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# Etymology + animation = Etymation : the history of spelling via animations

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**Etymology + Animation =**

# **Etymation**

The History of Spelling via Animations

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of  
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**Etymology + Animation =**

## **Etymation: The History of Spelling via Animations**

By Gladys Aponte

**ABSTRACT:** Etymation is a series of animated cartoons, each 4-7 minute-long. The seven cartoons provide a child-friendly overview of the history of American English spelling. Each cartoon explains one reason American English spelling often seems so irrational. The Etymation cartoons and the accompanying activities are designed to supplement an investigative spelling curriculum, such as *Words Their Way* (Bear et al. 2012). The rationale discusses the importance of such an investigative spelling curriculum, and outlines how Etymation is aligned to the Common Core State Standards, as it supports educators in preparing students for college and careers. The benefits of implementing animations in the classroom, particularly for students with diverse learning needs and students with learning English as a new language, are also emphasized. Finally, the value of exposing students to the reasons behind our unique spelling system—an understanding that has always been overlooked in the classroom—is also highlighted.

The cartoon characters often speak to the audience directly and ask them to connect insight gained from the cartoons to activities before and after watching the animations. There are pause signals throughout each of the animations, and the *Etymation Teacher's Manual* delineates the discussions and activities that should take place before, while, and after watching each animation. Etymation worksheets are also provided so that students can keep track of their etymological investigations, and for teachers to better assess student comprehension.

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*“Although many times the spelling of a word may appear odd, an understanding of its origin may provide the most powerful key to remembering the spelling” (Bear et al., 2012, p.276)*

## **Introduction**

To most, the orthography of the English language seems erratic and illogical. Its inconsistent spellings and pronunciations often perplex even the most successful native English speakers. Mark Twain (1907), for instance, regarded English as a “dreadful language,” and proclaimed that, “the ability to spell correctly is a talent, not an acquirement” (p. 445-46). Unfortunately, most students today also believe that spelling is hopelessly irregular, and that the only strategy for mastering it is brute memorization. Many students [and adults] often complain that they are “just not good spellers” (Gunning, 2005). These individuals build a self-fulfilling prophecy, forever believing that they have no control over their spelling abilities because they simply weren’t born with the “spelling gene” (p. 483). But contrary to popular belief, the language’s intricate spelling system *does* make sense. And in order to understand it, students must comprehend that the complexities of the language can be explained by looking into its historical context (Bear et al., 2012; Freeman & Freeman, 2004; Fillmore & Snow, 2000; Johnston, 2000; Joshi et al., 2008/2009; Moats, 2005/2006; Reed, 2012).

## **The Importance of Spelling & The Common Core Standards**

Over the years, the interconnectedness of spelling and literacy has become more widely accepted. We have realized that students who struggle with spelling often show difficulties in reading and writing, among other content areas (Gunning, p.27). Proficiency in spelling supports fluent and intelligible reading (Moats, 2005/2006). Since fluent reading relies on automatic word recognition and extensive word knowledge, simply trying to increase reading rates without building the underlying word knowledge is a shortsighted goal (Bear et al., 2012, p.201). Spelling development reflects etymology, meaning, and pronunciation. In other words, “spelling is a window on what a person knows about words... Learning about words and about language will improve spelling skills.” (Joshi et al., 2008/2009, p. 12). The deep word knowledge provided by Etymology widens students’ vocabulary repertoire, as they become experts in analyzing and investigating new words.

The significance of spelling and its interconnectedness with reading and writing is evident throughout the Common Core State Standards for Language. It is emphasized in the *Foundational Reading Skills* of grades K–5, which detail the decoding and recognition of words during reading; and it is a central focus of the Language Standards in grades K–5. Deep word knowledge that is developed through word study activities and the Etymology cartoons, support the Common Core’s emphasis on reading more complex literary and informational texts.

The importance of word knowledge and spelling development will become more obvious as educators continue to raise expectations so that our youth is well prepared for college and careers, for it deeply supports other language areas. The importance and

interconnectedness of spelling and these higher standards are explained in the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language (2010):

“To build a foundation for college and career readiness in language, students must gain control over many conventions of standard English grammar, usage, and mechanics as well as learn other ways to use language to convey meaning effectively. They must also be able to determine or clarify the meaning of grade-appropriate words encountered through listening, reading, and media use; come to appreciate that words have nonliteral meanings, shadings of meaning, and relationships to other words; and expand their vocabulary in the course of studying content. The inclusion of Language standards in their own strand should not be taken as an indication that skills related to conventions, effective language use, and vocabulary are unimportant to reading, writing, speaking, and listening; indeed, they are inseparable from such contexts.” (2010)

While most are familiar with spelling’s relationship with reading and writing, few recognize its correlation with oral language— as presented throughout the Common Core Standards. Spelling development has a greatly influences expressive communication, for both depend on a common denominator: proficiency with language. As more educators begin to recognize that expressive language is a critical skill which students must develop, they will also come to realize that a there is a complex and profound knowledge base that underlies vocabulary and spelling. The more deeply and thoroughly a student knows a word, the more likely he or she is to recognize it, spell it, define it, and use it appropriately in writing *and* in speech (Joshi et al., 2008/2009, p. 9).

Finally, along with a deep understanding of words, students must also have a positive attitude to approach a system that is often intimidating for adults. Optimistically, we will continue to see more and more educators beginning to push students to be interested and inquisitive learners, so that are always seeking to deeply understand the

concepts we want them to acquire. Etymation is an example of what it means to support children in acquiring a deep and comprehensive understanding.

### **Words Their Way**

For most, the term “Spelling” automatically resurfaces the daunting drill-and-practice ordeal that focuses on receiving a sticker or happy face on Friday’s spelling tests. Refreshingly, we have come to realize that “the best spellers approach spelling as a problem-solving activity, not a memorization task” (Freeman & Freeman, 2004, p.112). Students learn best when they discover concepts for themselves and when they reflect and communicate about these concepts. In order for them to construct internal spelling rules, children need to investigate the patterns and exceptions that are found in the American English spelling system.

In Words Their Way (Bear et al., 2012), students are actively involved in making discoveries about words and their spelling. The goal of word study is “to examine words in order to reveal the logic and consistencies within our written language system and to help students achieve mastery in recognizing, spelling, and defining specific words” (Bear et al., 2012, p.4) The process of collecting words, looking for spelling patterns, and stating generalizations helps students become more conscious of correct spellings (Freeman p.124).

