

Feeling quizzical?

Quiz is a relatively new word. It first came into use in the late 1700s, making it a little over 250 years old, and there's a curious story about its origin---The tale about Richard Daly in 1791, manager of the Theatre Royal in Dublin.

Origin of the Word "Quiz."—At the time Richard Daly was patentee of the Irish Theatres, he usually spent Saturday evening in the society of some of the first wits and men of fashion of the day. Gambling was introduced, and the manager staked a large sum that he would cause a word to be spoken, by a certain day, in all the principal streets of Dublin, having no meaning, neither derived from any known language. Wagers having been laid, and the stakes deposited, Daly went immediately to the theatre, and dispatched all the supernumeraries and servants of the establishment with the word "Quiz," which they chalked on most of the shop-doors and windows in the city. It being Sunday next day, all the shops were shut, and every one going to or coming from church, saw the word; every person at the same time repeating it: so that "Quiz" was heard all over Dublin. The circumstance of so strange a word being on every door and window, caused much surprise; and ever since should a strange story be attempted to be passed current, it draws forth the expression of "You are quizzing me."
S. T. B.

The New York Mirror - May 2, 1835

There's a number of reasons to doubt this story. For one, it first appeared in print in 1835, 44 years after the event supposedly took place. The story took the form of one of those small blurbs of trivia that newspapers and magazines used to pad out their columns. It ran in a number of publications, such as the *New York Mirror* (May 2, 1835), *The Mirror* (Feb 21, 1835), and *The London and Paris Observer* (Feb 15, 1835). However, its authorship wasn't attributed, or attributed only by initials, so we have no way of knowing how the author knew his information. Perhaps a newspaper editor simply made it up.

Second, back in the 1790s, 'Quiz' didn't mean what it means today. It was a derogatory term meaning an oddball or eccentric. Or, as the *London Magazine* put it, "one who thinks, speaks, or acts differently from the rest of the world in general."

The question then arises, if Richard Daly and his theatre employees didn't coin the word *Quiz*, how did it originate? One theory, offered by Stephen Fry, is that "it probably derives from the first question in the old grammar school Latin oral: 'Qui es?' or, 'Who are you?'"

The Oxford Dictionaries offers some further information:

'Quiz' was also used as a name for a kind of toy, something like a yo-yo, which was popular around 1790. The word is nevertheless hard to account for, and so is its later meaning of 'to question or interrogate'. This emerged in the mid-19th century and gave rise to the most common use of the term today, for a type of entertainment based on a test of a person's knowledge.

The 1971 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* also suggests that its current meaning may come from its association with the word 'inquisitive,' which is a very old word, as old as the English language itself, having derived from the Latin *inquirere* (to inquire).

Answer the following questions based on the text above.

Question 1:

If you called someone a *Quiz* in the late eighteenth century, it amounted to _____ them.

- (a) bossing
- (b) beckoning
- (c) belittling
- (d) betraying

Question 2:

Identify 4 statements out of the 7 given below that are TRUE (T) according to the text.

Statements	T/F
i) The familiar meaning of the word <i>Quiz</i> , as we know it today, originated from the mid- 1800s version.	
ii) <i>Quiz</i> was the term used for a plaything, sometime in the late 1700s.	
iii) Stephen Fry created the word <i>Quiz</i> from a foreign word which when translated mean 'Who are you?'	
iv) It took a little more than half a century for the current meaning of <i>Quiz</i> to emerge.	
v) A newspaper editor made up the Richard Daly story.	
vi) The word 'inquisitive' has its roots in the Latin word <i>interesse</i> .	
vii) The New York Mirror's Richard Daly story attributes <i>being surprised by something</i> as being called <i>being quizzed</i> .	

Question 3:

“He usually spent Saturday evening **in the society** of the first wits and men of fashion of the day.” The highlighted phrase refers to

- (a) returning favours owed (to)
- (b) entertaining business requests (of)
- (c) electing a chief (from)
- (d) being in the company (of)

Question 4:

Based on your reading of the tale about Richard Daly, write a caption* each, for the following images. (*title/brief explanation)

Saturday



(i)

late, that Saturday



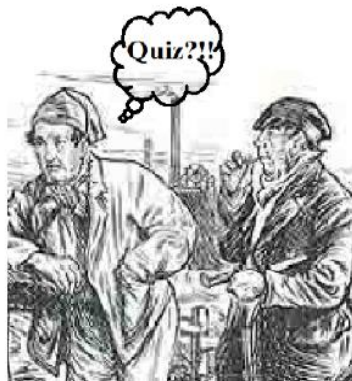
(ii)

night, that Saturday



(iii)

next day, Sunday morning



(iv)

Question 5:

The sentence, 'It **ran** in a number of publications', from the text, means printed or be circulated in a periodical, tabloid etc. according to an online dictionary. Match the usage of **ran** in the 5 sentences below, to the several meanings.

- 1) Her nose **ran** as she wept.
- 2) She **ran** her own catering business.
- 3) Blue-line buses **ran** up to a few years back.
- 4) He **ran** to catch the bus, lest he miss it.
- 5) Those tiles **ran** down to the edge of the room.

run

/rʌn/ verb, past tense: **ran**

- i) move at a speed faster than a walk, never having both or all the feet on the ground at the same time
- ii) pass or cause to pass quickly in a particular direction.
- iii) cause water to flow over.
- iv) extend or cause to extend in a particular direction.
- v) be in charge of; manage.
- vi) stand as a candidate in an election.
- vii) **printed or be circulated in a periodical, tabloid etc.**
- viii) (form of transport) make a regular journey on a particular route.

Sources:

- a) http://hoaxes.org/weblog/comments/the_origin_of_the_word_quiz
- b) <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/31412/31412-h/31412-h.htm>
- c) <https://janelark.blog/2012/07/08/stories-of-gamesters-in-18th-century-bath/>

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ANSWER KEY

1. Option (c)
2. TRUE Statements: --(i), (ii), (iv), (vii)
3. Option (d)
4. The manner of expression/ the way it has been worded/ the tense in which it has been worded, could vary. Answers should be factually correct.
 - Pic 1—Richard Daly places a bet that he could make most people in Dublin speak a meaningless word.
 - Pic 2—Daly, quickly put his servants/employees up to the task.
 - Pic 3—Daly's people wrote *Quiz* on the closed doors and windows of shops, the same night.
 - Pic 4—The people of Dublin were surprised to see the word *Quiz*, everywhere.
5. 1)-iii; 2)-v; 3)-viii; 4)-I, 5)-iv

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