



Are You Superstitious?

A **superstition** (soo-per-STISH-un) is an age-old belief that something good or bad might happen if we say or do a certain thing.

Have you ever heard kids say, “Step on a crack, break your mother’s back”? This is an example of a superstition.

Superstitions go back to the time when people couldn’t explain some of the things around them. Today, most of us don’t take superstitions seriously, but it’s fun to find out how some of them started — especially since Halloween is a very superstitious time of year.

Unlucky 13

Some people think 13 is an unlucky number. In fact, many large buildings skip naming the 13th floor; the numbers in the elevator go from 12 to 14.

This belief might have started with the Last Supper in the Bible, where there were 13 people at the table.

Knock on wood

Some people will knock on wood for good luck. Why?

Ancient people couldn’t understand why some trees stayed green all year and others lost their leaves. They thought some trees must have supernatural powers. For that reason, they would knock on trees to get their attention.

Cross your fingers

Do you ever cross your fingers for good luck? Do you think it works?

Mini Fact:

Druids wore costumes so that ghosts wouldn’t recognize them when they returned to Earth.

This custom began as a sort of shortcut for people making the sign of the Christian cross. People believed the cross protected them from evil or bad luck.

Cross your heart

Crossing your heart shows that you really mean something. Ancient people believed that the heart was the center of all knowledge.

Don’t spill salt

At one time, salt was very valuable. People used it for trading, just like money. To spill any was believed to bring bad luck.

People also thought that evil spirits lived in the left side of the body. If a person spilled salt, he or she would try to please the evil spirits by throwing salt in their direction. You may still see people today throw a pinch of salt over their left shoulder after a spill.

A broken mirror

In ancient times, people believed that their reflection in the water or in glass was really their “other self.” They thought that if you disturbed this image, you would bring bad luck.

Ancient Romans believed that life is renewed every seven years. This is where we got the idea of seven years of bad luck if we break a mirror, disturbing our reflection.



How about Halloween?

The Halloween custom goes back 2,000 years. It is probably based on a ceremony that was held around the first of November. The ceremony was led by **druids**, who were Celtic priests in Great Britain, Ireland and parts of France.

During the event, they honored the souls of the dead who returned to Earth that night. As a part of the celebration, people burned bonfires and wore costumes.

Witches

It used to be thought that witches were people who worked magic and cast spells on others. They were disliked because they were thought to be friendly with the devil. Halloween began as a holiday for the people Christians called “witches.”

Bats

Hundreds of years ago, people linked bats with witches because they both came out at night and disappeared during the day. People were also puzzled by the fact that bats could fly at night and not bump into things.

We also think of bats when we think about vampires. “Dracula,” which was written in 1897, features a vampire who can turn into a bat.



Resources

On the Web:

- kids.kiddle.co/Superstition

At the library:

- “Knock on Wood: Poems About Superstitions” by Janet S. Wong



Try ‘n’ Find

Words that remind us of superstitions are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

BAT, BELIEF, BROKEN, COSTUME, CROSS, DRUID, EVIL, FINGERS, HALLOWEEN, HEART, KNOCK, MIRROR, SALT, SEVEN, SPILL, SPIRIT, SUPERSTITION, UNLUCKY, WITCH, WOOD.

Q	G	B	V	L	B	B	R	O	K	E	N	J	D	C
D	N	O	I	T	I	T	S	R	E	P	U	S	O	T
Y	E	V	P	M	I	R	R	O	R	T	P	D	O	R
V	E	W	T	X	P	Y	Q	P	J	I	W	R	W	A
L	W	M	U	N	L	U	C	K	Y	R	A	U	F	E
L	O	I	C	O	S	T	U	M	E	I	T	I	S	H
I	L	I	T	B	N	E	V	E	S	P	E	D	A	G
P	L	H	A	C	N	Z	C	R	O	S	S	P	L	T
S	A	T	O	Q	H	G	F	E	I	L	E	B	T	O
F	H	E	S	R	E	G	N	I	F	K	C	O	N	K



Cook’s Corner

Pumpkin Smoothie

You’ll need:

- 1 (15-ounce) can low-sodium pumpkin, chilled
- 1 (12-ounce) can evaporated low-fat milk, chilled
- 1 1/2 cups orange juice
- 1 small banana (sliced)

- 1/3 cup light brown sugar, packed (or 1/3 cup regular sugar)
- 2 dozen ice cubes (optional)
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon (optional)



What to do:

- Place pumpkin, evaporated milk, orange juice, banana and sugar in blender.
- Cover and blend until smooth.
- If using ice, pour mixture over ice. If using cinnamon, add that too. Serves 6.

* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

- bunnies (7) _____
- made dinner (6) _____
- one cent (5) _____
- you can ride waves with it (9) _____
- ice cream treat (6) _____
- going on foot (7) _____
- cried out with fear (8) _____

ARD	ED	SUR	COO
SCR	BITS	SUN	KING
PEN	DAE	EAM	RAB
WAL	FBO	KED	NY



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Mini Jokes

Sam: How many witches does it take to change a lightbulb?
Sienna: Only one — but she changes it into a toad!



Eco Note

The infants of one bat species in Latin America have been found to make a babbling sound sort of like those of human babies. While it is known that human babies’ noises are important to their language development, there has been little evidence of the behavior in other species. But researchers from the Museum of Natural History in Berlin found that baby greater sac-winged bats are especially talkative, mouthing 25 different types of syllables.

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For later:

Look in your newspaper for articles about Halloween festivities in your area.

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