

## Latin/German - Teacher's Notes

English is a Germanic language, that is, it belongs to the same family of languages as German, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian and Danish and shares a core vocabulary with these languages. However, a very large proportion of words in English derive from Latin, which is the mother language of French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and Romanian.

Latin-derived words have entered English at various times over the last 2000 years. Until the Norman conquest in 1066 these words were absorbed into the language of the time and assimilated. However, after the Norman conquest French became the prestige language for some 200 years. Only in the late Middle Ages did French cease to be spoken exclusively by the upper classes and English begin to reassert itself. However, hundreds of French and Latin words were assimilated into English, mostly in more formal, educated and religious situations. Since then English has continued to absorb Latin-based words.

While many French-derived words have displaced Old English words and become parts of the standard, everyday vocabulary of the modern language, there remain many words derived from French and Latin which are used in more formal situations. Hence, we often have a choice of two or more words or phrases which mean more or less the same thing, but which are used in different situations. Generally, the Germanic-derived words are either more widely used or more colloquial and informal than the Latin-derived words. Look at the following examples with the focus word underlined:

Germanic: *I got a new car yesterday. It goes really well.*

Latin: *In his life Shakespeare acquired a reputation for being an exceptionally talented playwright.*

Although *got* and *acquired* have the same meanings they would sound rather awkward if they exchanged positions.

The worksheets in this section are designed to help students acquire a greater feel for choosing vocabulary depending on register and situation, based on the above analysis. The same section in the forthcoming 200 password-protected pages will include more background information and a framework for classifying the register and origin of each word.