Experts agree that a teacher must understand the stages in which spelling develops in order to build on students’ knowledge and teach spelling and decoding more effectively (Bear et al., 2012; Gunning, 2005; Freeman & Freeman, 2004). With Words Their Way, teachers can introduce word sorts and investigative activities that meet

students at their level of readiness. Teachers can easily administer their spelling inventory to determine students' spelling stages, and then decide which students are developmentally ready for Etymation.

Finally, a classroom's spelling program should also aim to ignite students' curiosity and interest in words. A spelling curriculum that approaches spelling in a scientific manner results in interested and inquisitive students, who are motivated to make sense of a system that often seems impractical (Freeman & Freeman, 2004; Johnston, 2000). For these reasons, an engaging and exploratory spelling program, such as Words Their Way, should be an essential part of every classroom.

### **Exposing Students to the History of Spelling**

As a child, I once envisioned a mighty queen in ancient England sitting on a throne as she invented words and then demanded that they'd be spelled in the senseless ways she desired. Of course, not many students will concoct such illusory justifications for our complex spelling system, but as they engage in word study, students will inevitably question—and *should be prompted to question*—why so many different spelling patterns and inconsistencies exist. This inquiry is usually accompanied by a frustration and aversion that is only perpetuated when a teacher's response implies that they must either memorize or fail. The oblivious attitudes that *my* teachers communicated, for instance, lead me to conform to the spelling system, glumly accepting that we still have to abide by the early queen's commandments.

The philosophy behind Etymation is to empower children and avoid submission and ignorance of our complex spelling system. *Not* exposing students to the *reasons*

behind our intricate spelling system only encourages compliance. As teachers, we want our students to be inquisitive and analytical, and thus, we must model and encourage interest and inquiry. So while it is clear that students become better spellers when teachers talk to them about spelling and help them understand how the system works, (Freeman & Freeman, 2004, p. 110), simply *talking* about it is not enough.

As Johnston (2000) emphasizes in her article, “Spelling Exceptions: Problems or Possibilities?” a teacher’s position is to not only to instruct his or her students, but also to shape their attitudes about language (p. 372). Before introducing the Etymology cartoons, teachers must model their *own* curiosity about spelling and its history. One way to do this is by referring to exceptions to patterns as *exceptional*, *outstanding*, or *extraordinary*, all of which instill a lot more optimism and excitement than the term “oddballs”. This shared spirit of inquiry promotes the motivation and curiosity that students need in order to view spelling’s intricacies through a positive lens— a linguistics lens.

In order to gain such enthusiasm and passion for spelling, teachers must have a comprehensive knowledge base of the English language (Fillmore & Snow, 2000, p. 25). We can only instill excitement for learning when we are better able to confidently answer a child that asks a complex question such as, “Why is spelling is so complicated?” Understanding the history behind our spelling system can avoid the frustration or uncertainty that usually arises when students ask why the word *shoe* is spelled *shoe* and not *shou* (*you*), *shoo* (*too*), *shue* (*blue*), *shough* (*through*) or *shew* (*flew*), for example. A background in etymology gives both teachers and students the foundation needed to approach spelling in a positive and productive manner. And although we cannot make the learning of English orthography effortless, we can make it meaningful and enjoyable.

Undoubtedly, Mark Twain must have had teachers who bemoaned our intricate spelling system.

### **The Need for Etymation**

Once you recognize that students must come to appreciate the history of our spelling system, you will begin to think of ways to engage them in this topic.

Unfortunately, there are very few child-friendly resources about etymology and *none* specifically focusing on the implications that it has on spelling. Students may attempt to interpret the existing resources, or teachers may choose to do the etymological and orthographical research and then transfer the information to students. Either way, the lack of child-accessible resources only contributes to students' disconnection with etymology and to the aversion that most of them already see as the "absurd lack of common sense and consistency" (Essinger, 2007, p. 86). If the historical context of our complex spelling has to be taught straightforwardly, who could be better suited than the captivating animated cartoon characters of Etymation?

### **Animations in the Classroom**

In a digital world, the importance of integrating technology into the curriculum has been well established. With it, the popularity of using animations in the classroom has also increased. Educators especially esteem cartoon animations, such as those on BrainPop.com. These teachers understand that integrating animations into the learning process significantly increases student motivation and results in positive learning outcomes, especially when learning about complex systems. This has been verified

through several studies in which classrooms that integrate animations were compared to traditional learning environments that focus on verbal explanations (Rosen, 2009; Park, 1994; Tversky, 2002). Additionally, the findings show that students' perceptions of learning changed, as they began to perceive themselves as playing a more central role in classroom interactions and felt greater interest in learning.

Nevertheless, simply showing a cartoon to students does not guarantee successful learning. If you have previously used animations in the classroom, you have probably realized that students do not learn just by watching. As Charney (2002) highlights, "children don't learn by being entertained. They learn by doing, and by finding success in doing" (p. 17). It is true that technology in the classroom has immeasurable possibilities, but the *context* in which it is introduced plays a key role in the effects that it has on learning (Park, 1992; Saloman, 2002). As Mayer and Moreno (2002) further clarify, animations promote learner understanding when they are used in ways that are consistent with the cognitive theory of multimedia learning. He explains that learning involves the conversion of information from the cartoons into knowledge that is already stored in the mind. Therefore, although research has shown that animations can result in thoughtful learners with an ability to transfer knowledge (Salomon & Perkins, 1989), investigational word study activities must precede and follow cartoon screenings. The effectiveness of any educational animation depends on students' abilities to connect previous discoveries and speculations about spelling to the cartoon content and then continue to connect new knowledge to their ongoing study of words.

Particular characteristics of an animation also contribute to the educational value of that cartoon. The Etymology cartoons for example, display key words on the screen as

the characters introduce those terms. Taking advantage of both the auditory and visual channels of working memory to deliver information, as Rosen (2009) explains, increases the overall amount of information that the brain can process. Likewise, research has shown that students learn more deeply from animations when the narration is conversational and when the characters direct the audience (Mayer & Moreno, 2002). Concordantly, the characters in the Etymation cartoons often speak to the audience directly, engaging students through questions and challenges.

