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of the English Language

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ture thought to exist in cytoplasm and function in a manner analogous to, but independent of, chromosomal genes. —**plas•ma•gen'ic** (-jēf-nik, -jēn'ik) *adj.*

**plas•ma•lem•ma** (plāz'mā-lēm'mā) *n.* See **cell membrane**. [PLASMA + Greek *lemma*, husk; see **LEMMA**.]

**plasma membrane** *n.* See **cell membrane**.

**plas•ma•pher•e•sis** (plāz'mā-fēr'ī-sis, -fā-rēf-) *n.* A process in which plasma is taken from donated blood and the remaining components, mostly red blood cells, are returned to the donor. [PLASM(A) + Greek *aphairesis*, removal; see **APHAERESIS**.]

**plas•ma•sol** (plāz'mā-sōl', -sōl', -sōl') *n.* A state of cytoplasm that is more liquid than plasmagel.

**plas•mid** (plāz'mid) *n.* A circular, double-stranded unit of DNA that replicates within a cell independently of the chromosomal DNA. Plasmids are most often found in bacteria and are used in recombinant DNA research to transfer genes between cells.

**plas•min** (plāz'min) *n.* A proteolytic enzyme that is formed from plasminogen in blood plasma and dissolves the fibrin in blood clots. Also called **fibrinolysin**.

**plas•min•o•gen** (plāz'min'ō-jən) *n.* The inactive precursor to plasmin that is found in body fluids and blood plasma.

**plasmo-** or **plasm-** *pref.* Plasma: **plasmin**. [From **PLASMA**.]

**plas•mo•des•ma** (plāz'mō-dēz'mā) also **plas•mo•desm** (plāz'mō-dēz'm) *n., pl. -ma•ta* (-mā-tā) or **-mas** also **-desms** A strand of cytoplasm that passes through openings in cell walls and connects the protoplasts of adjacent living plant cells. [PLASMO- + Greek *desma*, bond (from *dein*, to bind).]

**plas•mo•di•um** (plāz'mō-dē-əm) *n., pl. -di•a* (-dē-ā) **1.** A multinucleate mass of cytoplasm formed by the aggregation of a number of amoeboid cells, as that characteristic of the vegetative phase of the slime molds. **2.** A protozoan of the genus *Plasmodium*, which includes the parasites that cause malaria. [New Latin *Plasmodium*, genus name: PLASM(O)- + Greek *-ōdēs*, resembling; see **COLLODION**.] —**plas•mo•di•al** (-dē-əl) *adj.*

**plas•mog•a•my** (plāz'mōg'ā-mē) *n.* Fusion of two or more cells or protoplasts without fusion of the nuclei, as occurs in higher terrestrial fungi.

**plas•mol•y•sis** (plāz'mōl'ī-sis) *n., pl. -ses* (-sēz') Shrinkage or contraction of the protoplasm away from the wall of a living plant or bacterial cell, caused by loss of water through osmosis. —**plas•mo•lyt'ic** (plāz'mō-līt'ik) *adj.* —**plas•mo•lyt'ically** *adv.*

**plas•mo•lyze** (plāz'mō-līz') *v. -lyzed, -lyz'ing, -lyz'es* —*tr.* To subject to plasmolysis. —*intr.* To undergo plasmolysis.

**plas•mon** (plāz'mōn') *n.* The aggregate of cytoplasmic or extranuclear genetic material in an organism. [German, from New Latin *plasma*, plasma. See **PLASMA**.]

**-plast** *suffix.* A small body, structure, particle, or granule, especially of living matter; cell: **chloroplast**. [From Greek *plastos*, molded, from *plassein*, to mold. See **PELA**-2 in Appendix I.]

**plas•ter** (plās'tər) *n.* **1.** A mixture of lime or gypsum, sand, and water, sometimes with fiber added, that hardens to a smooth solid and is used for coating walls and ceilings. **2.** Plaster of Paris. **3.** A pastelike mixture applied to a part of the body for healing or cosmetic purposes. Also called **sticking plaster**. **4.** Chiefly British An adhesive bandage. ♦ *v.*

**-tered, -ter'ing, -ters** —*tr.* **1.** To cover, coat, or repair with plaster.

**2.** To cover or hide with or as if with a coat of plaster: *plastered over our differences*.

**3.** To apply a plaster to: *plaster an aching muscle*. **4a.** To cover conspicuously, as with things pasted on; overspread: *plaster the walls with advertising*.

