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AMERICAN
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dictionary

of the
English
Language



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u·ni·corn  (y nĭ-kôrn')

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n.

1.

a. A fabled creature symbolic of virginity and usually represented as a horse with a single straight spiral horn projecting from its forehead.

b. Heraldry A representation of this beast, having a horse's body, a stag's legs, a lion's tail, and a straight spiral horn growing from its forehead, especially employed as a supporter for the Royal Arms of Great Britain or of Scotland.

2. Unicorn The constellation Monoceros.

3.

a. Something that is greatly desired but difficult or impossible to find: "*Is antigravity the unicorn of physics? Or do we simply lack the strategy and bait to catch it in an experimental snare?*" (Jerome Groopman).

b. Business A startup company valued at one billion dollars or more.

[Middle English *unicorne*, from Old French, from Late Latin *ūnicornis*, from Latin, having one horn : *ūnus*, one; see **oi-no-** in the Appendix of Indo-European roots + *cornū*, horn; see **ker-**¹ in the Appendix of Indo-European roots.]



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unicorn

The Lady and the Unicorn: "Sight," one in a series of six 15th-century tapestries

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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:

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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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