



QuillSpell

Meet the Cast

ADVANCED EDITION

Spark & Anvil

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This advanced edition collects 13 chapter books from the QuillSpell cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register. Advanced edition: upper-middle-grade register (Wonder / Hatchet / Holes band) for readers ages 11-14 ready for longer sentences + more nuanced subtext.

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For everyone who learns by reading between the lines.

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Introduction

The QuillSpell cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 13 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.

Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

This is the **Advanced Edition** — written for readers who are ready for longer sentences, layered subtext, and the trust that comes with not having every joke explained. The Standard Edition covers the same characters at a lighter register; pick whichever feels right for the reader at hand.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*

Ember and Cadence



The spelling-bee study room held a particular kind of quiet that morning. It was a soft, deep quiet, the kind that allowed thoughts to settle. Sunlight streamed through the open windows, illuminating dust motes dancing above the plush carpet. A ceramic jar, brimming with sharpened pencils, stood sentinel on the table. Cadence, ever-restless, stood at the whiteboard, tapping a dry-erase marker against her palm. The rhythm seemed to pulse from an internal beat, audible only to her. Ember, meanwhile, sat cross-legged on a beanbag, her gaze fixed on a small index card.

The card bore a single word.

separate

Ember let out a soft sigh, almost a whisper. "This one," she murmured, a hint of respect in her tone.

Cadence's tapping ceased. She drifted over, her eyes scanning the word. A small, knowing "ah" escaped her lips. "Ah, yes. This one."

For a month now, these study mornings had been their shared ritual. Cadence was the rhythm-keeper, the one who could break any word into its component syllables, revealing its internal pulse. Ember was the schwa-namer, an expert at finding the elusive, quiet vowels that often hid within unstressed beats. *Separate* was, without question, their favorite case. It was a word notorious for tripping up spellers, precisely because most people tried to spell it exactly as they heard it.

What most people *heard* sounded something like: *SEP-rit*. Two distinct sounds, a quick dash between them. That was the common, mistaken spelling: *Seprit*. Incorrect, every time.

The true word, they knew, contained three syllables. And one of them was a master of disguise.

Cadence pulled the whiteboard closer, the marker now poised. "Want to do it?" she asked, a spark in her eyes.

"Always," Ember replied, pushing herself up from the beanbag.



With a flourish, Cadence wrote the word on the board, large and unmistakable: **SEPARATE**. Then she stepped back, tilting her head. The marker resumed its soft, percussive tap against her palm as she counted the invisible beats.

"Three syllables," she stated, her voice firm. "Always three. People want to say two because that middle one is so quiet. But it's there. Always three."

She drew tiny, precise vertical lines through the word, dividing it visually.

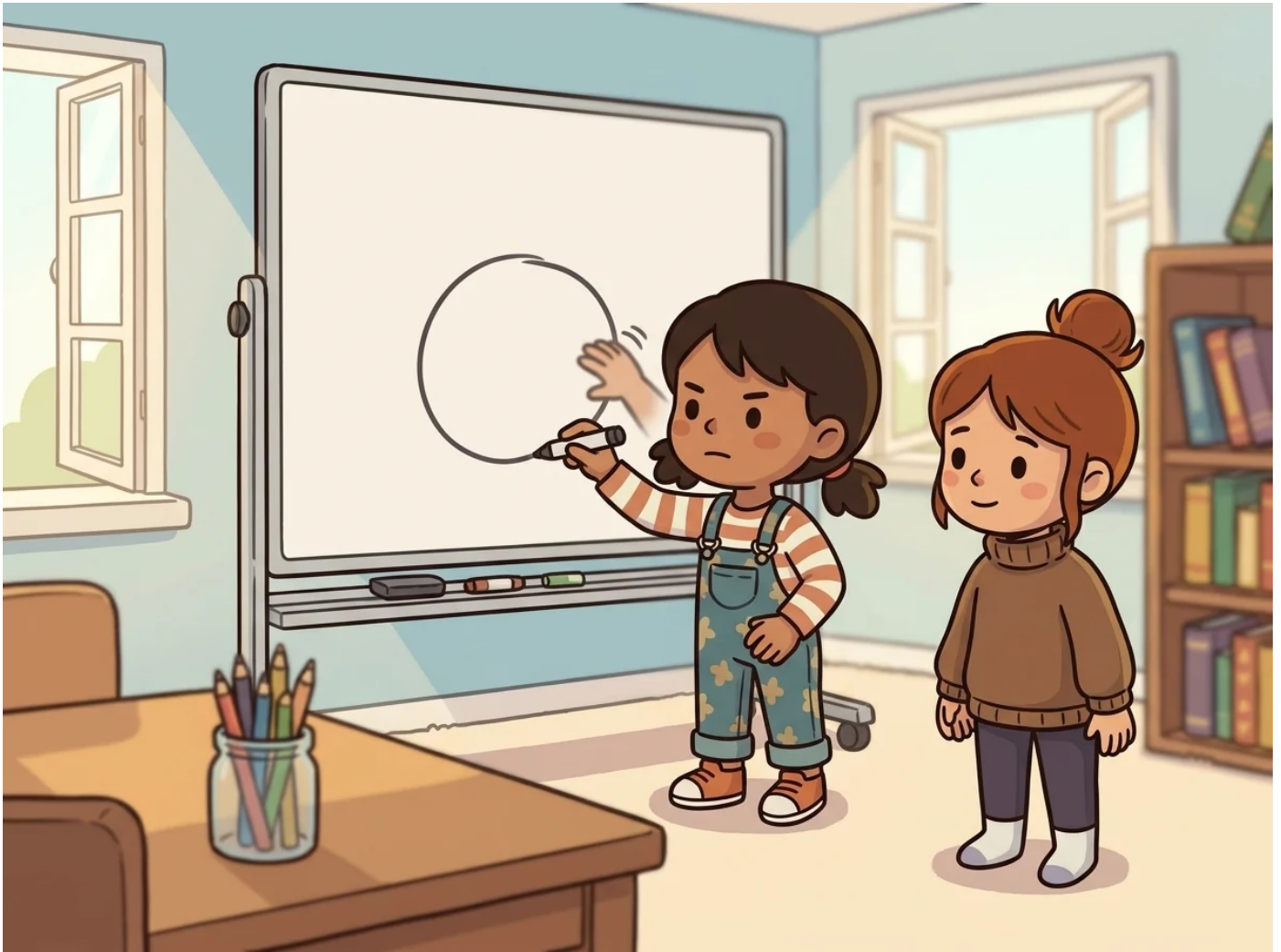
SEP | A | RATE

"Beat one — SEP," she articulated, tapping *SEP* with the marker. "That's the strong beat. The one your mouth naturally leans on." Her finger moved. "Beat two — A. The almost-silent beat. The **schwa**." She tapped the isolated A. "Beat three — RATE. The closing beat." Her marker landed on *RATE*.

She turned to Ember, a gesture of handing over the baton. "Three beats. That's my part. Anyone can hear the rhythm if they just slow down. The trouble is, most people *don't* slow down. They say it fast — sep-rit — and the middle beat simply falls away. It gets lost in the rush."

Ember nodded, a small, knowing smile playing on her lips. She picked up a smaller marker, the kind used for adding annotations. "And that's where I come in."

"Exactly," Cadence confirmed. "That's where you come in."



Ember moved to the board. Her hand went directly to the middle letter, the one Cadence had already isolated: the **A**. She circled it with a deliberate motion.

"This letter," Ember began, her voice soft but clear, "is a trickster. It's the spirit of the English language itself, sometimes. We call it a *schwa*. It looks like an 'a' here, but it sounds like 'uh.' And the truly tricky part? It can be spelled with *any* vowel letter — a, e, i, o, or u — depending on the word."

She wrote a small, ethereal **uh** in the air just above the **A** with her marker. The letter A remained on the board, steadfast. The little 'uh' seemed to float, a transient ghost of sound, in her gesture just above it.

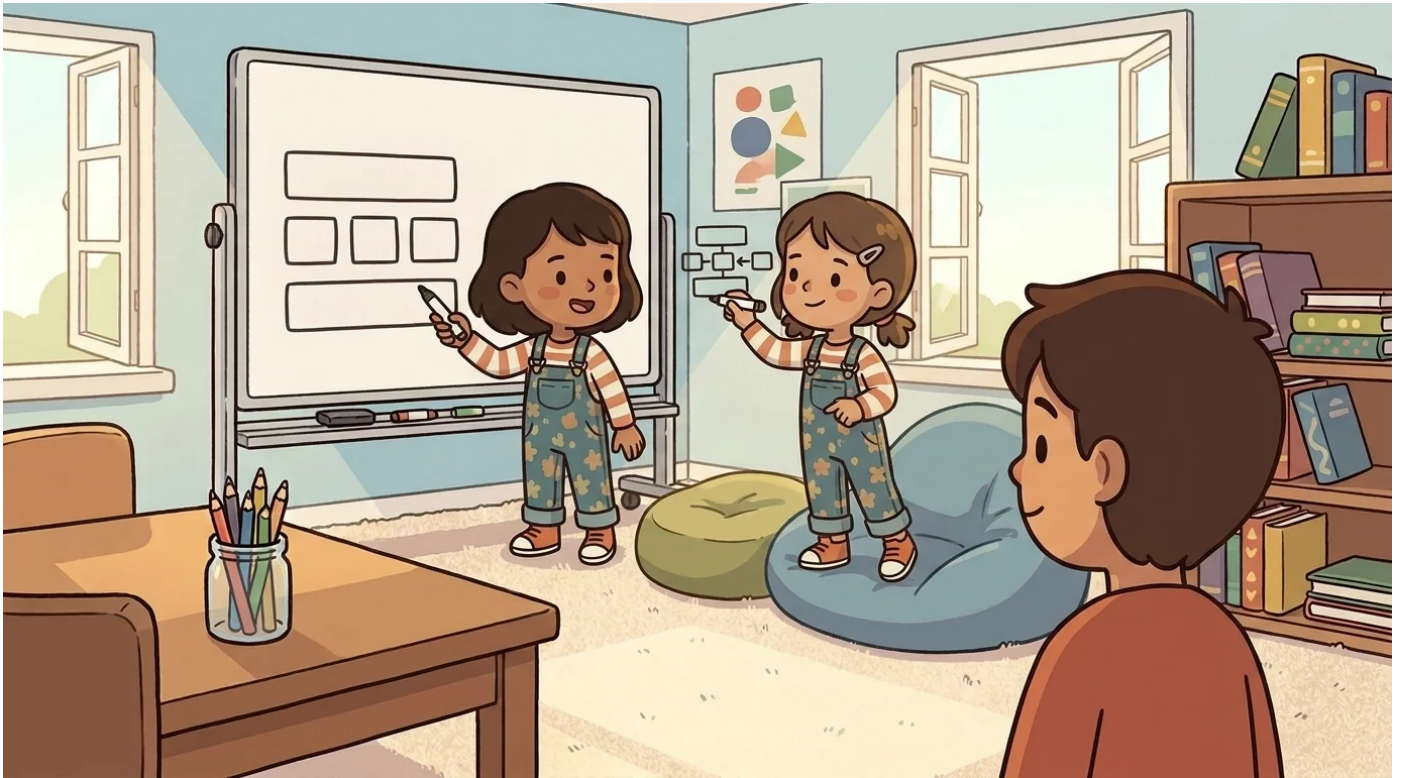
"The schwa is always unstressed. The strong beat in *separate* is *SEP*. The middle beat is so quiet your mouth barely registers it. That's why people misspell *separate*. They don't perceive that middle vowel as a vowel at all. They hear it as nothing, so they simply leave it out."

She paused, allowing the implication to settle. "But the middle vowel isn't nothing. It's a schwa. It's a quiet 'uh.' And in this particular word, that 'uh' sound is spelled with the letter **A**."

"How do you know which letter?" a new voice asked from the doorway.

Ember and Cadence looked up in unison. A young student stood there, clutching a quiz sheet, her expression a mixture of nervousness and curiosity. She was new to their study mornings, clearly hesitant but drawn by the unfolding lesson.

Ember waved the student in, a welcoming gesture. "Come in. We'll show you."



The student took a seat beside the whiteboard, eyes wide. Cadence set her marker down. Ember and Cadence both turned to face her, a practiced, synchronized movement. They had a well-worn routine for when a new student joined mid-case.

"Cadence breaks it down," Ember explained. "I name the schwa. Then, together, we go to the dictionary or the word's root."

Cadence pointed at the three distinct pieces on the board: **SEP | A | RATE**. "I tell you it's three syllables. You can hear it now, right? SEP — A — RATE. Slow it down."

The student tried, her lips forming the sounds carefully. "SEP — A — RATE." Her mouth opened just a tiny bit on the middle beat, a subtle but crucial movement.

"Yes!" Cadence exclaimed, a genuine smile lighting her face. "You heard it. That's the part most people miss entirely."

Ember took over smoothly. "Now — the middle vowel is a schwa. It sounds like 'uh.' But it absolutely has to be spelled with *some* vowel letter. The question is *which one*. That's the part you can't hear. You have to *know* it. And you know it from the *word's family*."