### **Etymation & Learners of English as a New Language**

It is safe to say that children learning English as new language carry twice the load as those learning English alone. Not only do new-language learners confront the challenge of having to familiarize themselves with a new spoken language, they also have to master its complex written counterpart. Thus, it is easy to see why exceptional spellings can be *more* of a frustration for these students. Furthermore, new-language learners who are already familiar with a more transparent spelling system, such as Spanish or Finnish, will definitely wonder *why* spelling patterns and written representations of phonemes aren't as consistent as they are in their home language. Etymation provides these students with an understanding that can ease the challenge of learning English, and it does so in a captivating way.

As Stephen Krashen, an expert in the field of bilingual education and new-language acquisition, has asserted, “language acquisition proceeds best when the input is not just comprehensible, but really interesting, even compelling; so interesting that you forget you are listening to or reading another language” (Rodriguez & Ramos, 2009). I

am certain that it isn't difficult for you to picture the majority of your students completely engrossed by an hour-long cartoon that is entirely in a foreign language. Even more, you can expect them to apply a lot more effort in interpreting *that* language than they would apply to analyze a Shakespearean play. This due to the fact that, as Krashen (1987) explains, the amount of input reaching the new-language learner is influenced by a number of affective variables, including motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence— all of which is taken into account when a teacher chooses to incorporate Etymation in the classroom.

### **Etymation & Developmental Variations**

The Etymation cartoons could be just as valuable for students with diverse learning needs, as they are for children at different levels of English proficiency. Since it is already clear that animations in the classroom makes the content more appealing and more memorable, the benefits for students who struggle with attention or memory are quite obvious. If we were to further analyze and identify the neurodevelopmental functions that are involved in spelling, the reasons that many students struggle with it becomes clear.

Distinct neurodevelopmental profiles have a great influence on spelling complications. These include inefficient phonological or visual memory, visual or phonological processing deficits, weak orthographic-processing abilities, attention deficits, and hyper-activity and impulsivity (Gunning, 2005). Students that struggle with spelling for one of these reasons must undergo more spelling practice in order to “overlearn” the spelling of words, especially of those with unpredictable spellings

(Gunning, 2005, p486-87). Gunning explains that, “overlearning entails studying a tricky word even after its correct spelling has been learned” (p. 486). Students that need to go the extra mile soon realize that that other students can tackle spelling with little effort, and they are *further* discouraged by the complexities of our spelling system. Helping these students understand the reasons behind the intricacies of our unique spelling, and doing so in a fun way, extracts from the pressure and motivates them to apply the additional effort. When teachers are straightforward and explain why things are challenging, students are more motivated to take on a challenge.

### **Conclusion**

As educators, our hope is that worldwide philosophies of education continue to advance with more progressive and child-centered values than ever before. There will be a high demand for materials that assist us in disclosing information that has traditionally been disregarded, such as the history of spelling. More specifically, like Etymation, resources will have to contend to children’s expanding technological fascination and capabilities. Etymation addresses these pioneering values, as well as every great teacher’s underlying goal— to create lifelong interested and inquisitive learners.

When teachers and students better understand the history of American English spelling, they become better spellers and learn to apply scientific reasoning and approach language the way that linguists do. As Freeman and Freeman (2004) remind us, “languages are very complex, and no linguist would claim to have described any language completely. Science is always a work in progress” (p. 112). So as we foster a curious and positive attitude of our language, we’ll not only have a class full of

enthusiastic spellers, but we will have contributed to their lifelong interest in language.

While it is true that our students can move on to parallel brilliant historical figures *without* having to understand the history of our intricate spelling system, exposing them to such fundamental insight can bring them to *outshine* esteemed individuals, such as Mark Twain.

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*Etymation*

**Teacher's**

**Manual**

## **Web Addressees to the Etymation Cartoons**

### **Video 1: History in Spelling?**

[http://goanimate.com/videos/0\\_3RTviiDm38?utm\\_source=linkshare](http://goanimate.com/videos/0_3RTviiDm38?utm_source=linkshare)

### **Video 2: Eponyms**

[http://goanimate.com/videos/0Ov8ZWVdBWfk?utm\\_source=linkshare](http://goanimate.com/videos/0Ov8ZWVdBWfk?utm_source=linkshare)

### **Video 3: Early Influences**

[http://goanimate.com/videos/0rFIPRtEQX9E?utm\\_source=linkshare](http://goanimate.com/videos/0rFIPRtEQX9E?utm_source=linkshare)

### **Video 4: Scribble, Scribble, SCRIBE!**

[http://goanimate.com/videos/0epqBJSfGZQs?utm\\_source=linkshare](http://goanimate.com/videos/0epqBJSfGZQs?utm_source=linkshare)

### **Video 5: How was it Pronounced?**

[http://goanimate.com/videos/0L8LLbO0kZPo?utm\\_source=linkshare](http://goanimate.com/videos/0L8LLbO0kZPo?utm_source=linkshare)

### **Video 6: America And Their Reformers**

[http://goanimate.com/videos/0ufC4Hm2tCiQ?utm\\_source=linkshare](http://goanimate.com/videos/0ufC4Hm2tCiQ?utm_source=linkshare)

### **Video 7: Can I Borrow That? (Loanwords)**

[http://goanimate.com/videos/0vClpwILRwPE?utm\\_source=linkshare](http://goanimate.com/videos/0vClpwILRwPE?utm_source=linkshare)

## Target Audience & Spelling Stages

While the writers of *Words Their Way* have established that *all* students benefit from etymological investigations (Bear et al., p.276), it is up to you, as a teacher, to use your knowledge of individual students to decide when to introduce Etymation, which suggested activities are appropriate for your students, and at which points you should pause the cartoons so that students can engage in conversations.

Etymation is ideal for students in the middle to late Syllables and Affixes stage and beyond.\* The Syllables and Affixes stage begins in the fourth grade for most writers, but in the second and third grades for some writers, (Bear et al., p.241). At this age, cognitive and language growth supports movements into the syllables and affixes stages of word knowledge. In the Syllables and Affixes these stage, students have already learned how spelling stands for sound, and now begin to see the different ways to spell those sounds, and how spelling also stands for meaning. They begin to look at the more ambiguous patterns of spelling that are addressed in the cartoons, such as the *gh* in *daughter* and *laughter*, and the silent consonants in *written*, *knuckle*, and *rhythm*. Additionally, their curiosities about words in previous spelling stages, such as those pertaining to exceptions of *have*, *give*, and *love* to the CVC pattern, are also addressed by the animations.

