Where do words come from?

You can often find the origin (or etymology) of a word at the end of a dictionary entry. This can help you understand the word’s meaning and shows how English has changed over time. You can see how English has borrowed words from other languages.

E.g. alligator is from Spanish, bungalow is from Hindi, and origami is from Japanese.

alligator NOUN alligators
a large reptile of the crocodile family. [from Spanish el lagarto = the lizard]

1. Match these words with the language that they come from:

- tornado
- torso
- topic
- tomahawk
- toad
- totter
- tortoise
- torch

2. Some words come from the names of real people or characters in stories. Look up the words below in the Oxford School Dictionary to see where they come from.

Can you find them all in this word search?

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M I L G H B S E Z F E O N W J
A Q G E A J O M N D R W X E A
N S U V O R R A X I P G U L K
T V A H C T G Z B I H Y S L M
A Y L N E I A A B S E J K I Z
L B B I D M Q R N W R E H N P
I O C R D W U U D T C V L G C
Z Y A O S S I L H O U E T T E
E C Y A Z M X C R I L A H O D
F O L J D D O E H M E I N N G
B T K C Y A T R J A S Z S O
A T S U W L I Q T H N A Z E W
M A V E R I C K U Y B V P I C
S D E G A R N M T R I L B Y R
L U P J K O H Z T A W E O D I
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Many English words are borrowed from other languages. Use the clues below to complete the crossword with some borrowed words. Look up words beginning with **K** in your *Oxford School Dictionary* to help you.

**ACROSS**
1. a Chinese method of self-defence, rather like karate (Chinese)
2. a traditional African village of huts (Dutch)
3. a school or class for very young children (German)
4. keeping to Jewish laws about the preparation of food (Hebrew)
5. a Japanese method of self-defence in which the hands and feet are used as weapons (Japanese)
6. a New Zealand bird that cannot fly (Maori)

**DOWN**
1. a citadel in a Russian city (Russian)
2. the sacred book of Islam (Arabic)
3. a small canoe with a covering that fits round the canoeist’s waist (Inuit)
4. a form of entertainment in which people sing well known songs against a pre-recorded backing (Japanese)
5. an Australian animal that looks like a small bear (Australian Aboriginal)
6. a dull yellowish-brown colour, used for military uniforms (Urdu)