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bee¹ (bē)

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n.

1. Any of numerous winged, hairy-bodied, usually stinging hymenopteran insects of the superfamily Apoidea, including both solitary species and social species such as the honeybees, and characterized by sucking and chewing mouthparts for gathering nectar and pollen.

2.

a. A gathering that combines cooperative labor and social interaction or friendly competition: *a quilting bee*.

b. A competition in which contestants are eliminated one by one after failing to answer a question or solve a problem: *a spelling bee*.

Idiom:

a bee in (one's) bonnet

1. An impulse to do something; a notion.

2. An obsession.

[Middle English, from Old English *bēo*; see **bhei-** in the Appendix of Indo-European roots. Sense 2, possibly alteration of dialectal *bean*, *been*, voluntary help given to a farmer by neighbors, from Middle English *bene*, request, boon, extra service by a tenant to his lord, from Old English *bēn*, request, prayer; see **bhā-**² in the Appendix of Indo-European roots.]

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bee² (bē)

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n.

Nautical

A bee block.

[Middle English *be*, a ring, from Old English *bēag*; see **bheug-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

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bee³ (bē)

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n.

The letter *b*.

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

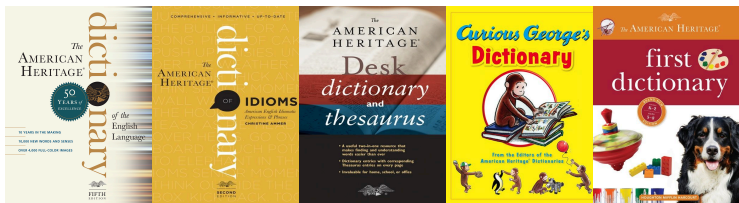
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

Indo-European Roots

Semitic Roots

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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*This website is best viewed in Chrome, Firefox, Microsoft Edge, or Safari. Some characters in pronunciations and etymologies cannot be displayed properly in Internet Explorer.