





Greek *aknas*, a misreading of *akmas*, accusative plural of *akmē* 'highest point, peak, or facial eruption'; compare with **ACME**.

**acolyte** |'ækə,lɪt| **n.** a person assisting the celebrant in a religious service or procession.

■ an assistant or follower.

—**ORIGIN** Middle English: from Old French *acolyt* or ecclesiastical Latin *acolytus*, from Greek *akolouthos* 'follower.'

**Acon-caga-gua** |,ækən'kægəwə; ,æk-| an extinct volcano in the Andes, on the border between Chile and Argentina, rising to 22,834 feet (6,960 m). It is the highest mountain in the western hemisphere.

**acornite** |'ækə,nɪt| **n.** a poisonous plant of the buttercup family, which bears hooded pink or purple flowers. It is native to temperate regions of the northern hemisphere.

•Genus *Aconitum*, family Ranunculaceae: many species, including monkshood and wolfsbane.

■ an extract of such a plant, used as a poison or in medicinal preparations.

—**ORIGIN** mid 16th cent.: via French and Latin from Greek *akoniton*.

**aconitine** |ə'kəni,tɪn| **n.** Chemistry a poisonous alkaloid obtained from monkshood and related plants.

**acorn** |'a,kɔrn| **n.** the fruit of the oak, a smooth oval nut in a rough cuplike base.

—**ORIGIN** Old English *æcern*, of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *aker*, also to **ACRE**, later associated with **OAK** and **CORN**!

**acorn barnacle** **n.** a stalkless barnacle that attaches itself to a variety of surfaces including rocks, ships, and marine animals. Large numbers of individuals may form a heavy encrustation that can affect the progress of a ship.

•Genus *Balanus*, family Balanidae.

**acorn squash** **n.** a winter squash, typically of a dark green variety, with a longitudinally ridged rind.

**acorn worm** **n.** a burrowing wormlike marine animal of shallow waters. Its body consists of a proboscis, a collar, and a long trunk with gill slits, and contains a notochordlike structure.

•Class Enteropneusta, phylum Hemichordata.

**acotyledon** |,ækɔl'edn| **n.** a plant with no distinct seed-leaves, esp. a fern or moss.

—**DERIVATIVES** **acotyledonous** |-'edn-əs| **adj.**

—**ORIGIN** mid 18th cent.: from modern Latin plural *acotyledones* (see **A-1**, **COTYLEDON**).

**acoustic** |ə'kəʊstɪk| **adj.** [attrib.] 1 relating to sound or the sense of hearing: *dogs have a much greater acoustic range than humans*.

■ (of building materials) used for soundproofing or modifying sound: *acoustic tiles*. ■ (of an explosive mine or other weapon) able to be set off by sound waves.

2 (of music or musical instruments) not having electrical amplification: *acoustic guitar*.

■ (of a person or group) playing such instruments.

**n.** 1 (usu. **acoustics**) the properties or qualities of a room or building that determine how sound is transmitted in it: *Symphony Hall has perfect acoustics*.

■ (**acoustic**) the acoustic properties or ambience of a sound recording or of a recording studio.

2 (**acoustics**) [treated as sing.] the branch of physics concerned with the properties of sound.

3 a musical instrument without electrical amplification, typically a guitar.

—**DERIVATIVES** **acoustic** **adj.**; **acoustically** |-ɪk(ə)lɪ| **adv.**

—**ORIGIN** mid 17th cent.: from Greek *akoustikos*, from *akouein* 'hear.'

**acoustic coupler** **n.** Electronics see **COUPLER**.

**acoustician** |ə,kəʊ'stɪʃən; ,ækəʊ-| **n.** an expert in the branch of physics concerned with the properties of sound.

**acoustic impedance** **n.** Physics the ratio of the pressure over an imaginary surface in a sound wave to the rate of particle flow across the surface.

**acquaint** |ə'kwənt| **v.** [trans.] (**acquaint someone with**) make someone aware of or familiar with: *new staff should be acquainted with fire exit routes* | *you need to acquaint yourself with the house style*.

■ (**be acquainted**) be an acquaintance: *I am not acquainted with any young lady of that name* | *I'll leave you two to get acquainted*.

—**ORIGIN** Middle English: from Old French *acointier* 'make known,' from late Latin *acognitare*, from Latin *acognoscere*, from *ad-* 'to' + *cognoscere* 'come to know.'

**acquaintance** |ə'kwəntns| **n.** 1 a person's knowledge or experience of something: *the students had little acquaintance with the language*.

2 a person one knows slightly, but who is not a close friend: *a wide circle of friends and acquaintances*.

■ such people considered collectively: *his extensive acquaintance included Oscar Wilde and Yeats*.

—**PHRASES** **make the acquaintance of** (or **make someone's acquaintance**) meet someone for the first time and become only slightly familiar: *they are anxious to make your acquaintance*.

—**DERIVATIVES** **acquaintance** **n.**

—**ORIGIN** Middle English (in the sense 'mutual knowledge, being acquainted'): from Old French *acointance*, from *acointier* 'make known' (see **ACQUAINT**).

**acquaintance rape** **n.** rape by a person who is known to the victim.

**acquiesce** |,ækwe'es| **v.** [intrans.] accept something reluctantly but without protest: *Sara acquiesced in his decision*.

