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lu·cre  (l kər)

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n.
Money or profits.

[Middle English, from Latin *lucrum*; see **lau-** [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#).]

Word History: In the 1520s, William Tyndale made an influential translation of the New Testament from Greek into English. Many of Tyndale's English renderings of Greek phrases were considered so apt that the translators of the King James Version of the Bible reused them eighty years later, thus ensuring their familiarity to speakers of Modern English. Among the familiar phrases that Tyndale apparently coined in his translation are *the powers that be* (Romans 13:1) and *filthy lucre* (Titus 1:7,11). This last expression occurs as part of the translation of Greek phrases like *aiskhrou kerdous kharin* "for the sake (*kharin*) of shameful (*aiskhrou*) gain (*kerdous*).\" When translating these words, Tyndale was probably guided by the Vulgate, the Latin translation of the Old and New Testaments that had been the standard edition of the Bible in Western Europe during the Middle Ages. In the Vulgate, the passage was rendered with the Latin words *turpis lucrī grātiā*, "for the sake (*grātiā*) of shameful (*turpis*) gain (*lucrī*).\" It was only natural that Tyndale, working in the early Reformation, would remember the wording of the familiar Latin translation. As a result, he rendered the phrase as *because of filthy lucre*, using the English word *lucre*, which comes from Latin *lucrum*, "material gain, profit,"—the same Latin word that appears in the form *lucrī* in the Vulgate. But we cannot attribute the modern pejorative connotations of *lucre* wholly to Tyndale's influence. In Latin itself, *lucrum* could be used to mean "avarice.\" When the Latin word was borrowed into Middle English as *lucre*, it was often used in the simple neutral sense "material gain, profit.\" Already in the 1300s, however, *lucre* began to appear in contexts favoring the development of pejorative overtones, such as in Chaucer's phrase from the Prioress's Tale: *foule usure and lucre of vileynye* ("foul usury and lucre of villainy").

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

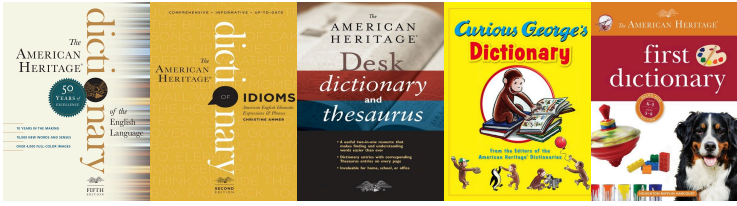
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[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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