

# The Etymology of Protest

written by Meriwether Clarke | January 20, 2017



**Author's note:** The dates next to each definition are the Oxford English Dictionary's first known recording of that particular definition's use (in English). The purpose of this is to showcase how and when different meanings for words developed. I found it surprising that in some cases common modern definitions were not used for hundreds of years after the word's first use.

For each listed word, I have purposefully left out usages and definitions that I found repetitive or irrelevant. As such, this should not be considered an exhaustive or comprehensive list of word use, past meanings, or etymologies. All definitions, dates, and records of publication are directly taken from the OED.

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ELECTION, noun

etymology: Old French *election*

c1270: *Saints Lives* by Saint Edmund: The formal choosing of a person for an office, dignity, or position of any kind; usually by the votes of a constituent body.

1393: *Confessio Amantis* by John Gower: The exercise of deliberate choice or preference; choice between alternatives, esp. in matters of conduct.

1531: *The book name the Gouverneur* by Thomas Elyot: Judicious selection; the faculty of choosing with taste or nice discrimination.

TWITTER, noun

etymology: Of imitative origin: compare Old High German *zwizirôn*

1678, Samuel Butler: A condition of twittering or tremulous excitement (from eager desire, fear, etc.); a state of agitation; a flutter, a tremble.

1721, James Kelly's *Scottish Proverbs*: An entanglement; a complication.

1736, John Lewis: A suppressed laugh, a titter; a fit of laughter.

1842, Robert Browning's *Dramatic Lyrics*: An act or the action of twittering, as a bird; light tremulous chirping.

1854, *Glossary of Northhamptonshire Words and Phrases* by Anne Elizabeth Baker: One who twits; a tale-bearer.

PETITION, noun

etymology: Anglo-Norman and Middle French *peticion*

1400: Robert Mannyng's *Chronicles*: A supplication, entreaty, or prayer.

1414: *Rolls of Parliament*: A written or formal request.

c1437: *Chancery Proceedings*: More generally: a formal written request or supplication, especially one signed by many people, appealing to an individual or group in authority for some favor, right, or mercy.

VOTE, verb

etymology: Latin *vōt*

1533: John Bellenden's *History of Rome*: To vow to do something; to assign by a vow.

1552: *Records of the convention of the royal burghs of Scotland*: To express a choice or preference by ballot or other approved means.

1678: *The Historie and Cronicles of Scotland* by Robert Lindsay: To declare one's opinions.

1676: *Essays on Several Important Subjects in Philosophy and Religion* by Joseph Glanvill: To devote or consign to destruction.

BOYCOTT, verb

etymology: The name of Captain Charles C. Boycott (1832–97), a land agent in Ireland, who was a prominent early recipient of such treatment (with the encouragement of the Irish Land League) in the autumn of 1880.

November 5, 1880, *Glasgow Herald*: Of tenants in Ireland: to isolate and ostracize (a landlord or land agent, or anyone not participating in such action) socially and commercially, by withholding labour, the supply of food, custom, etc., in order to protest at the eviction of tenants, secure a reduction in rents.

December 18, 1880, *Illustrated London News*: To withdraw from commercial or social interaction with (a group, nation, person, etc.) as a protest or punishment; to refuse to handle or buy (goods), or refuse to participate in (an event, meeting, etc.), as a protest.

PROTEST, verb

etymology: Anglo-Norman and Middle French *protester*

1429: *The acts of the parliaments of Scotland*: To put forward a protestation.

1430: *Proceedings & Ordinances Privy Council*: To vow; to promise or undertake solemnly.

1459-60: *Registrum Episcopatus Brechinensis* by Cosmo Innes: To claim, demand, or insist.

1533: *A letter* by Sir Thomas More: To assert publicly, make known; to proclaim, declare.

1870: *The Times (London)*: Of a (large) number of people: to express collective disapproval or dissent publicly, typically by means of an organized demonstration; to engage in a mass protest, usually against a government policy or legal decision.

1909: *The Saturday Evening Post (Philadelphia)*: To cause discomfort in response to prolonged or sudden stress.