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Word of the day:

SERPENT

“Now the *serpent* was the subtlest beast of all the field,” says the sacred author in Genesis, just as Satan, who evidently has taken over the body of the serpent and is using it like a puppet, is about to tempt Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. It had to be a serpent, you see, because if it had been a camel or a sheep or a cow, Eve would have said, “Why is this camel,” or sheep or cow, “talking to me?” And it is hard to imagine anything intelligent coming out of a camel.

Why do people think that snakes are sinister? Let’s look at this for a bit. The snake does eat frogs and slugs that might spoil your garden, and some little snakes also eat bugs. But in general we human beings don’t get a lot from snakes. We don’t eat serpent eggs, you can’t milk a snake, you would have to kill a hundred snakes to make a coat out of their skins, and the Jews were forbidden to eat snakes anyway, which was probably a good thing for their health. There are a lot of venomous snakes in that part



of the world, even more than there are in Washington, D. C.

The snake has a face, sort of; mainly it is a mouth, and eyes that do not blink. There is no expression to that face. Your pet snake does not tilt his head, as your dog will, to listen very hard to what you are saying. Your pet snake, if he eats your pet parakeet, does not look guilty

when you scold him. Your pet snake does not shut his eyes and purr like a cat. All the snake does is stare, sleep, eat, slither, and make more snakes. He is all appetite, and no more.

We also don’t see snakes in the way that we see other creatures.

The birds lift our hearts with their song and raise our eyes to the heavens above. Cattle look at us with their large and patient eyes, as we share the same fields or the same barn. But most of the time we do not see the snake until we almost step on him. As God will say, after Adam and Eve have sinned, and he is pronouncing a curse upon the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the man, and between your seed and his seed; he will crush your head, and you will strike at his heel.” We Christians believe that

that means more than that people are always accidentally stepping on snakes, or getting their feet bitten. We believe that the seed of Adam, who is Jesus, will crush the head of that old serpentine tempter called Satan; or we see Mary herself, the woman who obeyed the call of God to bear His Son, planting her heel upon the serpent's head, so that that malicious brain stuffed with fraud would be smashed, on behalf of all mankind.

You may ask, "What's the difference between a *serpent* and a snake?" There isn't any. They are just two words for the same thing. Sometimes we will say that a really vicious man, usually a liar, is a *snake*, and yet the Hall of Fame quarterback Kenny Stabler was nicknamed "The Snake," because when the defenders were after him, he might just shrug and slip to the side and they would tackle nothing but air. If we call somebody a *serpent*, we are probably putting special emphasis on his being devious and malicious. There is a stream in Regents Park in London called the *Serpentine*, not because snakes or politicians gather there, but because it twists and winds about in a lot of crazy turns.

The word SERPENT comes into English

from Latin SERPENS, meaning "creeping," "slithering," or "something that creeps." If you go to college to study snakes, you will become a HERPETOLOGIST, and that comes not from Latin but from Greek: HERPES, a snake. But those two words are cousins. A lot of words that begin with S in Latin begin with H in Greek, and sometimes forms of both words are

brought into English. That is why we talk about a SOLAR flare, which is a great jet of fire shooting out a half a million miles from the surface of the sun, and that's from Latin SOL, sun; but the same sun is constantly fusing hydrogen atoms to become HELIUM, from Greek HELIOS, sun.

A figure with SIX sides – that's a good old English word, there – is called a HEXAGON, from Greek HEX, meaning SIX, but if a woman gives birth to six babies at once, besides being very tired, she will have SEXTUPLETS, from Latin SEX, meaning SIX.



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