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al·che·my  (ăĭ kə-mē)

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n.

1. A medieval chemical philosophy having as its asserted aims the transmutation of base metals into gold, the discovery of the panacea, and the preparation of the elixir of longevity.
2. A seemingly magical power or process of transmuting: *"He wondered by what alchemy it was changed, so that what sickened him one hour, maddened him with hunger the next"* (Marjorie K. Rawlings).

[Middle English *alkamie*, from Old French *alquemie*, from Medieval Latin *alchymia*, from Arabic *al-kīmiyā'*: *al-*, the + *kīmiyā'*, chemistry (from Late Greek *khēmeia*, probably alteration of *khumeia*, from Greek *khein*, *khu-*, to pour; see **gheu-** in the [Appendix of Indo-European roots](#) (influenced, owing to the reputation of Egyptian alchemists, by Greek *Khēmiā*, Egypt, from Egyptian *kmt*, Egypt, from feminine of *km*, black, in reference to the black soil of the Nile valley)).]

al·chem i·cal (ăĭ-kēm ĭ-kəl), **al·chem ic** *adj.*

al·chem i·cal·ly *adv.*

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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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