She wrote on the board, a clear demonstration:

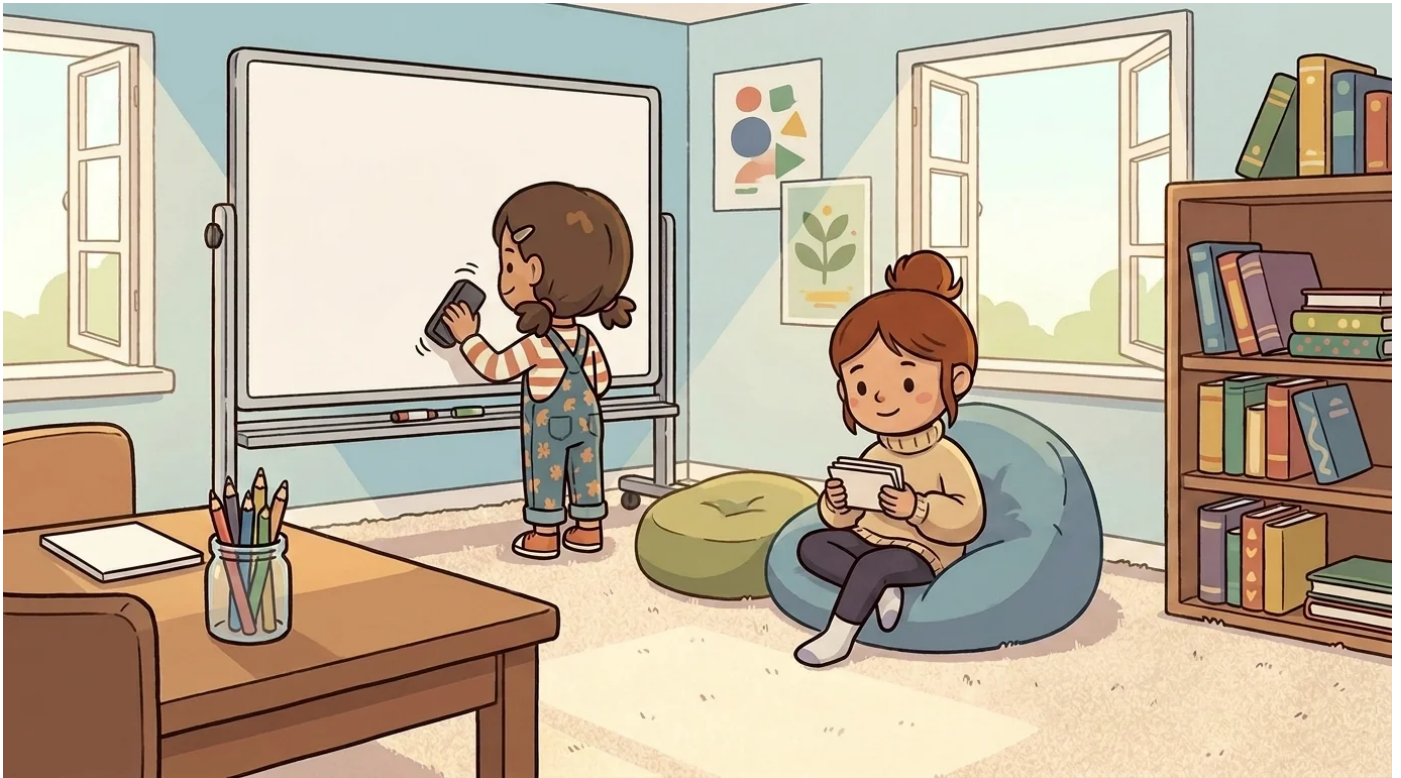
separate ← separation, separator, separable

"Look at the family," Ember instructed. "In *separation*, the middle vowel is stressed. You can hear it clearly: *sep-uh-RAY-shun*. That middle vowel becomes a strong **A** sound. That's your vital clue. The schwa in *separate* is spelled with the letter that's *loud* and clear in the rest of the word's family. So, here, the schwa is an A."

The student's gaze moved from *separate* to its related words. Her eyes widened slightly as the connection clicked. "So the loud cousin tells you what the quiet one looks like."

Ember grinned, a flash of shared understanding. "That's exactly it. The loud cousin tells you what the quiet one looks like."

Cadence nodded in agreement. "And once you have both — three syllables from me, the loud cousin from her — the word is yours. It can't hide anymore."



The student reached for a pencil from the jar, her movements now more confident. She wrote slowly, carefully forming each letter: **S — E — P — A — R — A — T — E**. She whispered the syllables under her breath as she wrote them. *SEP — A — RATE*. The middle A landed on the page precisely where it belonged, no longer a ghost.

"Separate," she articulated, a sense of triumph in her voice. "Three syllables. The middle vowel is a schwa. Spelled A because of *separation*."

Ember clapped softly, a quiet acknowledgment of a lesson well learned. Cadence tapped her marker against her palm, a rhythmic approval.

The student looked at the whiteboard, then at her own paper, then finally at the two of them — the rhythm-keeper and the schwa-namer, the architect of beats and the connoisseur of quiet vowels.

"Can I take the card with me?" she asked, her voice small but hopeful.

"Take it," Cadence said, a generous wave of her hand.

"Practice it tonight," Ember advised. "Say it slow. Tap the beats. Name the schwa. By tomorrow, it'll be in your fingers, a part of you."

The student nodded, a serious expression on her face. She carefully slid the index card into her notebook. She offered a quiet thank you and slipped back out into the hallway, already murmuring *SEP — A — RATE* to herself, the rhythm taking hold.

The study room settled back into its familiar quiet. Cadence picked up an eraser, beginning to clean the whiteboard with methodical strokes. Ember returned to her beanbag, pulling another card from a small stack. The next case was waiting.

The new card held a single word.

chocolate

Cadence and Ember exchanged a look. Both of them grinned, a shared understanding passing between them.

"Three syllables," Cadence declared, a familiar cadence in her voice. "And a schwa. Of course."

"Of course," Ember echoed, her eyes already tracing the word's hidden sounds.

They had work to do. The morning was just getting started. The rhythm-keeper and the schwa-namer were ready to spell anything, together.

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<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/quillspell/ember-and-cadence>

Etyma



Etyma lived in the Latin Quarter. It wasn't a city neighborhood, not really. It was a bustling part of the QuillSpell spelling academy, a place where Latin words had come to live. The academy itself was huge, a sprawling maze of old stone buildings and winding cobbled lanes. Six different neighborhoods made up the campus, each dedicated to a language family that had given English some of its core words. The Latin Quarter was the biggest. Its streets were paved, its market square always busy. Thousands of residents called it home, Etyma often said. Each resident was a Latin root, a tiny seed of meaning that had grown into English words over hundreds of years.

Etyma was the Latin Quarter's guide. She led visitors through its winding paths, introducing them to the ancient roots. She showed how these roots had traveled into English, sometimes whole, sometimes worn smooth like old river stones. Other times, they joined with different roots to build new, complex words.



She was a small woman, olive-skinned, in her early forties. Her dark hair was always pinned neatly under a wide-brimmed hat. She carried a leather satchel, its surface soft and worn. Inside, small wooden tablets clicked together with every step. Each tablet held a Latin root carved deep into its grain. These were her teaching tools, her way of showing how words worked. If a child asked about *portable* or *transport*, Etyma would pull out the *port* tablet. 'It means *carry*,' she would explain. For *scribe* or *manuscript*, she'd show them *scrib*, meaning *write*. And for *dictate* or *verdict*, out came *dict*, meaning *say*. The roots were like keys, unlocking dozens of English words.

Etyma's real name was Aurelia, but no one called her that anymore. She grew up in a house where Latin wasn't just a school subject. It was spoken at supper, as natural as breathing. Her parents taught ancient languages. Her grandmother had been a scribe for the kingdom's church, writing in Latin until she was very old. Her grandfather carved Latin words onto stone monuments. Aurelia learned Latin before she was four. She didn't think of it as a separate language, just another way to talk. Then, around age eight, something clicked. She started noticing things, little echoes. English words often sounded like Latin words, just a bit softer, a bit worn down. *Script* sounded like *scriptum*. *Portable* sounded like *portabilis*. *Dictionary* sounded like *dictionarium*. The connections were everywhere, like a secret code waiting to be cracked. She started a list, filling notebooks with her discoveries. By twelve, she had found over two thousand English words that came straight from Latin. By fourteen, she could look at a new, strange English word and guess its meaning. She would break it apart, find the Latin roots, the prefixes, the suffixes. No one had taught her this. She had simply figured it out, watching how words fit together, like a puzzle she was born to solve.

At seventeen, Aurelia walked into the grand main hall of the QuillSpell academy. She asked to take the placement test. It was a brutal challenge: three hundred spelling words, from simple to ridiculously hard. Most hopeful students scored somewhere between forty and seventy percent. Aurelia scored two hundred and ninety-seven out of three hundred. Lex, the academy master, was a quiet woman known for her calm demeanor. She looked at Aurelia's score. Then she looked at Aurelia. An interview was requested immediately.



The interview was brief. Lex leaned forward, her eyes sharp. 'How did you spell *floccinaucinihilipilification*?' she asked.

Aurelia didn't hesitate. 'It's five Latin roots, stacked up,' she explained. '*Floccus* means a tuft of wool. *Naucum* means a trifle. *Nihilum* means nothing. *Pilus* means a hair. And *-fication* is a suffix.' She paused, letting the words sink in. 'Each root means something small and worthless. So the whole word literally means *the act of judging something to be worthless*. The spelling just follows the roots, laid out in order: F-L-O-C-C-I-N-A-U-C-I-N-I-H-I-L-I-P-I-L-I-F-I-C-A-T-I-O-N.'

Lex slowly set down her tea cup. She had been the academy master for fifteen years. Never once had a seventeen-year-old explained that word by pulling it apart, root by root.



'You are not a placement candidate,' Lex said, her voice soft but firm. 'You are faculty. The Latin Quarter has needed a guide for years. Will you take the position?'

Aurelia accepted without a second thought. She was given her academic name, **Etyma**, from the Greek word *etymon*, meaning 'true meaning.' She has been the Latin Quarter's guide for twenty-three years now.

In her classroom, Etyma started every first-day lesson the same way. She opened her worn leather satchel. One by one, she laid five wooden tablets on her desk: *port*, *scrib*, *dict*, *vis*, *audi*. She turned to the class, her eyes bright. 'These are five Latin roots,' she told them. 'They are among the most common roots in English. *Port* means *carry*. *Scrib* means *write*. *Dict* means *say*. *Vis* means *see*. *Audi* means *hear*.' She paused, letting the words hang in the air. 'Learn these five, and you can unlock hundreds of English words. Let me show you how.'



She picked up *port*, its wood smooth under her fingers. 'Think of words built from *port*: *portable*, *transport*, *import*, *export*, *portage*, *porter*, *deport*, *report*.' She listed them slowly. 'The root always means *carry*. A *report* is something you *carry back*. An *export* is something you *carry out* of the country. A *porter* is someone whose job is to *carry* things.' The children watched, their faces shifting. At first, some looked bored, others confused. But as she spoke, their eyes widened. They had always thought English spelling was just a jumble of letters, full of random rules. Etyma was showing them a hidden logic, a secret code beneath the surface.

When children asked if Latin roots were hard, Etyma always shook her head. 'They aren't hard,' she would say. 'They are patterns. Learn a few dozen roots, and thousands of English words suddenly make sense. You learn the root once. Then all the words that come from it practically spell themselves. The pattern carries you, like a strong current, through the whole language.'

She still kept those wooden tablets in her satchel. Sometimes, a child would ask to hold one. Etyma always allowed it. Over twenty-three years, she had noticed, the tablets had grown smoother. The children's hands had polished them, one curious touch at a time.

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Birch



Birch lives in *the Germanic Grove*.

The Grove is on the academy's *eastern edge*. It is, unlike the Latin Quarter (with its paved streets) and the Greek Acropolis (with its white-marble paths), *an actual woodland*. The academy planted it deliberately when the academy was founded a hundred and twenty years ago. They planted *birch trees*, *oak trees*, *ash trees*, and *yew trees* — all of which had been *named in Old English* and whose Old English names had passed largely intact into modern English.

The Grove is, today, *substantial*. The birches are now nearly seventy feet tall. The oaks are *enormous*. The ash trees have unfortunately suffered from the kingdom's recent ash-die-back disease and are being replaced (slowly, mournfully) with hardier species. The yews are *very slow-growing* and remain modest. The whole Grove has a slightly *northern, slightly old-English atmosphere* — quiet, mossy, smelling of wet leaves and bark and earth.

Birch teaches in *a small wooden cabin* at the center of the Grove. The cabin was built, like the Grove, by the founding generation. It has a stone fireplace, a low ceiling, and a single long table. There is a small log-store under the eaves. Birch keeps the fire lit through the cold months.



Birch — whose given name is *Hroth*, an Old English name meaning *glory* — is the academy's specialist in *the foundational Anglo-Saxon vocabulary that makes up the everyday English of common speech*. This is, in a sense, *the most-important vocabulary in English*. Most of the words a child uses every day — *mouth, hand, foot, eye, ear, hear, see, walk, run, eat, drink, sleep, wake, day, night, sun, moon, sky, earth, tree, leaf, stone, water* — are Germanic. Not Latin. Not Greek. Not French. *Germanic*. The Anglo-Saxon foundation underlies *all* the more-sophisticated vocabularies that came later.

Birch — who is gruff, woodland-rugged, and bearded — is *quietly proud of this*.

