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dictionary

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phe·nom·e·non  (fĭ-nŏm ə-nŏn', -nən)

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n. pl. **phe·nom·e·na** (-nə)

1. An occurrence, circumstance, or fact that is perceptible by the senses.

2. *pl.* **phe·nom·e·nons**

a. An unusual, significant, or unaccountable fact or occurrence; a marvel.

b. A remarkable or outstanding person; a paragon. See Synonyms at [wonder](#).

3. *Philosophy* In the philosophy of Kant, an object as it is perceived by the senses, as opposed to a noumenon.

4. *Physics* An observable event.

[Late Latin *phaenomenon*, from Greek *phainomenon*, from neuter present participle of *phainesthai*, to appear; see [bhā-¹](#) [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

Usage Note: *Phenomenon* is the only acceptable singular form of this noun; *phenomena* is the usual plural. *Phenomenons* may also be used as the plural in nonscientific writing when the meaning is "extraordinary things, occurrences, or persons": *They were phenomenons in the history of music*.

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Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

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The Indo-European appendix covers nearly half of the Indo-European roots that have left their mark on English words. A more complete treatment of Indo-European roots and the English words derived from them is available in our [Dictionary of Indo-European Roots](#).

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