

Webster's Vocabulary Builder

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Introduction

This book is designed to achieve two goals: to add a large number of words to your permanent working vocabulary, and to teach the most useful of the classical word-building roots to help you continue expanding your vocabulary in the future.

In order to achieve these goals, this volume employs an original approach that takes into account how people learn and remember. Many vocabulary builders simply present their words in alphabetical order, many provide little or no discussion of the words and how to use them, and a few even fail to show the kinds of sentences in which the words usually appear. But memorizing a series of random and unrelated things, especially for more than a few hours, can be difficult and time-consuming. The fact is that we tend to remember words easily and naturally when they appear in some meaningful text, when they have been shown to be useful and therefore worth remembering, and when they have been properly explained to us. Knowing precisely how to use a word is just as important as knowing what it means, and this book provides that needed additional information.

Greek and Latin have been the sources of most of the words in the English language. (The third principal source is the family of Germanic languages.) Almost all of these words were added to the language long after the fall of the Roman Empire, and they continue to be added to this day. New words are constantly being invented, and most of them, especially those in the sciences, are still making use of Greek and Latin roots. Many words contain more than one root, as you'll see in the following pages, and some mix Greek and Latin (and even Germanic) roots.

The roots in this book are only a fraction of those that exist, but they include the roots that have produced the largest number of common English words. These roots (sometimes called *stems*) all formed part of Greek and Latin words. Some are shown in more than one form (for example, FLECT/FLEX), which means that they changed form in the

Unit 1

BELL comes from the Latin word meaning “war.” *Bellona* was the little-known Roman goddess of war; her husband, Mars, was the god of war.

antebellum \an-ti-'be-ləm\ Existing before a war, especially before the American Civil War (1861–65).

● When World War I was over, the French nobility found it impossible to return to their extravagant antebellum way of life.

Often the word *antebellum* summons up images of ease, elegance, and entertainment on a grand scale that disappeared in the postwar years. That way of life in the American South depended on a social structure that collapsed after the war. The years after the Civil War—and many other wars—were colored for some people by nostalgia and bitterness (Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* shows this through the eyes of the Southern gentry), and for others by relief and anticipation.

bellicose \be-li-,kōs\ Warlike, aggressive, quarrelsome.

● The country often elected the more bellicose party after a period of tension along the border, hoping that military action would result.

The international relations of a nation with a bellicose foreign policy tend to be stormy and difficult, since such a nation looks for opportunities to fight rather than to negotiate. Combative by nature, it is happiest when quarreling or, better yet, actively engaged in battle.

belligerence \bə-'li-jə-rəns\ Aggressiveness, combativeness.

- The belligerence in Turner's voice told them that the warning was a serious threat.

The belligerence of Marlon Brando's performance as the violent Stanley Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire* electrified the country. *Belligerent* speeches by leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States throughout the Cold War kept the world on edge for years. Iraq's shocking belligerence toward Kuwait and its own Kurdish people resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths.

rebellion \ri-'bel-yən\ Open defiance and opposition, sometimes armed, to a person or thing in authority.

- The substitute teacher attempted to end the student rebellion by insisting on absolute quiet.

These days, some degree of rebellion against parents and other authority figures is viewed as a normal part of growing up, as long as it is not destructive and does not go on too long. Rebellion, armed or otherwise, has often served to alert those in power to the discontent of those they control. The American War of Independence was first viewed by the British as a minor rebellion that would soon run its course.

PAC/PEAS is related to the Latin words for "agree" and "peace." The *Pacific Ocean*—that is, the "Peaceful Ocean"—was named by Magellan because it seemed so calm after the storms near Cape Horn. (He obviously never witnessed a Pacific hurricane.)

pacify \pa-sə-,fī\ (1) To soothe anger or agitation. (2) To subdue by armed action.

- It took the police hours to pacify the angry demonstrators.

Unhappy babies are often given a rubber device for sucking called a *pacifier* to make them stop crying. In the same way, someone stirred up by anger or some other strong emotion can usually be pacified by resolving or removing its causes. In a usage that became popular during the Vietnam War, *pacification* of an area meant using armed force to neutralize the enemy there and to quiet the local people who may have been supporting them.

Quizzes

A. Match the word on the left to the correct definition on the right:

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 1. antebellum | a. quarrelsome |
| 2. appease | b. solemn agreement |
| 3. rebellion | c. to make peaceful |
| 4. pacify | d. before the war |
| 5. pacifist | e. aggressiveness |
| 6. belligerence | f. opposition to authority |
| 7. pact | g. to calm by satisfying |
| 8. bellicose | h. one who opposes war |

B. Fill in each blank with the correct letter:

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| a. antebellum | e. rebellion |
| b. pacifist | f. bellicose |
| c. pact | g. pacify |
| d. appease | h. belligerence |
1. The native _____ began at midnight, when a gang of youths massacred the Newton family and set the house afire.
 2. The grand _____ mansion has hardly been altered since it was built in 1841.
 3. The Senate Republicans, outraged by their treatment, were in a _____ mood.
 4. To _____ the younger managers, the company will double their bonuses this year.
 5. The cease-fire _____ that had been reached with such effort was shattered by the news of the slaughter.
 6. Their relations during the divorce proceedings had been mostly friendly, so his _____ in the judge's chambers surprised her.
 7. The world watched in amazement as the gentle _____ Gandhi won India its independence with almost no bloodshed.
 8. Her soft lullabies could always _____ the unhappy infant.