—**DERIVATIVES** **acquiescence** |-'esəns| **n.**

—**ORIGIN** early 17th cent.: from Latin *acquiescere*, from *ad-* 'to, at' + *quiescere* 'to rest.'

**acquiescent** |,ækwe'esənt| **adj.** (of a person) ready to accept something without protest, or to do what someone else wants: *the unions were acquiescent and there was no overt conflict*.

—**ORIGIN** early 17th cent.: from Latin *acquiescent-* 'remaining at rest,' from the verb *acquiescere* (see **ACQUIESCE**).

**acquire** |ə'kwɪr| **v.** [trans.] buy or obtain (an asset or object) for oneself.

■ learn or develop (a skill, habit, or quality): *you must acquire the rudiments of Greek* | *I've never acquired a taste for whiskey*. ■ achieve (a particular reputation) as a result of one's behavior or activities.

—**PHRASES** **acquired taste** 1 a thing that one has come to like only through experience: *pumpkin pie is an acquired taste*. 2 a liking of this kind: *an acquired taste for tobacco*.

—**DERIVATIVES** **acquirable** **adj.**; **acquirer** **n.**

—**ORIGIN** late Middle English *acquire*, from Old French *acquerre*, based on Latin *acquirere* 'get in addition,' from *ad-* 'to' + *quaerere* 'seek.' The English spelling was modified (c. 1600) by association with the Latin word.

**acquired characteristic** (also **acquired character**) **n.** Biology a modification or change in an organ or tissue during the lifetime of an organism due to use, disuse, or environmental effects, and not inherited.

**acquired immune deficiency syndrome** see **AIDS**.

**acquirement** |ə'kwɪrəmənt| **n.** the action of acquiring: *the acquirement of self control*.

■ something acquired, typically a skill.

**acquisition** |,ækwi'zɪʃən| **n.** 1 an asset or object bought or obtained, typically by a library or museum.

■ an act of purchase of one company by another: *there were many acquisitions among travel agents* | *expanding by growth or acquisition*. ■ buying or obtaining an asset or object: *Western culture places a high value on material acquisition*.

2 the learning or developing of a skill, habit, or quality: *the acquisition of management skills*.

—**ORIGIN** late Middle English (in the sense 'act of acquiring something'): from Latin *acquisitio* (*ti-*), from the verb *acquirere* (see **ACQUIRE**).

**acquisitive** |ə'kwɪzɪtɪv| **adj.** excessively interested in acquiring money or material things.

—**DERIVATIVES** **acquisitively** **adv.**; **acquisitiveness** **n.**

—**ORIGIN** mid 19th cent.: from French *acquisitif*, *-tive*, from late Latin *acquisitivus*, from Latin *acquisit-* 'acquired,' from the verb *acquirere* (see **ACQUIRE**).

**acquit** |ə'kwɪt| **v.** (**acquitted**, **acquitting**) 1 [trans.] (usu. **be acquitted**) free (someone) from a criminal charge by a verdict of not guilty: *she was acquitted on all counts* | *the jury acquitted him of murder*.

2 (**acquit oneself**) conduct oneself or perform in a specified way: *the Israeli windsurfers acquitted themselves well at the 1994 championship*.

■ (**acquit oneself of**) archaic discharge (a duty or responsibility): *they acquitted themselves of their charge with vigilance*.

—**ORIGIN** Middle English (originally in the sense 'pay a debt, discharge a liability'): from Old French *acquiter*, from medieval Latin *acquitare* 'pay a debt,' from *ad-* 'to' + *quitare* 'set free.'

**acquittal** |ə'kwɪtəl| **n.** a judgment that a person is not guilty of the crime with which the person has been charged: *the trial resulted in an acquittal* | *the women felt their chances of acquittal were poor*.

**acquittance** |ə'kwɪtəns| **n.** Law, dated a written receipt attesting the settlement of a fine or debt.

—**ORIGIN** Middle English: from Old French, from

2 |'ækro; ,ækra| a state in western Brazil, on the border with Peru; capital, Rio Branco.

**acre** |'ækə| **n.** a unit of land area equal to 4,840 square yards (0.405 hectare): [as adj.] *a 15-acre estate*.

■ (**acres of**) informal a large extent or amount of something: *acres of space*.

—**DERIVATIVES** **acred** |'ækərd| **adj.** [in combination]: *a many-acred park*.

—**ORIGIN** Old English *æcer* (denoting the amount of land a yoke of oxen could plow in a day), of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *akker* and German *Acker* 'field,' from an Indo-European root shared by Sanskrit *ajra* 'field,' Latin *ager*, and Greek *agros*.

**acreage** |'æk(ə)rɪj| **n.** an area of land, typically when used for agricultural purposes, but not necessarily measured in acres: *a 35% increase in net acreage*.

**acre-foot** **n.** (pl. **acres-feet**) a unit of volume equal to the volume of a sheet of water one acre (0.405 hectare) in area and one foot (30.48 cm) in depth; 43,560 cubic feet (1233.5 cubic meters).

**acrid** |'ækrid| **adj.** having an irritatingly strong and unpleasant taste or smell: *acrid fumes*.

■ angry and bitter: *an acrid farewell*.

