



**The World of Languages**  
and Languages of the World

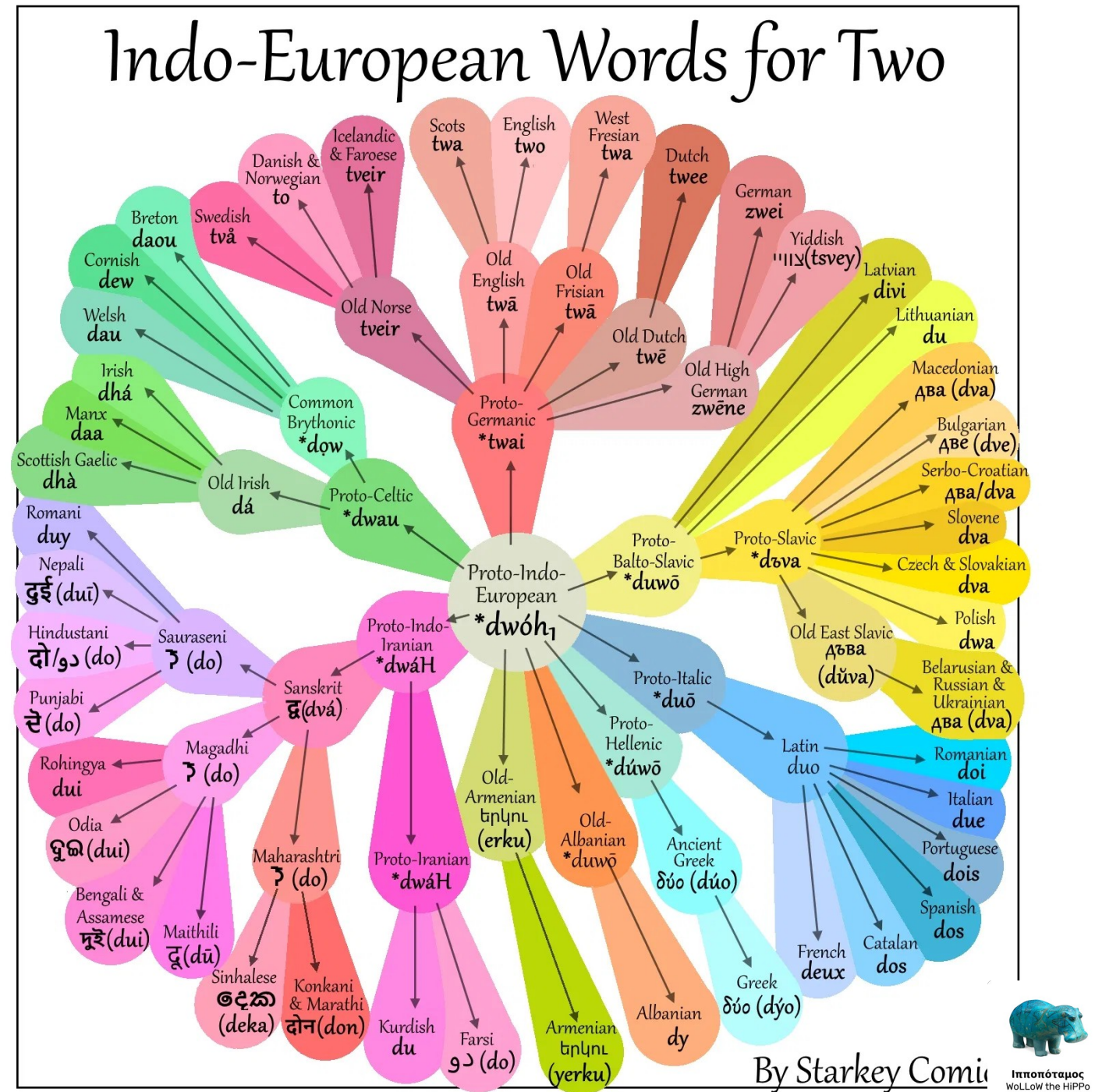
# Indo- European Language Puzzles

Thanks to Mary Wenham at St. Paul's Girl's  
School for resources from Discovering Language.





Can you  
see how  
the  
languages  
are linked?



# Root Letters

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Look in your workbook at the words for sun, star, death, water and milk in the table.

