

# Superstitions

## Pre-Reading

### A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Are you a superstitious person?
2. Name a common superstition from your country or culture.
3. How are superstitions passed on?

### B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| ___ 1. nervous       | a) lasts forever, does not end                              |
| ___ 2. superstitious | b) worried about what might happen                          |
| ___ 3. ritual        | c) a place to gamble for money                              |
| ___ 4. timeless      | d) a change in direction, the opposite                      |
| ___ 5. jinx          | e) an action that is repeated due to custom or belief       |
| ___ 6. reversal      | f) to cause bad luck to happen                              |
| ___ 7. casino        | g) well known for   |
| ___ 8. lucky streak  | h) to respond to an event or situation                      |
| ___ 9. notorious     | i) good fortune that happens over and over in a short time  |
| ___ 10. react        | j) believing that certain things can cause good or bad luck |



## Reading

### SUPERSTITIONS

*Would you get married on Friday the 13th?*

1. Do you avoid walking under ladders? Do black cats make you **nervous**? Some people are very **superstitious**. They carry a lucky charm such as a rabbit's foot everywhere they go. Why is a rabbit lucky? Because it's born with its eyes open, of course!
2. Where do superstitions come from? Long ago, people didn't have the scientific knowledge we do today. To reduce their fear about unexplainable events, people came up with **rituals**. They passed their beliefs down from generation to generation. Some superstitions are **timeless**. Floors in buildings still go from the 12th to the 14th floor, even though nobody can agree why the number 13 is unlucky!
3. Superstitious people think they can turn bad luck away. They "knock on wood" (or, in Britain, "touch wood") to avoid **jinxing** themselves. For example, if you say "I've never broken a limb" you should immediately search for a table to knock on to avoid a **reversal** of luck. You may break your leg tomorrow if you don't!
4. Many superstitions are related to money. For example, if you give money away on Mondays, you'll give money away all week long. If you leave your purse on the floor, you'll go broke. Gamblers are **notoriously** superstitious. If you're in a **casino**, never get up to use the washroom. Your **lucky streak** will go down the toilet!
5. Superstitions differ from culture to culture. A superstitious African mother won't cut her baby's hair before her child's first birthday! In Mexico, a bride must not wear pearls on her wedding day. Pearls symbolize tears and an unhappy marriage.
6. Are you superstitious? How would you **react** if someone opened an umbrella in your living room?

## Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs and write the answers in your notebook.

1. Why is a rabbit a symbol of luck?
2. Where did superstitions originate?
3. Why does the reading mention the 13th floor of a building?
4. What superstition do some people have about Mondays?
5. What must a Mexican bride NOT do on her “big day”?

## Vocabulary Review

### A. Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentences with words from the vocabulary on page 1.

1. Superstitious people feel \_\_\_\_\_ when a black cat is near.
2. Knock on wood to avoid \_\_\_\_\_ yourself.
3. If you're having a lucky \_\_\_\_\_ at the \_\_\_\_\_, don't get up to use the washroom!
4. Mexican brides are \_\_\_\_\_ superstitious.  
They perform many \_\_\_\_\_ on their wedding day.

### B. Result Clauses

Create a result clause to go with the “if” clause.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. If you step on a crack,<br><u>you will break your mother's back.</u> | 4. If you leave your purse on the floor,<br>_____    |
| 2. If you wear pearls on your wedding day,<br>_____                     | 5. If you carry a rabbit's foot everywhere,<br>_____ |
| 3. If you walk under a ladder,<br>_____                                 |  |

# Vocabulary Review cont.

## C. More Superstitions

Write some more examples of superstitions from your own culture.  
Share them with your classmates.

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# Discussion

1. Where do you think the superstition about cutting an African baby's hair came from?
2. When can superstitions be dangerous?
3. What superstition will never die?
4. Which countries or cultures are the most superstitious?

## Listening

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

### **SUPERSTITIONS**

*Would you get married on Friday the 13th?*

1. Do you avoid walking under ladders? Do black cats make you nervous? Some people are very superstitious. They carry a lucky \_\_\_\_\_ such as a rabbit's foot everywhere they go. Why is a rabbit lucky? Because it's born with its eyes open, of course!
2. Where do superstitions come from? Long ago, people didn't have the scientific knowledge we do today. To reduce their fear about unexplainable events, people \_\_\_\_\_ rituals. They passed their beliefs down from generation to generation. Some superstitions are timeless. Floors in buildings still go from the 12th to the 14th floor, even though nobody can agree why the number 13 is unlucky!
3. Superstitious people think they can turn bad luck away. They "knock on wood" (or, in Britain, "touch wood") to avoid jinxing themselves. For example, if you say "I've never broken a limb" you should immediately search for a \_\_\_\_\_ to knock on to avoid a reversal of luck. You may break your leg tomorrow if you don't!
4. Many superstitions are \_\_\_\_\_ to money. For example, if you give money away on Mondays, you'll give money away all week long. If you leave your purse on the floor, you'll go broke. Gamblers are notoriously superstitious. If you're in a casino, never get up to use the washroom. Your lucky streak will go down the toilet!
5. Superstitions \_\_\_\_\_ from culture to culture. A superstitious African mother won't cut her baby's hair before her child's first birthday! In Mexico, a bride must not wear pearls on her wedding day. Pearls symbolize tears and an unhappy marriage.
6. Are you superstitious? How would you \_\_\_\_\_ if someone opened an umbrella in your living room?

## Answer Key

### LESSON DESCRIPTION:

Students read about various superstitions and share superstitions from their own cultures. The lesson includes vocabulary review activities and discussion questions.

### TEACHING TIPS:

See *Discussion Starters Teaching Guide* (<https://esllibrary.com/courses/72/lessons/>) for a variety of ways to use the reading.

**LEVEL:** Int

**TIME:** 1.5–2 hours

**TAGS:** discussion, conditionals, superstitions, Friday the 13th

### Pre-Reading

#### A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Have students work in small groups or as a class.

#### B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- |      |      |      |      |       |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. b | 3. e | 5. f | 7. c | 9. g  |
| 2. j | 4. a | 6. d | 8. i | 10. h |

### Reading (and/or Listening)

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. You can also play the listening as your students read along. A gap-fill version of the reading is available on page 5. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with.

### Comprehension

1. A rabbit is a symbol of luck because it's born with its eyes open.
2. Superstitions originated from having a lack of scientific knowledge. People wanted to protect themselves from the unknown.
3. The reading mentions the 13th floor of a building because this is an unlucky number, and many buildings skip from 12–14.
4. Some people think that if you give money away on Mondays you'll give money away all week long.
5. A Mexican bride must not wear pearls on her "big day" because these symbolize tears, which means she'll have an unhappy marriage.

### Vocabulary Review

#### A. COMPLETE THE SENTENCES

- |            |                         |
|------------|-------------------------|
| 1. nervous | 3. streak, casino       |
| 2. jinxing | 4. notoriously, rituals |

#### B. RESULT CLAUSES

Answers will vary.

1. If you step on a crack, you will break your mother's back.
2. If you wear pearls on your wedding day, you will have an unhappy marriage.
3. If you walk under a ladder, you will have bad luck for the rest of the day.
4. If you leave your purse on the floor, you will lose all of your money.
5. If you carry a rabbit's foot everywhere, you will be lucky.

#### C. MORE SUPERSTITIONS

Answers will vary.

### Discussion

Answers will vary.

### Listening

- |                 |            |           |
|-----------------|------------|-----------|
| 1. charm        | 3. table   | 5. differ |
| 2. came up with | 4. related | 6. react  |