

# Good Luck to You!



Superstitions are common in every country and often they are the same in different cultures. They are sometimes called 'old wives **tales**' because they are traditional and pass from generation to generation. Some superstitions are irrational, such as if you **spill salt** you must **throw** some over your left **shoulder** into the face of the devil or if you see an ambulance, you must hold your nose until you see a brown or black dog. Other superstitions are historical, like the unlucky number 13 or Fridays. Judas was the 13th disciple and Eve tempted Adam on a Friday. On Friday 13th 1306, King Philip of France tortured the Knights Templar. As a consequence, the number 13 is rarely used for hotel rooms or street numbers or on aeroplanes and the date Friday 13th is considered extremely unlucky.

13



- tales** = racconti
- spill salt** = rovesci il sale
- throw** = lanciare
- shoulder** = spalla
- match** = fiammifero
- ladder** = scala
- put up** = aprire
- lucky charm** = portafortuna
- four-leaf clover** = quadrifoglio
- acorn** = ghianda

glossary

## Practical superstitions

Some superstitions are simply practical.

- 1 Don't light three cigarettes with the same **match**.
- 2 Don't walk under a **ladder**.
- 3 Don't **put up** an umbrella in the house.



## Lucky Charms

Some people carry a **lucky charm** in their pocket on an important day. Some examples of traditional Western charms are a **four-leaf clover**, a rabbit's foot, a horseshoe, a black cat and an **acorn**. In Eastern cultures an elephant or tiger brings good luck and the form of a hand (the hand of Fatima) or eye (the evil eye) protects a person from evil spirits. On a visit to India in 2008, US Senator Barack Obama showed a group of supporters his lucky charms. One of them was the figure of a monkey king,

Hanuman, which is a popular Hindu god, who brings great luck. The supporters were very happy. Soon after that, Obama became President of the United States!



### 1 Read the information on superstitions and mark true (T) or false (F).

- 1 Superstitions are different in every country.
- 2 Old wives tales are traditional stories.
- 3 Friday 13th is considered to be very lucky.
- 4 A rabbit's foot is used as a lucky charm in the West.
- 5 The tiger is a symbol of good luck in Eastern cultures.
- 6 Barack Obama doesn't believe in lucky charms.

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### 2 Look at the practical superstitions with a partner and answer these questions.

- 1 Are you superstitious? What are you superstitious about?
- 2 Do you have a lucky charm? What is it?
- 3 Are you lucky? Do you ever win competitions?
- 4 What is your lucky number?





farm = fattoria  
 cockerel = gallo  
 wailing noise = lamento  
 banshee = spirito di donna  
 che preannuncia la morte  
 Creepy! = Da brivido!

glossary

3, Oak Cottages  
 Ripon  
 North Yorkshire  
 RU6 7QE

Dear Grandma,  
 I hope you are well. We came back from Ireland yesterday. It was a great holiday, especially because we were very lucky with the weather; it was sunny all week! We stayed in a Bed and Breakfast on a **farm** near the town of Blarney. I didn't like waking up because of the **cockerel** crowing every morning but I enjoyed visiting the Blarney Stone. I kissed it because superstition says that when you kiss the stone, you become confident and can talk to anyone. You know how shy I am, let's hope it works!  
 One night I was really scared because it was windy and I heard a **wailing noise** outside. I looked out of the window and I saw a woman wearing white with long grey hair. The next morning, as soon as he heard the story, the farmer said it was a **banshee** because old Mrs Ahern at the next farm died that night. He said that Irish tradition says a banshee appears when someone is going to die. **Creepy!**  
 Can you believe it, Grandma, I actually saw a ghost?!

See you soon,  
 Lots of love,

Jim



**3** Listen to Jim reading his letter before he sends it to his grandma. Listen again then complete the sentences.



- 1 We were ..... because the weather was good all week.
- 2 I ..... because of the noise from the ..... every morning.

- 3 I ..... the Blarney Stone.
- 4 I ..... it because superstition says that when you kiss the stone, you become ..... and can talk to anyone.
- 5 One night I heard a ..... outside.
- 6 The farmer said it was a .....
- 7 I can't believe that I saw a ..... !