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hook·er¹  (h k əɹ)

Share:

n.

1. A single-masted fishing smack used off the coast of Ireland.
2. An old worn-out or clumsy ship.

[Dutch *hoeker*, from Middle Dutch *hoeckboot* : *hoec*, fishhook; see **keg-** in the Appendix of Indo-European roots + *boot*, boat.]

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hook·er²  (h k əɹ)

Share:

n.

1. One that hooks.
2. *Slang* A prostitute.

Word History: In his *Personal Memoirs* Ulysses S. Grant described Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker as “*a dangerous man ... not subordinate to his superiors.*” Hooker had his faults. He may indeed have been insubordinate; he was undoubtedly an erratic leader. But “Fighting Joe” Hooker is often accused of one thing he certainly did not do: he did not give his name to prostitutes. According to a popular story about the origin of the term *hooker*, the men under Hooker's command during the Civil War were a particularly wild bunch who would spend much of their time in brothels when on leave, and thus prostitutes came to be known as *hookers*. However, this tale of the origin of *hooker* cannot be true. The explanation of this highlights a procedure that etymologists often use when trying to evaluate proposed etymologies that relate the origin of a word to a specific historical event or to the name of a historical person: if the word is attested before the event occurred, or before the person lived, then the word cannot have originated with that event or in that person's name. In fact, the word *hooker* with the sense “prostitute” is recorded before the Civil War. As early as 1845 it is found in North Carolina, as reported in Norman Ellsworth Eliason's *Tarheel Talk: An Historical Study of the English Language in North Carolina to 1860*, published in 1956. It also appears in the second edition of John Russell Bartlett's *Dictionary of Americanisms*, published in 1859, where it is defined as “a strumpet, a sailor's trull.” Etymologically, it is most likely that *hooker* is simply “one who hooks or snares clients.”

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hook·er³  (h k əɹ)

Share:

n.

Slang

A drink of undiluted hard liquor: *a hooker of whiskey.*

[Probably from the hook-like form of the arm taken in raising a drink to the mouth.]

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Hooker, Thomas 1586?-1647.

Share:

English-born American cleric who founded Hartford, Connecticut (1636).

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Hooker, Richard 1554?-1600.

Share:

English writer and theologian. His *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1594) was central to the formation of Anglican theology.

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Hooker  (h k ər), **Joseph** Known as "**Fighting Joe**." 1814-1879.

Share:

American Union army officer who was defeated by Robert E. Lee at Chancellorsville (1863).

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Hook·er  (h k ər), **John Lee** 1917-2001.

Share: [Post](#)

American singer, guitarist, and songwriter whose characteristic style combined elements of boogie-woogie and traditional blues.

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

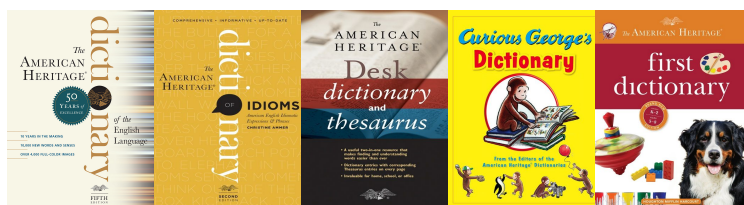
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The Indo-European appendix covers nearly half of the Indo-European roots that have left their mark on English words. A more complete treatment of Indo-European roots and the English words derived from them is available in our [Dictionary of Indo-European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

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