The usefulness of Etymation for students in the Derivational Relations stage should be quite clear. During this stage, word sorts and etymological exploration of words have a lot more to do with vocabulary development than simply spelling development. Students' understandings expand as they learn about the derivation of words like *cappuccino* and *segue*. Unfortunately, individuals in the Derivational

Relations stage are not only found in in upper elementary to middle and high school grades— many adults remain in this stage throughout their life. In order to move young adults beyond this stage, we must expose them to the etymological and spelling insight that Etymation offers.

Finally, while I have made it clear that these animations are meant to enhance an investigative word study curriculum, undoubtedly, a much wider audience can benefit from these cartoons. This includes students that are taught through a more traditional “Monday-list, Friday-test” routine, to students receiving a more innovative and specialized spelling instruction. Children in need of a special reading program build self-efficacy, while students who have been distinguished as spelling geniuses can come to appreciate spelling patterns that they have recognized but have never valued.

\*While you may want to introduce Etymation towards the end of the Within Word Pattern stage, (typically near the middle of second grade), you will realize that modification (or omission) of suggested activities will be necessary.

## Validity of Resources

Although there is currently a lack of child-friendly resources, teachers must encourage students to seek confirmation of etymologies from various sources. Freeman and Freeman (2004) remind us that, “the Internet is a good source for information about words as long as students realize that they need to check more than one site” (p.110). As students explore the history of spelling, they will find contrasting etymologies in different sources. The etymology of the word *candy*, for example, continues to be unclear.

Authors of eponymous stories attribute the founding to Prince Charles Phillippe de Conde of France, who would only eat sugary treats. Meanwhile, other resources explain that *candy* derives from the Persian word *qand*, and others from the Sanskrit word *khanda*.

While I aimed to choose words with less controversial etymologies, it is important to remind students that they should always question the validity of sources, including Etymology. Children should realize that tracing the histories of words is complicated, and that it is not wise to rely on just one or two sources.

**Materials/Preparation**

1. Stock your classroom with several Etymology Dictionaries for your students.
2. Create space for 2 word walls: *Exceptional Words* and *Spelling Inquiries*.
3. Create a space for 2 charts in a place that can be easily seen each time the cartoons are viewed.
4. Print, copy, and staple the *Collection of Etymologies* packet: 1 cover page + at least 15 worksheet per student.
5. Print 1 copy of the *Etymation Packet*. Write the title of your two classroom charts on the second page before making copies for your students. Copy and print: 1 cover page + 7 worksheets per student.

Recommended books:

- “Where Words Come From” by Jack Umstatter
- “Talk About English”, by Janet Klausner
- “Eat Your Words: A Fascinating Look at the Language of Food” by Charlotte Jones

## 2-5 Weeks Before Introducing Etymology

The first cartoon refers to the audience as “Word Investigators” and “Word Detectives.” Ideally, your students have been engaged in word sorts and other activities that have allowed them to discover spelling patterns and exceptions, or “oddballs”, as Words Their Way refers to them.

### **Introduce Key Terms**

English has a unique spelling system. What makes it unique? (Many letters can make different sounds. One sound can be represented in various ways. One pattern can sound different ways. Many words have silent letters. Many words aren’t spelled the way they sound.)

#### *Examples:*

- “bow” can mean two different things depending on how they are pronounced
- “ou” can be pronounced in at least eleven different ways: “famous”, “journey”, “cough”, “dough”, “bought”, “loud”, “tough”, “should”, “you”, “flour”, “tour”
- Long e can be spelled in at least ten different ways: “me”, “seat”, “seem”, “ceiling”, “people”, “chimney”, “machine”, “siege”, “phoenix”, “lazy”

If possible, compare English to another language with a more transparent spelling system, such as Spanish.

#### Optional Digital Resources:

1.-Clips of Dan Quayle misspelling potato: (*Why do you think he made that mistake? Which words follow that spelling pattern?*)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wdqbi66oNuI>

2.Wheel of Fortune- Wand (rhymes with pond, not hand):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDoNArvKjZg>

- Introduce the word **phonetic**. *Words that are spelled **phonetically** are spelled the way they sound. It is easy to remember phonetic spellings because each letter in the word represents one sound. Some words are not spelled phonetically (light & thought) but do follow a common pattern (bright, sight, bought, sought) so they are not **exceptional**.*
- *A lot of words have **exceptional** spellings!* Talk about what it means to be exceptional. What makes a word's spelling exceptional? Which words would they categorize as *exceptional*?
- **Definition of exceptional words:** a word that has an unphonetic spelling *and* that doesn't follow a common English spelling pattern.
- Explain that you will soon be learning a lot about where words come from. *The history of words is called **etymology**. Etymology explains how English ended up with such a unique spelling system! When we study the etymology of a word, we can discover how it got its exceptional spelling.*
- Model how to look up the etymology of a word and how its etymology can explain its spelling. *I want to learn about the **etymology** of the word turquoise because it has an **exceptional** spelling. It is not spelled **phonetically** and it does*

*not follow one of the common spelling patterns that we have in English. Let me show you how the etymology of [i.e.] turquoise can help me understand why it is spelled this way. “Where Words Come From”, by Jack Umstatter is a child-friendly resource that you may want to model with. You can also model using the Internet or another reference book to look up the etymology. The gem is said to have gotten to Europe through Turkey, which is Turquoise in French. We kept the French word and the French spelling. There are a lot of other cool reasons that we have exceptional spellings. But before we start looking at the etymology of words, let’s begin to collect words that we want to study!*

- ***The words phonetic, etymology, exceptional, should continue to be displayed and used frequently so that students become familiar with their meanings before viewing the first cartoon.***

### **Begin a Collection of Exceptional Words**

**Designated Exceptional Words wall/sections-** Have students organize exceptional words in an ***Exceptional Words*** section in their word study folder/notebook. (If not possible, students can just keep them in an *Exceptional* column during word sorts).

