

Earth Day on the Mediterranean Sea

A Word Roots Lesson for Earth Day – Terr(a)

On April 22nd, the whole world comes together to celebrate the planet Earth. You may already know that many familiar “earth” words come to us from the Latin base *terr*, which means “land, ground, earth.” But did you know that *terr* often occurs in words that name geographical places? Here’s how the *Mediterranean Sea* got its name.

The ancient Romans lived in Italy, which is in the middle of the *Mediterranean Sea*. The Romans set out to conquer all the lands that touched this huge body of water: France, Spain, Libya, Egypt, Arabia, Greece, and the Middle East. The Romans called the world they conquered the “Circle of Lands” (*orbis terrarum*), and they called this sea “Our Sea” (*Mare Nostrum*). We call it the *Mediterranean Sea* because it lies in the **middle (Medi-)** of all those **lands (terr)** once conquered by the ancient Romans.



See if you can figure out the “earth” connection in these words: *territory*, *terrace*, *terrain*, *terrarium*, *extraterrestrial*, *subterranean*, *terrier*. If you need help, look them up in an online dictionary.

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