

Latin Borrowings

The introduction of Latin words into English vocabulary has taken place over a considerable period of time. It came into English with the contact of the Latin civilization. Initially, words pertaining to battle-field and agriculture have been greatly borrowed words such as camp (battle), sign (banner), pil (pointed stick, javelin), pytt (pit), mil (mile), millestre (courtesan) are instances of the borrowings. Slowly, words related to trade such as ceap (cheap, bargain), pend (pound), mydd (bushel), mynet (coin) and seam (bearden) have been borrowed in English. In those days, there was enormous business of wines so words such as win (wine), must (new wine) aced (vinegar) and flase (flask) have been used frequently. Words of domestic life have also been borrowed such as cytel (Kettle), mise (table), scamol

(stool, bench), cyane (kitchen),
cuppe (cup) and disc (disk) etc.

Besides it, a
number of latin words entered
into English language through Celtic
transmission. The latin word

Caester which means camp is a
typical example. This word stands
for a town or an enclosed
community. It forms a familiar
element in English place names
such as Dorchester, Manchester and
Winchester and so on. Other words
come from Celtic include port
(harbour, gate, town), mont
(mountain) and torr (tower).

Another phase of
latin borrowings came into
English when the christianisation
of Britain took place in 597 A.D.
The old language of this period
was inadequate to express the
concept of new religion. Therefore,
there was a massive inflow of
latin words into English. The
popular words are church, bishop

vulture, alibi, angel, anthem, minister,
cannon, hymn, pope, psalm and
zeal etc.

The greater influence of
church of over the domestic life
words such as clothing (cap,
silk), food (beet, lentil, millet,
radish, oyster). Such words as
pine, balsam, lily, limbo, pulpit
school, master, verse, grammatical
etc their origin from Latin.
Literary words like accent, brief,
history, paper, perme etc, medical
words like cancer, paralysis,
plaster etc. names of trees like
cedar, cypress, fig etc. and names
of animals like camel, tiger and
scorpion are taken Latin origin.

During the middle
English period a considerable number
of Latin words entered into
English through translation of
literary text. Such words as
generation, persecution, transmigration,
conspiracy, custody, frustrate,
genius, intellect, infinite, limbo,

pulpit, secular, scripture, testify,
Some unusual words like abusion,
dispone, equipolent, tenebrous etc.
have been borrowed by poets
and writers for an innovation in
the language in the 15th century.

It was in the
16th century that first swelled the
number of English words borrowed
from Latin to the overwhelming
proportions whereas the number of
Middle English loans from Latin
is difficult to estimate because
many of them were indirectly
borrowed from French, there is
no doubt that a great mass of
borrowings in early Middle English
are Latin origin. Numerous examples

can be cited affidavit, agenda,
alibi, bones, deficit, esuit, extra,
fact, maximus, memorandum,
Omnes and veto.

During
Renaissance, quite a number of
French words were remodelled into
closer resemblance with their
Latin originals. For instances,

Chaucer used the word descriere,
the form describe makes its
appearance only in the 16th Century.
Similarly, the word perfet and
perfet becomes perfect due to
Latin origin.

In the present days,
Scientific and technical English,
Latin shares with Greek the honour
of being the host of a new
vocabulary. Such examples as
interstellar, mutant, neutron, sulfur,
radium, penicillin, spectrum etc.
have been established in English
language. The Latin words,
except the earliest ones, were the
work of churchmen and scholars.