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kith and kin  (kɪθ ən kɪn)

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pl.n.

1. One's acquaintances and relatives.
2. One's relatives.

[Middle English *kith*, from Old English *cȳth*, kinsfolk, neighbors; see **gnō-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

Word History: *Kith* is obsolete except in the alliterative expression *kith and kin*, a phrase that dates from Middle English times and seems to have already become a cliché by the 1300s. The Middle English noun *kith* meant basically "familiar country, place that one knows" and also "kinsfolk, relations." It comes from the Old English noun *cȳth*, meaning "knowledge," "known, familiar country," and "acquaintances, friends." *Cȳth* in turn comes from the Germanic noun **kunthithō*, a derivative of **kunthaz*, "known." Germanic **kunthaz* was the past participle of a verb **kunnan*, "to know, know how," which became *cunnan* in Old English. The first person singular of this verb, *can*, is alive and well today, as is what was originally the verbal noun and adjective of *cunnan*, namely *cunning*, which first appeared in the 1300s.

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

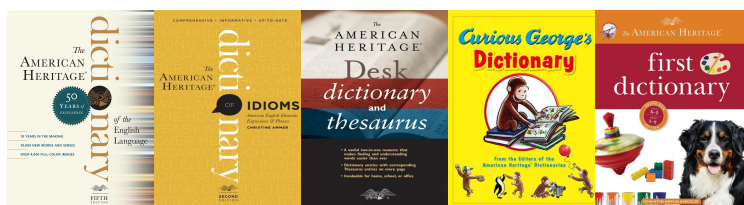
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[Indo-European Roots](#)

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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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