He grew up *in the kingdom's far north*, in a village called *Beorn* (an Old English name meaning *warrior* or *hero*, though by Birch's time it was used as a generic place-name without warlike connotations). *Beorn* was a *small* village. It had a church, a smithy, a tavern, a small school. It was surrounded by woods. Birch grew up in the woods. He spoke, at home, the *northern dialect of the kingdom's common tongue* — which preserves more Old English vocabulary and grammar than the southern dialect spoken at the capital.

This was, Birch eventually realized, *a deep gift*. He understood, viscerally, that *common speech is Germanic-rooted*. He understood that *sophisticated English speech often layers Latin and Greek and French roots on top of a Germanic foundation*. He understood, by the time he was twelve, that *most English speakers do not realize how Germanic their everyday speech is*.

Birch made it his life's work to *surface this*.



He left Beorn when he was nineteen. He travelled south to the academy capital. He arrived at QuillSpell with *no formal academic credentials*, but with a *pocket notebook full of Old English etymology* — every common English word he had been able to trace back to its Anglo-Saxon root. The notebook had, by his count, *two thousand four hundred entries*. He had filled it during his teens, walking the northern woods.

The academy master — Lex — interviewed him. The interview went like this:

Lex said: **"What is the etymology of foot?"**

Birch said: **"Old English *fo̥t*. Same word. The pronunciation has shifted slightly. The spelling has changed slightly. The meaning is identical. Foot has been foot for a thousand years."**

Lex said: **"What is the etymology of eat?"**



Birch said: *"Old English *etan*. Same word, with the suffix-vowel worn off. The Germanic family of languages all have a closely-related word: German *essen*, Dutch *eten*, Old Norse *eta*. The root is *ed-* in Proto-Indo-European. *Eat* has been *eat* since before English was English."*

Lex said: *"What is the etymology of *the*?"*

Birch said, after a long pause: *"That is the most-common word in English. It is also the *most-Germanic* word in English. Old English had multiple definite-article forms — *se*, *seo*, *þæt* — that collapsed over Middle English into the single form *the*. The history of *the* is the history of English shedding case-endings."*

Lex set down her tea. She said: *"You will teach in the Grove. Take your academic name. *Birch* — for the trees that mark your neighborhood."*

That was thirty-one years ago. Birch has been the Grove's teacher ever since.



In his classroom (the wooden cabin), he begins every first-day lesson the same way. He sits at the long table. He has, before him, *a small carved birch-twig* (he carves a new one every few years; he gives the old ones to children who have impressed him). He uses the twig as a pointer. He says: *"Most of the words you use every day are Germanic. Mouth is Old English. Hand is Old English. Foot is Old English. Eye, ear, hear, see, walk, run, eat, drink, sleep, wake, day, night, sun, moon, sky, earth, tree, leaf, stone, water — all Old English. The Anglo-Saxon vocabulary is the foundation of English. Latin and Greek and French are layered on top. But the foundation is Germanic."**

He pauses. He taps the table with his twig. He says: *"This is something most English speakers do not realize. They think fancy words are real English. They are wrong. Common words are real English. Fancy words are borrowed. English is, at its roots, a Germanic language."**

The children — always — find this *somewhat radical*. They had been taught that *sophisticated vocabulary* was a sign of *good language*. Birch is telling them that *common vocabulary* is *the original language*. This reorganizes their sense of what English is.

When children ask whether Germanic roots are hard to learn, Birch always says the same thing:

*"They are not hard. They are already in your mouth. You have been using them since you were two. The job is not to learn them — you already know them. The job is to recognize them. Once you can pick out the Germanic core of any English sentence, you can see the structure of the language."**

He still keeps the carved birch-twig on the long table. The children sometimes ask to hold it. He always lets them. The twig is now, after thirty-one years of children's fingers, *very smooth*.

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Sophia



Sophia lives in *the Greek Acropolis*.

The Acropolis is *the academy's neighborhood for Greek-derived English roots*. It is not an actual Greek acropolis. (The kingdom does not have actual Greek acropoli.) The academy's founders, a hundred and twenty years ago, built this neighborhood *on a small hill*. They added white-marble step-up paths and an open-air amphitheater. Academy historians say they wanted *to honor the Greek tradition of teaching outdoors under the sky*.

Sophia teaches in that amphitheater.

She holds her lessons there in almost any weather. Sun, mist, even the kingdom's occasional light snow. The stone benches have softened to a pale gray over the last century. The acoustics, proven by years of testing, are *extraordinary*. Sophia can speak from the central rostrum at a *normal conversational volume*, and her words reach every child in the top row.



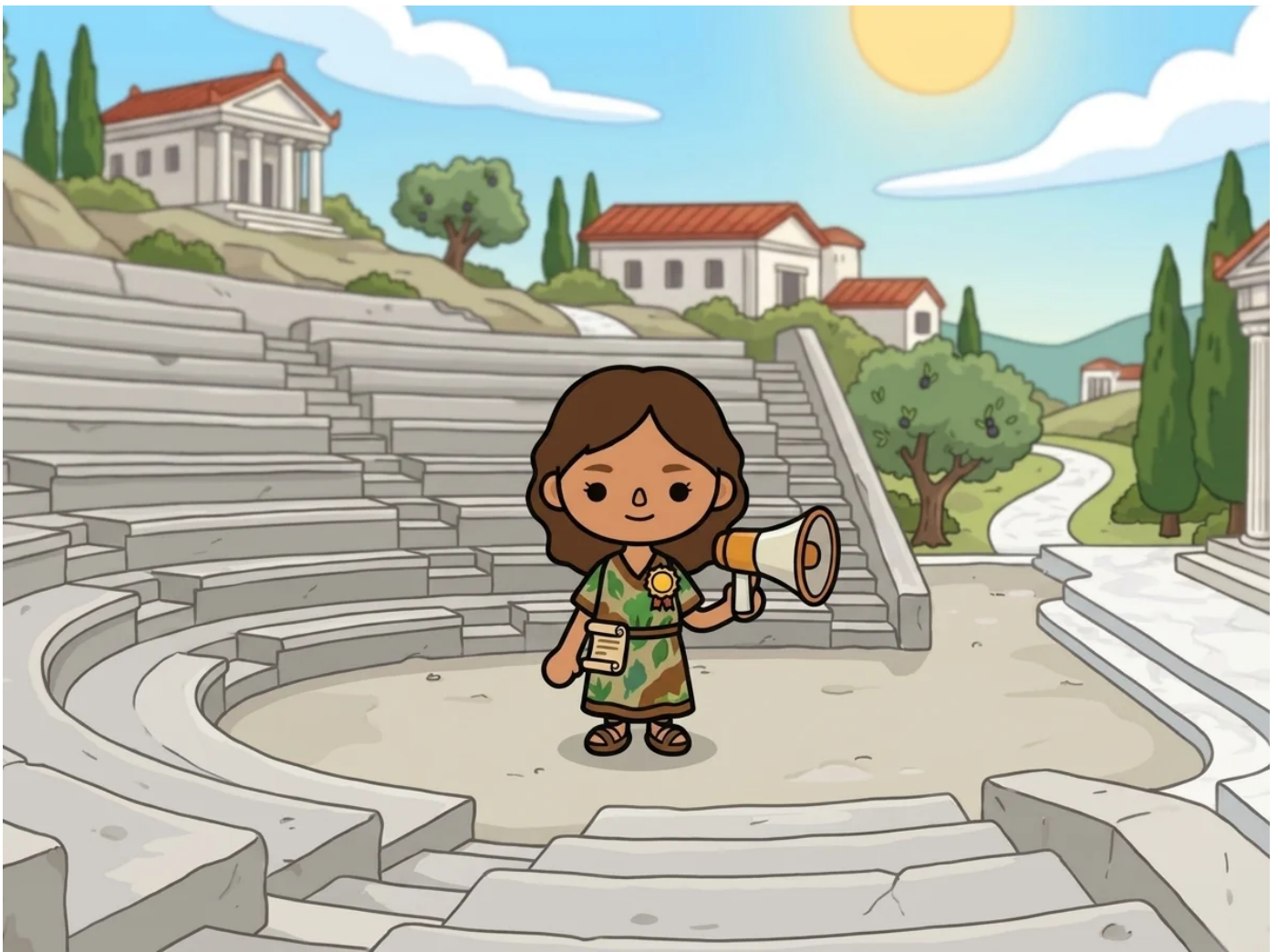
Over the years, she has *trained children to whisper from the back of the amphitheater*. This shows how well the sound carries. The whisper reaches her perfectly every time. The children are delighted by this small magic.

Sophia's given name is *Theodora*. But everyone calls her Sophia, which is the Greek word for *wisdom*. She grew up in a home where a classical language was still spoken at supper, just like Etyma's family. In Sophia's house, that language was *Greek*. Both her parents were scholars of ancient languages. Her grandmother had taught at a small private school. Her grandfather translated Greek poetry for the kingdom's literary journals.

Theodora learned Greek as a second language before she could even walk. As a small child, she didn't really separate Greek from her native tongue. She simply used both. By the time she was nine, she started noticing something wonderful. Many English words were actually Greek words, just a little worn down by time. The English word *biography* came from Greek *bios* (life) and *graphein* (to write). *Photograph* was *photos* (light) and *graphein* (to write). *Telephone* was *tele* (far) and *phone* (sound). These patterns were *everywhere*.

What Theodora understood, and what her Latin counterpart Etyma hadn't quite realized yet, was how gracefully Greek roots combined. Greek roots, when used in English, *plug into each other directly*. You take two Greek roots and simply connect them. A new word appears: *bio* + *graph* = *biography*. *Geo* + *log* = *geology*. *Phon* + *graph* = *phonograph*. The combinations felt *modular*.

Latin roots, on the other hand, often needed *connecting vowels* or *suffix modifications* to join smoothly. Think of *port* + *able* becoming *portable*, with the *-able* suffix doing the work. Greek roots just *snapped together*.



This fact, to eleven-year-old Theodora, felt deeply satisfying.

She began making her own vocabulary lists. She would pick two Greek roots, like *bio* and *log*. Then she'd write down every English word she knew that combined them. *Biology*, *biologist*, *biological*, *biologically*. Next, she would try to *predict* other English words. What about *bio* and *graph*? *Biography*. *Bio* and *phone*? *Biophone*—not a real word. *Bio* and *sphere*? *Biosphere*—a real and very useful word.

By thirteen, she could *invent* plausible-sounding Greek-derived English words on demand. She created *hypsograph* and *thermophone* herself. Later, in her grandmother's old reference books, she found that *hypsograph* was already a real word. *Thermophone* had been a brief term in early acoustics. Her rate of invention was unusual, even for a classical scholar.

When Theodora was eighteen, she walked into the QuillSpell academy. She asked to be considered for the Greek-roots-specialist position. The role had been empty for two years. The academy master, Lex—the same woman who would later hire Etyma—interviewed her.

Lex asked: *"What is the root *log*?"*



Theodora answered: *"Greek *logos*. It means *word, study, or principle*. It appears in: biology, which is the study of life. Geology, the study of earth. Psychology, the study of mind. Mythology, the study of myths. Philology, the study of words. It also shows up in: dialogue, speaking across. Monologue, speaking alone. Prologue, speaking before. Epilogue, speaking after. And in: logic, logician, illogical. Same root. Many faces."*

Lex then asked: *"What is the root *graph*?"*

Theodora replied: *"Greek *graphein*. It means *to write* or *to draw*. You see it in: biography, autograph, photograph, telegraph, paragraph, graph, graphite. The pencil material, graphite, comes from the root because graphite is *what you write with*. The pencil makes the connection visible. The root describes the activity. The words derived from it show *what you do that activity with, or where that activity happens*."*

Lex carefully set down her tea. In her career, she had *interviewed three previous candidates for the Greek-roots position*. She had rejected all three. She knew this candidate was different within the first thirty seconds.

She said: *"You are appointed. The Acropolis has needed you for two years. Take your academic name. *Sophia* — *wisdom*. It suits you."*

Theodora, now Sophia, has been the Acropolis's resident teacher for twenty-six years.



In her classroom, the amphitheater, she begins every first-day lesson the same way. She stands at the central rostrum. On a small marble table beside her, she has *six small wooden tiles*. Each tile bears a Greek root: *bio, geo, photo, log, graph, phon*. She picks them up one at a time. Holding each up, she says in her clear amphitheater voice: *"Bios — life. Geo — earth. Photo — light. Logos — word or study. Graphein — write. Phone — sound. These are six of the most prolific Greek roots in English. Once you know them, you can decode thousands of words."*

She demonstrates. She places the *bio* tile and the *graph* tile next to each other. She says: *"Biography. Life-write. The story of someone's life. Built from two roots. Decodable on sight."* She places *photo* next to *graph*. She says: *"Photograph. Light-write. A picture made by light. Built from two roots."* She places *geo* next to *log*. *"Geology. Earth-study."* *Bio* next to *log*. *"Biology. Life-study."*

The children are always thrilled. They had thought all those long scientific words were arbitrary. Sophia shows them they are *logical compounds*.

When children ask if Greek roots are hard, Sophia always gives the same answer:

"They are not hard. They are modular. Greek roots snap together. Learn the roots. The compound words assemble themselves. Most of science and medicine and philosophy and technology lives in Greek-derived English. Once you have the roots, the whole vocabulary opens up."

She still keeps the six wooden tiles on the marble table. The children sometimes ask to arrange them in new combinations. She always lets them. The combinations they invent—*photo + geo? photogeology? a real word, the study of earth from photographs. Phon + log? phonology, the study of speech sounds. Bio + graph + log? biographology, not a real word, but they understand what it would mean if it were.*—are, Sophia has noticed, *the best part of her job*.

