

QUOTIDIAN

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A WORD OR TWO

It has been a few weeks since the last edition came out, and for that I sincerely apologize. There has been much occupying my time, and I regret that my passion has had to take a backseat to it all. I bring you more of the same, and thankfully without all the holiday connections. Happy reading!

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

“Short is the joy that guilty pleasure brings.”
—Euripides

“It has been my experience that folks who have no vices have very few virtues.”
—Abraham Lincoln

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

JANUARY 31, 1940: Sixty-five year old Ida May Fuller becomes the first recipient of a social security check, in the amount of \$22.54 (check number 00-000-001). She had paid into the social security system for three years, and before she passed away some 35 years later, she was receiving regular payments totaling nearly \$22,000. She later observed: “It wasn’t that I expected anything, mind you, but I knew I’d been paying for something called Social Security and I wanted to ask the people in [my home town] about it.” Source: www.ssa.gov.

FEBRUARY 5, 1631: Roger Williams, an important religious leader in colonial America, spent four years in the Massachusetts Bay colony before inflaming the Puritan oligarchy with his outspoken and colorful attacks on their stringent doctrines regarding religious dissension. Williams was banished from the colony and made his way south, where he established a settlement at the junction of two rivers near Narragansett Bay, located in present-day Rhode Island. He declared the settlement open to all those seeking freedom from the church’s involvement in civil affairs, thus attracting many dissatisfied Puritans. Taking the success of the settlement as a sign from God, Williams named the community “Providence.” Source: www.historychannel.com.

3 WORDS

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

apocryphal (a-POK-ri-ful) *adj.*
1. of doubtful authenticity
2. spurious; false
(He lays claim to this parcel of land with an apocryphal deed)

celerity (se-LER-i-tee) *noun*
1. speed or rapidity of motion
(1. She speaks with great celerity. 2. The army moved toward its target with a celerity previously unimaginable.)

munificent (myoo-NIF-i-cent) *adjective*
1. liberal in giving or bestowing
2. characterized by great generosity
(1. Bill Gates is perhaps the most munificent individual in the world’s history, having contributed billions of his own money to charities worldwide. 2 *as a noun*. She relied on the munificence of her father when she asked for a new pony)



ETYMOLOGY 101

After flipping at random through my favorite online etymology dictionary, I settled on a word not known in the English language prior to World War II.

Everyone is familiar with the Japanese kamikaze pilots of World War II, who flew their planes into American carriers and ships in a desperate attempt to turn the tide of the war. What most people don't know is that the word literally means "divine wind" (from the Japanese kami "god, providence, divine" + kaze "wind").

The word has its basis in the 13th century, when the great and terrible Mongol emperor Kublai Kahn decided to invade Japan. Kahn had already created a reputation as a formidable opponent, and most people thought it best to surrender to his large Mongol armies, rather than risk death and destruction. Kahn set his sights on Japan in 1274, when (after being given the written equivalent of the middle finger by the samurai) he sent a fleet of 800 ships to crush all resistance there. The samurai met the invaders on the shores and forced them to retreat to their ships after the first day; a storm came up the following day, and the fleet retreated to avoid being smashed against the rocks.

Kublai Kahn was furious at his defeat, and ordered an even greater fleet to be assembled—it is said the mountains were stripped of their trees so enough timber could be gathered for the estimated 3,500 ships that were built. The samurai spent this time training, and were eager to meet their opponent once more in battle.

Kahn's second fleet departed in 1281, and once again met furious resistance on the shores of Japan. After a few weeks of intense fighting, a furious storm came up. The Mongols tried to make it out to sea before their ships were smashed against the rocks, but it was in vain. Those who did not drown were cut to pieces by the merciless samurai, and Kublai Kahn never again attempted to take the island.

The samurai, convinced that the storm was sent by the Gods to save their island from invasion, named it "kamikaze," or "Divine Wind." Sources: www.etymonline.com, www.rickriordan.com.



Kublai Kahn (1215-1294)

NEAT-O

THE ORIGIN OF THE 7 DAY WEEK

When you roll out of your driveway at 6 AM on a Monday morning, you're probably not thinking much about why we call that dreaded day "Monday." In fact, you're probably already looking ahead to "Frige's Day." Let me explain.

A long time ago, people thought the earth was flat, and ships would sail right over the edge if they went too far. Back in those days, people thought of the sun, the moon, and the five known planets as Gods, and believed each hour of the day was ruled by one of them. The Egyptians—to whom we owe most of this—believed that Saturn was the furthest from the earth (then supposed to be at the center of the universe), followed by Jupiter, Mars, the sun, Venus, Mercury, and the moon. Since Saturn was the furthest, it got first dibs on the first hour of the first day; Jupiter got the second hour, Mars the third, and so on. After each seven-hour cycle, the cycle would repeat, such that the 8th hour was Saturn's, the 9th Jupiter's, and so on.

The Egyptians also believed that whichever god ruled the first hour ruled the entire day, and so gave the god's name to that day. Hence, Saturn took title to the first day of the week, and the sun took title to the second.

But wait a minute—the sun is fourth in line on the list of planets above, so why does it lay claim to the second day?

