

Superstitions

WORKSHEET A

Exercise 1

Try this quiz on British superstitions.

1. To bring good luck, what might some British people say immediately after mentioning something that they hope will (or won't) happen in the future? (e.g. 'I think I'll probably pass my exam next week, _____'.)
 - a) 'Touch ground' (and then touch the floor or, if they are outside, the ground)
 - b) 'Touch wood' (and then touch something nearby that is made of wood)
 - c) 'Touch beast' (and then touch an animal, such as a dog or cat, if there is one nearby)

2. Which of these animals is supposed to bring bad luck if you see one of them, but good luck if you see two of them together?
 - a) A black and white cow
 - b) A black and white cat
 - c) A magpie (a wild bird that is black and white)

3. Which of these objects is supposed to bring good luck if you attach it to the outside of your house above the front door?
 - a) A shoe belonging to one of the builders who built the house
 - b) A horseshoe (but only if the curved part is at the bottom, in the shape of a 'U')
 - c) A shoe belonging to a child living in the house (but only if it is the left shoe)

4. What is the superstition associated with the thirteenth day of a month falling on a Friday?
 - a) The day is unlucky, so there is a high chance of bad things happening
 - b) People born on Friday 13th have special powers, such as an ability to see into the future
 - c) The day is lucky, so there is a high chance of good things happening

5. Which of these parts of a dead animal is supposed to bring good luck if you carry it with you?
 - a) The skin of a snake
 - b) The tail of a mouse
 - c) The foot of a rabbit

6. Which of these is supposed to bring bad luck?
 - a) Walking under a ladder (e.g. if you are walking along a pavement next to a building and there is a long ladder leaning against the side of the building)
 - b) Talking to your mother-in-law on a Saturday
 - c) Having a red rose grow in your garden

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WORKSHEET B

- Rob:** How much did you get your flight to Milan for?
- Danny:** Two hundred and twenty quid.
- Rob:** Was that the cheapest they had?
- Danny:** No. It would have been one hundred and fifty to leave on Friday morning, then I realised it was Friday 13th, so I decided I'd go on the Sunday instead.
- Rob:** You paid an extra seventy quid because you didn't want to fly on Friday 13th?
- Danny:** Look, I'm not superstitious – it's just, well, you know ... just in case.
- Rob:** You're hilarious! Not superstitious, you say! Will you take your lucky rabbit's foot with you on the plane? What about a horseshoe? I'm not sure you'd get that through the metal detector.
- Danny:** Very funny. Look, of course I know it's not rational-
- Rob:** You can say that again! What will you do if you see a magpie on the way to the airport? Turn back and go by train instead? Honestly, I've never heard anything like it.
- Danny:** Well, I have. What about you and your red socks?
- Rob:** Oh, that's different.
- Danny:** How?
- Rob:** Arsenal have only ever lost two matches when I've been wearing them.
- Danny:** So they don't *always* work, then?
- Rob:** No, not quite. But the times I've forgotten to wear them, which isn't often, Arsenal have never won. That's the difference – my behaviour is based on evidence, yours isn't.
- Danny:** I see. And how do your socks affect the Arsenal players' performance? Don't tell me – they look at the stands in the middle of the game, pick you out in the middle of 60,000 people, spot that you're not wearing red socks, and start getting freaked out.
- Rob:** I don't know how it works, mate. It's one of the great mysteries of the universe.

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WORKSHEET C

Exercise 2

Decide whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F), or if the text doesn't say (D).

1. Danny has decided not to fly to Madrid at all.
2. Danny denies that he is superstitious.
3. Rob says Arsenal have never lost when he's worn his red socks.
4. There have been three occasions on which Rob has forgotten to wear his red socks to Arsenal games.
5. Danny will be flying to Madrid on a Sunday morning.
6. Danny's flight on Friday 13th would have been in the morning.
7. Rob finds Danny's behaviour amusing.
8. Rob travels by plane less often than Danny.

