WHERE THEY ARE COMING FROM

Leonard R. N. Ashley
Brooklyn, New York

Some pretty common words have unexpectedly uncommon origins. Here’s a little romp in the usually dry-as-dust field of etymology (from Greek for the origin or literal sense of a word), Quintillian’s *originatio*. See how many you can get. You may think that the clues get progressively harder.

1. amber (Greek)
2. cock’s comb (Old French)
3. elk (Afrikaans)
4. idol’s temple (Persian)
5. purse (Irish)
6. medical office (Greek)
7. ill-omened (Latin)
8. payment again (Old English)
9. ghost (Latin)
10. swamp tree (Creek)
11. awaken (Old French)
12. emptiness and desolation (Hebrew)
13. blackberry bush (Old English)
14. musty juice (Latin)
15. coracle (Arabic)
16. disturbingly excite (Icelandic)
17. underhanded dealing (Scottish)
18. seclusion (Persian)
19. speck (Dutch)
20. Islamic ascetic (Turkish)
21. story to be read (Latin)
22. triangular frame for candles from “wolf” (Samnite)
23. American goose (Ojibway)
24. fern (Old High German)
25. brown spot (Old Norse)
26. fair weather (Spanish)
27. snatchers (Greek)
28. learner (Latin)
29. picture to hang up (Japanese)
30. inanimate object (Old Frisian)