In at least two of the different groups, the words are very similar. Using these similarities between groups, suggest what the root letters of the original Indo-European word were.

e.g. Root letters of milk: m-l-k

Root letters of sun:

Root letters of water:

Root letters of death:

Root letters of star:

What is it about the meaning of these words which means they are likely to have a common ancestor?







# Why are some words the same or very similar?

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Look at the words for 'rice' and 'wine' on your table.

What do these two products have in common which means the word describing them is the same across different groups?



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# Words on the move

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Tea is similar to rice and wine but it is not the same across different groups.

Read the following excerpt below from, 'Tea: The Autobiography' by A. T. Bag

'In Mandarin, I am known as 'cha'. In Fujian province they call me, 'te'. The Dutch East India Company came to Fujian and took me back to Europe and told people I was called 'thee'. The Portuguese took me to Europe from a Mandarin port and told their people I was called 'cha'. I arrived in some European countries by an overland route and they referred to me by my Mandarin name. Other countries already had a name for drinks they put herbs in, so they just called me by that'.

**Russian refers to tea as 'chai' because...**

**English refers to tea as 'tea' because...**

**Romanian refers to tea as 'herbata' because...**



# Different words

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Language groups sometimes ‘invent’ a ‘new’ item and because they describe it using existing terms, it takes on a range of names.

So, cheese can take its name from the Latin ‘caseus’ meaning solid, which is what curd feels like; the Russian word for ‘sour’ (syhr), which is what fermented milk tastes like; the Old Norse word for ‘sauce’ (ostr), which is what it looks like, or describing its shape or form (fromage/ formaggio).

Or consider the spoon. ‘Spann’ was a chip of wood in Old Norse, ‘sked’ is the Swedish for divided and ‘cochlea’ is the Latin word for a snail. ‘Lepel’ and ‘Löffel’ come from the word meaning, ‘drink’ or ‘lap’ which describes what a spoon enables you to do.

**Draw a picture of what the spoons that Vikings and Romans used might have looked like.**

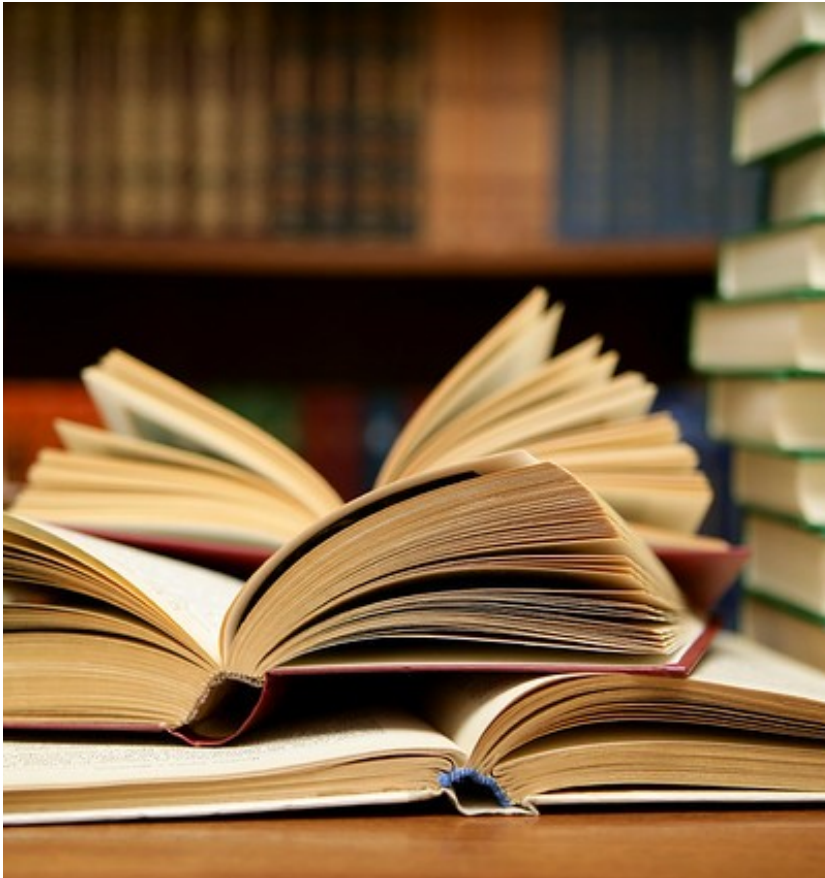


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# Writing it down

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Writing is a fairly modern phenomenon so different language groups described it in different ways. The Slavs called it 'painting' (e.g. 'pisati'), the Romans and the Vikings called it 'scratching' (e.g. 'skriv'), the Greeks called it 'drawing' (e.g. 'grapho'), while the Egyptians called it 'drawing a figure' ('write').

