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guide to the dictionary

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back·ground (bāk□ground′)

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n.
1. The ground or scenery located behind something.
2.
a. The part of a pictorial representation that appears to be in the distance and that provides relief for the principal objects in the foreground.
b. The general scene or surface against which designs, patterns, or figures are represented or viewed.
3.
a. A position, area, or situation that is not immediately in one's attention or notice: *You can hear traffic moving in the background during the interview.*
b. *Computers* The environment in which programs operate that the user does not engage with directly: *processes that run in the background.*
4. The circumstances and events surrounding or leading up to an event or occurrence.
5.
a. A person's experience, training, and education: *Her background in the arts is impressive.*
b. The cultural or social environment in which a person was brought up or has lived: *a class with students from many different backgrounds.*
6. Subdued music played especially as an accompaniment to dialogue in a dramatic performance.
7.
a. Sound that intrudes on or interferes with an audio recording.
b. Low-level radiation, as from radioactive decay, that exists as part of the natural environment.
Idioms:
on background
For publication but without specific attribution of the source: *The senator would only speak on background with the reporter about the crisis.*
on deep background
For publication without any attribution of the source.

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back□ground′ *v.*

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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

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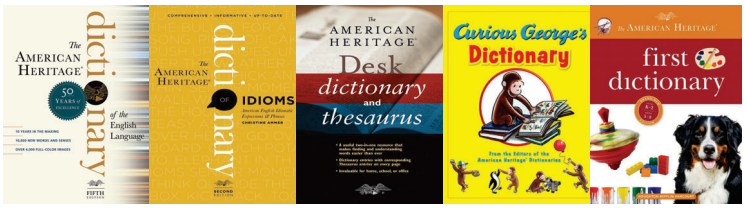

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