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<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/quillspell/sophia>

Margaux



Margaux lived in *the French Chateau*.

This Chateau wasn't a real French chateau, of course. No actual French chateaux existed in the kingdom. But the academy's founders had wanted a French-roots neighborhood. So they built this place with high stone arches and tall, narrow windows. It looked like something from an old storybook. A small, formal garden sat out front. Academy gardeners kept the bushes clipped into perfect geometric patterns. This kind of garden was called a *parterre*. The Chateau stood on the academy's western edge. A fountain splashed gently in front, with a stone lily — a *fleur-de-lys* — carved into its center.

Margaux taught in the Chateau's great hall. The hall had high ceilings that seemed to touch the sky. Sunlight streamed through the tall, narrow windows, landing on a long oak table in the middle. Old tapestries covered the walls. Retired teachers had donated them over the years. They showed scenes from all over the world: a fishing village by the sea, a deep forest in the north, a busy market in the desert. Even a medieval hunting party. The tapestries were ancient, and some edges had begun to fray.



Margaux herself always looked perfectly put together.

If you asked, she would say it was "part of the Chateau's standards." This was the most formal part of the academy. Children coming for a lesson knew to brush their hair and straighten their collars. They did this before stepping inside. Margaux never scolded anyone. A small mirror hung by the door, and a comb rested on a side table. Most children, seeing these, understood the quiet expectation. Margaux always wore a navy-blue jacket and a crisp white blouse. A small silver pin, shaped like a fleur-de-lys, gleamed on her lapel. Her hair was always neatly arranged, not a strand out of place. She was a living example of the Chateau's quiet elegance.

Margaux's real name was Marguerite. She grew up in a house where two languages were spoken at supper. One was the kingdom's common tongue. The other was a regional dialect, full of French-sounding words. Centuries ago, her family's region had been part of a Norman-French duchy. That duchy was long gone, absorbed into the kingdom. But the local way of speaking still held onto many French words and sounds. Marguerite's mother, Madeleine, insisted her children speak both clearly. The common tongue helped them get along in the world. The regional dialect honored their family tradition.

By the time she was a teenager, Marguerite had an incredibly sharp ear for words. She could hear tiny differences in how people pronounced things. French-derived words sounded different from Germanic-derived ones. Take the word *garage*. She noticed early on that it was French. But the kingdom's southern dialect had changed it. They made it sound almost unrecognizable. The French way was *gar-AHZH*. It sounded clearer, more elegant, closer to its true beginning. The southern dialect's *GAR-ij* always struck Marguerite as a little sad.

She would never say that aloud, of course. That would be rude. But when the chance came, she would gently say the French version. She hoped the people around her might notice.



They almost never did. Marguerite eventually accepted this. Still, she pronounced *garage* the French way. It was, she decided, her small daily contribution. A way to honor the word's origin, one quiet syllable at a time.

When Marguerite was nineteen, she walked into the QuillSpell academy. She asked to be considered for the French-roots position. Lex, the head of the academy, interviewed her.

Lex leaned forward. "What is the *etymology* of *royal*?" she asked.

Marguerite understood. *Etymology* meant the history of a word. "It comes from Old French, *roial*," she said. "From Latin, *regalis*. It means 'kingly' or 'of the king.' The word arrived in English with the Norman conquest. Before that, Old English had *kynelic* for 'kingly.' But the Norman nobles used *roial*. The English nobility started using it too. *Royal* became the fancy word. *Kingly* stayed the everyday word."

Lex nodded slowly. "And *cuisine*?"

"That's from Modern French, *cuisine*," Marguerite explained. "It means 'kitchen' or 'cooking.' It came into English much later, in the 1700s. French cooking was very popular back then. So *cuisine* kept its French pronunciation, *kwee-ZEEN*. We tend to keep the French sound when a word still feels very French. Think of *garage*, though. That word is older. Its pronunciation has become more English. But I am, personally, holding out for the French version."



Lex set down her tea cup. A small smile touched her lips. "You are appointed to the Chateau," she said. "Take your academic name. *Margaux* — after the Bordeaux region. It honors your family's French heritage."

Marguerite became Margaux that day. She has been the Chateau's teacher for twenty-two years.

In the great hall, Margaux began every first-day lesson the same way. She stood by the long oak table, holding a small silver pin. It was shaped like a lily, a *fleur-de-lys*.

"This pin is a stylized lily," she would say. "In old French tradition, the lily was a symbol of royalty. It reminds me of the word *royal*. That's one of the most important French-derived words in English."

She explained how *royal* came into English. It arrived with the Norman conquest in 1066. Norman nobles brought their French words to England. Many words for how we govern, how we make laws, what we eat, and how we talk about art and fashion came this way.



She would write the words on a slate. *Royal, justice, jury, court, judge, attorney, parliament, government.* "All these came from Norman-French," she'd say. Then she'd add more. *Beef, pork, mutton, veal, poultry, cuisine.* "All French." She'd list even more. *Adventure, courage, marriage, beauty, courtesy.* "Also French."

The list was huge, she pointed out. About thirty percent of all modern English words came from Norman-French. The old Germanic words formed the base of English. But the French words settled right on top, like a fancy frosting.

When children asked if French roots were hard to learn, Margaux always gave the same answer.

"They aren't hard at all," she'd say. "They are simply layered into English words in certain areas. Think about how we talk about government. That's Norman-French. Or law. Also Norman-French. What about food preparation? French. Fashion and high-culture? French again. The nobles in medieval England spoke French for two hundred years. The words they used became the important, fancy words for those topics. Once you spot the pattern, you start seeing French everywhere."

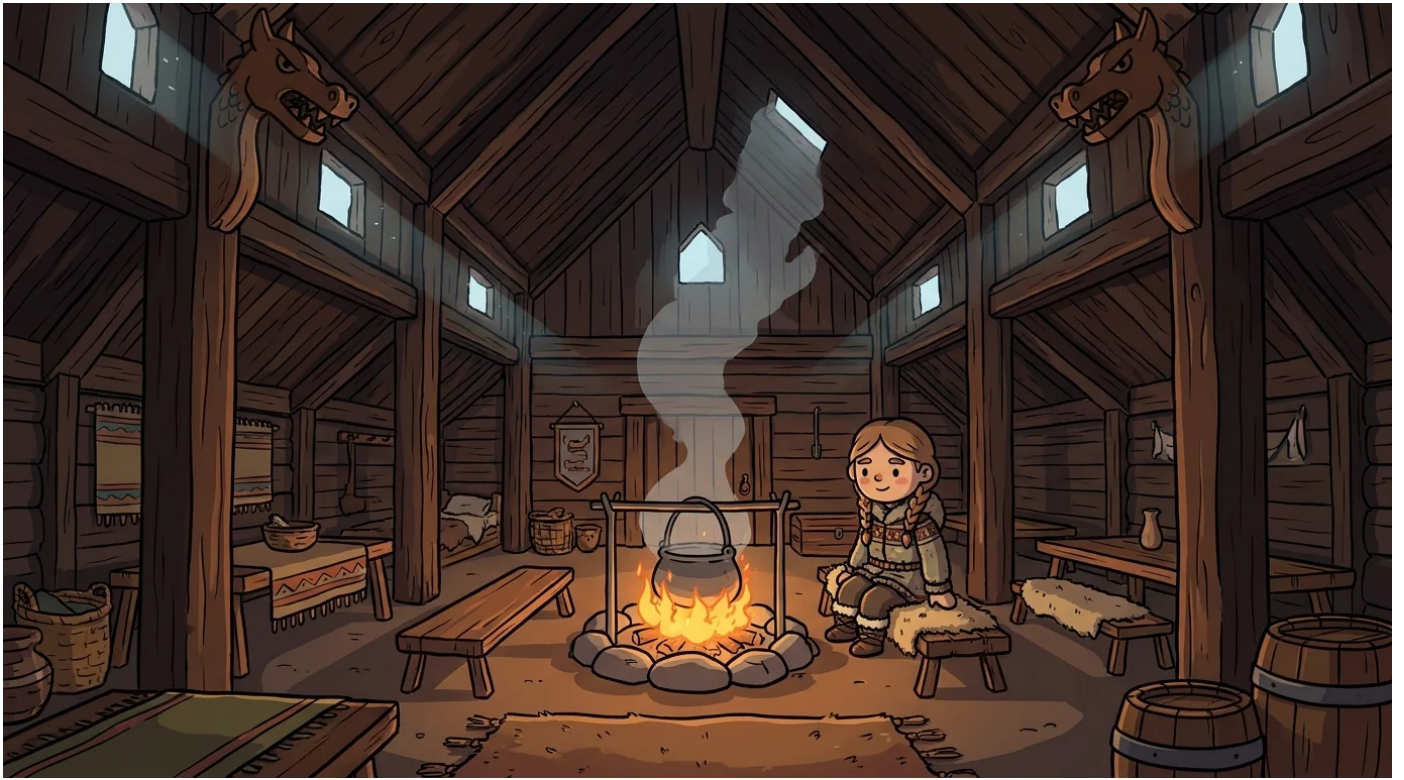
Margaux still wore the fleur-de-lys pin every day. Sometimes, children would ask to hold it. She always allowed them, but she was very strict about its return. The pin had belonged to her grandmother. It wasn't just a teaching prop; it was a personal heirloom. Still, she shared it, carefully.

Listen along + meet more of the cast at:



<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/quillspell/margaux>

Saga



Saga lives in *the Norse Longhouse*.

The Longhouse is *the academy's neighborhood for Old Norse roots*. It sits on the academy's *northern edge*, a little further from the central buildings than the Latin Quarter or the Greek Acropolis. Even the Germanic Grove feels closer. When the academy's founders built the Longhouse a hundred and fifteen years ago, they *deliberately placed it at a distance*. They wanted the Norse-roots neighborhood to feel a sense of *northernness*, just like the language itself. That's what the academy historians say.

The Longhouse stood tall, a dark wooden structure with a steeply peaked roof. Carved dragon heads guarded the gables, their snouts pointing to the sky. Small, high windows let in slivers of light. Inside, a single hearth smoked through a hole in the roof, filling the air with the scent of woodsmoke and slow-cooked stew. Especially in winter. It was, by all academy accounts, Saga's favorite place.



Saga's given name is *Skadi*. It's an Old Norse name for the goddess of winter. Skadi was, in Norse mythology, the goddess of mountains, skiing, and bowhunting. Saga treats the name as an honoring of the broad northern-Germanic mythic tradition. She doesn't claim to worship any specific deity. Saga is the academy's teacher for the English words that came from Old Norse. These words entered English during the *Viking-Age contact period*.

This vocabulary is, in fact, *enormous*. Many English speakers don't realize how many everyday words come from Old Norse, not Old English. Words like *sky, take, gift, give, raise, weak, scant, knife, husband, window, egg, leg, root, skin, skirt, sister* are all Norse. The Norse contribution to English was *deep*. It changed not only vocabulary but also *some of the grammar*. Old Norse gave English the *they/them/their* pronoun set. The Old English pronoun set had been confusingly similar to the *he/him/his* set. The Norse alternative was clearer, and English adopted it.

Saga is *quietly proud of this*.

She grew up in the kingdom's far northwest, in a village called *Skogr*. That's an Old Norse-derived name meaning *forest*. Norse settlers founded the village a thousand years ago. They eventually intermarried with the local population. By Saga's time, the village spoke the kingdom's common tongue every day. Still, many of the village's older words and place-names kept their Norse character. Skogr's neighboring fells, or hills, were called *Helvellfell, Skiddaw, and Causey Pike*. All of them were Norse-rooted names. The village had a *beck* (the Norse word for *stream*), a *gill* (the Norse word for *ravine*), and a *tarn* (the Norse word for *mountain lake*). Saga grew up speaking a northern-dialect English, full of these Norse survivals.

Like Birch, to whom she is closely allied, Saga noticed something by adolescence. Her local vocabulary felt more Norse than the southern dialect. But unlike Birch, who came to love Anglo-Saxon vocabulary, Saga came to *Old Norse*. Old English and Old Norse were like sister languages, both from the same Germanic family tree. The Norse contribution to English was substantial, but it layered differently than the underlying Anglo-Saxon vocabulary.



By the age of twelve, Saga could trace dozens of common English words back to their Old Norse origin.

She learned by *telling stories*. This was a tradition she had inherited from her grandmother, Halla. Halla had been the village's *informal saga-teller*. She knew dozens of short stories. Each one showed *how a Norse word had entered English*. Every story was about a Viking-Age sailor, merchant, or settler. They brought a word from their northern home and used it in the new country. Eventually, the locals adopted it. Halla's stories weren't always exact history. They were more like vivid tales, designed to make the words come alive. Saga learned dozens of words this way.

When Saga was eighteen, she walked the long road south to QuillSpell. She arrived at the Longhouse, which had been waiting for a teacher for four years. Saga asked to be interviewed by the academy master.

Lex said, "What is the etymology of *sky*?"

Saga answered, "Old Norse *ský*, meaning *cloud*. The Old English word for *sky* had been *heofon* — what we now call *heaven*. The Norse word *ský* came in through Viking-Age contact. It replaced *heofon* for everyday usage. *Heofon* survived as *heaven*, for the religious sense. *Sky* became the secular word."



Lex said, "What is the etymology of *they*?"