—**DERIVATIVES** **acridity** |ə'krɪdɪtɪ| **n.**; **acridly** **adv.**

—**ORIGIN** early 18th cent.: formed irregularly from Latin *acer*, *acri-* 'sharp, pungent' + *-id*!, probably influenced by *acid*.

**acridine** |'ækri,dɪn| **n.** Chemistry a colorless solid compound obtained from coal tar, used in the manufacture of dyes and drugs.

•Chem. formula: C<sub>10</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N.

—**ORIGIN** late 19th cent.: coined in German from **ACRID** + **-INE**!

**acriflavine** |,ækro'flævɪn| **n.** a bright orange-red dye derived from acridine, used as an antiseptic.

—**ORIGIN** early 20th cent.: formed irregularly from **ACRIDINE** and **FLAVINE**.

**Acrylican** |'ækra,lɪən| **n.** trademark a synthetic acrylic textile fiber.

—**ORIGIN** 1950s: from **ACRYLIC** + Latin *lana* 'wool.'

**acrimonious** |,ækro'mɒnɪəs| **adj.** (typically of speech or a debate) angry and bitter: *an acrimonious dispute about wages*.

—**DERIVATIVES** **acrimoniously** **adv.**

—**ORIGIN** early 17th cent. (in the sense 'bitter, pungent'): from **ACRIMONY** + **-OUS**.

**acrimony** |,ækro'mɒni| **n.** bitterness or ill feeling: *a quagmire of lawsuits, acrimony, and finger-pointing*.

—**ORIGIN** mid 16th cent. (in the sense 'bitter taste or smell'): from French *acrimonie* or Latin *acrimonia*, from *acer*, *acri-* 'pungent, acrid.'

**acrobat** |'ækro,bæt| **n.** an entertainer who performs gymnastic feats.

2 a person noted for constant change of mind, allegiance, etc.

—**ORIGIN** early 19th cent.: from French *acrobate*, from Greek *akrobatēs*, from *akrobatōs* 'walking on tiptoe,' from *akron* 'tip' + *bainein* 'to walk.'

**acrobatic** |,ækro'batɪk| **adj.** performing, involving, or adept at spectacular gymnastic feats: *an acrobatic dive*.

—**DERIVATIVES** **acrobatically** |-ɪk(ə)lɪ| **adv.**

**acrobatics** |,ækro'batɪks| **pl.** **n.** [usu. treated as sing.] gymnastic feats: *figurative goes through all sorts of financial acrobatics to make the monthly payments*.

**acrocyanosis** |,ækro'saɪ'nɒsɪs| **n.** Medicine bluish or purple coloring of the hands and feet caused by slow circulation.

—**ORIGIN** late 19th cent.: from Greek *akron* 'tip' + **CYANOSIS**.

**acrolect** |'ækro,lekt| **n.** Linguistics the most prestigious dialect or variety of a particular language (used esp. in the study of Creoles). Often contrasted with **BASILECT**.

—**DERIVATIVES** **acrolectal** |,ækro'lektl| **adj.**

—**ORIGIN** 1960s: from Greek *akron* 'summit' + *-lect* as in *dialect*.

**acromegaly** |,ækro'megəli| **n.** Medicine abnormal growth of the hands, feet, and face, caused by overproduction of growth hormone by the pituitary gland.

—**DERIVATIVES** **acromegalic** |-mə'gæli:k| **adj.**

—**ORIGIN** late 19th cent.: coined in French from Greek *akron* 'tip, extremity' + *megas*, *megal-* 'great.'

**acronym** |'ækro,nɪm| **n.** a word formed from the initial letters of other words (e.g., *radar*, *laser*).

—**ORIGIN** 1940s: from Greek *akron* 'end, tip' + *onoma* 'name,' on the pattern of *homonym*.

**acropetal** |ə'kræpɪtəl| **adj.** Botany (of growth or development) upward from the base or point of attachment. The opposite of **BASIPETAL**.

■ (of the movement of dissolved substances) outward toward the shoot and root apices.

as well as possible: *he tried to make the best of his talents. to the best of one's ability (or knowledge)* as far as one can do or know: *the text is free of factual errors, to the best of my knowledge. with the best of them* as well or as much as anyone: *he'll be out there dancing with the best of them.*

—ORIGIN Old English *betest* (adjective), *betost*, *best* (adverb), of Germanic origin; related to Dutch and German *best*, also to **BETTER**<sup>1</sup>.

**USAGE:** On the punctuation of **best** in compound adjectives, see **usage** at **WELL**<sup>1</sup>.

**best ball** ▶n. Golf the better score at a hole of two or more players competing as a team: [as adj.] *a best-ball match.*

**best boy** ▶n. the assistant to the chief electrician of a movie crew.

**bestial** |'bestʃəl; 'bes-| ▶adj. of or like an animal or animals: *Darwin's revelations about our bestial beginnings.*

■ savagely cruel and depraved: *bestial and barbaric acts.*

—DERIVATIVES **bestially** adv.

—ORIGIN late Middle English: via Old French from late Latin *bestialis*, from Latin *bestia* 'beast.'

**bestiality** |'bestʃə'lɪtɪ; 'bes-| ▶n. 1 savagely cruel or depraved behavior: *there seems no end to the bestiality of human beings.*

2 sexual intercourse between a person and an animal.

—ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French *bestialite*, from *bestial* (see **BESTIAL**).

