

QUOTIDIAN

JANUARY 24, 2006 VOL. 1 NO. 15



PRELUDE

After an inexcusable absence from my desk, perpetuated in no small part by the madness of the holidays, I have decided it is once again time to further enlighten you, my loyal readers. Over Christmas, I received a book that will help me achieve that goal: *Oxymoronica*. It is a collection of paradoxical parables that bundle advice and humor in a few choice words. All three quotes this week come from my new treasure trove. As a resolution, this year I have decided to be more disciplined as an editor. I think everyone would be better served by additional doses of the *Quotidian*, so expect to receive a new issue every two weeks hence. Enjoy.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"I often marvel that while each man loves himself more than anyone else, he sets less value on his own estimate than on the opinions of others."

—Marcus Aurelius,
in *Meditations*

"As a rule, what is out of sight disturbs men's minds more seriously than what they see."

—Julius Caesar,
in *Gallic Wars*

"Too much liberty leads both men and nations to slavery."

—Cicero,
in *De Republica*

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

JANUARY 24, A.D. 41: Gaius Caesar Germanicus (better known as Caligula) is assassinated by members of his Praetorian Guard (an elite unit of handpicked soldiers that acted as bodyguards for the emperor). As a small child, Caligula accompanied his parents on military campaigns in Germania, where his mother often dressed him in a miniature soldier's costume. The soldiers, amused by this display, nicknamed Gaius *Caligula*, meaning "little boots" (from *caliga*, the word for the familiar brown sandal worn by Roman soldiers).

Relatively little is known about Caligula, but he is widely regarded by history as a prat, given to extravagance and depravity. The tales range from the outrageous (that he appointed his horse to the Senate) to the lascivious (that he had sexual relations with his sisters). Contemporary historians speculate that these unsavory habits were the result of encephalitis, a swelling of the brain brought about by viral infection. *Continued on page 2, column 1*

3 WORDS

Memorize these by week's end and you shall quickly develop an enviable lexicon.

This week's theme: common Latin phrases.

alma mater (AL-muh MAU-ter)
noun – *literally*, "fostering mother"

1. a school or university which one has attended or from which one has graduated
2. the song or hymn of such school

Ex. I recently sent a donation to my alma mater.

sine qua non (sin-i kwa nAWN, KNOWN) *noun* – *literally*, "without which not"

1. an indispensable or essential thing

Ex. For nearly 20 years, Alan Greenspan has been the sine qua non of the Federal Reserve Board.

non sequitur (non SEK-wet-er)
noun – *literally*, "it does not follow"

1. an inference that does not follow from the premises
2. a statement that does not follow logically from anything previously said

Ex. A well-timed non sequitur can be humorous, but an ill-timed one will make you look like a fool.

Continued from page 1, column 1

Whatever the cause of Caligula's malevolence, by 41 a lot of people had had enough. Caligula's longtime friend Cassius Chaerea, whom Caligula mocked relentlessly for his effeminacy, perpetuated a conspiracy to have the emperor murdered.

After the dirty deed was done, Cassius and another killed Caligula's wife Caesonia and their infant daughter Julia. Cassius, who did not enjoy sufficient support among the Praetorians, was tried and executed with his own murder weapon for his crimes.



Sources: wikipedia.org, vroma.org, roman-emperors.org.

ETYMOLOGY 101

The origin of: ain't

As a kid, you probably heard the expression "ain't ain't a word." This was usually followed up by a claim that you couldn't find the word in the dictionary. In the years that have passed since this childhood taunt, I've learned that ain't *is* a word, and has been listed in the dictionary for at least 35 years—the age of my oldest dictionary. Though widely reprehended by self-proclaimed pedants everywhere, the contraction has at least three meanings: is not, am not, and are not. Although the meaning of *ain't* is clear, its origins aren't.

Webster's places ain't's origins after 1660, when the first printed evidence of negative contractions appeared. Among the defunct are *ben't*, *an't*, *en't* and *han't*. These were either replaced by newer contractions or went out of use. Others, like *can't*, *shan't*, *don't* and *won't*, are still in use today. The precursor to ain't was *an't*, which means "am not." It first appeared in 1695, in William Congreve's *Love for Love*. The transition from "am not" to "an't" is easy to discern: "am not" was first abbreviated to *amn't*, then the *m* and *n*—which sound familiar, were combined. *Aren't* sounds a lot like *an't* when pronounced with a British accent.