**b.** To affix conspicuously, usually with a paste: *plaster notices on all the doors*.

**5.** To make smooth by applying a sticky substance: *plaster one's hair with pomade*.

**6.** To make adhere to another surface: "His hair was plastered to his forehead" (William Golding).

**7. Informal a.** To inflict heavy damage or injury on. **b.** To defeat decisively. —*intr.* To apply plaster. [Middle English, from Old English, medical dressing, and from Old French *plastre*, cementing material, both from Latin *emplastrum*, medical dressing, from Greek *emplastron*, from *emplassein*, to plaster on: *en-*, in, on; see **EN**-2 + *plassein*, to mold; see **PELA**-2 in Appendix I.] —**plas•ter'er** *n.* —**plas•ter'ery** *adj.*

**plas•ter•board** (plās'tər-bōrd', -bōrd') *n.* A rigid board made of layers of fiberboard or paper bonded to a gypsum plaster core, used instead of plaster or wood panels in construction to form walls. Also called **gypsum board, wallboard**.

**plaster cast** *n.* **1.** A sculptured mold or cast in plaster of Paris. **2.** See **cast** (sense 11).

**plas•tered** (plās'tərd) *adj.* Slang Intoxicated; drunk.

**plas•ter'ing** (plās'tər-īng) *n.* **1.** A layer or coating of plaster. **2. Informal** A resounding defeat; a beating.

**plaster of Paris** *n.* Any of a group of gypsum cements, essentially hemihydrated calcium sulfate, CaSO<sub>4</sub>•½H<sub>2</sub>O, a white powder that forms a paste when it is mixed with water and then hardens into a solid, used in making casts, molds, and sculpture. [Middle English, after PARIS<sup>2</sup>, France.]

**plas•ter•work** (plās'tər-wōrk') *n.* Construction or ornamental work done with plaster.

**plas•tic** (plās'tik) *adj.* **1.** Capable of being shaped or formed: *plastic material such as clay*. See synonyms at **malleable**. **2.** Relating to or dealing with shaping or modeling: *the plastic art of sculpture*. **3.** Having the qualities of sculpture; well-formed: "the astonishing plastic beauty of the chorus girls" (Frank Harris). **4.** Giving form or shape to a substance: *the plastic forces that create and wear down a mountain range*. **5.** Easily influenced; impressionable. **6.** Made of a plastic or plastics: *a plastic garden hose*. **7. Physics** Capable of undergoing continuous deformation without

rupture or relaxation. **8. Biology** Capable of building tissue; formative. **9.** Marked by artificiality or superficiality; synthetic: *a plastic world of fad, hype, and sensation*. **10. Informal** Of or obtained by means of credit cards: *plastic money*. ♦ *n.* **1.** Any of various organic compounds produced by polymerization, capable of being molded, extruded, cast into various shapes and films, or drawn into filaments used as textile fibers. **2.** Objects made of plastic. **3. Informal** A credit card or credit card: *would accept cash or plastic in payment*. [Latin *plasticus*, from Greek *plastikos*, from *plastos*, molded, from *plassein*, to mold. See **PELA**-2 in Appendix I.] —**plas'tic'ally** *adv.* —**plas'tic'ity** (plās-tis'tē-tē) *n.*

**-plastic** *suffix.* Forming; growing; changing; developing; *metaplastic*. [Greek *plastikos*, fit for molding. See **PLASTIC**.]

**plastic explosive** *n.* A versatile explosive substance in the form of a moldable doughlike solid, used in bombs detonated by fuse or electrical impulse. Also called **plastique**.

**plas•ti•cize** (plās'ti-sīz') *tr. & intr.v. -cized, -ciz'ing, -cizes* To make or become plastic. —**plas'tic'iza'tion** (-sī-zā'shən) *n.*

**plas•ti•ciz'er** (plās'ti-sī-zər) *n.* Any of various substances added to plastics or other materials to make or keep them soft or pliable.

