

how colors got their names

Indigo

Means "Indian," because the dye was imported from India.

Mauve

From the French word for the mallow plant, which had similar purple markings on its petals.

Magenta

Named in honor of a battle during the Second Italian War of Independence.

Azure

A misspelling of the Medieval Latin word lazur, meaning "lapis lazuli."

Taupe

From a French word meaning "moleskin," because it was thought to look similar.

Fuschia

After a plant which was named for a German botanist called Leonhart Fuchs.

Porcelain

From Latin for "young pig" since the ceramic had a luster like shells which resembled pig vagina.

Orchid

The flower name comes from the Greek word for "testicle," due to the round shape of the roots.

Sienna

Named after the city-state in Italy where the pigment was first produced.

Cerulean

From the Latin word caelum, meaning "sky" or "heaven."

Burgundy

After a region of France producing a wine of that color. Ultimately from a Latin word for "highlander."

Scarlet

From Old French escarlate, which could refer to any brightly colored cloth.

Alabaster

As a Latin word, it referred to a type of box used to hold perfumes and unguents.

Periwinkle

The word for its namesake plant comes from Latin pervincere, or "to entwine," due to how it grows.

Maroon

Comes from a French word for "chestnut."

Teal

Originally referred to a small fresh-water duck that has a similar green-blue color on its head.

Crimson

Ultimately from a Persian word meaning "worm-colored," in reference to how it was made.

Vermillion

Means "small worm" in Latin because the dye was originally obtained from worms.

Beige

Has historically referred to the color of wool. Traces to Ancient Greek byssos, meaning "linen."

Turquoise

Means "Turkish" in Old French because the mineral came to Europe through Turkey.

Auburn

From Latin albus, meaning "white," but influenced by Middle English brun, meaning "brown."

Persimmon

The name for its eponymous fruit comes from a Powhatan word meaning "he dries berries."

Viridian

From the Latin word viridis, which could mean "green," "fresh," "youthful," or "blooming."

Orange

The color comes from the fruit, which traces to Sanskrit naranga, the name of the orange tree.

Khaki

Traces to the Persian word khak, meaning "dusty" or "earth-colored."

Ochre

Derives from the Greek word khros, meaning "pale yellow."

Aquamarine

Translates to "sea water" in Latin.

Kelly Green

The color was associated with Ireland, and Kelly is a common Irish last name.

Tangerine

The color was named after the fruit, which was imported to the UK through the port of Tangier.

Chartreuse

After a liqueur produced in a monastery called La Grande-Chartreuse.

Amber

The word for the resin derived from ambergris, the waxy material secreted by sperm whales.

Umber

Either from the Italian region of Umbria or from the Latin word umber, meaning "shadow."

Sepia

From Latin for "cuttlefish," since the color came from the secretions of the mollusk.

QUESTIONS

- Did you know any of these?
- What is your favourite colour range? Why?
- Do you know anyone who is colourblind? If so, what problems do they have?
- Do you think colour affect your mood or your feelings?
- The meaning of colours changes with time and culture. Do you know any examples?
- Revise the following expressions a
 - a "black and white" issue.
 - What does "see red" mean?
 - If you "feel blue", how do you feel?
 - What does it mean to "be yellow"?
 - Meaning of "black tie affair"?
 - You don't want to be "blacklisted", do you? But, why?
 - Do you know any other expressions or idioms with colours.