

## e-lesson

Week starting: July 26, 2010

### 1. Superstitions

This week's lesson is based on a conversation about superstitions, and also includes a brief quiz about superstitions in the USA.

#### Level

Intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level B1 and above)

#### How to use the lesson

1. Ask your students how they would define the word "superstition." Then ask for examples of popular superstitions in your students' country, and ask if your students themselves are superstitious in any way. Encourage any students who have habits based on superstition to describe them to the rest of the class. Do they really believe those habits "work" – for example, by bringing good luck – or do they have some other reason for maintaining them?
2. Divide the students into pairs, hand out Worksheet A, and ask them to work together to come up with answers to the six questions in the quiz. The students might have to guess in some cases. Note that some of the vocabulary will reappear in the main text.
3. Check answers in open class. At this point, you might also want to make clear that the superstitions mentioned in the quiz are not necessarily exclusive to the USA (those regarding Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> and a rabbit's foot, for example, are quite widespread), and also that American people in general are not particularly superstitious: the vast majority would be familiar with the superstitions in the quiz, but unlikely to take them very seriously.
4. Keeping the students in their pairs, hand out Worksheet B and give them five to ten minutes to read through the dialogue, encouraging them to look up new vocabulary. Tell them they are going to answer a series of questions on the text, but that they shouldn't write anything down at this stage. (Note: The Tigers are a major-league baseball team based in Detroit, Michigan, USA.)
5. Divide the students into pairs and hand out Worksheet C. Ask the students to work together to complete Exercises 2 and 3, in which they have to answer two different kinds of comprehension questions.
6. Check answers in open class. You could also ask the students if, like Rob, they have any superstitions involving their clothing.
7. Hand out Worksheet D and ask the students to work together to complete the crossword.
8. Check answers in open class.

**Answers:**

**Exercise 1**

1. b 2. c 3. b 4. a 5. c 6. a

**Exercise 2**

1. F 2. T 3. F 4. D 5. D 6. T 7. T 8. D

**Exercise 3**

1. Seventy dollars.
2. They agree that Danny's decision not to fly on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> was not rational.
3. He might not be able to get it through the metal detector.
4. He says it is based on evidence (i.e. that the Tigers have had better results when he's been wearing his red socks), while presumably there is no evidence that traveling by plane on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> is more dangerous than on any other day.
5. Lucky: being in possession of a rabbit's foot, and a horseshoe. Unlucky: having a black cat cross your path.
6. The three pieces of slang are "bucks," meaning dollars; "dude," meaning man; and "freaked out," meaning so overwhelmed with emotion that you cannot control yourself.
7. Rob and Danny seem to think each other's superstitions are ridiculous. As well as saying that he finds Danny's fear of flying on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> "hilarious," it should be clear that Rob's questions to Danny about the rabbit's foot, the horseshoe, and the black cat are sarcastic rather than serious. Danny's speculation about the way Rob's choice of socks affects the Tigers players' performance is equally sarcastic.
8. It appears that Rob and Danny are friends, mainly because their mutual sarcasm (see 7, above) seems to be taken in good spirit, and also because Danny knows about Rob's socks superstition.

**Exercise 4**

1. behavior 2. horseshoe 3. red 4. affect 5. back 6. stands 7. ridiculous 8. evidence 9. games

If the sentences have been completed correctly, *break a leg* will read from top to bottom.

**2. Related Websites**

Send your students to these websites, or just take a look yourself.

<http://books.google.co.uk/101+american+superstitions>

A "preview" of the book *101 American Superstitions* by Harry Collis (published by McGraw-Hill Contemporary, 1997) showing thirteen illustrated US superstitions. Accessible to intermediate level.

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/33792757/>

An MSNBC article (2009) on superstitions from various countries around the world. Challenging for intermediate level.

<http://www.familyhistoryquickstart.com/world-superstitions/>

More international superstitions, from a family history website. Challenging for intermediate level.