

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.

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 nicodéme 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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