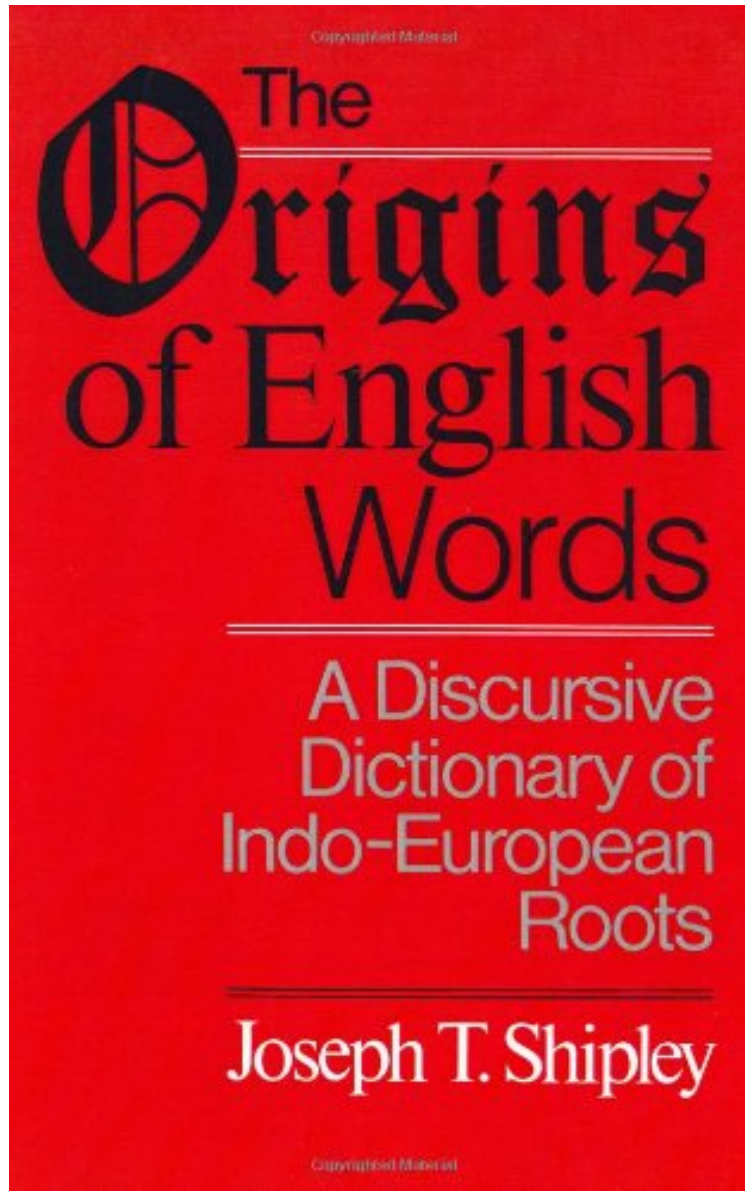


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# The Origins of English Words: A Discursive Dictionary of Indo-European Roots

*Joseph Twadell Shipley*

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By Shemp Duchamp  
Anybody interested in words should find this book fascinating. It's arranged like a dictionary, but the entries are (as the title promises) discursive, and reveal unexpected relationships between words. A random example: "heart" derives from the Indo-European "kerd", which also gives rise to cardiac, core, cordial, courageous, accord, accordion, discord, record ("on the tablet of your heart"), misericord (from which comes miser and miserable), quarry ("hunted game, from the heart's being given to the hounds"), and more. One might think cord, chordal, and harpsichord are related to these, but they're not; they derive from "gher" (gut), which is also the root of hernia. The book is full of surprises and is entertainingly written, abounding in (often bawdy) literary examples.  
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This "discursive dictionary" is both quirky and authoritative, the sort of reference work in which one becomes easily lost. For etymology lovers, this is superb.  
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This book is a must own if you have international friends or live in a multi lingual house hold. I satisfy both criteria and at dinner's we will always talk etymology and meanings. The internet has nothing on the Red Book, as I call it. I invariably pop it out to settle a linguistic dispute. Very entertaining. I keep it in the kitchen with the cookbooks.

There are no direct records of the original Indo-European speech. By comparing the vocabularies of its various descendants, however, it is possible to reconstruct the basic Indo-European roots with considerable confidence. In *The Origins of English Words*, Shipley catalogues these proposed roots and follows the often devious, always fascinating, process by which some of their offshoots have grown. Anecdotal, eclectic, and always enthusiastic, *The Origins of English Words* is a diverting expedition beyond linguistics into literature, history, folklore, anthropology, philosophy, and science.

"Hats off to Joseph Shipley." (William Safire *New York Times*)  
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West Coast of Books  
About the Author  
Joseph Twadell Shipley is the author of the highly acclaimed *In Praise of English* as well as twenty-six other books, including *The Quest for Literature*, *Dictionary of Word Origins*, and *Dictionary of Early English*. In a long and distinguished career he was president of the New York Drama Critics Circle, was a founder of Yeshiva College, and taught at the City College of New York.