

★ The Illustrated Etymologicon: A Circular Stroll Through the Hidden Connections of the English Language

Mark Forsyth

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The Illustrated Etymologicon is a dizzying, delightful trip through the evolution and accidents of language.

You could not be *impassive* or *loquacious* without John Milton; they're two of the many states that the puritanical poet coined terms to describe. The sky and clouds were once the same; and the *guillotine*, a symbol of viciousness, was so named to commemorate a man's compassion. You can't *tootle* or *trample* just a little; and *turkeys* are so called because of a geographical misunderstanding, just like the pejorative for Roma rests in mistaken beliefs about the travelers' origins (not all Egyptian after all).

These are a few of the truths revealed in the tenth-anniversary edition of linguaphile Mark Forsyth's beguiling, amusing, winding story about how words came into being. With a flow that seems somewhat extemporaneous, bound only by the pleasure taken in words' connections and histories, it winks and reveals the stories behind a bevy of terms that we take for granted. There are a fair number of scatological, gross, and biological explanations—you'll be shocked to learn how many words tie back to flatulence. Pen-and-ink drawings, their style steampunk and charming, illuminate this glorious exploration, which runs the *gamut* from *gambling* to *astrology* to *bucks*, rounding it all out with a fun quiz to further tickle linguistic interests.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (March / April 2023)

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