, have an abiding interest in language and just how the words we use were developed. It's called the study of *etymology*. Latin is alive and well in all English-speaking countries as well as the lands of the Romance languages – Italy, France, Portugal, Spain and Romania. Scholars believe that at least 60% of our words come directly or indirectly from the ancient Romans. I've always regretted not taking Latin in school as it's such a great foundation for learning vocabulary and increasing word power. Despite the fact that doctors and lawyers use Latin every day and that Latin phrases flourish in our language, it is taught less and less in our schools today. We've noted here a few Latin words along with examples of Latin "rooting" (excerpted from Eugene Maleska's *A Pleasure in Words*), so you can appreciate how much Latin has impacted English.



ROOTS

dic, dict ("to say")

scrib, script ("to write")

spec, spect ("to look at")

mov, mot ("to move")

ROOT WORDS

diction, edict, indict, indicate, contradict, dictionary, benediction, valedictory

scribe, scribble, inscribe, subscribe, prescribe, describe, transcribe, ascribe, script, scriptures, circumscribe, postscript, inscription, description, transcript, conscription

spectacle, spectator, inspection, respect, suspect, prospect, speculate, introspection, retrospect, aspect, spectrum, circumspect, expect, perspective

move, remove, remote, motion, motor, movement, commotion, emotion, demote, promote, motel, motivate, automotive

AS THE ROMANS SAID IT

- **ROTA** in early Rome was "a wheel." Later, by metonymy, it came to mean "a vehicle with wheels; a chariot." It also came to signify "the disk of the sun," and Ovid even called it "the wheel or rack of love." *The Sacred Roman Rota* is a tribunal of prelates serving as an appeals court. But in a nonecclesiastical sense of a *rota* is a roster or list of names. It's also a round of golf tournaments. Some descendants of that Roman wheel are *rotate, rotund, rotunda, round, roulette* and *rotor*. It's easy to see why *rodeo* comes from this same source. In Spanish (and also in one of its English uses) it means "roundup." In New England a *rotary* is a traffic circle. And the members of *Rotary International* owe their allegiance to *rota*, too. The name sprang up because the original members of the club rotated the task of playing host.
- **CURRICULUM** is "a body of courses offered by an educational institution." Once more we encounter a noun taken bodily from Latin but changed in meaning through the years. The early Romans called a race-course a *curriculum*. Later it became the running itself and finally a career. Anyone who has tried to

keep up with competitors in his vocation will understand how appropriate that particular definition is! And college students will agree that their *curriculum* keeps them running. This word, by the way, has a slew of relatives – all coming from *currere* ("to run"). Consider *current, currency, concur, occur, recur* and even *course, concourse, discourse* and *recourse*.

- **PENDULUM** is the neuter term of *pendulus* ("hanging"). The eventual source is the verb *pendere* ("to hang"). From this root, and its sister verb ("to weigh"), we also obtain such words as *pendant, impend* and a host of others.
- **VACARE**. The parental verb is *vacare* ("to be empty"). Thus when a position is vacated, it is emptied and when people are evacuated from a house, they are literally emptied out. The Romans also defined *vacare* as "to be free from labor or unoccupied." And so *vacationers* truly live in a *vacuum*!

For the Latin experts, if there are errors in the above, I plead *non culpabilis* and ask you to please *indictum sit*.