

## MORE ETYMOLOGICAL CURIOSITIES

ANIL

Perth, Australia

### • SEXTUPLY WEIRD

**whetstone** Wets t' hone.

This <sup>1</sup>homophonic <sup>2</sup>anagram <sup>3</sup>definition is already highly unusual but goes on to become a perhaps unique curiosity in its <sup>4</sup>etymology, a <sup>5</sup>paradox. Neither **stone** nor **whet** is related to **hone**, yet hone as a noun *means* whetstone and comes from a word that *means* stone (OE *han*) and from an earlier word that *means* whetstone (Skt. *sana*)! **Stone** instead traces back to I-E *stai-*, *sti-*, **whet** is from OE/Germanic words meaning sharp(en), and **wet** has the same origin as water, but here it usually means wet with oil. <sup>6</sup>In addition, the anagram is a near charade, simply moving one letter (h).

### • SAME BUT DIFFERENT

**Defer** and **deter** are unrelated yet have the same definition, **put off**, in two different senses.



### • QUADRUPLE PUN?

**Websters weave webs, weft/woof interwoven.**

This nearly tautological definition of webster is composed only of related words, not surprisingly. What's surprising is the quadruple pun. Webster is an old word for **weaver**, interpretable as: 1) human weaver; 2) spider; 3) surfer, web surfer, webmaster; 4) Noah Webster's alphabetical web.

### • QUADRUPLE COINCIDENTAL SIMILARITIES

The word **bound** has four similar meanings from four unrelated origins.

- 1) obliged, fastened <past tense of bind <band (fasten).
- 2) boundary <OF *bonde*, *borne*, bone.
- 3) intending, toward <OIce *buinn*, *bun* (get ready, dwell).
- 4) leap <F. *bondir*, rebound, spring, make a resounding noise; related to bomb.

The meanings overlap heavily, all implying limitation, edge or aim/move toward. 1-2 are actually opposites of 3-4, stationary vs. moving. Compare **rack** in the Aug.'18 Mean Sidewalks.

### • 2 TRIPLE COINCIDENTAL SIMILARITIES

1) three unrelated but related-looking word groups all meaning divide/divided/division:

**separate** <pare.

**sept 1, septate, septum** <L. *saeptus*, enclose.

**sept 2** (tribe division) <sect/ion.



2) **found** is 3 homographic cognates, all ≈ bring into being or awareness.)

- a) find, past tense <OE *finden*, come upon.
- b) base, establish <bottom, lay foundation.
- c) mold, cast (metal, in a foundry) <mix, melt together.

• MORE SINGLE COINCIDENTAL (etymologically unrelated) SELF-SIMILARITIES

**briar** plants: 1) thorny bush; 2) also **brier**, heath plant > brier pipe.

**keel** marine vessels: 1) spine of a ship, a ship (poetic); 2) a type of boat, a barge.

**meal** food: 1) ground grain; 2) a repast <measure.

**muse** thought-producers: n.) goddess, poetic inspiration; vb) ponder, entertain (an idea), amuse.

**policy** plans, practices: 1) government program, plan of action; 2) insurance contract

**tarry** delay(er)s: 1) delay; 2) like tar (a delayer).

And a coincidental self antonym:

**yard** size opposites: 1) something large (lawn or garden) vs. 2) something small (3 ft. length).

(Yard 2 once meant penis! What?? Of an elephant or whale?)

• EVIL METALS

Tho not related, **cobalt** and **nickel** were both named after demons by superstitious miners. Nickel first meant demon or the Devil, Old **Nick**. Cobalt is from **kobold**, a goblin or demon.