- **Word Wall-** Display exceptional words on a **word wall** that has two parts—***Exceptional Spellings*** and ***Our Spelling Inquiries***. In the latter, students can place questions about spelling and about words that *don’t* have exceptional spellings, such as: *Why is the spelling of football so misleading? Why are some*

*words, like gym, spelled with a y? Why are some words spelled with a ph? Why are thought and light spelled with a gh?*

- **Model Interest & Excitement!**
- Dedicate 15 minutes a week for sharing extraordinary words that students have found throughout the week. Offer 3 minutes after a social studies lesson for students to jot down words from the books used during the lesson. Encourage students to walk to the wall and add a Post-it with a word the moment they encounter it (or to their word study notebook/folder).
- Demonstrate the interest and excitement that you would like to see from your students. Add words that you have encountered yourself. Model the etymologist in you, as you point out that and encouraging that the hunt goes on throughout all subject areas.
- Examine **words in *their* worlds**. What are some exceptional spellings in your students' lives? Are some students in a *choir/chorus*? Do any of them engage in *aerobics*? Do they play the *cello* or the *trumpet*? These are all exceptional spellings! Look into pop culture, students' home cultures, and words pertaining to school trips and events.

## Phonetic Spelling

*The characters in the first cartoon use the word phonetically but do not explain its meaning. This word is used throughout the series of cartoons, so it is important for students to understand its meaning. Here are a few activity ideas:*

### Activities:

1) Read a few made-up words (example: *bitscuz*) aloud and ask students to spell them. Have students to share the way they spelled each word. Did most people spell them the same way? Show them how *you* spelled the words (*bizzcause*). What do you notice about the way you spelled them? (They probably spelled them more phonetically).

2) Review the meaning of *phonetic*.

*Let's look at the spelling of a student in a younger grade.*

### Excerpt of a student's writing:

*I like two go two the scool gim becuz wen I am thair I hav a lot ov phun with mi frends.*

*What is wrong with this writing? Does it make sense if you read it aloud? I want you guys to be the teacher. Some words are spelled phonetically, but some words are not.*

*What do you notice? (Some words follow the wrong spelling pattern).*

### ANSWER KEY

two – multiple ways of spelling one word (two)

scool – phonetic

gim - multiple ways of spelling one sound (him, slim, trim)

becuz - phonetic

wen - phonetic

thair - multiple ways of spelling one sound (fair, hair)

hav - phonetic

ov - phonetic

phun - multiple ways of spelling one sound (phone, sphere)

mi – multiple ways of spelling one sound (hi)

friends - multiple ways of spelling one sound (bends, trends)

**3)** How can some of the words on our *Exceptional Words* and *Spelling Inquiries* will be spelled more phonetically? (Or ask students to share words from their word study notebooks/folders/ word sort *exceptional* column). *\* If your students do not have any of these, you can brainstorm a few words as a group, or allow students to search through books for exceptional spellings.*

***MAKE CHART:*** *Some people might think that spelling these words more phonetically is better, but we are going to be discovering many reasons that our spelling system is wonderful just the way it is. I think we should keep a list of these reasons on this chart (give it a title). (I refer to this as the “Awesome Spelling” chart. You may prefer choose any variation, such as “Our Spelling System is Awesome Because...” or “Reasons Our Spelling is So Great!”). As we learn about how wonderful our spelling system is, we can keep track of it here.*

Outline  
for  
**Implementing**  
**Each**  
Etymation  
**Video**

## **VIDEO 1**

### ***History in Spelling?***

#### **Summary:**

In this first video, Angie, the main character of the Etymation cartoons, introduces herself and informs the audience that they will be joining her on a word study adventure. She acknowledges that many words have “tricky” spellings but explains that this is because our spelling system is very unique. She also explains that many words with “exceptional” spellings usually have the most interesting etymologies. Angie sets the optimistic attitude that students need as they continue with their own word study routine in the classroom.

#### **Vocabulary:**

etymology, etymologist, phonetically, pronounced, aardvark, exceptional

#### **Addition to CHARTS:**

##### **1) How We Got Our Unique Spelling:**

-Some words mean something in another language and we kept their spelling. (aardvark, turquoise)

##### **2) Our Spelling System is Awesome Because...**

-We can see other languages in English words (Example: Dutch Afrikaans: aard=earth, vark=pig)

**BEFORE Watching:**

1) *Introduce the Etymation Cartoons:* A couple of weeks ago, I told you that we were going to be studying etymologies of words. I showed you how I found the etymology of the word turquoise. Can someone remind us what *etymology* means? Today, we are going to begin this etymological study! There are many resources that we can use to find the etymology of a word. One resource we are going to use is a series of cartoons. We are going to watch some short animations. The cartoon characters are also going to be learning about etymology. The cartoons are called *Etymation*. What two words do you think were combined to create the word *Etymation*? (Etymology and animation) The characters in the cartoons are going to join us in our etymological adventure! There are seven cartoons.

2) In each cartoon, we are going to learn of at least one reason our spelling is so unique. Where should we keep record of these reasons as we learn them? (On the classroom chart: ***ETYMOLOGY: How We Got Our Unique Spelling***)

3) Hand out and introduce the *Etymation packet*. They will complete a new page every time they watch a video. Ask students to write the title of the first cartoon on the first inside page of the packet.

4) *In this first video, you are going to learn the etymology of the word aardvark. This is an animal (Arthur, the PBS character, is an aardvark). Aardvarks dig deep burrows in the earth. They dig faster than most animals. Do you think we should add aardvark to our Exceptional Word Wall? Let's learn the reason aardvark has such an exceptional spelling. Then we will add this reason to our chart. As you watch the cartoon, pay attention to WHY aardvark has an exceptional spelling.*

**WHILE Watching:** (*Cartoon display a red square at the bottom right-hand corner of the screen at suggest stopping points*)

1 – Turn and talk to your partner. How would you explain the meaning of *etymology* to Trixie?

2 – Stop to discuss the etymology of *aardvark*. Why is its spelling so unique? So can we say that one reason spelling is so unique is because *some words mean something in another language and we kept their spelling*? List this on your chart, and write *aardvark* as an example. *So already, we have learned about a reason spelling came to be so unique.* Add to the **Spelling is Awesome chart:** We can see other languages in English words (Example: Dutch Afrikaans: aard=earth, vark=pig).