**bestiary** |'bestɪəri; 'bes-| ▶n. (pl. -ies) a descriptive or anecdotal treatise on various real or mythical kinds of animals, esp. a medieval work with a moralizing tone.

—ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: from medieval Latin *bestiarium*, from Latin *bestia* 'beast.'

**bestir** |bi'stɔr| ▶v. (**bestirred**, **bestirring**) (**bestir oneself**) make a physical or mental effort; exert or rouse oneself: *they rarely bestir themselves except in the most pressing of circumstances.*

**best man** ▶n. [in sing.] a male friend or relative chosen by a bridegroom to assist him at his wedding.

**bestow** |bi'stəʊ| ▶v. [trans.] confer or present (an honor, right, or gift): *the office was bestowed on him by the chief of state | thank you for this honor that you have bestowed upon me | figurative she bestowed her nicest smile on Jim.*

—DERIVATIVES **bestowal** |-əl| n.

—ORIGIN Middle English (in the sense 'use for, devote to'): from **BE-** (as an intensifier) + Old English *stōw* 'place.'

**bestrew** |bi'strəʊ| ▶v. (past part. **bestrewed** or **bestrewn** |-'strəʊn|) [trans.] poetic/literary cover or partly cover (a surface) with scattered objects: *the bride's train was bestrewn with rose petals.*

■ (of objects) lie scattered over (a surface): *steepling away the sand and rubbish that bestrewed it.*

—ORIGIN Old English *bestreowan* (see **BE-**, **STREW**).

**bestride** |bi'strɪd| ▶v. (past **bestrode** |-'strɒd|; past part. **bestriden** |-'strɪdn|) [trans.] stand astride over; span or straddle: figurative creatures that *bestride the dividing line between amphibians and reptiles.*

■ sit astride on: *he bestrode his horse with the easy grace of a born horseman.*

—ORIGIN Old English *bestridan* (see **BE-**, **STRIDE**).

**best seller** ▶n. a book or other product that sells in very large numbers: *her autobiography is an international best seller.*

**best-selling** ▶adj. [attrib.] (of a book or other product) having very large sales; very popular: *a best-selling novel.*

**bet** |bet| ▶v. (**betting**; past and past part. **bet** or **betted**) 1 [intrans.] risk something, usually a sum of money, against someone else's on the basis of the outcome of a future event, such as the result of a race or game: *betting on horses | | [with clause] I would be prepared to bet that what he really wanted was to settle down | [trans.] most people would bet their life savings on this prospect |*

■ [with obj. and clause] risk a sum of money against (someone) on the outcome or happening of a future event: [with two objs.] *I'll bet you \$15 you won't find a single scratch.*

2 [with clause] informal feel sure: *I bet this place is really spooky late at night | he'll be surprised to see me, I'll bet.*

▶n. an act of risking a sum of money in this way: *every Saturday she had a bet on the horses. |*

■ a sum of money staked in this way: *the bookies are taking bets on his possible successor. | [with adj.] informal a candidate or course of action to choose; an option: | your best bet is to call a professional exterminator.*

■ (one's bet) informal an opinion, typically one formed quickly or spontaneously: *my bet is that the president will veto the bill.*

informal used to express doubt about an assertion or situation: *he may be a suitable companion—but don't bet on it. want to (or wanna) bet?* informal used to express vigorous disagreement with a confident assertion: *"You can't be with me every moment." "Want to bet?" you bet informal you may be sure; certainly: "Would you like this piece of pie?" "You bet!"*

—ORIGIN late 16th cent.: perhaps a shortening of the obsolete noun *abet* 'abatement.'

**bet.** ▶abbr. between.

**beta** |'bɛtə| ▶n. the second letter of the Greek alphabet (Β, β), transliterated as 'b.'

■ [as adj.] denoting the second of a series of items, categories, forms of a chemical compound, etc.: *beta carotene | beta blocker. | informal short for BETA TEST: their database system is currently in beta | [as adj.] a beta version. | (Beta) [followed by Latin genitive] the second (usually second-brightest) star in a constellation: Beta Virginis. | [as adj.] relating to beta decay or beta particles: beta emitters.*

**beta-adrenergic** ▶adj. of, relating to, or affecting beta receptors: *sympathetic nerves that stimulate beta-adrenergic receptors.*

**beta blocker** ▶n. any of a class of drugs that prevent the stimulation of the adrenergic receptors responsible for increased cardiac action. Beta blockers are used to control heart rhythm, treat angina, and reduce high blood pressure.

**BetaCam** |'bɛtə,kæm| ▶n. trademark a high quality format for video cameras and recorders.

■ a camera using this format.

**betacarotene** |'bɛtə'kerə,tɛn| (also **beta-carotene**) ▶n. see **CAROTENE**.

**beta cell** ▶n. any of the insulin-producing cells in the islets of Langerhans.

**beta decay** ▶n. radioactive decay in which an electron is emitted.

**beta endorphin** ▶n. an endorphin produced in the pituitary gland that is a powerful pain suppressor.

**beta globulin** ▶n. see **GLOBULIN**.

**betaine** |'bɛtə,ɛn| ▶n. Chemistry a crystalline compound with basic properties found in many plant juices.

•Chem. formula: (CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>N<sup>+</sup>-CH<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>2</sub><sup>-</sup>.