Ain't was first used in print in a 1778 novel by Fanny Burney entitled *Evelina*, and historians have since struggled to understand how the "i" found its way into *an't*. Since the word *ain't* and its precursor are forms of speech, there is relatively little printed evidence as to how they evolved. By the end of the 19th century, *an't* had all but disappeared.

The bottom line is, ain't *is* a word, and I'm sure there ain't no situation you couldn't use it in.

Source: *The Merriam-Webster New Book of Word Histories*

PLAIN ENGLISH

Today's Lesson: the meaning of *i.e.* and *e.g.*, and the difference between the two

The Latin abbreviation *i.e.* stands for *id est*, and means "that is." It is used to clarify a sentence.

In contrast, the abbreviation *e.g.* stands for *exempli gratia*, and means "for example." It is used to provide examples in support of a sentence.

Correct uses:

I.E. – The CEO is allowed to use the corporate jet, even when he is not engaged in company business (*i.e.*, he may use it for personal travel).

E.G. – Only non-electronic devices (*e.g.*, pens, pencils, handwritten notes) may be used during the test.

Incorrect uses:

I.E. – Moms typically do all they can to make their children happy (*i.e.*, cooking their favorite meals, buying snacks).

Should be *e.g.*, since the sentence is followed by examples, and not a clarifying statement.

E.G. – People can improve their intelligence by engaging in certain activities (*e.g.*, reading, writing, crossword puzzles, etc.).

Correct use of *e.g.*, but the etc. is redundant and should not be added. *E.g.* by itself says a list of examples will not be exhaustive.

Source: getitwriteonline.com

WELL I'LL BE! THE ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS YOU NEVER ASKED

What does "R.I.P." stand for?

The common belief that the conventional tombstone abbreviation *R.I.P.* stands for "rest in peace" isn't that far removed from the truth. The initials are short for the Latin *requiescat in pace*, which means "may he/she rest in peace." The abbreviation is much more prevalent than the full phrase for two reasons: one is limited space, and the second is cost—engravers typically charge by the letter.

Why do people say "bless you" when you sneeze?

This is one of those questions that doesn't have a straight answer. There are at least three reasons people *used* to say "bless you" or "God bless you" after someone sneezed. The first: a sneeze was often the first sign of a cold or other illness, so a blessing from another was a way of saying "hope it doesn't get worse mate, and God bless you if it does." The second: a sneeze either (a) blasted your soul out of your nostrils or (b) blasted evil spirits out of your nostrils. In the first instance, a "bless you" would act as a ward against the soul escaping; in the second instance, it acted as a ward against demons re-entering the body. The third: it was once believed that a sneeze caused the heart to temporarily stop beating, so a "bless you" was either a plea for the heart to start again or a congrats when it did.

Today, we say "bless you" for none of these reasons. Rather, the phrase has become a perfunctory utterance whose absence is seen as utterly impolite. To test this theory, simply try to not say "bless you" the next time a person sitting next to you lets one loose. After a second or two of discomfort, you'll realize you care nothing for the man's soul, and just don't want to be seen as ill-mannered.

It is interesting to note that most cultures have their own way of saying "bless you." For the Germans, it is *gesundheit*—"I wish you] good health." For the French it is *À tes souhaits*—"to your wishes." The Spaniards and Japanese say different things depending on the number of sneezes:

#	Spanish	means
1	<i>salud</i>	health
2	<i>salud y dinero</i>	money
3	<i>salud y dinero y amor</i>	love
4	<i>alergías</i>	allergies

#	Japanese	means
1	<i>ichi homerarete</i>	once being praised
2	<i>ni kenasare</i>	twice being disparaged
3	<i>san shikarare</i>	thrice being scolded
4	<i>shi kaze hiku</i>	four times catch a cold

Both cultures seem to agree that while sneezing once may be fortuitous, sneezing too many times in a row can be a sign of bad health.

Sources: snopes.com, netlaputa.ne.jp/~tokyo03/e/sneeze_e.html.