Saga replied, "Old Norse *þeir*. This is one of the deepest *grammatical contributions* Norse made to English. The Old English third-person plural pronouns — *hīe*, *hira*, *him* — had become confusingly similar to other pronoun-forms. The Norse plural pronouns *þeir*, *þeirra*, *þeim* were clearer. Middle English adopted them. They became *they*, *their*, *them*. Without Norse, English would have a much more confusing pronoun system."

Lex set down her tea. She said, "Take the Longhouse. Take your academic name. *Saga*. It honors what your grandmother gave you."

Saga has been the Longhouse's teacher for nineteen years.

In her classroom, she begins every first-day lesson the same way. She sits at the long table by the central hearth. She lights a small candle. "Tonight," she says, "well, *today*, but the tradition was *tonight*, I will tell you a saga. The saga is about how a Norse word came into English."



Then she tells a story. Sometimes it's about a Viking sailor. He learns to call his ship's *sky* by the Norse word, and the English crew picks it up. Sometimes the story is about a Norse-settled village adopting the word *take* over the Old English *niman*. Sometimes the story is about *they/them/their*. This is Saga's favorite story. She tells it with particular animation, because the pronoun change is *grammatically substantial*. It's not just a new word.

The children always *love* the saga-format. They had not been told before that English grammar was partly Norse. They had not been told that common English words have origin-stories. Saga makes both visible.

When children ask whether Norse roots are hard to learn, Saga always says the same thing:

"They are not hard. They are *layered into English so deeply you do not notice them*. The job is to *notice them*. Once you do, you see Norse in *sky, take, gift, give, knife, husband, window, egg, leg, root, skin, sister, they, them, their*. These are not foreign words. These are *English words with a Norse parentage*."

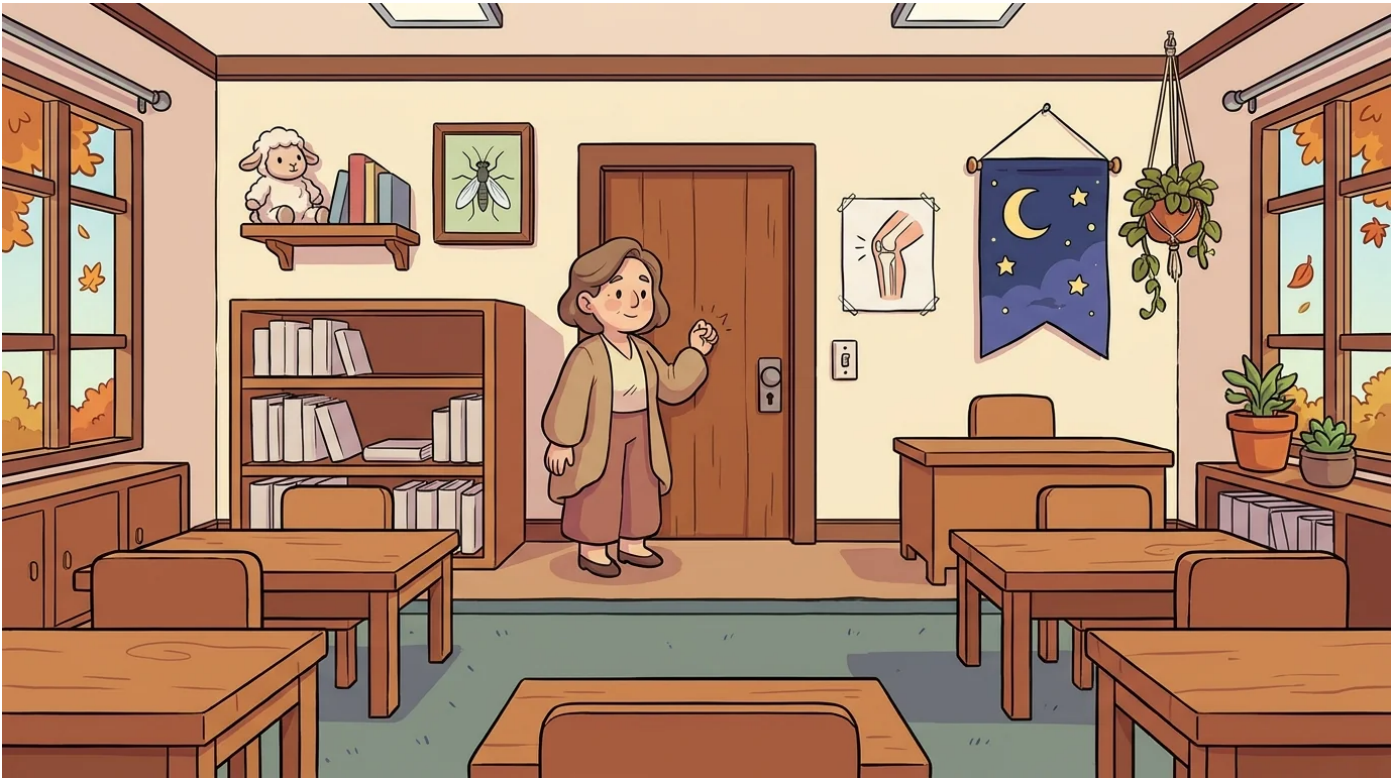
She still lights the candle at the start of every lesson. The Longhouse fire is also lit when the weather is cold. The children sometimes ask to sit by the fire while she teaches. She always lets them.

Listen along + meet more of the cast at:



<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/quillspell/saga>

Hush

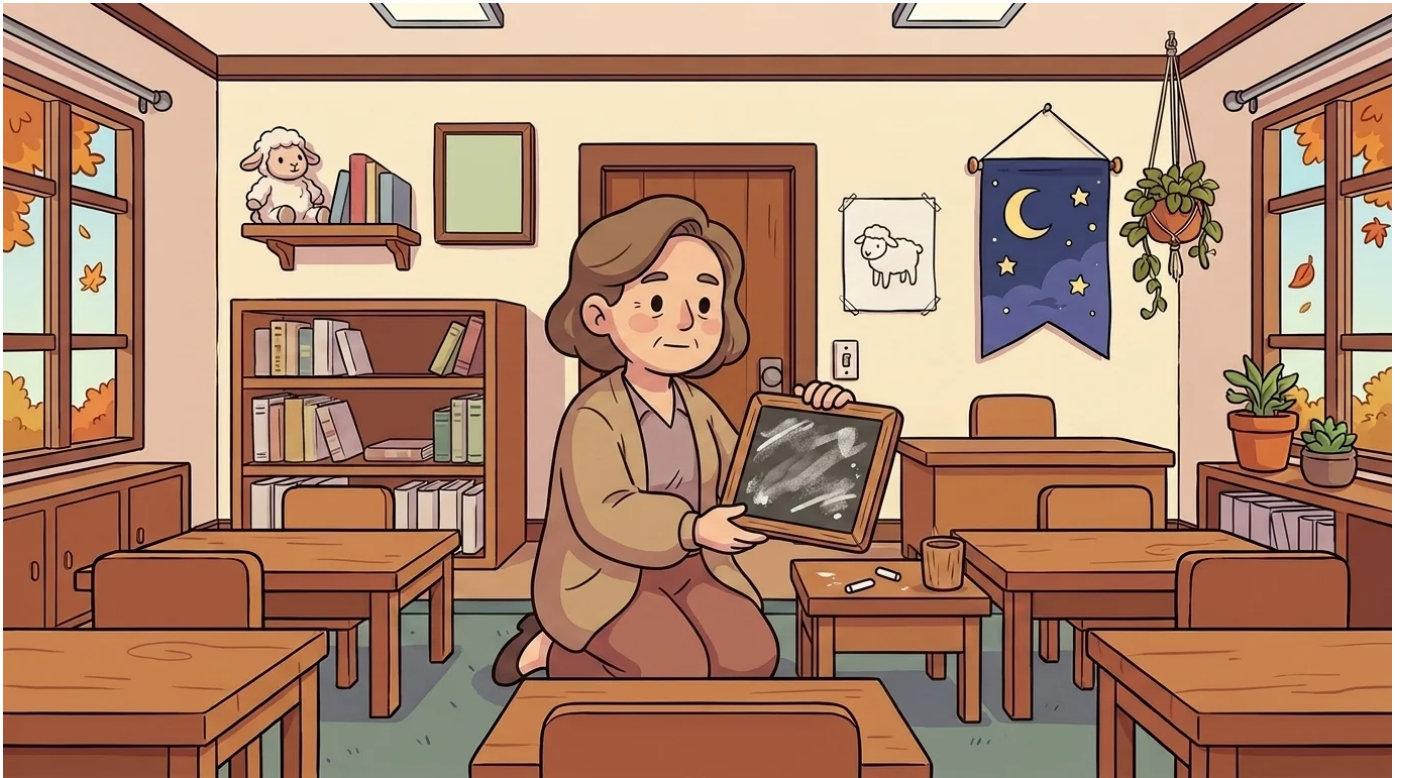


Hush is, of all the QuillSpell academy faculty, *the quietest*.

This is, given her area of specialty, *fitting*. Hush teaches *silent letters* — the letters in English words that *do not get pronounced*. *Knee* has a silent *k*. *Gnat* has a silent *g*. *Write* has a silent *w*. *Lamb* has a silent *b*. *Night* has a silent *gh*. *Pneumonia* has a silent *p*. *Psychology* has a silent *p*. English is, by Hush's careful count, *full of silent letters* — more than most other European languages — because *English has preserved many old spellings that no longer match modern pronunciation*.

Hush's first name is, fittingly, *Hush*. She has no other name on the academy's records. She did not arrive at the academy under a formal application; she *simply appeared* one autumn day, presented herself at the academy master's door, and said: "*You have many silent letters in your curriculum. They need a teacher. I am the teacher.*"

The academy master at the time — a thoughtful woman named *Cur* — had asked Hush what her name was. Hush had pointed at her own throat and shaken her head. *Cur* had understood that Hush *did not speak*. *Cur* had asked Hush to write. Hush had written, in a careful neat hand:



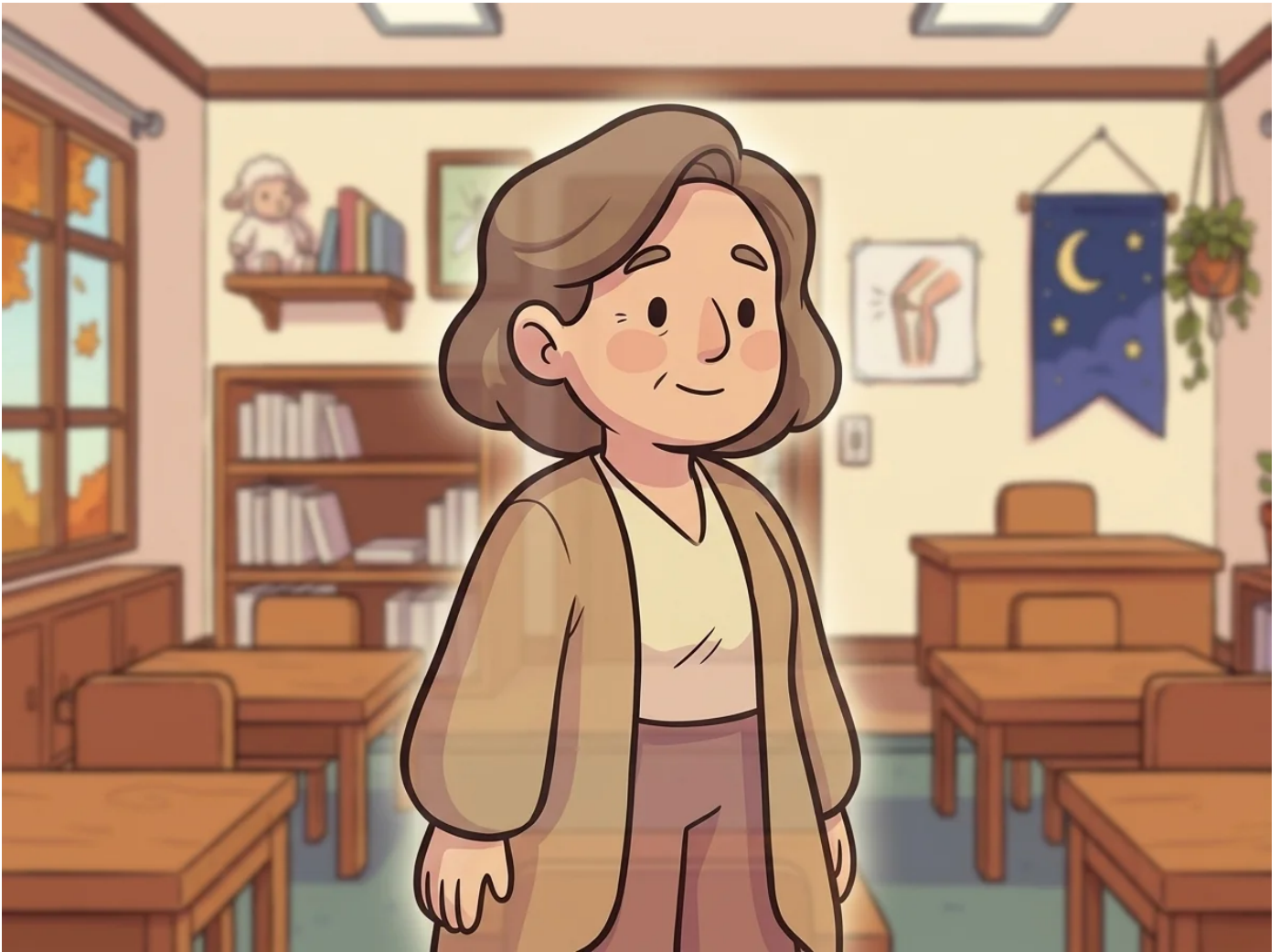
"I do not speak, by choice. I have given my voice to the silent letters. I will teach them faithfully."