Exercise 3

Answer the questions about the text on Worksheet A.

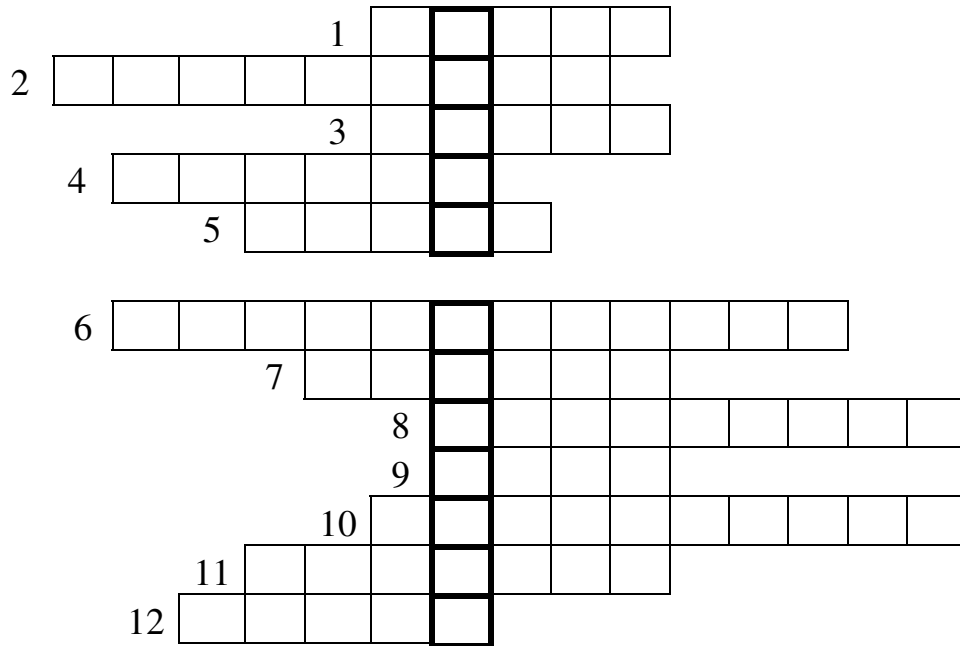
1. How much extra money did Danny have to pay to avoid flying on Friday 13th?
2. Rob and Danny agree on one point regarding Danny's superstition – what is it?
3. What problem does Rob suggest Danny would have if he wanted to take a horseshoe with him on the plane?
4. In what way does Rob think his own superstitious behaviour is different from Danny's?
5. The text mentions three other superstitions (two involving things that bring good luck, and one that brings bad luck) – what are they?
6. There are two examples of slang words or expressions in the text – what are they?
7. Would you say that Rob and Danny respect each other's superstitions? Justify your answer.
8. What do you think is the relationship between Rob and Danny, and why?

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WORKSHEET D

Exercise 4

Complete the crossword below. If all the words are correct, reading from top to bottom will be the first words some British people still say after they wake up on the first day of every month. The traditional belief is that these words bring good luck.



1. Rob says Arsenal have only lost _____ when he's been wearing his lucky red socks.
2. Rob suggests to Danny that it wouldn't be a good idea to go to the airport with a _____.
3. Danny is going to travel to _____.
4. Danny doesn't believe Rob's socks can _____ how well Arsenal play.
5. Danny would have _____ 70 pounds if he had chosen to fly on Friday 13th.
6. Rob says there is evidence that Arsenal's _____ get worse when he doesn't wear his red socks.
7. Danny imagines Rob sitting in one of the _____ at the Arsenal stadium.
8. Rob thinks his _____ is more rational than Danny's.
9. Rob asks if Danny would turn _____ on his way to the airport if he suddenly saw a magpie.
10. Rob seems to think Danny's decision not to fly on Friday 13th is _____.
11. Rob says the connection between his choice of socks and Arsenal's results is a _____.
12. Rob hasn't often forgotten to wear his red socks when watching Arsenal _____.