

FUN WITH FAUNA

LET'S TALK ANIMALS

STRATEGY 1:

MAKE A BASIC ROOT FOR IT

STRATEGY 2:

MAKE AN ANALOGY TO ANOTHER ANIMAL





hippopotamus: from Greek compound meaning "river horse"



Other languages calqued that compound:

- Armenian ***getaji***
- Danish ***flodhest***
- Finnish ***virtahepo***

STRATEGY 3:

COLOR ASSOCIATION





beaver:
ultimately from a
PIE root meaning
“brown”



Fun side notes:

Armenian's *jršun*
breaks down into
"water dog."

Greek's *kastoras*
is based on the
root meaning
"wood."



In Ancient Greek, the word for "otter" (***húdra***) means "water snake."



Most IE forms of the word for “otter” come from the PIE root meaning “of the water.”





donkey: the best guess of this word's origin is that it means "miniature dun horse," where "dun" is a root meaning "brownish grey color" with two diminutive suffixes



But in other languages...

STRATEGY 4:

BASED ON LOOKS (OTHER THAN COLOR)



Chickasaw ***haksibish falaa'*** literally means "long ear."

STRATEGY 5: ITEM ASSOCIATION



Dalmatian ***samur*** has origins in Late Latin ***sagmarius***, which breaks down into a derived noun meaning "thing with a saddle."

STRATEGY 6:

MOVEMENT ASSOCIATION



raccoon: borrowed from Powhatan *ärähkunēm* "he scratches with his hands"



German *Waschbär* means "wash bear."







Arabic [tʃɑːʔir] "bird"
comes from the verb
[tʃɑːra] "to fly" and
means "flyer."



The Romance root ***grill-*** is based on Latin ***gryllus***, which is believed to be borrowed from Ancient Greek ***grúllos*** meaning “performer in an Egyptian dance, comic figure, caricature.”



Other languages used a different
association for crickets...



STRATEGY 7: SOUND ASSOCIATION

English ***cricket*** is based on the verb meaning “to creak.”

Slavic languages have a root meaning “to squeak” (e.g. Polish ***świerszcz***).



STRATEGY 8:

MYTHOLOGY/FOLKLORE



The word *python* is from Ancient Greek *Púthōn*, a huge serpent that Apollo slayed.



Pali *ajagara* is from Sanskrit and literally means "goat-swallower."







Turtle and ***tortoise*** come from the same root (Latin ***tortuca***). The etymology is ultimately unknown but is perhaps related to the underworld because they were mythologically tied to the underworld. The older English word was ***byrdling***, which is essentially a board-ling, plank-ling, or table-ling.



Afrikaan *skilpad* is an example of the “shield toad” compound in many Germanic languages.



Bulgarian [kostɛnurkə]
breaks down into “bone
diver.”

FOR FUN...



Most words for unicorn break down into "one horn."

However...
Albanian ***briqen*** means "horn dog"!



AND NOW FOR DAVID'S FAVORITE...



The English word breaks down into “butter” and “fly,” but the reasons aren’t entirely clear.



It could be color (wings the color of butter).



It could be from the belief that they ate/stole
butter and cream: German variants ***Molkendieb***
“whey thief” and ***Botterlicker*** “butter licker.”



Other German variants include **Schmetterling** "cream-ling" and **Bottervögel** "butter fowl."



It could be from the belief that they excreted
butter-like substance: Dutch *boterschijte* "butter
shitter."



However, it could be an ablauted form of *butor*
"to beat."



As a fun side note, the Pennsylvania German word for butterfly is *Fleddermaus* ("flutter mouse"), a word typically meaning "bat" in other Germanic languages.



French ***papillon*** comes from a root meaning "to shake."



Russian ***bábočka*** means “little grandmother” from the belief that spirits of the dead live on as butterflies.



Spanish *mariposa* comes from the phrase *María pódase* ("Mary, alight!").