With much writing come books. The North Europeans called their books, 'bok' after beech wood. The Slavs called their books 'knjiga' after 'symbols' or 'knowledge'. The Romans called their books 'liber' after the inner bark of the tree.

**Explain why each of these terms is an appropriate description of a book.**

**Bok:**

**Knjiga:**

**Liber:**



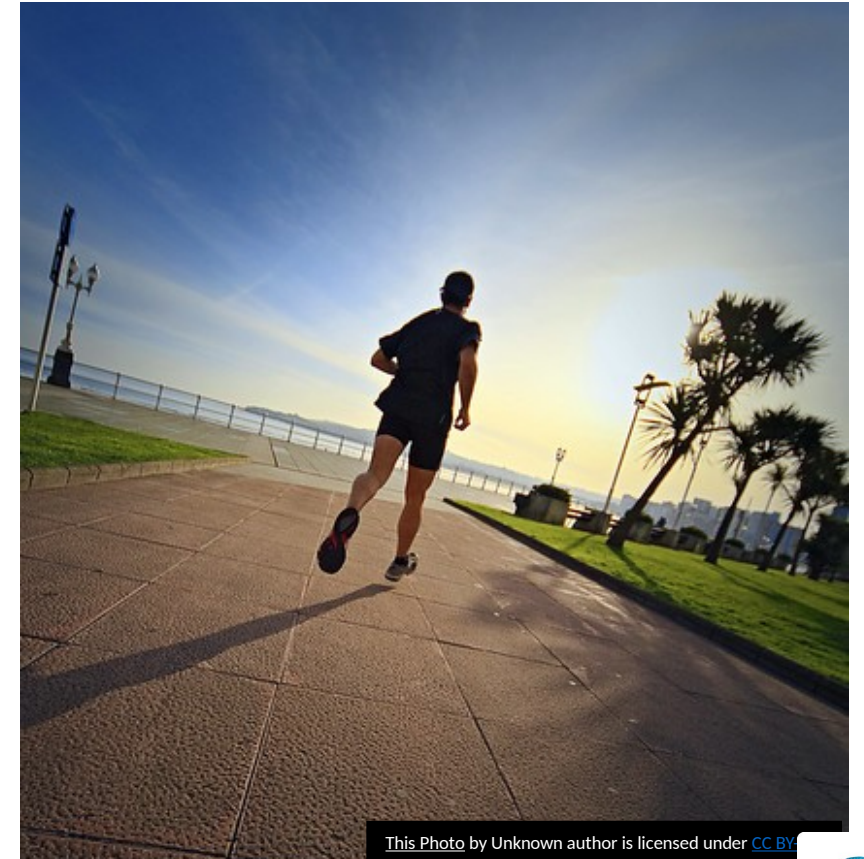
# Vivid Terminology

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Sometimes individual languages within a group can use vivid terms to describe objects. For example, the Slavs called their cows 'krava' meaning 'the horned creatures', which makes them sound almost exotic.

The Northern Europeans were creative in the way they described running. The English word for running was originally used to describe a river running its course. The Dutch word 'lopen' is where the English word 'elope' and 'leap' come from.

**Look at the table to find another vivid term for running North Europeans use.**



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# Words Spread

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Sometimes individual languages within a group adopt the word of a language they have contact with.

From what you have heard today, who might have given the Spanish their word for apple?

Can you spot a word the Romanians have borrowed from their neighbours, the Slavs?



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# Odd ones out

Sometimes a language has a completely different word for something.



Apart from the word, 'write', can you find another example where the English word is unlike any other language?



# Two Roots

Sometimes a word can have two roots. Look back at the words for 'water'. There were in fact two roots for water in Indo European. 'ap-', the root for 'aqua' and 'wed-', the root for 'water'. In ancient cultures people believed that water was animate, so one root described the spiritual nature of water and the other described it as a physical entity.







# Conclusion

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From what you have learnt today, can you summarise the reasons words in different languages look the same and why words in languages which are closely related can look different?

Similar:

Different:



# Acknowledgements

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With thanks to Mary Wenham at St Paul's Girls' School

