

# Eponym

## Definition of Eponym

Eponym is a name of a [legend](#) or real person that writers associate with some other person, object, institution, or thing. Simply, we can define it as a famous person whose name is given to someone else, such as Homer has derived the name of his ancient epic *The Odyssey* from a major [character](#), *Odysseus*. Many TV shows, books, and films have used eponymous characters like Emma, Harry Potter, and The Legend of Zelda. Besides, we commonly see the use of this literary device in literature, industry, places, and in several other fields.

## Everyday Use of Eponym

The **sandwich** was given the name of a British politician, John Montagu, who was fourth Earl of Sandwich.

The **cardigan sweater** was named after the British military officer, James Thomas Brudenell, who was Seventh Earl of Cardigan.

The **saxophone** was given the name of Sax, a surname of a family from Belgium, which was skilled at making musical instruments.

## Examples of Eponym in Literature

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### Example #1: *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* (By James Thurber)

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James Thurber in his novel, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, introduces the main character Walter Mitty, who is a rather timid and unadventurous fellow, whose wife has the dominating role in their relationship. Beneath his humble and timid exterior, Walter Mitty hides dreams and a great [fantasy](#) in his life in which he imagines himself as a successful surgeon, a daredevil pilot, and a heroic naval commander. After his dreams, the phrase “Walter Mitty Dreams” is used to refer to a sort of wild fantasy that an average person can dream up to satisfy his/her daily grind.

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### **Example #2: *Gulliver's Travels* (By Jonathan Swift)**

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Jonathan Swift, in his satirical novel *Gulliver's Travels*, uses the name "Lilliputian," which originates from the miniature and fictional name of an island nation situated in the South Pacific, where Gulliver was lashed to the ground. This term generally means anything small or miniature, or it may have a derogatory meaning, referring to pettiness or narrow-mindedness.

Swift also used the term "Yahoos," which are an uncouth or degraded race of people whom Gulliver encounters on the Houyhnhnm island in book IV. Initially, Gulliver felt some difficulty recognizing them as human beings, because they were so backward, and an intelligent race of horses known as the Houyhnhnm would treat Yahoos as beasts. Today, Yahoo means an ignorant, uncouth, or brutish person. Besides, Americans use it also as an exclamation of happiness or excitement. More recently, a very well-known internet service has named its search engine and service providing company as Yahoo.

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### **Example #3: *Life in London* (By Pierce Egan)**

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A Victorian writer Pierce Egan in his 1821 book, *Life in London*, featured two popular characters, Tom and Jerry. This book became very popular and finally their adventurous story gained entry into William T. Moncrieff's play. More recently, William Hannah and Joseph Barbara have created a cartoon cat and mouse duo, dubbed *Tom & Jerry*. Their popularity in different comic books and on television continues today.

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### **Example #4: *Pickwick Papers* (By Charles Dickens)**

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In *Pickwick Papers*, Charles Dickens has created his most endearing and enduring character, Mr. Samuel Pickwick, who is head of the Pickwick Club in London. He and his associates make a travelling society to visit different areas in England, to study the phenomena and peculiarities of life. The purpose is to do something good for others. Along the way, they encounter some shady and evil characters, like Mr. Jingle.

However, the novel ends happily, as Mr. Pickwick successfully understands the crisis in a family and reunites a married young couple with their relatives. Hence, the term “Pickwickian” is used commonly now, meaning generosity and simplicity, like Mr. Pickwick demonstrated.

There is another popular term from this book, which has made it into dictionaries: “Pickwickian sense. Merriam Webster defines it as something “intended or taken in a sense other than the obvious or literal one.” This term derives from an incident that occurred between Mr. Blotton and Mr. Pickwick, who apparently abuse each other but, in fact, pay high regards.

## **Function of Eponym**

Eponym is like an [allusion](#) that refers to a famous person. Therefore, it develops a link between a reference and the thing being referred to, and through this connection, readers are able to understand the idea easily. The scope of eponym is wide. It is everywhere, as we can easily find its frequent use in literature, politics, advertising, sciences, discoveries, music, films, medicines, and legal studies. Besides, eponyms give further meanings to the terms and increase readers’ information by providing them reference of the names of famous persons from history.