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AMERICAN  
HERITAGE®

dictionary

of the  
English  
Language

  


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[guide to the dictionary](#)



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**ca·nar·y**  (kə-nâr ē)

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*n. pl. ca·nar·ies*

1. A small finch (*Serinus canaria*) native to the Canary Islands that is greenish to yellow and has long been bred as a cage bird.
2. *Slang*
  - a. A woman singer.
  - b. An informer; a stool pigeon.
3. A sweet white wine from the Canary Islands, similar to Madeira.
4. A light to moderate or vivid yellow.

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[French *canari*, from Spanish *canario*, of the Canary Islands, from (*Islas*) *Canarias*, Canary (Islands), from Late Latin *Canāriæ* (*Insulae*), (islands) of dogs, from Latin *canārius*, pertaining to dogs, canine, from *canis*, dog; see **kwon-** [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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