■ any zwitterionic compound of the type represented by this.

—ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: formed irregularly from Latin *beta* 'beet' (because originally isolated from sugar beet) + **-INE**<sup>4</sup>.

**betake** |bi'tæk| ▶v. (past **betook** |-'tʊk|; past part. **betaken** |-'tækn|) [trans.] (**betake oneself to**) poetic/literary go to: *I shall betake myself to my room.*

**BetaMax** |'bɛtə,mæks| ▶n. trademark a format for video recorders, now largely obsolete.

**beta particle** (also **beta ray**) ▶n. Physics a fast-moving electron emitted by radioactive decay of substances. (The emission of beta particles was originally regarded as a ray.)

**beta receptor** ▶n. an adrenergic receptor in the sympathetic nervous system, stimulation of which results esp. in increased cardiac activity.

**beta rhythm** ▶n. Physiology the normal electrical activity of the brain when conscious and alert, consisting of oscillations (**beta waves**) with a frequency of 18 to 25 hertz.

**beta test** ▶n. a trial of machinery, software, or other products, in the final stages of its development, carried out by a party unconnected with its development.

▶v. (**beta-test**) [trans.] subject (a product) to such a test.

**betatron** |'bɛtə,treɪn| ▶n. Physics an apparatus for accelerating electrons in a circular path by magnetic induction.

—ORIGIN 1940s: from **BETA** + **-TRON**.

**betcha** |'bɛtʃə| ▶v. a nonstandard contraction of "bet you," used in representing informal speech. *betcha can't find a better apartment.*

**betel** |'bɛtəl| ▶n. 1 the leaf of an Asian evergreen climbing plant that is used in the East as a mild stimulant. Parings of areca nut, lime, and cinnamon are wrapped in the leaf, which is then chewed, causing the saliva to go red and, with prolonged use, the teeth to go black.

2 the plant, related to pepper, from which these leaves are taken.

•Piper betle, family Piperaceae.

—ORIGIN mid 16th cent.: via Portuguese from Malayalam *vetzila*.

**Beteigeuze** |'bɛtɪ,dʒuːz; 'bɛtɪ-; -dʒuːz| (also **Beteigeux**) Astronomy the tenth brightest star in the sky, in the constellation Orion. It is a red supergiant, and variations in its brightness are associated with pulsations in its outer envelope.

**betel nut** ▶n. another term for **ARECA NUT**.

—ORIGIN Portuguese *betel*.

**betel palm** ▶n. another term for **ARECA**.

**bête noire** |'bɛt 'nʊəri; 'bet | ▶n. (pl. **bêtes noires** |-'nʊəri| pronunc. same) a person or thing that one particularly dislikes: *great-uncle Edward was my father's bête noire.*

—ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: French, literally 'black beast.'

**beth** |bæs; bæt; bet| ▶n. the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

**Bethany** |'bɛθəneɪ| a city in central Oklahoma, west of Oklahoma City; pop. 20,075.

**Bethel** |'bɛθəl| a town in the Catskill Mountains, in southeastern New York; pop. 3,693. It is the actual site of the 1969 Woodstock music festival.

**bethel** |'bɛθəl| ▶n. 1 a holy place.

2 a chapel for seamen.

3 Brit. a Nonconformist chapel.

**Bethel Park** a borough in southwestern Pennsylvania, south of Pittsburgh; pop. 33,823.

**Bethesda** |bɪ'tɛʒədə| an affluent unincorporated suburb in central Maryland, north of Washington, DC. It is home to the National Institutes of Health; pop. 62,936.

**betthink** |bi'tɪŋk| ▶v. (past and past part. **bethought** |-'θɔt|) (**betthink oneself**) formal or archaic think on reflection; come to think: *he bethought himself of the verse from the Book of Proverbs | [with clause] the council bethought itself that this plan would leave room for future expansion.*

—ORIGIN Old English *bitencan* (see **BE-**, **THINK**).

**Bethlehem** |'bɛθlɪ,hɛm; -lɛm| 1 a small town 5 miles (8 km) south of Jerusalem, in the West Bank; pop. 14,000. It was the native city of King David and is the reputed birthplace of Jesus.

2 an industrial city in eastern Pennsylvania, on the Lehigh River; pop. 71,329. It is noted for the manufacturing of steel.

**Bethune** |bɪ'tʊn(y)ʊn|, Mary McLeod (1875–1955), US educator. In 1904, she founded the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Negro Girls, which, with the Cookman Institute, became Bethune-Cookman College in 1923. Bethune was founder and first president 1935–49 of the National Council of Negro Women.

**betide** |bi'tɪd| ▶v. [intrans.] poetic/literary happen: *I waited with beating heart, as yet not knowing what would betide.*

■ [trans.] happen to (someone): *she was trembling with fear lest worse might betide her.*

—PHRASES **woe betide** see **WOE**.

—ORIGIN Middle English: from **BE-** (as an intensifier) + obsolete *tide* 'befall,' from Old English *tīdan* 'happen,' from *tīd* (see **TIDE**).

**betimes** |bi'tɪmz| ▶adv. poetic/literary before the usual or expected time; early: *next morning I was up betimes.*

—ORIGIN Middle English: from obsolete *betime* (see **BY**, **TIME**).

