



Words and Ideas

By William J. Dominik

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Unlike most etymology textbooks, this one presents the words studied in the context of the ideas in which the words functioned. Instead of studying endless lists of word roots, suffixes, and prefixes in isolation, the words are enlivened by the social, literary, and cultural media in which they were used. Readers are introduced to a wide variety of topics from classical antiquity, entertained by clever cartoons, and are able to practice their word knowledge with exercises.

Special Features

An etymology textbook that also introduces students to a wide variety of topics in classical antiquity

Chapters on Mythology, Medicine, Politics and Law, Commerce and Economics, Philosophy and Psychology, History

Introduction to word building

Exercises throughout

Illustrations of ancient artifacts

Clever cartoons on word origins

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Words and Ideas By William J. Dominik Bibliography

- Rank: #456711 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers
- Published on: 2002-12-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.75" h x 5.75" w x .75" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 281 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

In *Words and Ideas*, editor William J. Dominik has created an introductory Classics curriculum within the context of a vocabulary builder and beginning etymology textbook. Not only is *Words and Ideas* multipurpose in scope, but it is also suitable for a variety of learning situations, from autodidacts yes, you can sit down on your own with *Words and Ideas* to homeschooling parents to regular high school or college teachers.

Supplementing each chapter of Dominik's *Words and Ideas*, are bibliographies, exercises, websites, and invaluable Word for Word cartoon strips. *Words and Ideas* can be read in almost any order or, if it's for personal interest, even randomly, but structured approaches would work better in the classroom. For this reason, Dominik suggests two structured approaches: either to focus first on the first three chapters to build up some basic understanding of word building before proceeding to the Greek and Roman culture and further word building sections or to study the first three chapters in conjunction with the remaining nine cultural chapters.

The first three chapters of *Words and Ideas* introduce word building, with essential, basic, explained terms like base, prefix, and suffix. Dominik explains the creation of hybrid words like sociology, which comes from a Latin base and a Greek ending, and the twisted paths by which Latin and Greek words find their way into our English vocabulary. Dominik says about sixty percent of words in common use in English are derived from Latin.... Dominik's writing style in this potentially confusing area is clear and precise.

Starting with Chapter 4, Dominik focused on Greco-Roman culture, the differences between Greece and Rome, and the essential words used to describe first mythology, then medicine, politics and law, commerce and economics, philosophy and psychology, and history. In the process, Dominik summarizes:

- the creation stories and major myths of the Greek gods and heroes
- the change from magic to reason-based medicine
- the development of the ancient city, democracy and the effect of Roman law on American and South African law
- financial systems and trade, including slavery and ancient machinery
- the concept of knowledge, with a quick look at individual pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates, the Stoic, Epicurean and Cynic philosophers, with a Freudian excursus, and finally
- the contributions made by historians to our knowledge of times past with a look at and occasional passage written by the ancient philosophers Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius, Josephus, Caesar, Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus.

Cartoons drive points home quickly and provide easily remembered anecdotes about etymology. Did you know the tree-filled area we know of as an arbor does not come from the Latin word for tree? The (translated into English) literary passages are short. Dominik makes ample use of tables, lists, and bullet points, with occasional illustrations. These techniques make *Words and Ideas* easy and appealing to use. To keep *Words and Ideas* short, there is no answer key. This should not be a problem if the student (and homeschooling or other teacher) reads the chapter carefully and keeps a dictionary with etymologies handy.

Words and Ideas may look confusing and not at all like your vision of a word builder, but if you dig through the wealth of clearly presented material and challenging exercises, I think you will agree that you have found a gem. --N. S. Gill, About.com

...Dominik's stated aim is to broaden the vocabulary and cultural literacy of students within the context of Classics and other disciplines. The first three chapters explain the basics of word building: he shows how specific nouns, verbs, and adjectives relate to each other and how words can be broken down into the base, prefix, and suffix. The subsequent chapters contain overviews of classical mythology, law, medicine, history, commerce, philosophy, and psychology each followed by tables of English/American words relevant to that particular topic, all with their classical derivations. The arrangement of words into their subject disciplines is why the book is different from other etymological handbooks though there is an alphabetical index if you need it. As an example, the medicine chapter will explain the difference between optometrist, optician, oculist, and ophthalmologist, and the precise meanings of antimelanin and epinephrine. Latin - and Greek-less medical students might find an intensive weekend on this chapter a useful shortcut to medicalese.

The book is attractive, compact, and contains useful extras: bibliographies, related web-sites, lists of Latin/Greek phrases and reasonably amusing cartoons which serve to break up the text. Dominik suggests using the first three chapters as a course book and there are exercises at the end of all the chapters. --Sue Pontin, JACT

Users Review

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