**plastic surgery** *n.* Surgery to remodel, repair, or restore body parts, especially by the transfer of tissue. —**plastic surgeon** *n.*

**plas•tid** (plās'tid) *n.* Any of several pigmented cytoplasmic organelles found in plant cells and other organisms, having various physiological functions, such as the synthesis and storage of food. [From Greek *plastis*, *plastid-*, feminine of *plastēs*, molder, from *plastos*, molded. See **PLASTIC**.]

—**plas'tid'i•al** (plās-tid'ē-əl) *adj.*

**plas•tique** (plā-stēk') *n.* See **plastic explosive**. [French, from Latin *plasticus*, plastic, of modeling. See **PLASTIC**.]

**plas•tron** (plās'trən) *n.* **1.** A metal breastplate that is worn under a coat of mail. **2.** A quilted pad that is worn by fencers to protect the torso and side. **3.** A trimming on the front of a bodice. **4.** The front of a man's dress shirt. **5.** The front panel of the tunic of a uniform, usually of a different color than the rest. **6. Zoology** The ventral part of the shell of a turtle or tortoise. [French, from Old French, from Old Italian *piastro*, augmentative of *piastra*, thin metal plate. See **PIASTER**.] —**plas'tral** (-trəl) *adj.*

**-plasty** *suffix.* Molding or forming surgically; plastic surgery: *dermatoplasty*. [Greek *plastia*, from *plastos*, molded, from *plassein*, to mold. See **PELA**-2 in Appendix I.]

**-plasy** *suffix.* Variant of **-plasia**.

**plat**<sup>1</sup> (plāt) *tr.v. plat'ed, plat'ing, plats* To plait or braid. ♦ *n.* A braid. [Middle English *platen*, alteration of *plaiten*, to fold, braid. See **PLAIT**.]

**plat**<sup>2</sup> (plāt) *n.* **1.** A piece of land; a plot. **2.** A map showing actual or planned features, such as streets and building lots. ♦ *tr.v. plat'ed, plat'ing, plats* To make a plat of: *plat a new town*. [Middle English, probably alteration (influenced by *plat*, something flat) of *plot*; see **PLOT**.]

**plat** *abbr.* **1.** plateau **2.** platoon

**Pla•ta** (plā'tā, -tā), **Río de la A** wide estuary of southeast South America between Argentina and Uruguay formed by the Paraná and Uruguay rivers and opening on the Atlantic Ocean. It was explored by Magellan in 1520 and Sebastian Cabot from 1526 to 1529.

**Pla•tae•a** (plā-tē'ā) An ancient city of central Greece southwest of Thebes. It was the site of a major Greek victory over the Persians in 479 B.C.

**plate** (plāt) *n.* **1.** A smooth, flat, relatively thin, rigid body of uniform thickness. **2a.** A sheet of hammered, rolled, or cast metal. **b.** A very thin applied or deposited coat of metal. **3a.** A flat piece of metal forming part of a machine: a **boiler plate**. **b.** A flat piece of metal on which something is engraved. **c.** A license plate. **4a.** A thin piece of metal used for armor. **b.** Armor made of such pieces. **5. Printing a.** A sheet of metal, plastic, rubber, paperboard, or other material prepared for use as a printing surface, such as an electrotpe or a stereotype. **b.** A print of a woodcut, lithograph, or other engraved material, especially when reproduced in a book. **c.** A full-page book illustration, often in color and printed on paper different from that used on the text pages. **6. Photography** A light-sensitive sheet of glass or metal on which a photographic image can be recorded. **7. Dentistry** A thin metallic or plastic support fitted to the gums to anchor artificial teeth. **8. Architecture** In wood-frame construction, a horizontal member, capping the exterior wall studs, upon which the roof rafters rest. **9. Baseball** Home plate. **10a.** A shallow dish in which food is served or from which it is eaten. **b.** The contents of such a dish: *ate a plate of spaghetti*. **c.** A whole course served on such a dish. **11.** Service and food for one person at a meal: *dinner at a set price per plate*. **12.** Household articles, such as hollowware, covered with a precious metal, such as silver or gold. **13.** A dish passed among the members of a group or congregation for the collection of offerings. **14. Sports a.** A dish, cup, or other article of silver or gold offered as a prize. **b.** A contest, especially a horserace, offering such a prize. **15.** A thin cut of beef from the brisket. **16. Biology a.** A thin flat layer or scale, as that of a fish. **b.** A platelike part, organ, or structure, such as that covering some reptiles. **17. Electricity a.** An electrode, as in a storage battery or capacitor. **b.** The anode in an electron tube. **18. Geology** In the theory of plate tectonics, one of the sections of the earth's lithosphere, constantly moving in relation to the other sections. **19. Informal** A schedule of matters to be dealt with: *had a lot on my plate at work after vacation*. ♦ *tr.v. plat'ed, plat'ing, plates* **1.** To coat or cover with a thin layer of metal. **2.** To cover with armor plate: *plate a warship*. **3. Printing** To make a stereotype or electrotpe from. **4.** To give a glossy finish to (paper) by pressing between metal sheets or rollers. **5.** To arrange (food) on a plate, as for serving: "a choice of starters, entrées, and desserts plated just as they will appear when ordered" (John Edward Young). [Middle English, from

