

Dictionary Definitions of “Mormo” / “Mormon”

THE SHORTER OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY

ON HISTORICAL PRINCIPLES

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†**Mo·rmo**. 1605. [– Gr. *μορμώ* a hideous she-monster.] A hobgoblin, bugbear –1738.

Mormon (*mɔːmən*). 1837. [f. *Mormon*, the alleged author of ‘The Book of Mormon’.] 1. A member of a religious body, calling itself ‘The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints’, having its headquarters at Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A.; and founded in 1830 at Manchester, New York, by Joseph Smith on the basis of supposed divine revelations contained in ‘The Book of Mormon’.

The best known feature of the sect is the practice of polygamy; but this is not countenanced by the Book of Mormon or the law of the U.S.

Hence **Mo·rmondom**, Mormons collectively, their territory, or their usages. **Mo·rmonism**, the religious doctrines of the Mormons 1834. **Mo·rmonite** *sb.* a M. 1833; *adj.* of or pertaining to the Mormons.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word “Mormo” as “a hobgoblin, bugbear” derived from the Greek “Mormo” meaning “a hideous she-monster.”

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ΛΕΞΙΚΟ ΤΗΣ ΑΡΧΑΙΑΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΓΛΩΣΣΑΣ ΕΡΜΗΝΕΥΤΙΚΟ – ΕΤΥΜΟΛΟΓΙΚΟ



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1995

μορμολυκείον ή μορμολύκειον, τό, φόβητρο ή τ
ρατώδες προσωπείο για να φοβίζουν τα πο
διά. – <μορμολύττομαι.

μορμολύττομαι, (μόνο ενεστ. και παρατ.), φοβ
ζω, “σκιάζω” και “σκιάζομαι”, φοβούμαι.
<Μορμώ.

μορμύρος, ό, είδος ψαριού, η “μουρμούρα”.
πιθ. <μεσογ. λ.

μορμύρω, ροχθώ, βγάζω κάποιο ήχο, “μουρμ
ρίζω” (όπως το νερό στο ποτάμι ή στο ρυάκι
– πιθ. <μύρ-ω (με αναδίπλωση της ρίζας).

Μορμώ, -όος (συνηρ. -οῦς), **ή** (και *Μορμών*,
ῶνος, ή), φοβερό θηλυκό τέρας με το οποίο φο
βιζαν τα μικρά παιδιά. 2. (γενικά) φόβητρο.
πιθ. <ηχοπ. λ.

This *Lexicon of the Ancient Greek Language* shows that an alternative spelling of “Mormo” is “Mormon” and defines the word as, “a frightening female monster which was used to frighten little children.” Note also the similar related words “mormolykeion” meaning “a frightening or monstrous mask for frightening children” and “mormolyttomai” meaning “to frighten, scare and to be scared.”

Liddell-Scott Greek Lexicon

Mormo and **Mormon**, a *hideous she-monster*, used by nurses to frighten children with: generally, a *bugbear*.
II. as an exclamation to frighten children with, *boh!*

In Greek mythology, **Mormo** was a goddess who bit bad children, said to have been a consort of the Greek goddess of fertility, Hecate, who later became associated with Persephone as goddess of the underworld and protector of witches.

The name was also used to signify a female vampire-like creature in stories told to Greek children by their nurses to keep them from misbehaving.

Is this a coincidence?

mó = devil

mun = gate, door, entrance, opening

In Cantonese Chinese “Mormon” sounds like “devil’s gate.”

Joseph Smith’s Explanation of the Origin of the word “Mormon”

In 1843, Joseph Smith wrote in *Times and Seasons*, Nauvoo, Illinois, vol. 4 (1843), p. 194, a Mormon publication:

“Through the medium of your paper, I wish to correct an error among men... The error I speak of, is the definition of the word "MORMON." It has been stated that this word was derived from the Greek morme. This is not the case. There was no Greek or Latin upon the plates from which I, through the grace of God, translated the Book of Mormon. Let the language of that book speak for itself. On the 523d page, of the fourth edition, it reads: "And now behold we have written this record according to our knowledge in the characters which are called among us the Reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech; and if our plates had been sufficiently large, we should have written in Hebrew, but the Hebrew hath been altered by us, also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold ye would have had no imperfection in our record, but the Lord knoweth the things which we have written, and also, that none other people knoweth our language; therefore he hath prepared means for the interpretation thereof." Here then the subject is put to silence, for "none other people knoweth our language," therefore the Lord, and not man, had to interpret, after the people were all dead... I may safely say that the word Mormon stands independent of the learning and wisdom of this generation... Before I give a definition, however, to the word, let me say that the Bible in its widest sense, means good; for the Savior says according to the gospel of John, "I am the good shepherd;" and it will not be beyond the common use of the terms, to say that good is among the most important in use, and though known by various names in different languages, still its meaning is the same, and is ever in opposition to bad. We say from the Saxon, good; the Dane, god; the Goth, goda; the German gut; the Dutch, goed; the Latin, bonus; the Greek, kalos; the Hebrew, tob; and the Egyptian, **mon**. Hence, with the addition of **more**, or the contraction, **mor**, we have the word **MORMON**; which means, literally, more good. Yours, Joseph Smith.”

Joseph Smith did not explain how or why an English word “more” came to be combined with an “Egyptian” word “mon”. We leave it to the reader to decide whether Smith’s etymology of “mormon” is more credible than the dictionary definitions shown above.