

# The Colors of English



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There's a fruit that you eat in sections or squeeze to drink its juice. What is it? It's an orange. The name of the fruit is also the name of the color you use to paint carrots or flowers.

Many words have come into English from other languages. The word *orange* came into English from Arabic. Arabic farmers cultivated the orange, known there as the *naranjl*. Later, the

word came into Spanish as *la naranja*. Finally, it came into English as the *orange*. At that time, *orange* only referred to the fruit. Later, *orange* was also used for the color.

Some words keep their meaning when they come into another language. Others change their meaning. Many languages have words that came from Indo-European, which was an early language. The word *blue* is from an Indo-European word that meant "yellow." Later, the word came into Greek, where it meant "white." Then it came into Old English, where it meant "pale."

*Blue* started referring to the color we know today when the word came into French. Today, you would probably choose blue to paint the sky or blueberries, not the Sun or snow.

The word for the color green was originally from German. The German word was *gruen*, meaning "to grow." That's how we got the name for the color of plants. Today, *green* also describes actions that help our planet.

*Red*, which came from Greek, also kept the same meaning when it moved into English. You can see the word *red* in color words that are shades of red, including *ruby* and *rust*. You might use the color red to paint apples or cherries.

Words often change their spelling and meaning when they come into another language. You can be a word detective and find clues to a word's history. Many dictionaries have notes about how a word came into English. These notes can amaze you—and your friends.



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