**Word Meaning Changes**

**Modern translators say "almanac" comes from the Arabic for "weather." But scholars insist the ancient Arabic meaning was "where camels kneel." (L. M. Boyd)**

**In 1711, when work on St. Paul's Cathedral in London was completed and was shown to George I, the King is reported to have exclaimed to its architect, Christopher Wren, that the work was “aweful” and “artificial.” In the eighteenth century, “aweful” meant awe-inspiring, and “artificial” meant full of great art. (David Louis, in Fascinating Facts, p. 17)**

**Back in early Rome, persons seeking public office were required to wear white togas to symbolize that the person did not have any character or reputation stain and thus was worthy of the office. And that's how we got our word candidate. It's derived from the Latin candidatus, meaning "dressed in white." *(Lou Sequin, in Catholic Digest)***

**Before World War II, the word "commando" meant a British unit of about 600 men. After, to most it meant one man. (L. M. Boyd)**

**That word "fond," which now means affectionate, used to mean "silly," "simple" or "crazy." In bygone centuries, to say you were fond of somebody was to say you were a bit foolish about that person. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Your great-great-grandfather stored his car in a "motor house" before it was called a "garage." (L. M. Boyd)**

**Although the word “ghetto” today connotes impoverished urban centers, it originally pertained to quarters where Jews were forced to live, irrespective of social class. In Venice in the early 1500s, Jews were housed on an island with an iron foundry. The Italian word for foundry is gheto. *(Harry Bright & Jakob Anser, in That’s A Fact, Jack!, p. 17)***

**You knew that "goodbye" dates back to "God be with you." But you can see it better in the original spelling: "Godbwye." *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The letter "H" started out as a Phoenician drawing of a fence. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**That word "hick" started out in the 1500s as a nickname for "Richard." It didn't get around to meaning "country bumpkin" until about 1920. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Here’s an example of how much language can change. An English king once said that a building was “awful” and “artificial” – and he meant that as a compliment. The word “awful” once meant “awe-inspiring,” and the word “artificial” meant “full of art.” Now, those words have exactly the opposite meanings. *(Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell, p. 238)***

**Two meals a day was standard until a century ago. "Lunch" had been a word for several hundred years, but the practice of breaking at midday to partake of same didn't get started until about 1890. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**In the English of Olde, "meat" meant any solid food, nothing more specific. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Used to be, a century or so ago, that a "moment" was exactly 1 1/2 minutes. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**"Mrs." started out as the abbreviation for "mistress" and "Mr" for "master." *(L. M. Boyd)***

**It's amazing how everyday words have changed in meaning since first they originated. Take the word naughty. When it first came into use ages ago, it had nothing to do with bad behavior in the sense of "disobedience," "mischievous," or "indecent." Naughty can be traced back to the King James translation of the Old Testament where, in Jeremiah 24:2, it is written "One basket had very good figs. The other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten." The figs in one basket were spoiled and had to be disposed. Back in the 16th century, William Shakespeare used naughty in a new sense in Act 4 of The Merchant of Venice. He wrote of "a good deed in a naughty world." Then the word took on the additional meaning of "corrupt." *(Lou Sequin, in Catholic Digest)***

**Nice, which describes everything and everybody -- has a history going back to the Middle Ages when the word referred to a person who was ignorant, foolish and without sense. It took a while before it became the nice word we use today. *(Lou Sequin, in Catholic Digest)***

**Did you know noon originally was not midday? In Latin, nona, from which we get noon, meant ninth, so noon, then, according to the ancient Romans, was the ninth hour of the day, starting from sunrise. *(Lou Sequin, in Catholic Digest)***

**Would you believe the word omelette originated from the Latin word lamella which meant thin plate? Later, lamella was absorbed into the French, lemelle, meaning "blade of a sword or knife." How it eventually turned into a dish of mixed-up eggs is puzzling. *(Lou Sequin, in Catholic Digest)***

**The word pants was considered a very vulgar word in 1880s Great Britain. (Valmarie Carson, in Tidbits)**

**Original form of phrases:**

**\* Head over heels: was heels over head**

**\* Doubting Thomas: wavering Thomas**

**\* A necessary evil: an evil place, yet necessary**

**\* A drop in the bucket: a drop of a bucket. (World Features Syndicate)**

**Old-timers remember when "software" meant negligees. (Shelby Friedman, in The Saturday Evening Post)**

**What six terms first meant:**

**\* Chuckle -- to laugh convulsively**

**\* Tawdry -- refined**

**\* Enthusiasm -- religious fanaticism**

**\* Vandals -- the brave ones**

**\* Chigger -- any biting insect**

**\* Meteorite -- any object in the sky, including clouds, rain, rainbows, etc. (World Features Syndicate)**

**The Russian thistle changes its name after it dies -- to tumbleweed. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Titles of heads of state change from century to century. "Emperor" was long the most coveted. "King," too, lasted for centuries. "President," "premier" and "prime minister" have had excellent runs. But it's said today's title that's most pleasing, however secretly, to heads of state is "commander in chief." (L. M. Boyd)**

**"I used to feel gay until they told me it didn't mean happy anymore," said a woman to her friend. "And I used to feel cool until I was told it didn't apply to the weather and that I was too old to feel that way. Now when I ask my granddaughter to bring home a turkey from the grocery store, who knows? She might bring home the bag boy." *(Lynne Alpern and Esther Blumenfeld, in Reader's Digest)***

**Times change. It seems the good-old five W's of journalism -- who, what, where, when and why -- have been changed to the four W's. Today, people want the "who, what and with whom." *(Sally Koch, in Poynette, Wisconsin Press)***

**What some words originally meant:**

**\* counterfeit -- legitimate copy**

**\* brave - implied cowardice**

**\* crafty -- word of praise**

**\* enthusiasm -- term of mild abuse. *(Bill Bryson, in The Mother Tongue)***

**What words originally meant:**

**\* noon -- first referred to 2 p.m.**

**\* jungle -- "desert or wasteland"**

**\* peculiar -- "private property"**

**\* janitor -- "a gatekeeper"**

**\* junk -- "old cable or rope"**

**\* pickle -- "spicy sauce served with fowl." *(World Features Syndicate)***

**The "yard" wasn't standardized at 36 inches until 1830. It varied greatly for centuries. For good reason. It started out as the girth of a Saxon. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**"Yule" started out as a 12-day heathen feast. *(L. M. Boyd)***

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