Cur had thought about this for a day. She had consulted the other faculty. The faculty had agreed: the academy did, in fact, need a silent-letters teacher, and a teacher who *did not speak* might be ideal for the role.

Hush was given a small set of rooms attached to the academy's library. She was given a wooden writing-slate, a supply of chalk, and a stipend. She was given the *roving* teaching role — she would not have a permanent classroom; she would *appear* in other teachers' classrooms whenever a silent letter came up in the lesson.

That was twenty-seven years ago.

Hush has been the academy's silent-letters teacher ever since. She has never spoken a word, in twenty-seven years, in any lesson. She communicates *entirely by writing*. She is, by appearance, *small, slight, and slightly translucent-looking* — the academy's children find her *slightly thrilling* without being afraid of her. (The Greek-roots specialist Sophia has, on several occasions, compared Hush's classroom presence to that of the Compass Wraith in the GeometryForge academy; the comparison is, Sophia says, *deeply complimentary*.)



In her teaching, Hush works like this:

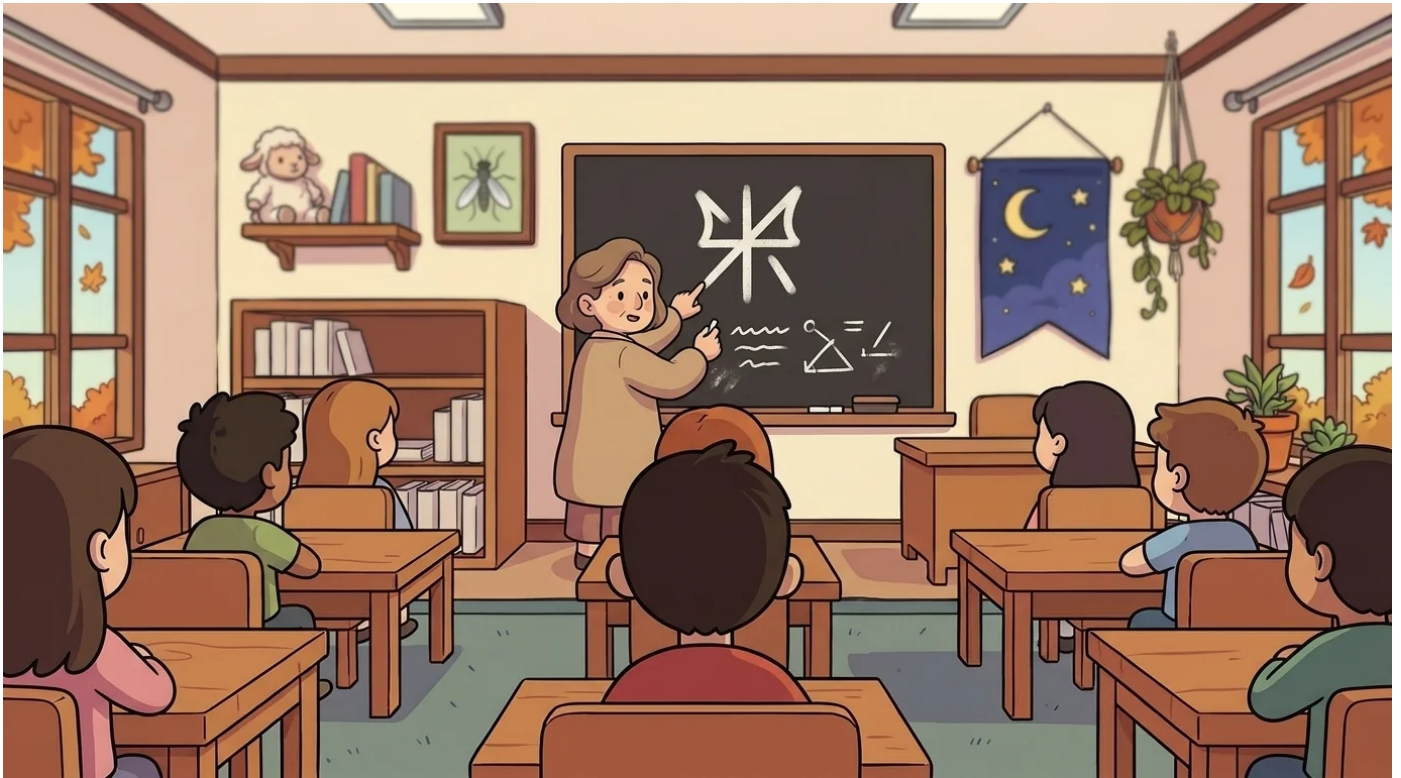
A child encounters a word with a silent letter. Most commonly this happens during one of the other teachers' lessons — Etyma is teaching Latin roots and the word *psyche* comes up; Sophia is teaching Greek roots and *pneuma* comes up; Birch is teaching Germanic roots and *knee* comes up. The other teacher pauses. The other teacher says, gently: "*This is a job for Hush.*"

Hush *appears*. (She has a small alcove off the main academy hall where she waits; the other teachers send a young runner to fetch her.) She enters the classroom *silently*. She walks to the front. She picks up the chalk. She writes the word on the board.

Then she *points* at the silent letter.

She does not pronounce the word. She does not pronounce the silent letter. She just *points*. The silent letter sits on the board, unspoken. The children watch.

Hush then writes, beneath the word, *a short note explaining why the letter is silent*. The note is *brief*. Examples:



For *knee*: "Once we said *k-nee*. Old English had a real /k/ sound here. The /k/ went silent in the 1600s. The spelling did not change."

For *pneumonia*: *"Greek word. *Pn* was a real sound in Greek. English speakers cannot easily pronounce /pn/. So we drop the /p/. The spelling honors the Greek origin."*

For *write*: *"Once we said *w-rite*. The /w/ went silent in early modern English. The spelling kept the *w* to mark the older pronunciation."*

The notes are *historical*. They explain *why* a letter is silent rather than just *that* it is. Children find this satisfying. Children — Hush has noticed — *like to know why*.

Hush has been, over twenty-seven years, *exceptionally consistent* in her work. She has appeared in *thousands of classrooms*. She has written *thousands of silent-letter explanations*. She has never spoken.

Children sometimes ask her, after a few weeks of encountering her, *why* she does not speak. She writes, in her careful neat hand:



"I have given my voice to the silent letters. They cannot speak. So I do not speak with them. It is a small offering."

The children, after a few rounds of this, accept it. They stop asking. They start *paying attention to the silent letters* — which is, Hush has noticed, *the whole point*. By making the silent letters *visible* — by writing them on the board, pointing at them, explaining their history — Hush has *given them a kind of voice*. They have her voice. She does not need her own.

When children ask whether silent letters are hard to learn, Hush always writes the same answer:

*"They are not hard. They are *historical*. Each silent letter was *once spoken*. The pronunciation changed. The spelling did not. Once you know that, the silent letters become memorable. The k in *knee* was once a /k/. The b in *lamb* was once a /b/. The gh in *night* was once a /x/ — a back-of-the-throat sound that English has lost. The spellings are the old language preserved in writing."*

She still keeps the wooden slate and the chalk on her writing-table. The children sometimes ask to borrow them. She always lets them. She watches them write. She nods when they get it right.

She has never, in twenty-seven years, spoken a word at the academy. She has, however, *taught more children to spell silent-letter words correctly* than any other teacher in the academy's history.

Listen along + meet more of the cast at:



<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/quillspell/hush>

Zayn



Zayn lives in *the Arabic Oasis*.

The Oasis is the academy's newest neighborhood. It wasn't part of the original school grounds. The academy added it about fifty years ago. Before that, the school had taken a long, hard look at its lessons. Officials realized many English words came from Arabic. These words appeared everywhere, especially in math, science, sailing, and business. But the curriculum hardly ever taught them.

The Master of the academy at the time decided to add the Oasis. This happened after Zayn himself, then a visiting teacher, simply showed them a list. He had quietly gathered more than three hundred common English words that came from Arabic. Politely, he asked why there wasn't a permanent place for them at the academy.



The Master had said, "We didn't have a teacher for them until you arrived. Now we do. Would you take the appointment? You can design the neighborhood."

Zayn, whose given name is *Zayd*—an Arabic name meaning *growth*—accepted the offer. He designed the Oasis himself. He wanted, he said, "a calm, green place." It shouldn't be a marketplace or a mosque. He didn't want anything that would reduce Arabic culture to just one picture. He designed a small, enclosed garden. A stone fountain stood at its center. Date palms grew around the edges. Jasmine vines climbed the walls. The floor was a tile mosaic with a geometric pattern. The Oasis was small but very beautiful when it was finished. It opened onto a small classroom-pavilion with white plaster walls and dark wooden ceiling-beams.

Zayn teaches in that pavilion.

He grew up in a home where everyone spoke two languages. One was the kingdom's common tongue. The other was an old Arabic language, a regional dialect. His family lived in the southern port-cities of the kingdom. For several hundred years during the Middle Ages, this region traded a lot with North African and Arabic-Mediterranean ports. Arabic merchants had settled in these southern cities. Some of their descendants married local families. By Zayd's time, the old Arabic dialect was mostly forgotten. But many Arabic words survived in his family, especially special words used for work. His parents, both schoolteachers from the port area, were careful to preserve and teach these words to their children.



By the time he was a teenager, Zayd learned something surprising. The English words he used every day were unusually full of words that came from Arabic. The southern dialect kept them alive more visibly than the northern dialect. *Sugar, coffee, cotton, lemon, orange, syrup, mattress, sofa, magazine, algebra, algorithm, zero, cipher, zenith, azimuth, admiral, arsenal, alchemy, alcohol*—all Arabic. The list was huge. His parents slowly explained that these words had entered English over many centuries. They arrived through trade and scholarship. The math and science words came through Arabic scholars in the Middle Ages. This was especially true in a place called al-Andalus, where Muslims ruled parts of Spain. There, Arabic-language scholars saved and added to Greek and Indian math and science traditions. The trade words came through trading across the Mediterranean Sea.

By his twenties, Zayd had become deeply interested in these words.

He hadn't thought about becoming a teacher back then. In fact, he was a clerk at a shipping office in the southern port-city of Aluria. The shipping office was always busy. Zayd filled out lists of cargo, figured out shipping prices, and checked off what was in each shipment. He was good at the work.

But then something changed his life. Zayd quietly started keeping a small notebook. In it, he traced every Arabic-origin word he found in the shipping office's English letters and papers. *Cotton bales*, the papers would say. *Cotton*—from Arabic *qutn*. *Sugar shipments*. *Sugar*—from Arabic *sukkar*. *Coffee inventories*. *Coffee*—from Arabic *qahwa*. The shipping office, in its daily work, was full of words that came from Arabic. Zayd's notebook grew thicker and thicker.



By age twenty-eight, he had three notebooks filled with Arabic-origin English words.

One day, a teacher from QuillSpell visited. He was the academy's Latin expert at the time, a kind man named Ferran. He was at the shipping office for academy business, as the school sometimes needed help moving supplies between its branches. Ferran noticed Zayd's notebook. He asked to see it. Zayd let him.

Ferran read the notebook for half an hour. Then he said, "Have you thought about becoming a teacher at QuillSpell? The academy doesn't have anyone who specializes in Arabic roots. In these three notebooks, you have more material than the academy has ever gathered on this subject. Would you visit?"

Zayd visited. He stayed. Eventually, he proposed the Oasis. He has been the Oasis's teacher for forty-six years.

In his classroom, the pavilion, he starts every first-day lesson the same way. He sits on a small, low cushion at the front of the room. Over the years, he started to prefer cushions to chairs, and the Oasis was designed for that. Beside him, he has a small, shiny tray. On the tray are seven small, white cups. Each cup holds a small sample of something that came from Arabic. One cup has a few grains of sugar. One cup has a few drops of coffee. One cup has a few cotton fibers. One cup has a small piece of orange peel. One cup has a few lemon seeds. One cup has a small piece of paper with the word *zero* written on it. Another cup has a small piece of paper with the word *algebra* written on it.



He gestures at the tray. He says, "These are seven things in this room. Their names are all Arabic. *Sugar, coffee, cotton, orange, lemon, zero, algebra*. The English words come from Arabic *sukkar, qahwa, qutn, naranj, laymun, sifr, al-jabr*. You have been using Arabic vocabulary every day of your life without knowing it. Today we begin learning the names of the words you already use."

The children are always amazed. They hadn't known that *coffee* was Arabic. They hadn't known that *zero* was Arabic. They especially hadn't known that *algebra* was Arabic. The word *algebra* comes from *al-jabr*, meaning "restoration." It was part of a mathematics book written by a brilliant scholar. Zayn tells the children about this scholar using his preferred title, *the Mathematician*. This helps them focus on the words themselves and how they arrived in English.

When children ask if Arabic-origin words are hard to learn, Zayn always says the same thing:

"They are not hard. They are *already in your everyday life*. The job is to notice them. Once you do, you see Arabic in *sugar, coffee, cotton, orange, lemon, syrup, mattress, sofa, magazine, algebra, algorithm, zero, cipher, zenith, azimuth, admiral, arsenal, alchemy, alcohol*. These are not foreign words. These are English words with an Arabic parentage."