This little wrinkle can be explained by the fact that the

24 hour day is not evenly divisible by seven. Recall that Saturn rules the 1st, 8th, 15th and 22nd hours of the day. This means the next planet in line, Jupiter, rules the 2nd, 9th, 16th, and 23rd hours of the day; Mars rules the 3rd, 10th, 17th, and final hour of the day; and the sun rules the first hour of the new day—Sunday. This process repeats, such that each day of the week gets its name from one of the seven celestial bodies known to man in ancient times.

You will notice, however, that in English, we preserve only 3 days of the week for the planets, while the others are dedicated to Norse Gods. Why are the *Norse*, of all people, still alive and well in our language? We can thank the Germanic peoples and the Angles and Saxons for that—back in the 500s, they invaded present day England, bringing with them their own gods, which eventually supplanted the Greco-Roman ones. For example, instead of Tuesday being dedicated to the *Roman* god of war (Mars), it is dedicated to the *Norse* god of war, Tiw (also spelled Tyr). Here is a table for easier comprehension:

<i>English</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon</i>	<i>Latin</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
Saturday	Saturn daeg	Dies Saturni	Sabado
Sunday	Sunnan daeg	Dies Solis	Domingo
Monday	Monan daeg	Dies Lunae	Lunes
Tuesday	Tiwes daeg	Dies Martis	Martes
Wednesday	Wodens daeg	Dies Mercurii	Miercoles
Thursday	Thors daeg	Dies Jovis	Jueves
Friday	Frige daeg	Dies Veneris	Viernes

SUNDAY – Sun’s Day

Sunday gets its name from an obvious source—the sun. The word as it is today is derived from the Anglo-Saxon sun god Sunne, and also from the Scandinavian sun goddess Sunna. Since the sun was considered a great source of life by ancient peoples, it became the first day of the week for many (but not all; recall the Egyptians considered Saturday the first day of the week).

Christians consider Sunday the holiest of days, since it is supposedly the day God rested after creating the earth (hence the common notion that Sunday is the 7th day of the week), and the day Christ rose from the dead.

MONDAY – Moon’s Day

Monday derives its name from the Anglo-Saxon moon god Mona. Note that the Latin and Spanish words for Monday are closely related to “luna” and “lunar,” both Latin words for moon.

TUESDAY – Tiw’s Day

Tuesday is a day of war, at least etymologically speaking. The English word comes from the Anglo-Saxon god Tiw, which is the same as the

Nordic god of war, Tyr. Note that the Latin and Spanish words maintain their original Greco-Roman roots, referring still to the Roman god of war, Mars.

Election day in the United States always falls on a Tuesday (for presidential elections, this has been law since 1845). This is because back when the law was passed, it was figured that many people would need an entire day to travel from their homes to a polling place, and would not wish to leave on a Sunday.

WEDNESDAY – Woden’s Day
 Wednesday falls in the middle of the week (hence the German designation *Mittwoch*—literally, “midweek”), and owes its name to the Nordic god Woden (more commonly known as Odin). The Romans named Wednesday for the messenger god Mercury, and the name is still apparent in the Spanish *Miercoles*.

THURSDAY – Thor’s Day

This day of the week is named after the Norse god of thunder, Thor. The Romans named this day after their own god of thunder, Jupiter (also known as Jove). The latter god still lives on in—you guessed it—the Spanish *Jueves*.

FRIDAY – Frige’s Day

Friday comes from the Anglo-Saxon goddess of love, Frige (or Frigga), who was wife of Woden. The Roman equivalent is Venus, and thanks to the Spanish language, her names lives on to this day as *Viernes*.

Sources: www.wikipedia.org, indepthinfo.com, 12x30.net.

LITERARY GENIUS

The following is a speech given by William Faulkner at a state dinner in Stockholm, Sweden, on the eve of December 10, 1950. Faulkner had traveled to Sweden to accept the Nobel Prize for literature, and he speaks here to the young writer, exhorting him to dedicate himself to his work and write not for glory, but for love.

I DECLINE TO ACCEPT THE END OF MAN

William Faulkner

I FEEL THAT THIS AWARD was not made to me as a man, but to my work—a life's work in the agony and sweat of the human spirit, not for glory and least of all for profit, but to create out of the materials of the human spirit something which did not exist before. So this award is only mine in trust. It will not be difficult to find a dedication for the money part of it commensurate with the purpose and significance of its origin. But I would like to do the same with the acclaim too, by using this moment as a pinnacle from which I might be listened to by the young men and women already dedicated to the same anguish and travail, among whom is already that one who will someday stand here where I am standing.



Our tragedy today is a general and universal physical fear so long sustained by now that we can even bear it. There are no longer problems of the spirit. There is only the question: When will I be blown up? Because of this, the young man or woman writing today has forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat.

He must learn them again. He must teach himself that the basest of all things is to be afraid; and, teaching himself that, forget it forever, leaving no room in his workshop for anything but the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed—love and honor and pity and compassion and sacrifice. Until he does so, he labors under a curse. He writes not of love but of lust, of defeats in which nobody loses anything of value, of victories without hope and, worst of all, without pity or compassion. His griefs grieve on no universal bones, leaving no scars. He writes not of the heart but of the glands.

Until he relearns these things, he will write as though he stood among and watched the end of man. I decline to accept the end of man. It is easy enough to say that man is immortal simply because he will endure: that when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded from the last worthless rock hanging tideless in the last red and dying evening, that even then there will still be one more sound: that of his puny inexhaustible voice, still talking. I refuse to accept this. I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he along among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's, duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.