

Topic 4: Plant-Animal Interactions

I. Two-Minute History

In biology (and many other disciplines) dividing and subdividing the subjects of your studies from the very general to the very specific helps you to understand how they are related. For many centuries biologists and other scientists have used Latin to help with this categorization process. Starting with the largest groups (*animalia* = animals, *plantae* = plants, etc), scientists divide different types of organisms into smaller and smaller groups. There are seven groups in all (kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, species). The last two groupings give organisms their "Latin names" - such as *homo sapiens* (*man, wise*) for human beings.

II. Learning Latin Roots

competition

English definition: a rivalry

Latin root: *competere* = created from *cum* (with) and *petere* (to go towards, to demand); hence, to seek together

Related Latin words: *competitio* (an agreement), *competentia* (a meeting)

mutualism

English definition: an association that benefits two (or more) organisms

Latin root: *mutuus* = borrowed, lent

Related Latin words: *mutuo* (to borrow), *muto* (to change, to move away)

species

English definition: a group of organisms capable of interbreeding

Latin root: *species* = kind, sort, type

Related Latin words: *specere* (to look at), *speciosus* (beautiful, showy)

population

English definition: a body of organisms having something in common

Latin root: *populus* = a people

Related Latin words: *populosus* (populous), *popularis* (belonging to the people), *popularitas* (being a fellow citizen)

III. Recognizing Roots

Remembering that words can be thought of as symbols, the root of a word is the basic few letters -- without affixes, conjugation, or declination -- that communicates a particular symbol or concept. The root of "population" is *popul*. Behind this word is the concept "people" or "group of people" depending on how it is used. By adding to the root, we can create all kinds of new words (and concepts) related to the basic idea of "people". See if you can use Latin roots from this week's vocabulary list to decipher the concepts behind them.

IV. Etymology Exercises

1. Match the English words on the left with their roots on the right. Be careful - some of these words are not related to any of the roots!

populous
mutually
appetite
impetus
popcorn
especially
immutable
carpet
specify
populace
competent
specimen
puppet
specious
popularize

A. popul-
B. mutu-
C. pet-
D. speci-