**AFTER Watching:**

1) Why is Trixie having trouble remembering the spellings of Frisbee, cologne, and Wednesday? (They are not spelled phonetically). I am sure that learning the etymology of these words will help us understand why they are spelled that way. Provide students with resources to look up these etymologies in class or for homework.

2) Angie mentioned the word scissors. Add the words scissors, science, island to your exceptional word wall if it isn't there already. Their spelling will be explained in Video 3.

3) Share notes taken on the worksheet- add to the charts

4) Introduce the Collection of Etymologies books. Have students write their name on the cover and record the etymology of *aardvark*, with “Etymation Video 1” as the source.

## **VIDEO 2**

### ***Eponyms***

#### **Summary:**

Many English words have exceptional spellings because they preserve the spelling of people's names. Such words are called *eponyms*. In this video, the characters explain that Wednesday, Fahrenheit, Graham cracker, Tootsie rolls, and sandwich are all eponymous words. Then, they explain that some words, like hamburger, frankfurter, and bologna, are not spelled phonetically because they retain the spelling of the place they were named after. At the end of the cartoon, students are asked to determine the eponymous words that the following individuals left behind: Harry Reese (Reese's chocolate), John Venn (Venn diagram), General Burnside (sideburns), Teddy Roosevelt (teddy bear), Joseph Sax (saxophone), Fettuccine Alfredo (the dish), and George Ferris (Ferris wheel).

#### **Vocabulary:**

eponym, origin, originated, Fahrenheit

#### **Addition to CHARTS:**

##### **1) How We Got Our Unique Spelling:**

- Some words were named after people (eponyms) and they preserve the spelling of their name.
- Some words are named after places and retain the spelling of the place's name.

## 2) Our Spelling System is Awesome Because...

-Some eponyms honor the people that they were named after. It's like saying "thank you!"

-Some spellings show appreciation of a place by keeping the spelling of the place it came from.

### **BEFORE Watching**

*\*Students should have done research to learn the etymology of Wednesday prior to viewing this video.*

1) Review the meaning of phonetic. *Is your name spelled phonetically? Why not?*

(Diverse name origin, unique names, unique spellings of traditional names, etc.) How can your name be spelled more phonetically? Would you want someone to change the spelling of your name just because they think it would be easier to spell?

2) Review last reason that was added to the class chart. *This video will give us 2 more reasons.*

3) Ask students to write the title of the cartoon on the next page of the Etymation packet.

### **WHILE Watching:**

1- Turn and talk to your partner- How would you explain the etymology of *Wednesday* to Brenda? Turn and talk again- How does the etymology of *Wednesday* explain the spelling of the word?

2- Would you rather spell Fahrenheit more phonetically, like Brenda spells it? Why or why not?

3- They have already spoken about two eponyms- *Wednesday* and *Fahrenheit*. What are eponyms? Why do you think Angie is now saying that her lunchbox is full of eponyms? Why do you think Graham isn't spelled phonetically?

**AFTER Watching:**

- 1) Students can work in groups to think of (or research) the eponyms that people on the list at the end of the cartoon left behind.
- 2) Many other words were named after people! There are eponymous states, sports terms, and a lot of other words. Words in your unit of study may also be eponymous, such as *Boycott*. Challenge your students to find eponyms on their own.
- 3) Remind students that language is always changing. New words come into English all the time. How can *their* names become eponyms?
- 4) Share notes taken on the worksheet- add to the class charts.

### **VIDEO 3**

#### ***Early Influences***

##### **Summary:**

This animation focuses on some of the earliest influences on the English language and spelling. It provides an overview of the initial contributions of historical events like the Norman Conquest, without going into detail about such complex events. The characters also speak about the *false etymologies* that some spellings portray.

##### **Vocabulary:**

false etymology, Latin, Dutch, Shakespeare,

##### **Addition to CHARTS:**

###### **1) How We Got Our Unique Spelling:**

- People that spoke other languages went to England and spelled English words with patterns from their language, such as Dutch, French, German, Latin.
- Some spellings were changed to make it look more like a language that was thought to be fancier.
- Mistakes- people thought that words had certain origins and changed the spelling to match spelling patterns in those languages.

###### **2) Our Spelling System is Awesome Because...**

- Shows that a lot of different languages contributed to the spelling of our words.
- We can see mistakes and false etymologies in words!

**BEFORE Watching:**

1) In this video, you are going to learn that another reason our spelling is so unique is because we have spelling patterns from other languages. Every language has spelling patterns that are pronounced in different ways. How would you read this word: terror? In English, the double *r* spelling pattern is pronounced the same as one *r*. But in Spanish, this spelling pattern is pronounced differently. English is really cool because we have spelling patterns from other languages. This cartoon is going to explain how English got some of those spelling patterns.

**Other examples:**

*In English, th makes the th sound but in Spanish it does not.*

*In English, ll makes the l sound but in Spanish it sounds like a j or y. Spelling patterns are different in every language.*

*In French, ch is pronounced like the sh in English.*

2) Ask students to write the title of the cartoon on the next page of the Etymology packet.

**WHILE Watching:**

1- Why was it okay to spell girl *gerl*? Why do you think Shakespeare spelled his name different ways on different writings? Why wasn't there a set way of spelling? What kind of people do you think *did* know how to write?

2- What does Mateo mean by "false etymology"?

**AFTER Watching:**

- 1) Recap the reasons that are mentioned in this cartoon and add them to the class chart.
- 2) Should spelling be made more phonetic? Why or Why not?
- 3) Can you see some of the spelling patterns that the cartoon mentioned in our word wall? (scissors, science, etc). Have students choose words from the wall and look for the etymology of those words to learn about their origins. Students should record these etymologies in their *Collection of Etymologies* books.

## **VIDEO 4**

### ***Scribble, Scribble, SCRIBE!***

#### **Summary:**

This video explains how scribes had a great influence on the American English spelling systems. Because they were paid depending on the amount of lines that they wrote, they added letters to many words to make them longer. This resulted in some of the spelling patterns we have today, which often seem senseless (such as the silent e at the end of *love*). Scribes also changed the spelling of words so that people can differentiate between homonyms. They also wanted to avoid words with letters with down strokes (u,v,m,n) side-by-side, so they replaced them with other (usually rounder) letters.