He still serves a small, special sip of coffee at the end of every first-day lesson. The academy's catering provides it. The children are usually too young for coffee, so they get one small sip from a tiny cup. It is part of the ceremony. As they sip, he says, "This drink is *qahwa*. It came to your language from the Arabic world through Italian traders in the seventeenth century. The drink itself came even earlier, from Ethiopia through Yemen. Every cup of coffee you ever drink has this long journey in its name."

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<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/quillspell/zayn>

Ember



- "m"
 - "n"
 - "w"
 - "p"
- gate-allow-text-pattern: "[A-Za-z]\$"



Ember is, by all faculty agreement, *the academy's most-quietly-essential teacher*.

She teaches *the schwa*.

The schwa — written in linguists' notation as the inverted *e* symbol ə — is *the most common vowel sound in English*. It is the "uh" sound that appears in *unstressed syllables*. The *a* in *about*. The *e* in *pencil*. The *o* in *lemon*. The *u* in *circus*. The *u* and the *i* and the *u* in *medium*. The ə in *the* (when *the* is unstressed, which is most of the time). The *e* in *brother* (when it appears in casual speech as *bruh-thər*).



Children — especially when they are first learning to spell — *consistently misspell schwa-vowels*. They write *pensil* for *pencil* (because they hear "pen-sil" with a schwa that they reasonably guess might be an *i*). They write *lemen* for *lemon* (because they hear "lem-ən" and guess at the vowel). They write *abowt* for *about*. The errors are *legitimate phonetic guesses*. The spellings just *do not match the sound*.

Ember's job is to teach children *how to handle the schwa*.

This is, by Ember's own admission, *one of the harder pedagogical jobs at the academy*. You cannot teach the schwa by *sounding it out* — sounding-out, in fact, is *the source of the error*. You have to teach it by *etymology* (knowing the root tells you the vowel), by *related-word triangulation* (the schwa in *pencil* is spelled *e* because *pencillate* — a rare word, but it exists — has the same root with the *e* stressed), by *memorization*, and (Ember's specialty) by *visual highlighting*.



Ash had been seven. She had taken her grandmother's instruction *seriously*. She had begun to *listen for the schwa* in everyone's speech. By ten she could *hear it in about, pencil, lemon, circus, medium, sofa, agenda, taken, given, problem, system, holiday, holiday, holiday* (she once spent an entire afternoon noting how many times the local shopkeeper said *holiday* in a single conversation; the shopkeeper had said it eleven times and had used *three different vowel-letter spellings* in writing — *holiday, holyday, hollyday* — depending on the context).

Ash had become, by adolescence, *unusually careful* about schwa spellings. She had also become *unusually patient* about other people's schwa misspellings. She had understood — viscerally — that *the schwa was a hard spelling problem* and that *getting it wrong was reasonable*. Her grandmother had cultivated this patience deliberately.

When Ash was nineteen, she walked to the QuillSpell academy. She arrived. She asked to be considered for a teaching position. The academy master at the time was Lex's predecessor — a kind man named *Veller* — who had asked her what she wanted to teach. Ash had said: "*The schwa. The unstressed vowel. I think children deserve better than to be punished for misspelling it. I would like to teach it explicitly so they have the tools to spell it correctly.*"

Veller had — by his own later report — *been moved* by the directness of this answer. He had appointed Ash to the schwa-position. He had given her the academic name *Ember* — *for the small unobtrusive flame that does most of the work of a fire*. The name was apt.



In her classroom (a small low-key cottage on the academy grounds, deliberately understated), she begins every first-day lesson the same way. She lights a small candle. (The candle is the *ember* — her name's source.) She places it on the desk. She turns to the class. She holds up a slate with the word *PENCIL* written on it. She says: *"There is a vowel in this word that is *quiet*. It is in the second syllable. The second syllable is *unstressed*. Listen. *Pen-cil*. The *cil* part is *cil* — but the *i* is doing very little work. It is *almost* an *uh* sound. *Pen-cuh-l*. That is the schwa."*

She *touches the candle's flame* with the end of a small wire pointer. (The candle does not extinguish; she only briefly touches it. The gesture is purely theatrical.) She says: *"The schwa is the *quietly burning vowel*. You hear it in unstressed syllables. You can write it with *any vowel letter*. That is why it is hard to spell. The job is to *check, not guess*."*

She then writes several words on the board: **about* (a-bout — the *a* is the schwa). *pencil* (pen-cil — the *i* is the schwa). *lemon* (lem-on — the *o* is the schwa). *circus* (cir-cus — the *u* is the schwa). *medium* (me-di-um — both the *i* and the *u* are schwas).* She points at each schwa vowel with her wire pointer. She does not pronounce them. They are *quiet*.

She says, gently: *"Each of these vowels is the *same sound*. Each is spelled differently. The job is not to *hear* the spelling. The job is to *learn* the spelling. Once you know which vowel-letter writes the schwa in each word, you can spell it correctly forever. The schwa is patient. It will wait for you."*

Listen along + meet more of the cast at:



<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/quillspell/ember>

Twin



Twin grew up *one of identical twins*.

Her sister's name is *Twyn*. They were born on the same morning in the village of *Pair-by-the-River* — a real village, the kingdom's records confirm, though the river it was paired-by has changed course over the centuries and the village is no longer on the riverbank. Twin and Twyn were named by their mother — who was a *poet* — to *echo each other*. The names are *one letter different*. They sound *identical aloud*. They are, on paper, *the simplest possible illustration of the double-consonant idea*.

Twin and Twyn grew up *constantly together*. They shared a cradle. They shared a cot. They shared a bed. They shared, by their parents' careful arrangement, *everything that could plausibly be shared* — toys, books, garments (the family seamstress made one set in two sizes; their sizes diverged in adolescence and the seamstress had to start making two sets), even a small dog named *Bough* who alternated her affections between them on a daily schedule.



What Twin and Twyn discovered, slowly, over their childhood, was that *they were not the same person*.

This was, when they were small, a *surprise*. They had been treated, by their family and their village, as *one unit with two bodies*. But Twin was *talkative* and Twyn was *quiet*. Twin liked to *narrate* what was happening around her. Twyn liked to *listen and think before responding*. Twin would say: "*It is raining.*" Twyn would say (after a pause): "*It is. The leaves were facing up earlier; they are now drooping.*" The two girls were *complementary, not identical in temperament*.

They formalized this when they were thirteen. They decided — together, after a long quiet conversation — that *Twin would be the speaker and Twyn would be the listener*. When the two were together (which was most of the time), *Twin did the talking*. Twyn did the listening and the thinking. When Twin said something that needed correction, Twyn would *gently signal* — a small touch on Twin's arm, a small shake of the head. Twin would *adjust*.

This division-of-labor *worked*. The two girls became, over their teens, *unusually well-functioning as a pair*. Twin's narration was *thoughtful* because Twyn was correcting it. Twyn's silence was *welcome* because she was always actively listening. The combination was *uncommonly good company*.

When Twin was eighteen, she encountered *the double-consonant rule* at the village school. The teacher had said: *"When a one-syllable word ends in a single consonant after a single vowel, you double the consonant when adding a vowel-suffix. Run + ing → running. Hop + ed → hopped. Plan + ed → planned. The doubling preserves the short-vowel sound."**



Twin raised her hand. She said: *"Like me and Twyn."*

The teacher said: *"What?"*

Twin said: *"Twyn and I are doubled. Our names are one letter apart. We function as a pair. Run becomes running because the running needs to keep the short u sound — and the way English signals short vowel is by doubling the consonant after it. The double n in running keeps the u short. Without the double n, you would have runing, which would tend to be pronounced roon-ing. The double consonant is the spelling's way of saying: this vowel is short, don't lengthen it."**

The teacher set down the chalk. She had been teaching the double-consonant rule for fifteen years. She had not previously heard a student explain it as *spelling's way of saying short vowel*. She also had not previously heard a student compare the doubled consonant to a *pair of twin sisters*.

She said: *"That is exactly correct on the function of the doubling. And the twin analogy is, frankly, one of the best mnemonic devices I have heard. Have you thought about teaching?"*



Twin had not. She had thought about *staying home with Twyn* and *helping her parents with the family farm*. But the teacher's question prompted her to think about it. She talked to Twyn. Twyn — who never spoke much, even in private — *thought about it for a week*. Then Twyn said: "*You should go. I will visit. We have always done things together. We do not have to do everything together.*"

Twin went. Twyn stayed. They have, in the twenty-eight years since, *written each other long letters every week*. Twyn has visited the academy more than thirty times. The academy children all know about Twyn. They consider her *Twin's silent partner* even though they almost never see her in person.

In Twin's classroom, she begins every first-day lesson the same way. She holds up *one finger* of each hand. She brings them together. She says: *"This is a single consonant. Run ends in a single n. To turn run into running, I need to add a vowel-suffix — -ing. But the n needs to double. If I do not double, the spelling looks like runing, which most readers will try to pronounce roon-ing. I want the short u sound. I double the n to signal: short vowel, the consonant is the boundary."**

She brings her two fingers together. She makes a *pair*. She says: "*Two consonants. Side by side. Like Twyn and me. The pair is the signal.*"

The children — always — find this *deeply satisfying*. The twin-sister analogy makes the abstract rule *visceral*.



Twin then writes on the board: *run + ing = running. hop + ed = hopped. plan + ed = planned. swim + ing = swimming. bat + er = batter.* Each example: short vowel + single consonant + vowel-suffix → consonant doubles. She explains the *contrast cases*. *Rain + ing = raining* (not *raining*) because *rain* has a long vowel (the *ai* vowel team) and does not need the doubled consonant to preserve its sound. *Help + ing = helping* (not *helping*) because *help* ends in *two* consonants and the short-vowel sound is already protected.

The children try it. They double consonants on the short-vowel-CVC words and *not* on the others. They get it right.

When children ask whether the double-consonant rule is hard, Twin always says the same thing:

*"It is not hard. It is *pair-signaling*. The doubled consonant is the spelling's way of saying *short vowel*. Once you hear the short vowel, you know to double. The pair is the signal. Just like Twyn and me."*

She still writes Twyn a letter every week. Twyn writes back. Children at the academy sometimes ask to read Twyn's letters. Twin gently declines. "*Twyn's letters are for me. But she sends her good wishes to all of you.*" The children accept this.

Listen along + meet more of the cast at:



<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/quillspell/twin>

Affix



Affix is a builder.

This is a metaphorical claim — she is not a carpenter — but Affix treats *words as constructions*. She believes — and she teaches her students — that *long English words are not arbitrary*. They are *assemblies*. A root word + a suffix + another suffix + another suffix = a long word. The long word's *meaning* and *spelling* are *predictable* from the assembly. Once you know the root and the suffixes, you can *build* the long word yourself.

This is, by Affix's careful count, *true of perhaps thirty percent of long English words*. The other seventy percent are *idiomatic* — they cannot be predicted from their pieces. But the thirty percent that *are* assembleable is *substantial*. Mastery of suffix-stacking unlocks a large vocabulary of long words that would otherwise have to be memorized one at a time.



Affix lives in a *small workshop* on the academy grounds. The workshop is *deliberately full of carpenter's tools* — saws, planes, chisels, mallets, a workbench, sawhorses, a small pile of wood-shavings in the corner. (None of these tools are functional. They are *display pieces*. Affix does not actually do carpentry. The tools are *teaching props*.) The workshop also has a *large rack of wooden blocks*. Each block has a *morpheme* — a root, a prefix, or a suffix — stamped on its surface.

Affix teaches by *stacking the blocks*.

She has a block stamped *nation*. She has a block stamped *-al*. She stacks them: *nation + -al = national*. She has a block stamped *-ize*. She stacks: *national + -ize = nationalize*. She has a block stamped *-ation*. She stacks: *nationalize + -ation = nationalization*. The four blocks together make a *four-block word*. The word is *long*. The word is *spellable*. The word was *assembled* from four pieces, each of which the children can see and handle.

Affix — whose given name is *Wyn* — grew up *in a family of carpenters*. Her father had run a small woodworking shop in a market town. The shop had made *furniture* — tables, chairs, cabinets, small chests. Wyn had grown up *handling wood*. She had learned, by the time she was eight, *how parts fit together*. A chair was *a seat + four legs + a back + two cross-supports*. Each part had to be *the right shape, the right size, the right wood-grain orientation*. If any part was wrong, the chair would not work. But if every part was right, the chair *assembled smoothly*. Once you understood the *parts* of a chair, you could build *any chair*.



Wyn applied this thinking to *words* when she was fourteen and encountered *the suffix-stack rule* at school. The teacher had written *nationalization* on the board. The teacher had explained that the word was *nation + al + ize + ation*. Wyn had stared at it. She had said: "*That is a chair.*"

The teacher had said: "*What?*"

Wyn had said: *"*A chair is a seat plus four legs plus a back plus two cross-supports. Nationalization is nation plus -al plus -ize plus -ation. The structure is identical. Once you know the pieces, you know the assembly. Words are assemblies of morphemes the way chairs are assemblies of wood-parts. The same kind of thinking works for both.*"*

The teacher had been *delighted*. The teacher had said: "*You should be a teacher of suffix-stacking. The QuillSpell academy is always looking for talent. Would you consider it?*"



Wyn had considered it. She had talked to her father. Her father — who had been hoping she would inherit the woodworking shop — had been *initially disappointed* but had *come around*. He had said: "*You will still be building things. You will just be building things made of letters instead of made of wood. The same thinking. I am proud.*"

Wyn had walked to the academy at nineteen. She had been appointed by Lex (after the standard interview, in which Wyn had explained the chair-and-word analogy and Lex had laughed and offered her the appointment). Wyn had been given the academic name *Affix* — *a deliberate teaching name; an affix is a prefix or a suffix; Affix's job is to stack them*. Wyn has been the workshop's teacher for sixteen years.