Old French, from feminine of *plat*, flat, from Vulgar Latin \**plattus*, from Greek *plattus*. See **plat-** in Appendix I. —**plat'er** *n.*  
**plateau** (plā-tō) *n.*, *pl.* **-teaus** or **-teaux** (-tōz) 1. An elevated, comparatively level expanse of land; a tableland. 2. A relatively stable level period, or state: *Mortgage rates declined for months before reaching a plateau.* **intr.v.** **-teaued**, **-teauing**, **-teaus** To reach a stable level; *"The tension seemed to grow by degrees, then it plateaued"* (Tom Clancy). [French, from Old French *platel*, platter, from *plat*, flat. See **PLATE.**]

**plated** (plā'tid) *adj.* 1. Coated with a thin adherent layer of metal. Often used in combination: a gold-plated ceramic bowl; a silver-plated spoon. 2. Covered with protective plates or sheets of metal. Often used in combination: an armor-plated truck; a steel-plated safe. 3. Knitted with two kinds of yarn, one on the face and one on the back.

**plateful** (plāt'fūl) *n.*, *pl.* **-fuls** 1. The amount that a plate can hold. 2. A generous portion of food.

**plate glass** *n.* A strong rolled and polished glass containing few impurities, used for mirrors and large windows.

**platelet** (plāt'lit) *n.* A minute, nonnucleated, disklike cytoplasmic body found in the blood plasma of mammals that is derived from megakaryocyte and functions to promote blood clotting. Also called *blood platelet*, *thrombocyte*.

**platen** (plāt'n) *n.* 1. The roller in a typewriter that serves as the backing for the paper against which the type bars strike. 2. Computer Science The roller in a printer against which the print head strikes. 3. A flat plate or rolling cylinder in a printing press that positions the paper and holds it against the inked type. 4. The glass surface of a flatbed scanner. [Middle English *plateine*, *paten*, from Old French *platine*, metal plate, from *plat*, flat. See **PLATE.**]

**plate proof** *n.* Printing A proof taken from a master plate.

**Plateresque** (plāt'ar-ēsk) *adj.* Of or relating to a style of 16th-century Spanish architecture marked by lavish ornament in a variety of motifs, especially Gothic, Renaissance, and Moorish. [Spanish *plateresco*, in the manner of a silversmith, *Plateresque*, from *platero*, silversmith, from *plata*, silver. See **PLATINA.**]

**plate tectonics** *n.* 1. (used with a *sing. verb*) A theory that explains the global distribution of geological phenomena such as seismicity, volcanism, continental drift, and mountain building in terms of the formation, destruction, movement, and interaction of the earth's lithospheric plates. 2. (used with a *sing. or pl. verb*) The dynamics of plate movement. —**plate-tectonic** (plāt'tēk-tōn'ik) *adj.*