#### **Vocabulary:**

scribe, homophones, influence

#### **Addition to CHARTS:**

##### **1) How We Got Our Unique Spelling:**

- Scribes gave a lot of homophones distinct spellings so that we could see the different meanings.
- Scribes made words longer because they were paid depending on how much they wrote.

-Scribes changed some spellings so that people wouldn't confuse the letters UVMN in which looked too similar in their handwriting.

## **2) Our Unique Spelling is Awesome Because...**

- It is easier for us to know the meaning of different homonyms.
- We have patterns that scribes created in order to avoid visual confusion.
- We have kept some excess letters that that scribes added so that they could be paid more

### **BEFORE Watching:**

- 1) Recap all of the reasons on the chart thus far. What has *influenced* our spelling?
- 2) *Optional*: Read books about homonyms (Such as *A Chocolate Moose for Dinner* and *The King Who Rained* by Fred Gwynne)
- 3) Discuss the meaning of homonyms and talk about which word is spelled more phonetically (know/no, eye/I, would/wood, whole/hole). Why do you think we have so many homonyms? How do you think they got their spellings? Do you think we already had one word first, and then someone decided to spell the next one differently?
- 4) Talk about words that have a silent e at the end but do not follow the long vowel rule: glove, love, have, live. Why do you think these words have a silent e at the end? How would you spell glove more phonetically?
- 5) The title of this video is *Scribble, Scribble, Scribe*. What do you think scribe means? In this video you are going to learn that *scribes* did some things that made our spelling even more unique!
- 6) Ask students to write the title of the cartoon on the next page of the Etymology packet.

**WHILE Watching:**

1- What letter did scribes add to each word? Did we need those letters? Is this why some people think spelling is tricky? This actually makes our spelling more unique! (Add to chart)

2- What word would you confuse “glovv” with? How did their handwriting influence the spellings we now have?

**AFTER Watching:**

1) Review Etymation worksheet and add reasons to chart.

2) Why don't we have words with double Vs? Why don't we have words that end with double Cs?

3) Analyze word on the word wall to see if any inquiries are addressed. Look for words with *ck* endings and *c endings*. Do you see a pattern?

4) Look up the etymology of words with patterns mentioned in the cartoon. Record them in the *Collection of Etymologies* books.

5) Ask students to create their own homonym riddles.

6) *Optional* : Share the poem “Candidate for a Pullet Surprise” by Mark Eckman and Jerrold H. Zar. Talk about a spell checker's ability to correct spelling but not detect meaning.

## **VIDEO 5**

### ***How was it Pronounced?***

#### **Summary:**

This cartoon focuses on how changes in pronunciation have led to some of today's interesting spelling patterns. English spelling became more or less fixed as the pronunciation of words continued to change. The characters explain that words like good, rough, night, column, and guard, were once pronounced differently so the spelling was once phonetic.

#### **Vocabulary:**

pronounced

#### **Addition to CHARTS:**

##### **1) How We Got Our Unique Spelling:**

- Some spellings still represent old pronunciations- so they *used to* be phonetic!

##### **2) Our Spelling System is Awesome Because...**

- Some spellings let us see how people used to pronounce words.

**BEFORE Watching:**

- 1) Display the words *hymn*, *tough*, and *night*. What do you notice? Based on what's on our chart so far, what are some possible reasons that these words are not spelled phonetically?
- 2) It actually isn't any of the reasons we have learned about yet. In today's video you are going to learn that language is always changing. The way we speak today is very different than the way people spoke hundreds of years ago.
- 3) Ask students to write the title of the cartoon on the next page of the Etymology packet.

**WHILE Watching:**

- 1 – How do you think these words were pronounced?

**AFTER Watching:**

- 1) How do you think *knight* was pronounced?
- 2) Review Etymology worksheet and add to class charts.
- 3) Anonymously assign students with some of these words: *sight*, *light*, *daughter*, *neighbor*, *knife*, *knit*, *gnaw*, *gnat*, *gnome*, *guest*, *autumn*, *comb*, *numb*, *lamb*. Say a sentence using the old pronunciation of the word and see if your classmate can guess what you are saying.
- 4) *Optional (Spanish)*: Ages ago, the *h* was once pronounced in Spanish! It sounded like an F (facier, fablar, etc..). ¿Cómo crees que se pronunciaban estas palabras?: hablar, hora, etc...

## **VIDEO 6**

### *Americans and their Reformers*

#### **Summary:**

This cartoon focuses on spelling reforms that have been proposed in the past. The characters explain that reformers, like Noah Webster, were successful in changing the spelling of some words so that they are now more phonetic. These changes resulted in a greater variety of spelling patterns that exist in English.

#### **Vocabulary:**

reform, reformers

#### **Addition to CHARTS:**

##### **1) How We Got Our Unique Spelling:**

- Some spellings are a result of changes that reformers made.

##### **2) Our Spelling System is Awesome Because...**

- A lot of spellings can help us work out the meanings, even when the letter is silent.

**BEFORE Watching:**

- 1) Have you noticed that some words end with *c* and others end with *ck*? Do you get confused with words that end in *ze* and *se*, like *analyze* and *surprise*? There is another reason we have these different spelling patterns. It is not a reason that we have learned about yet.
- 2) Which spelling is more phonetic, *analyze* or *surprise*? Point out other words on your word wall. Do you think that we should make spelling more phonetic? Why or why not (refer to the “Awesome Spelling” chart).
- 3) Ask students what they think of when they hear of *Webster* (dictionary). Webster was a schoolteacher in New York. He wasn’t happy with the way words were spelled, so he decided to change some spellings and creates an entire book for people to refer to. People began to spell the way his dictionary said to do so. But this was in America. Do you think people all the way in England followed Webster’s spellings? You are going to learn more about this in this cartoon.
- 4) Ask students to write the title of the cartoon on the next page of the Etymology packet.

**WHILE Watching:**

- 1- What cool etymology would be concealed if the spelling of *through* were changed?
- 2- What changes did Webster make to these words?
- 3- Can you tell what words these are? Why do you think Webster wanted to make these changes?
- 4- How do you think reformers wanted to spell these words?