TRIVIAL TIDBIT

Keeping up with this week's pseudo-theme of all things Latin, I've included here some additional Latin phrases that are commonly used in speech and writing.

ad hoc (to this thing) – means "for this." An attorney *ad hoc* is one appointed for a special purpose, usually to represent a client in a particular action.

ad hominem (to the person) – an *ad hominem* attack seeks to discredit one's ideas based on the type of person one is.

carpe diem (pluck the day) – commonly translated as "seize the day." Enjoyment of the present without concern for the future.

cave canem (beware of dog) – put it on your fence and astound your neighbors.

deus ex machina (a God from a machine) – a contrived plot resolution. From old Greek plays in which a "God" was lowered by cables upon the stage to save the day.

ipso facto (by the fact itself) – the sale of your property should *ipso facto* end any interest you have in it.

pax vobiscum (peace be with you [all]) – used when speaking to at least two people. When wishing one person farewell, use *pax tecum*.

semper fidelis (always faithful) – the motto of the U.S. Marine Corps, abbreviated *Semper Fi*.

LITERARY GENIUS

Marcus Tullius Cicero is said to have been the greatest Latin orator to have ever lived, and has received credit for passing the tenets of Greek philosophy on to Western Europe. What follows is an example of his immortal prose. It is about two friendships—that between Laelius and Scipio, and that between Cicero and Titus Atticus. Below is a portion of a conversation between Laelius and his sons-in-law Fannius and Scaevola, which Scaevola passed on orally to Cicero.

FROM LAELIUS, OR AN ESSAY ON FRIENDSHIP

by Cicero

I DESIRE IT MAY BE UNDERSTOOD that I am now speaking, not of that inferior species of amity which occurs in the common intercourse of the world (although this, too, is not without its pleasures and advantages), but of that genuine and perfect friendship, examples of which are so extremely rare as to be rendered memorable by their singularity. It is this sort alone that can truly be said to heighten the joys of prosperity, and mitigate the sorrows of adversity, by a generous participation of both; indeed, one of the chief among the many important offices of this connection is exerted in the day of affliction, by dispelling the gloom that overcasts the mind, encouraging the hope of happier times, and preventing the depressed spirits from sinking into a state of weak and unmanly despondence. Whoever is in possession of a true friend sees the exact counterpart of his own soul. In consequence of this moral resemblance between them, they are so intimately one that no advantage can attend either which does not equally communicate itself to both; they are strong in the strength, rich in the opulence, and powerful in the power of each other. They can scarcely, indeed, be considered in any respect as separate individuals, and wherever the one appears the other is virtually present. I will venture even a bolder assertion, and affirm that in despite of death they must both continue to exist so long as either of them shall remain alive; for the deceased may, in a certain sense, be said still to live whose memory is preserved with the highest veneration and the most tender regret in the bosom of the survivor, a circumstance which renders the former happy in death, and the latter honored in life.

If that benevolent principle which thus intimately unites two persons in the bands of amity were to be struck out of the human heart, it would be impossible that either private families or public communities should subsist—even the land itself would lie waste, and desolation overspread the earth. Should this assertion stand in need of a proof, it will appear evident by considering the ruinous consequences which ensue from discord and dissension; for what family is so securely established, or what government fixed upon so firm a basis, that it would not be overturned and utterly destroyed were a general spirit of enmity and malevolence to break forth amongst its members?—a sufficient argument, surely, of the inestimable benefits which flow from the kind and friendly affections.

...

Having frequently, then, turned my thoughts on this subject, the principal question that has always occurred to me is, whether Friendship takes its rise from the wants and weaknesses of man, and is cultivated solely in order to obtain, by a mutual exchange of good offices, those advantages which he could not otherwise acquire? Or whether nature, notwithstanding this beneficial intercourse is inseparable from the connection, previously disposes the heart to engage in it upon a nobler and more generous inducement? In order to determine this question, it must be observed that love is a leading and essential principle in constituting that particular species of benevolence which is termed amity; and although this sentiment may be feigned, indeed, by the followers of those who are courted merely with a view to interest, yet it cannot possibly be produced by a motive of interest alone. There is a truth and simplicity in genuine friendship, an unconstrained and spontaneous emotion, altogether incompatible with every kind and degree of artifice and simulation. I am persuaded, therefore, that it derives its origin not from the indigence of human nature, but from a distinct principle implanted in the breast of man; from a certain instinctive tendency, which draws congenial minds into union, and not from a cool calculation of the advantages with which it is pregnant.