**bêtise** |bɛ'tɪz| ▶n. a foolish or ill-timed remark or action.

—ORIGIN early 19th cent.: French, literally 'stupidity.'

**betoken** |bi'tɔkn| ▶v. [trans.] poetic/literary be a sign of; indicate: *she wondered if his cold, level gaze betokened indifference or anger.*

■ be a warning or indication of (a future event): *the falling comet betokened the true end of Merlin's powers.*

—ORIGIN Old English *betācnian*, from **BE-** (as an intensifier) + *tācnian* 'signify,' of Germanic origin; related to **TOKEN**.

**betony** |'bɛtn-ɛ| ▶n. (pl. -ies) a Eurasian plant of the mint family that bears spikes of showy purple flowers.

•*Stachys officinalis*, family Labiatae.

■ used in names of plants that resemble the betony, e.g., **wood betony**.

—ORIGIN Middle English: from Old French *betoine*, based on Latin *betonica*, perhaps from the name of an Iberian tribe.

**betook** |bi'tʊk| ▶n. past of **BETAKE**.

**betray** |bi'treɪ| ▶v. [trans.] be disloyal to: *his friends were shocked when he betrayed them.*

■ be disloyal to (one's country, organization, or ideology) by acting in the interests of an enemy: *he could betray his country for the sake of communism. | treacherously inform an enemy of the existence or location of (a person or organization): this group was betrayed by an informer. | treacherously reveal (secrets or information): many of those employed by diplomats betrayed secrets and sold classified documents. | figurative reveal the presence of; be evidence of: she drew a deep breath that betrayed her indignation*

—DERIVATIVES **betrayal** |-'əl| n.; **betray'er** n.

—ORIGIN Middle English: from **BE-** 'thoroughly' + obsolete *tray* 'betray,' from Old French *traire*, based on Latin *trahere* 'to draw over.'

An independent sultanate known as Muscat and Oman until 1970, Oman was the most influential power in the region during the 19th century; it controlled Zanzibar and other territory. Since the late 19th century, it has had strong links with Britain. The economy is dependent on oil, discovered in 1964.

-DERIVATIVES **Omani** |'ɒməni| adj. & n.

**Oman**, Gulf of an inlet of the Arabian Sea, connected by the Strait of Hormuz to the Persian Gulf.

**Omar** |'ɒmər| (c. 581–644), Muslim caliph 634–44. He conquered Syria, Palestine, and Egypt.

**Omar Khayyām** |kɪ'æm; 'æm| (died 1123), Persian poet, mathematician, and astronomer. His *rubāiyāt* (quatrains), found in *The Rubāiyāt of Omar Khayyām* (translation published 1859), are meditations on the mysteries of existence and celebrations of worldly pleasures.

**Omasum** |'ɒməsəm| n. (pl. **omasa** [-sə]) Zoology the muscular third stomach of a ruminant animal, between the reticulum and the abomasum. Also called **PSALTERIUM**.

-ORIGIN early 18th cent.: from Latin, literally 'bullock's tripe.'

**Omayyad** |'ɒmi(ɪ)æd| variant spelling of **UMAYYAD**. **OMB** ▶abbr. (in the federal government) Office of Management and Budget.

**ombre** |'ɒmbər| n. a trick-taking card game for three people using a pack of forty cards, popular in Europe in the 17th–18th centuries.

-ORIGIN from Spanish *hombre* 'man,' with reference to one player seeking to win the pool.

**ombred** |'ɒmbrəd| adj. (of a fabric) having a dyed, printed, or woven design in which the color is graduated from light to dark.

-ORIGIN French, past participle of *ombrer* 'to shade.'

**ombro-** ▶comb. form relating to rain: *ombrotrophic*.

-ORIGIN from Greek *ombros* 'rain shower.'

**ombrotrophic** |'ɒmbɹə'trɒfɪk; -'trɒfɪk| adj. Ecology (of a bog or its vegetation) dependent on atmospheric moisture for its nutrients.

**ombudsman** |'ɒmbʊdzmən; -'bʊdʒz-| n. (pl. **-men**) an official appointed to investigate individuals' complaints against maladministration, esp. that of public authorities.

-ORIGIN 1950s: from Swedish, 'legal representative.'

**ombuds-person** |'ɒmbʊdʒ,pərsən; -'bʊdʒz-| n. a person acting as an ombudsman.

**Omdurman** |'ɒmdər'mæn| a city in central Sudan, on the Nile River opposite Khartoum; pop. 229,000.

**ome** ▶suffix chiefly Biology forming nouns denoting objects or parts having a specified nature: *rhizome* | *trichome*.

-ORIGIN variant form of **-OMA**.

**omega** |'ɒməgə; 'ɒmə-| n. the twenty-fourth, and last, letter of the Greek alphabet (Ω, ω), transliterated as 'o' or 'ō.'

■ the last of a series; the final development: [as adj.] *the omega point*. ■ (**Omega**) [followed by Latin genitive] Astronomy the twenty-fourth star in a constellation: *Omega Scorpii*.

▶symbol ■ (Ω) ohm(s): a 100Ω resistor.

-ORIGIN from Greek *ō mega* 'big O.'

**omega-3 fatty acid** n. an unsaturated fatty acid of a kind occurring chiefly in fish oils, with three double bonds at particular positions in the hydrocarbon chain.