In her classroom (the workshop), she begins every first-day lesson the same way. She walks to the wooden-block rack. She pulls out, in order: *the root *act*, the suffix *-ion*, the prefix *re-*, the suffix *-ize*. She sets them on the workbench. She turns to the class. She says: *"*This is the word *reactionization*. It is not a common word. It might not even be a real word — let me think. Actually it is not a real word. *Reactionization* is plausible but unattested. But *reaction*, *reactionary*, *reactionism*, *reactionize* are all real words. They are built from the same root *act* and various combinations of these affixes. You can read them, you can spell them, and you can decode their meanings — *because you know the pieces.*"**

She demonstrates. *Act* + *-ion* = *action* (a doing). *Re-* + *action* = *reaction* (a doing-back, a response). *Reaction* + *-ary* = *reactionary* (relating to reactions; sometimes politically loaded but the morphology is straightforward). *Reaction* + *-ism* = *reactionism* (a doctrine of reactions). Each combination is *assembled*. Each is *spellable*. Each is *meaningful*.



The children — always — find this *very satisfying*. They had thought long words were hard. Affix is showing them that *long words are constructions* and that *constructions can be analyzed by inspecting the parts*.

When children ask whether suffix-stacking is hard, Affix always says the same thing:

*"It is not hard. It is *carpentry*. You know the parts. You assemble them. The assembly tells you the meaning and the spelling. Long words are not magic. They are *chairs made of letters*. Build a few, and you can build any of them."*

She still keeps the wooden blocks in the workshop rack. The children sometimes ask to assemble their own words. She always lets them. She watches them stack the blocks. She corrects, gently, when the assembly does not work. (Some affixes do not combine with certain roots. *Re- + -ize + -ation* is plausible after *nation*; less plausible after, say, *table*. *Re-tableize-ation* is not a word. Affix gently explains why.)

Listen along + meet more of the cast at:



<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/quillspell/affix>

Cadence



Cadence is a drummer.

She *literally carries a small hand-drum* — a round wooden frame about the size of a dinner plate, with a tightly-stretched leather drumhead. She wears it on a leather strap over her left shoulder. She can play it with her right hand or with a small wooden mallet kept in a pocket of her tunic. The drum has, over the years, developed *a soft worn quality* in the leather where her hand most often strikes. It is, by all academy accounts, *the most-used teaching prop in the QuillSpell academy*.

Cadence teaches *syllable-rhythm*.



Syllable-rhythm is the *rules for dividing words into syllables for spelling*. English has *several* such rules — VC/CV (between two consonants split — *but-ter, pen-cil, win-dow*), V/CV (after a long vowel, split before the consonant — *pi-lot, ti-ger, mu-sic*), VC/V (after a short vowel, split after the consonant — *cab-in, lem-on, wag-on*), and *several others* for affixes (*re/pace, un/happy, hap/pi/ness*). The rules are *useful for spelling* — once you can break a word into syllables, you can *spell each syllable separately and combine them*. The strategy reduces a long word to a sequence of short manageable pieces.

The rules are *also useful for reading* — for guessing the pronunciation of an unfamiliar word — but Cadence's specialty is *spelling*.

She teaches by *drumming*.

This was her own innovation. Cadence — whose given name is *Llyr*, an old Welsh-derived name meaning *sea* (her parents had liked the sound; the name is treated as a generic *family-given* name without cultural-attribution claim) — grew up *in a musical family*. Her mother was a *fiddler* who played at country dances. Her father was a *drummer*. Llyr had been raised on *rhythm*. She had learned to *count beats* before she could read. She had understood, by four, that *music had a pulse* and that *the pulse could be marked with a drumbeat*.



When she was twelve, Llyr encountered *syllable-division at school*. The teacher had been trying to explain that *syllabification* was *syl-LAB-i-fi-CA-tion*. The teacher had marked the syllables with slashes on the board: *syl/lab/i/fi/ca/tion*. Llyr had stared at the board and had said, immediately and without thinking: "*Tap-tap-tap-tap-tap-tap.*"

The teacher had said: "*What?*"

Llyr had said: *"You divided the word into six syllables. That is six beats. You can tap them out: tap-tap-tap-tap-tap-tap. The word has a rhythm. Once you hear the rhythm, the syllable-divisions are obvious."*

The teacher had paused. The teacher had then drummed her fingers on the desk: *tap-tap-tap-tap-tap-tap*. The teacher had said: "Yes. That is exactly the rhythm. I have been teaching syllabification for ten years. I have never thought of it as drumming. Have you considered teaching?"

Llyr had not. She had thought about *becoming a musician* like her parents. But the teacher's question had stayed with her. By fifteen she had decided: *she would teach syllable-rhythm through drumming*. The two disciplines — *music and spelling* — were, she had come to think, *the same discipline applied to different materials*.



She had walked to the QuillSpell academy when she was nineteen. She had brought *her father's old hand-drum* (he had retired from performance and had given it to her as a parting gift). She had been interviewed by Lex. The interview had been *largely percussive* — Lex had given Llyr a list of words to *drum the syllable-rhythm of*, and Llyr had drummed all of them correctly, including the famously-tricky *anti-dis-es-tab-lish-men-tar-i-an-ism* (eleven beats, which Llyr had drummed *cleanly* with her father's drum at a steady-but-quickening pace).

Lex had appointed her *immediately*. Lex had said: *"Take your academic name. *Cadence* — for the rhythm. You will teach by drumming. The hand-drum will be your tool."*

That was thirteen years ago. Cadence has been the academy's syllable-rhythm teacher ever since.

In her classroom, she begins every first-day lesson the same way. She unslings the drum from her shoulder. She places it on her left forearm. She *taps* it three times, slowly. *Tap. Tap. Tap*. The children quiet down.

Then she taps it *six times* in a clear rhythm: *tap-tap-tap-tap-tap-tap*. She turns to the class. She says: *"That was six beats. Six syllables. *Syllabification*. Listen as I say the word and watch as I drum each syllable: *syl-* (tap) *-lab-* (tap) *-i-* (tap) *-fi-* (tap) *-ca-* (tap) *-tion.* (tap) Six syllables. Six beats. Once you can hear the beats, you can divide the word."*



She demonstrates with several more words. *But-ter* (two beats). *Pen-cil* (two beats). *Win-dow* (two beats). *Cab-in* (two beats). *Lem-on* (two beats). *Wa-gon* (two beats). *Pi-lot* (two beats). *Mu-sic* (two beats). *Sat-ur-day* (three beats). *Won-der-ful* (three beats). *Beau-ti-ful* (three beats). *Cat-er-pil-lar* (four beats). *Cel-e-bra-tion* (four beats). *In-ter-na-tion-al* (five beats). *Syl-lab-i-fi-ca-tion* (six beats). *An-ti-dis-es-tab-lish-men-tar-i-an-ism* (eleven beats — she drums this one for fun; the children always cheer).

The children — always — find this *electrifying*. They had thought syllabification was *a dry rule*. Cadence is showing them that *it is a rhythm* and that *rhythms can be heard, felt, drummed*.

When children ask whether syllable-rhythm is hard to learn, Cadence always says the same thing — *while drumming the rhythm*:

"It is not (tap) hard (tap). It is rhythm (tap-tap). Hear the beats (tap-tap-tap). Divide the word (tap-tap-tap-tap). Spell each syllable (tap-tap-tap-tap-tap). Combine (tap-tap-tap-tap-tap-tap). That is everything about syllabification."

She still carries the drum. The children sometimes ask to drum a word themselves. She always lets them. She has, over thirteen years, *handed the drum to perhaps four thousand children* and let each of them drum *one word*. The drum is, by now, *very worn*. She is — quietly — beginning to worry about needing a replacement. (Her father, who is now elderly, has offered to *make her a new one*. She has not yet accepted. The old drum, she says, *still has the rhythm in it*.)

Listen along + meet more of the cast at:



<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/quillspell/cadence>

Wren



Wren is *small and bird-like*.

This is a literal description. She is a wren-headed character in the cast portrait style. She has *brown feathered hair*, a *small sharp beak* (which she uses, of course, for facial expressions; she has a mouth too), and *small dark observant eyes*. She is the academy's *smallest faculty member* by significant measure. She is also, by general agreement, *the academy's most musical voice* — her speech has a *lilting bird-song quality* that children find immediately memorable.

Wren teaches *vowel-team duos*.

A vowel-team duo is *two vowel letters working together as a unit* to write a *single vowel sound*. The classic schoolroom rule is: "*When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking, and it says its own name.*" This rule is *broadly true* for many vowel teams — *ai* in *rain* says long *a*; *ea* in *eat* says long *e*; *ee* in *bee* says long *e*; *oa* in *boat* says long *o*. But the rule has *many exceptions*. *Ea* can also say short *e* (*bread, head, dead*) or long *a* (*great, break, steak*). *Ie* can say long *e* (*chief, brief*) or long *i* (*pie, tie, lie*). *Ow* can say long *o* (*snow, blow*) or the *ou*-sound (*cow, brow*). The rule is *useful* but *not absolute*.



Wren teaches both *the rule* and *the exceptions* by *singing*.

This was a teaching method she developed herself, based on her own childhood. Wren — whose given name is *Awen*, an old word meaning *poetic inspiration* — grew up in a *household of singers*. Her family had been *itinerant musicians* for several generations. Her parents had performed at weddings, festivals, and small concerts throughout the kingdom. Awen had been raised on song. She had learned to spell, as a small child, *by singing the letters*. Her mother had taught her that *letters had melodies* — that you could *sing the spelling of a word* as a small song and the song would *help you remember the order of letters*.

This had been, in Awen's family, a *folk-pedagogy method*. It had not been formalized. It had been *passed down* from parents to children for at least four generations.

When Awen was seventeen, she encountered formal spelling-instruction at the village school. She had been *amazed* to discover that *most children were not taught to sing the spelling*. They were taught to *recite* it. *R-A-I-N. Rain. B-E-E. Bee.* Awen had thought: *but if you sing it, you remember it better. Why would you not sing it?*

She had begun to teach her classmates *to sing*. She had taught them small two-vowel-pair melodies. "*A-I, A says I*" for *rain, paint, brain*. "*E-A, E says I*" for *eat, beat, neat*. "*O-A, O says O*" for *boat, coat, road*. The melodies were *simple* — small four-note phrases that the children could pick up in one repetition.



The classmates had picked them up. The classmates had remembered them. The classmates' spelling-test scores had *improved*.

The village schoolteacher had noticed. The schoolteacher had asked Awen where she had learned the technique. Awen had explained the family tradition. The schoolteacher had said: "*This is a real pedagogy. You should formalize it. There is an academy that would appreciate this.*"

Awen had walked to the QuillSpell academy when she was eighteen. She had brought *no academic credentials*. She had brought *her singing voice*.

The academy master — Lex — had interviewed her. Lex had said: "*Demonstrate.*"

Awen had sung. She had sung the *ai* song. She had sung the *ea* song. She had sung *the exceptions* — *the *ea* of *bread* is not the same as *the *ea* of *eat*; here is how you sing the difference.* Lex had listened for fifteen minutes. Lex had set down her tea. Lex had said: *"*You are appointed. Take your academic name. Wren — for the small bird with the loud voice.*"*

Awen — now Wren — has been the academy's vowel-team teacher for nineteen years.



In her classroom, she begins every first-day lesson the same way. She *sings*. She does not speak first; she sings. The first song is the *ai* song:

"A-I, A says I; rain, brain, paint, train, A says I."

The melody is simple. Five notes. Repeats with each example-word. The children pick it up immediately. They sing it back to her.

She then teaches the *ea* song:

"E-A, E says I; eat, beat, neat, seat, E says I."

And then *the exception* — the *ea* of *bread*:



"E-A, E says short; bread, head, dead, lead, E says short. Watch the E. It changes its mind. Some words long. Some words short. Sing both. Remember both."

She continues. Ee (see, bee, tree, free). Oa (boat, coat, road, soap). Ow (snow, blow, low, slow — and the exception: cow, brow, now, allow). Ie (chief, brief, thief — and the exception: pie, tie, lie, die). Oi (coin, boil, soil, moist).

The children, by the end of the first lesson, can sing all seven vowel-team songs. They can pick out, from a list of unfamiliar words, which vowel-team is which. They have *the songs in their heads* and the songs will not leave them for years.

When children ask whether vowel-team patterns are hard, Wren always says the same thing — *in song*:

*"They are not hard; they are *songs*; sing the pair, sing it loud, sing it again — and the spelling stays."*

She still sings the songs at the start of every lesson. The children sometimes ask her to sing new songs for newly-learned vowel-teams. She always obliges. She has, in nineteen years, *composed perhaps two hundred small vowel-team melodies* — most of which are now part of the academy's informal pedagogy and are sung by children in classrooms across all twelve language-neighborhoods.

Listen along + meet more of the cast at:



<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/quillspell/wren>

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