**platform** (plāt'fōrm) *n.* 1a. A horizontal surface raised above the level of the adjacent area, as a stage for public speaking or a landing alongside railroad tracks. b. A vessel, such as a submarine or an aircraft carrier, from which weapons can be deployed. c. An oil platform. 2. A place, means, or opportunity for public expression of opinion: a journal that served as a platform for radical views. 3. A vestibule at the end of a railway car. 4. A formal declaration of the principles on which a group, such as a political party, makes its appeal to the public. 5a. A thick layer, as of leather or cork, between the inner and outer soles of a shoe, giving added height. b. A shoe having such a construction. 6. Computer Science The basic technology of a computer system's hardware and software that defines how a computer is operated and determines what other kinds of software can be used. 7. Geology a. A flat elevated portion of ground. b. The ancient, stable, interior layer of a continental craton composed of igneous or metamorphic rocks covered by a thin layer of sedimentary rock. [French *plate-forme*, diagram, from Old French : *plat*, flat; see **PLATE** + *forme*, form (from Latin *forma*).]

**platform bed** *n.* A bed consisting of a mattress on a solid platform raised off the floor by legs or framing, with the floor space beneath the platform used for living space or storage.

**platform scale** *n.* An industrial weighing instrument consisting of a platform coupled to an automatic system of levers and adjustable weights, used to weigh large or heavy objects.

**platform tennis** *n.* A variation of tennis played with paddles and a rubber ball on a raised wooden floor that is fenced with a wire screen, in which balls that have landed once inbounds and then struck and rebounded off the screen remain in play.

**Plath** (plāth), Sylvia 1932–1963. American writer. Her poems, collected in *Colossus* (1960) and *Ariel* (1965), are noted for their technical excellence and their disturbing images of alienation. Plath's other works include the semiautobiographical novel *The Bell Jar* (1963).

**platin-** *pref.* Variant of **platino-**.

**platina** (plā-tē'nā) *n.* Platinum, especially as found naturally in impure form. [Spanish, diminutive of *plata*, silver, plate, from Vulgar Latin \**plattus*. See **PLATE.**]

**plating** (plā'ting) *n.* 1. A thin layer of metal, such as gold or silver, deposited on or applied to a surface. 2. A coating of metal sheets or plates.

**platin-** *pref.* Variant of **platino-**.

**platinic** (plā-tin'ik) *adj.* Of, relating to, or containing platinum, especially with valence 4.

**platinize** (plāt'n-iz') *tr.v.* **-nized**, **-nizing**, **-nizes** To electroplate with platinum.

**platin-** or **platini-** or **platin-** *pref.* Platinum: *platinotype*. [From **PLATINUM.**]

**platinotype** (plāt'n-ō-tīp') *n.* 1. A process formerly used for making photographic prints, using a finely precipitated platinum salt and an iron salt in the sensitizing solution to produce prints in platinum black. 2. A print produced by platinotype.

**platinous** (plāt'n-əs) *adj.* Of, relating to, or containing platinum, especially with valence 2.

**platinum** (plāt'n-əm) *n.* 1. *Symbol Pt* A silver-white metallic element occurring worldwide, usually mixed with other metals such as iridium, osmium, or nickel. It is ductile and malleable, does not oxidize in air, and is used as a catalyst and in electrical components, jewelry, dentistry, and electroplating. Atomic number 78; atomic weight 195.08; melting point 1,772°C; boiling point 3,827°C; specific gravity 21.45; valence 2, 3, 4. See table at **element**. 2. A medium to light gray. [New Latin, from Spanish *platina*, platinum. See **PLATINA.**]

**platinum black** *n.* A fine black powder of metallic platinum, used as a catalyst and as a gas absorbent.

**platinum blond** *n.* 1. A very light silver-blond hair color, especially when artificially produced. 2. A person having hair of this color.

**platitude** (plāt'i-tōd', -tyōd') *n.* 1. A trite or banal remark or statement, especially one expressed as if it were original or significant. See synonyms at  **cliché**. 2. Lack of originality; triteness. [French, from *plat*, flat, from Old French. See **PLATE.**] —**plati'tu'di'nous** (-tōd'n-əs, -tyōd'-) , **plati'tu'di'nal** (-tōd'n-əl, -tyōd'-) *adj.* —**plati'tu'di'nously** *adv.*

**platinodiarian** (plāt'i-tōd'ār-ē-ən, -tyōd'-) *n.* One who habitually uses platitudes. [**PLATITUDIN(OUS)** + **-ARIAN.**]

**platinize** (plāt'i-tōd'n-iz', -tyōd'-) *tr.v.* **-nized**, **-nizing**, **-nizes** To use platitudes in speaking or writing.