**omelet** |'ɒm(ə)lɪt| (also **omelette**) n. a dish of beaten eggs cooked in a frying pan until firm, often with a filling added while cooking, and usually served folded over.

-ORIGIN French *omelette*, earlier *amelette*, alteration of *alumette*, variant of *alumelle*, from *lemele* 'knife blade,' from Latin *lamella* (see **LAMELLA**). The association with 'knife blade' is probably because of the thin flat shape of an omelet.

**omen** |'ɒmən| n. an event regarded as a portent of good or evil: *the ghost's appearance was an ill omen* | *a rise in imports might be an omen of recovery*.

■ prophetic significance: *the raven seemed a bird of evil omen*.

-ORIGIN late 16th cent.: from Latin.

**omentum** |'ɒməntəm| n. (pl. **omenta** [-tə]) Anatomy a fold of peritoneum connecting the stomach with other abdominal organs.

-DERIVATIVES **omental** |'ɒmentl| adj.

-ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin.

**omer** |'ɒmər; 'ɒmər| n. 1 an ancient Hebrew dry measure, the tenth part of an ephah.

2 (**Omer**) Judaism a sheaf of corn or omer of grain presented as an offering on the second day of Passover.

■ the period of 49 days between this day and Shavuoth (Pentecost).

Mafia) a code of silence about criminal activity and a refusal to give evidence to authorities.

**omicron** |'ɒmi,kɹən; 'ɒm-| n. the fifteenth letter of the Greek alphabet (Ο, ο), transliterated as 'o.'

■ (**Omicron**) [followed by Latin genitive] Astronomy the fifteenth star in a constellation: *Omicron Piscium*.

-ORIGIN from Greek *o mikron* 'little O.'

**ominous** |'ɒmɪnəs| adj. giving the impression that something bad or unpleasant is going to happen; threatening; inauspicious: *there were ominous dark clouds gathering overhead*.

-DERIVATIVES **ominously** adv.; **ominousness** n.

-ORIGIN late 16th cent.: from Latin *ominosus*, from *omen*, *omin-* 'omen.'

**omission** |'ɒmɪ'shən| n. someone or something that has been left out or excluded: *there are glaring omissions in the report*.

■ the action of excluding or leaving out someone or something: *the omission of recent publications from his bibliography*. ■ a failure to do something, esp. something that one has a moral or legal obligation to do: *to pay compensation for a wrongful act or omission*.

-DERIVATIVES **omissive** |'ɒmɪsɪv| adj.

-ORIGIN late Middle English: from late Latin *omissio(n-)*, from the verb *omittere* (see **OMIT**).

**omit** |'ɒmɪt| v. (**omitted**, **omitting**) [trans.] (often **be omitted**) leave out or exclude (someone or something), either intentionally or forgetfully: *a significant detail was omitted from your story*.

■ fail or neglect to do (something); leave undone: *the final rinse is omitted* | [with infinitive] *he modestly omits to mention that he was pole-vault champion*.

-DERIVATIVES **omissible** |'ɒmɪsəbəl| adj.

-ORIGIN late Middle English: from Latin *omittere*, from *ob-* 'down' + *mittere* 'let go.'

**ommatidium** |'ɒmə'tɪdɪəm| n. (pl. **ommatidia** [-'tɪdɪə]) Entomology each of the optical units that make up a compound eye, as of an insect.

-DERIVATIVES **ommatidial** |-'tɪdɪəl| adj.

-ORIGIN late 19th cent.: modern Latin, from Greek *ommatidion*, diminutive of *omma*, *ommat-* 'eye.'

**ommatophore** |'ɒ'mætə,fɔːr| n. Zoology a part of an invertebrate animal, esp. a stalk or tentacle, that bears an eye.

-ORIGIN late 19th cent.: from Greek *omma*, *ommat-* 'eye' + **-PHORE**.

**omni-** ▶comb. form all; of all things: *omniscient* | *omnifarious*.

■ in all ways or places: *omnipotent* | *omnipresent*.

-ORIGIN from Latin *omnis* 'all.'

**omnibus** |'ɒmnə,bʊs| n. 1 a volume containing several novels or other items previously published separately: *an omnibus of her first trilogy*.

2 dated a bus.

▶adj. comprising several items: *Congress passed an omnibus anti-crime package*.

-ORIGIN early 19th cent.: via French from Latin, literally 'for all,' dative plural of *omnis*.

**omnidirectional** |'ɒmni,dɪ'rekʃənəl| adj. Telecommunications receiving signals from or transmitting in all directions.

**omnifarious** |'ɒmnə'ferɪəs| adj. formal comprising or relating to all sorts or varieties.

-DERIVATIVES **omnifariously** adv.; **omnifariousness** n.

-ORIGIN mid 17th cent.: from late Latin *omnifarius* + **-OUS**; compare with **MULTIFARIOUS**.

**omnipotent** |'ɒm'nɪpə'tent| adj. (of a deity) having unlimited power; able to do anything.

■ having ultimate power and influence: *an omnipotent sovereign*.

n. (**the Omnipotent**) God.

-DERIVATIVES **omnipotence** n.; **omnipotently** adv.

-ORIGIN Middle English (as a divine attribute): via Old French from Latin *omnipotens* 'all-powerful.'