**AFTER Watching:**

1) Webster changed words like *emphasize* and *analyze*. Was this a good idea? Why or why not? (He made them more phonetic, but makes it less like *analysis* and *emphasis*).

2) *Derivational Spellings*: Can you think of other words that aren't very phonetic but should be kept that way because they help us see its relationship with other words? (soften, politician, criticize, electricity, official, magician, musician, connection, selection, condemn)

3) Discuss what would happen if we had a spelling reform. The classroom charts can guide you to point out reasons that a reform is a bad idea. (Example: Webster wanted to spell machine *masheen*. If we made this change, we wouldn't be able to see the French spelling pattern in the word).

Additionally:

-It would cost too much to change the spelling of *all* existing books.

-We can keep those with old spellings, but then we would have to learn how to read new words and old words.

- Because of different dialects, spelling could never be entirely phonetic.

\*Some time before showing Video 7, add the following words to your Exceptional Words wall (if not already on there):

1. genre
2. plateau
3. chauffeur
4. rhythm
5. souvenir
6. choir
7. jalapeño
8. chihuahua
9. tortilla

## **VIDEO 7**

### ***Can I Borrow That? (Loanwords)***

#### **Summary:**

This video talks about words that the English language has borrowed from other languages, such as pizza (Italian), chocolate (Spanish), and rhombus (Greek). Most of the time, English keeps the spelling of these loanwords, which contributes to the uniqueness of our spelling system.

#### **Vocabulary:**

loanword

#### **Addition to CHARTS:**

##### **1) How We Got Our Unique Spelling:**

- English borrows words from other languages and usually keeps their spelling.

##### **2) Our Spelling System is Awesome Because...**

- The spellings of many loanwords show how diverse English is!
- We can see the origin of the word, and if we keep the spelling, it's like saying "thank you" for the word or the invention.

**BEFORE Watching:**

- 1) *One reason that people like Brenda (cartoon character) don't like spelling is because there are multiple ways of spelling one sound. Talk about multiple ways of spelling the f and short-i sounds (ph and y). This can be confusing, but there is a reason for this. And it only makes our spelling system more unique!*
- 2) Today we are going to watch the last Etymation video. Angie and her friends are going to explain one more reason our spelling is so unique. But just because this is the last video, it doesn't mean that we know *all* of the reasons. We are going to add the reason Angie gives us today, and then we can always continue to do research on the history of spelling so that we can continue to add to our chart. This way, whenever we get stuck on a spelling of a word, we can always remember the reasons spelling is this way, and why it is *awesome* just the way it is!
- 3) Ask students to write the title of the cartoon on the next page of the Etymation packet.

**WHILE Watching:**

- 1- Let's read these words aloud. Have you seen these words before? They are on our *Exceptional Words* wall! These are French loan words and we kept the French spelling. Now we know why these spellings are so exceptional!
- 2- Do you notice which spelling patterns English kept? (ñ, ll, j)
- 3- What other patterns do you notice in these Greek loanwords?

*Optional (Spanish): What does Trixie mean by: It's the Greek i.. La i griega”?*

**AFTER Watching:**

1) Have students search for more loan words. Remind them that the spelling of a word gives us a clue, as seen in the cartoon, but that many loanwords *don't* have very unique spellings. *Are any of the words on our wall borrowed? Does a word in another language sound similar to the English word? Find out if it is a loanword.*

Students should record the words and their etymologies in their *Collection of Etymologies* book.

**More Loanwords-**

Hindi: shampoo, khaki, cheetah

Hebrew: camel

Arabic: zero, algebra

French: debut, encore, premier, premiere

Arabic: video: cotton, sugar

3) *Optional:* Discuss English loanwords in Spanish: *los jeans, el internet, el freezer, email, sandwich*. Spanish changed the spelling of some words to follow Spanish rules: fútbol (football), tenis (tennis), gol (goal), bluyín (blue jeans). And just about everyone in the world says OK.

4) Many languages borrow words but don't keep the spelling! Welsh is a language where this is done with some consistency, with words like *gêm* (game) and *cwl* (cool). They changed the spelling to match *their* spelling patterns.

**Continue to model an interest in etymology in your classroom!**

*\*Many people (even adults!) think that spelling makes not sense. All of you are now well-informed and can be their teachers.*

Encourage students to bring in interesting words and share their etymology throughout the entire school year.

### **Optional Culminating Project Ideas:**

*Essential Question: What historical events have shaped in our spelling system?*

*Should we change the spelling of English to make it more phonetic?*

- Classroom debate
- Persuasive video
- Students create their own animated cartoon to answer this question.
- Persuasive essays: “ A spelling reform is a bad idea because...”
- Opinion News Article (students can interview members of the school community).

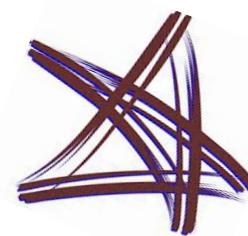
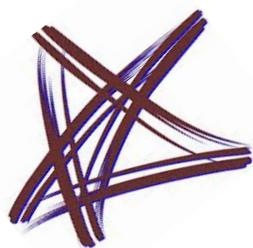
\* Students should include information learned from at least 4 of the cartoons/charts to support their stance.

**Contact Me!**

Etyimation has yet to be implemented in the classroom. Certainly, I'll be returning to this project as I learn from my experiences, my students, and all of you. I am eager to hear about your own experience using Etyimation in the classroom. Please contact me with comments, questions, and suggestions at [Gaponte4@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:Gaponte4@schools.nyc.gov)

Thank you!

*Gladys Aponte*



# My Collection of Etymologies

- 
- **word**
  - **detective**
- 
- A magnifying glass icon is positioned over the word 'word' in the list, highlighting it.



: \_\_\_\_\_

Sources:

Etymology:

Influence on Spelling:

Etymology  
+  
Animation  
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ETYMATIION



Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Angie and her friends taught me that

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**WORDS** in this Cartoon

- 1- \_\_\_\_\_
- 2- \_\_\_\_\_
- 3- \_\_\_\_\_
- 4- \_\_\_\_\_
- 5- \_\_\_\_\_
- 6- \_\_\_\_\_
- 7- \_\_\_\_\_
- 8- \_\_\_\_\_

**Charts**

Now I want to find out . . .

