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pret·er·ite or **pret·er·it**  (prĕt ə-ĭt)

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adj.

Of, relating to, or being the verb tense that describes a past action or state.

n.

1. The verb form expressing or describing a past action or condition.
2. A verb in the preterite form.

[Middle English, from Old French, from Latin (*tempus*) *praeteritum*, past (tense), neuter past participle of *praeterīre*, to go by : *praeter*, beyond, comparative of *prae*, before; see **per**¹ [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#) + *īre*, to go; see **ei-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

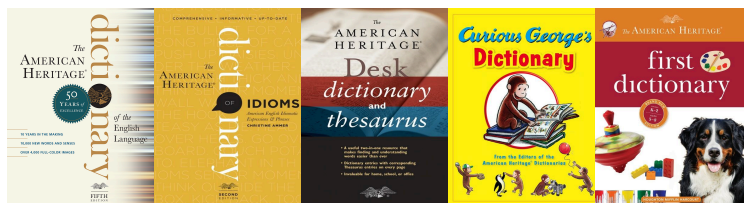
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[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.