**omnipresent** |'ɒmnə'preznt| adj. (of God) present everywhere at the same time.

■ widely or constantly encountered; common or widespread: *the omnipresent threat of natural disasters*.

-DERIVATIVES **omnipresence** n.

-ORIGIN early 17th cent.: from medieval Latin *omnipraesent-*.

**omni-range** |'ɒmni,ræŋ| n. a navigation system in which short-range omnidirectional VHF transmitters serve as radio beacons.

**omniscient** |'ɒm'nɪʃənt| adj. knowing everything: *the story is told by an omniscient narrator*.

-DERIVATIVES **omniscience** n.; **omnisciently** adv.

-ORIGIN early 17th cent.: from medieval Latin *omniscient-* 'all-knowing,' based on *scire* 'to know.'

**omni-sexual** |'ɒmni'seksʃwəl| adj. involving, re-

-DERIVATIVES **omni-sexuality** |-,seksʃə'vælɪtɪ| n.

**omni-um-gather-um** |'ɒmniəm gæ'tɪəəm| n. a collection of miscellaneous people or things.

-ORIGIN early 16th cent.: mock Latin, from Latin *omnium* 'of all' and **GATHER** + the Latin suffix *-um*.

**omnivore** |'ɒmnə,vɔːr| n. an animal or person that eats food of both plant and animal origin.

-ORIGIN late 19th cent.: from French, from Latin *omnivorus* 'omnivorous.'

**omnivorous** |'ɒm'nɪv(ə)rəs| adj. (of an animal or person) feeding on food of both plant and animal origin.

■ taking in or using whatever is available: *an omnivorous reader*.

-DERIVATIVES **omnivorously** adv.; **omnivorousness** n.

-ORIGIN mid 17th cent.: from Latin *omnivorus* + **-OUS**.

**omophagy** |'ɒməfəʒi| (also **omophagia**) n. the eating of raw food, esp. raw meat.

-DERIVATIVES **omophagic** |'ɒmə'fæʒɪk| adj.; **omophagist** |-'ʒɪst| n.; **omophagous** |-'gəs| adj.

-ORIGIN early 18th cent.: from Greek *ōmophagia*, from *ōmos* 'raw' + *-phagia* (from *phagēin* 'eat').

**Omotik** |'ɒmə'tɪk| n. a subfamily of Afro-Asiatic languages spoken in Ethiopia, with over thirty members.

▶adj. denoting or belonging to this subfamily.

-ORIGIN 1970s: from *Omo*, the name of a river in southwestern Ethiopia, + **-OTIC**.

**omphalo-** ▶comb. form relating to the navel.

-ORIGIN from Greek *omphalos* 'navel.'

**omphalos** |'ɒmfələs| n. (pl. **omphaloi** |-'loɪ|) poetic/literary the center or hub of something: *this was the omphalos of confusion and strife*.

■ a rounded stone (esp. that at Delphi) representing the navel of the earth in ancient Greek mythology.

-ORIGIN Greek, literally 'navel.'

**Omsk** |'ɒmsk| a city in south central Russia, on the Irtysh River; pop. 1,159,000.

**ON** ▶abbr. Ontario (in official postal use).

**ON** ▶abbr. Old Norse.

**on** |'ɒn; 'ɒn| prep. 1 physically in contact with and supported by (a surface): *on the table was a water jug* | *she was lying on the floor* | *a sign on the front gate*.

■ located somewhere in the general surface area of (a place): *an internment camp on the island* | *the house on the corner*. ■ as a result of accidental physical contact with: *one of the children had cut a foot on some glass* | *he banged his head on a beam*. ■ supported by (a part of the body): *he was lying on his back*. ■ so as to be supported or held by: *put it on the table*. ■ in the possession of (the person referred to): *she only had a few dollars on her*.

2 forming a distinctive or marked part of (the surface of something): *a scratch on her arm* | *a smile on her face*.

3 having (the thing mentioned) as a topic: *a book on careers* | *essays on a wide range of issues*.

■ having (the thing mentioned) as a basis: *modeled on the Mayflower Compact* | *dependent on availability*.

4 as a member of (a committee, jury, or other body): *they would be allowed to serve on committees*.

5 having (the place or thing mentioned) as a target: *five air raids on the city* | *thousands marching on Washington*.

■ having (the thing mentioned) as a target for visual focus: *her eyes were fixed on his dark profile*.

6 having (the thing mentioned) as a medium for transmitting or storing information: *put your ideas down on paper* | *stored on the client's own computer*.

■ being broadcast by (a radio or television channel): *a new TV series on Channel 4*.

7 in the course of (a journey): *he was on his way to see his mother*.

■ while traveling in (a public conveyance): *John got some sleep on the plane*. ■ on to (a public conveyance) with the intention of traveling in it: *we got on the train*.

8 indicating the day or part of a day during which an event takes place: *reported on September 26* | *on a very hot evening in July*.

■ at the time of: *she was booed on arriving home*.

9 engaged in: *his attendant was out on errands*.

10 regularly taking (a drug or medicine): *he is on morphine to relieve the pain*.

11 paid for by: *the drinks are on me*.

12 added to: *a few cents on the electric bill is nothing compared with your security*.

▶adv. 1 physically in contact with and supported by a surface: *make sure the lid is on*.

■ (of clothing) being worn by a person: *sitting with her coat on* | *get your shoes on*.

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