Google's Etymology Features: Homework Assignment

When you are trying to learn a new word, one of the coolest tools available to you is Google. If you search for a word plus the term "etymology" (the study of word history and origins), you will see a chart (it looks sort of like a sideways tree) that shows how we got the word in English.

Step 1:

Google two words plus "etymology." (Google has maps for many, but not all words. If you don't get an etymology chart when you search, try another word.) Copy the chart that you find into the space below, then write a sentence about why the origins of your words are interesting. (If you think the origins of your word are boring, keep trying new words until you find one that you like.)

Here is an example of one that I looked up:

I think that this is interesting because the original meaning of the word *robota* in Czech probably means that robots were designed to be sort of like slaves for human beings and do the work that we don't want to do.

Word #1: _____

Draw the chart:

What is interesting about this word's origins:

Word #2: _____

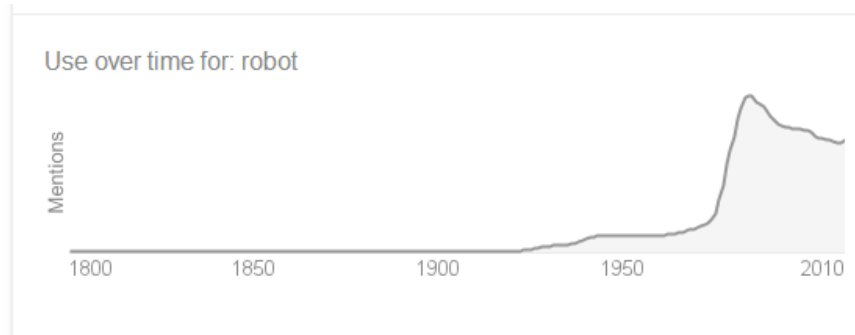**Draw the chart:**

What is interesting about this word's origins:

Step 2:

The other cool thing that the Google etymology feature can do is show you how frequently the word has been used over the past 200 years. (Google has scanned in millions of documents of all sorts, and it searches them for your word.) Click the light gray arrow underneath the word origin chart to see this feature.
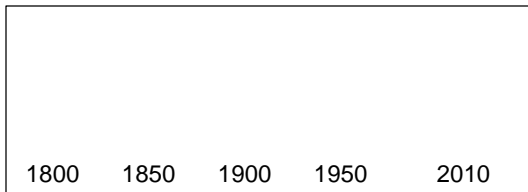
Here is the graph for usage of the word "robot."

Use over time for: robot

Mentions

1800   1850   1900   1950   2010

Pattern: The word "robot" is not used at all until about 1930, when it slowly increases. It increases rapidly starting in about 1970, spikes at around 1985, and then slowly decreases until today.

Inference: I think the use of the word "robot" increased so dramatically in the second half of the 20th century because this is when the general public first really became aware of computers, and people were excited and scared by their potential. As we became used to this technology, robots became less interesting to us and people did not talk about them as much.

For this next portion of the assignment, I want you to look at the **pattern**[1] that appears in the graph and make an **inference**[2] about why that pattern exists.
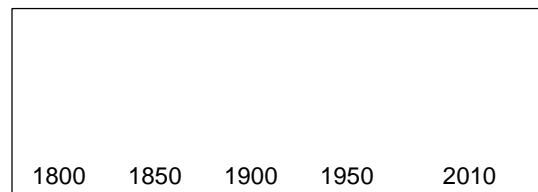
Word #1: _____	**Word #2:** _____
Draw the graph:	**Draw the graph:**

1800   1850   1900   1950   2010   1800   1850   1900   1950   2010

Describe the pattern: **Describe the pattern:**

Make an inference about the pattern: **Make an inference about the pattern:**

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[1] A **pattern** is, according to Google's dictionary, "an arrangement or sequence regularly found in comparable objects or events." Basically, you are looking for the shape of the line, which indicates how frequently the word was used at different times.

[2] An **inference** is "a conclusion reached on the basis of evidence and reasoning." I sometimes think of inferences as educated guesses.