**Plato** (plā'tō) 427?–347? B.C. Greek philosopher. A follower of Socrates, he presented his ideas through dramatic dialogues, in the most celebrated of which (*The Republic*) the interlocutors advocate a utopian society ruled by philosophers trained in Platonic metaphysics. He taught and wrote for much of his life at the Academy, which he founded near Athens in 386.

**Platonic** (plā-tōn'ik, plā-) *adj.* 1. Of, relating to, or characteristic of Plato or his philosophy: *Platonic dialogues; Platonic ontology*. 2. often **platonically** Transcending physical desire and tending toward the purely spiritual or ideal: *platonically love*. 3. often **platonically** Speculative or theoretical. [After **PLATO.**] —**Platonic** *adv.*

**Word History** Plato did not invent the term or the concept that bears his name, but he did see sexual desire as the germ for higher loves. Marsilio Ficino, a Renaissance follower of Plato, used the terms *amor socraticus* and *amor platonicus* interchangeably for a love between two humans that was preparatory for the love of God. From Ficino's usage, *Platonic* (already present in English as an adjective to describe what related to Plato and first recorded in 1533) came to be used for a spiritual love between persons of opposite sexes. In our own century *Platonic* has been used of relationships between members of the same sex. Though the concept is an elevated one, the term has perhaps more often been applied in ways that led Samuel Richardson to have one of his characters in *Pamela* say, "I am convinced, and always was, that Platonic love is Platonic nonsense."

**Platonism** (plāt'n-iz'm) *n.* The philosophy of Plato, especially insofar as it asserts ideal forms as an absolute and eternal reality of which the phenomena of the world are an imperfect and transitory reflection. —**Platonist** *n.* —**Platonic** *adj.*

**platoon** (plā-tōon) *n.* 1. A subdivision of a company of troops consisting of two or more squads or sections and usually commanded by a lieutenant. 2. A group of people working, traveling, or assembled together: a platoon of firefighters; buses carrying platoons of tourists. 3. Sports A group of players within a team, especially a football team, that is trained and sent into or withdrawn from play as a unit: the defensive platoon. **intr.v.** **-tooned**, **-tooning**, **-toons** *Sports* —*tr.* To play (a player) in alternation with another player in the same position: *platooned the two catchers*. —*intr.* 1. To use alternate players at the same position. 2. To take turns playing a position with another player. [French *peloton*, from Old French, diminutive of *pelote*, ball. See **PELLET.**]

**platoon sergeant** *n.* The senior noncommissioned officer in an army platoon or comparable unit.

**Plattdeutsch** (plāt'doich') *n.* See **Low German** (sense 1). [German (translation of Dutch *Platduits*, Low German): *platt*, low, flat (from Middle Dutch *plat*, from Old French; see **PLATE**) + German *Deutsch*, German (from Middle High German *diutsch*, from Old High German *diutisc*, of the people; see **teutā-** in Appendix I).]

**Platte** (plāt) A river, about 499 km (310 mi) long, of central Nebraska formed by the confluence of the North Platte and South Platte rivers and flowing eastward to the Missouri River at the Iowa border below Omaha. **platter** (plāt'er) *n.* 1. A large shallow dish or plate, used especially for serving food. 2. A meal or course served on a platter. 3. Slang A phonograph record. — **idiom:** on a platter Without exertion; effortlessly: *always got what they wanted on a platter*. [Middle English *plater*, from Anglo-Norman, from Old French *plate*, plate. See **PLATE.**]

**Plattsburgh** (plāt'sbūrg') A city of extreme northeast New York on Lake Champlain northwest of Burlington, Vermont. During the War of 1812 an American fleet decisively defeated the British in a naval battle

ā pat	oi boy
ā pay	ou out
ār care	ōō took
ā father	ōō boot
ē pet	ū cat
ē be	ūr surge
ī pit	th thin
ī pie	th this
ī pier	hw which
ō pot	ō vision
ō toe	ō about, item
ō paw	♦ regionalism