

Superstitions

Ideas for Writing

4th
Grade



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SUPERSTITIONS

AROUND THE WORLD

NAME: _____

In many cases around the world, superstitious beliefs influence the way a culture celebrates important holidays. Here are a few examples of how different countries celebrate New Years in light of their superstitions.

Did you know...

In the **PHILIPPINES**, a house should be completely cleaned before New Year's. The house's refrigerator must be fully stocked, and all lights be left on so that no darkness can enter the home. In many homes, all the cupboards, drawers and doors should be left open so that abundance can be welcomed into the home. Fresh fruit such as tangerines and oranges are often left in the doorways to ensure good fortune in the home.



PHILIPPINES



CHINA

In **CHINA**, all sweeping should be done the day before New Year's Day, because otherwise you might sweep all of the good fortune out of your house.

In **SPAIN**, people celebrate New Year's Eve by eating a grape for each second the clock strikes at midnight. The 12 grapes stand for good luck for each month of the upcoming year.



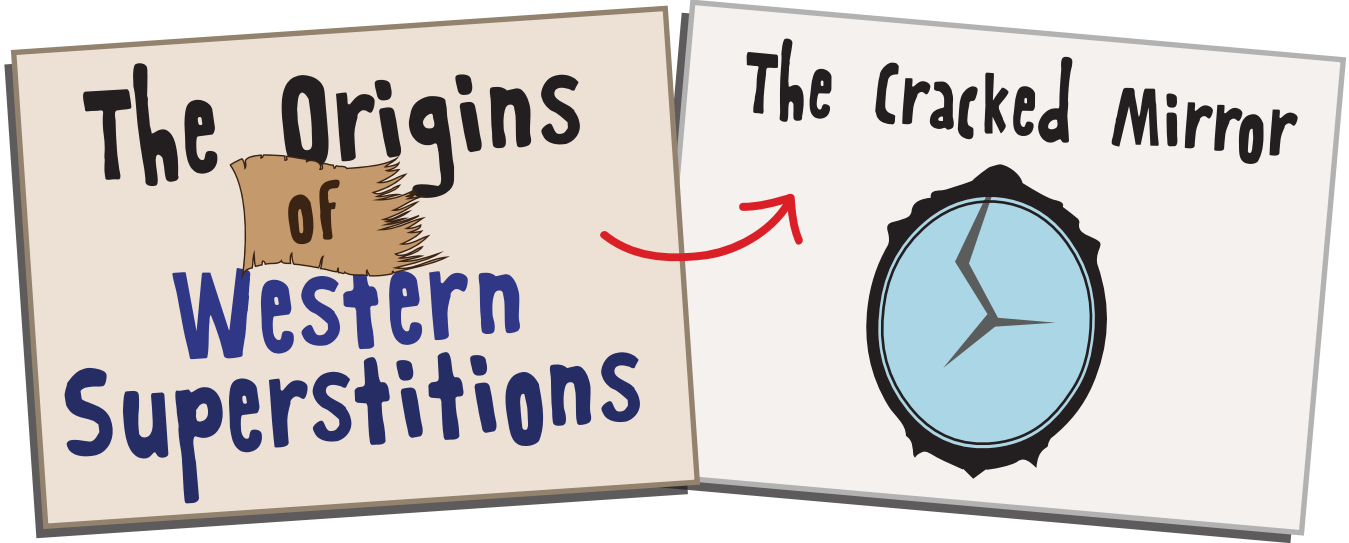
SPAIN



FINLAND

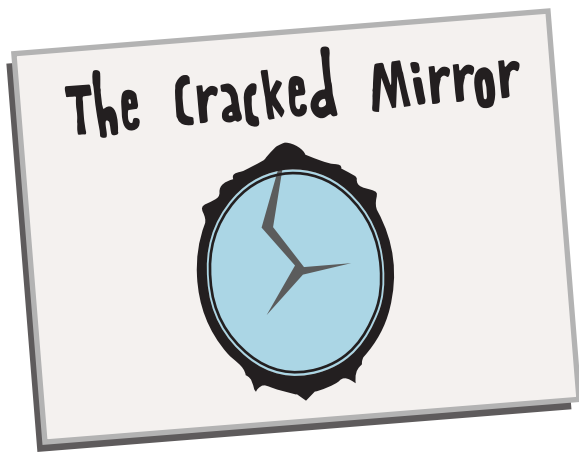
In **FINLAND**, a common New Year's Eve tradition is to "predict the future" by casting molten tin into a container of water. Then people interpret the shape of the metal after hardening. For example, a heart or ring shape means a wedding, a ship foretells a travel, and a pig shape means plenty of food will come in the new year.

Does your family have any special New Year's superstitions or traditions?



How do you think this superstition began? Write a story about why a broken mirror is known to give people bad luck for seven years.

Do you believe in this superstition? Why or why not?



The True Origin of the Cracked Mirror:

The Romans were the first people to create glass mirrors. They also believed that their invention had the potential to steal part of the soul of the person using it. If a person's reflection were distorted (or broken) while using a mirror, then their soul would be corrupted and trapped!

Fortunately, the Romans also believed that a soul could be renewed after seven years' time. Until that point though, the person would still suffer from bad luck, since they lacked a whole, healthy soul to fight off evil.

If a person wanted to shed their bad luck a little sooner, there were a few methods to free a soul, including grinding all the pieces of the mirror into a fine dust, or burying the pieces of the mirror under a tree during a full moon.

Do you think the invention of the mirror was a good thing or a not-so-good thing? Why?

Do you have any superstitions? Do you really believe your superstition, or is it more of a habit or tradition?

The Origins of Western Superstitions



Have you ever knocked on wood? Why did you do it? Did anything happen afterward? Explain why you think people knock on wood and how you think this superstition came to be.

Do you believe in this superstition? Why or why not?

The True Origin of “Knocking on Wood”



This expression comes from Pagans, who believed that all living materials had spiritual properties, including trees. They believed that when trees were cut down, the spirit inside the tree would die, and the trunk would become hollow. People feared that evil spirits, like sprites, could take over the tree and concoct ways to bring pain and suffering to people living in the area.

Fortunately, if someone knocked on the wood, it would drive away the malevolent spirits and prevent any potential misfortunes from occurring.

Why do you think that “knocking on wood” would drive away the evil spirits in the trees?

Can you think of any other ways to ward off the evil spirits of the trees? Explain how below.

The Origins of Western Superstitions

Black Cats



Has a black cat ever crossed your path? Did anything bad happen to you afterward?
Tell your story below.

Do you believe in this superstition? Why or why not?

Black Cats



The True Origins of the Black Cat:

While most Western cultures consider black cats to be bad luck, many areas of the UK actually see it as good luck! In fact, some say that the superstition was started because the Pagan groups of the era considered black cats to be good luck, so in order to spread fear about Paganism, early Christians spread stories of the cats being evil.

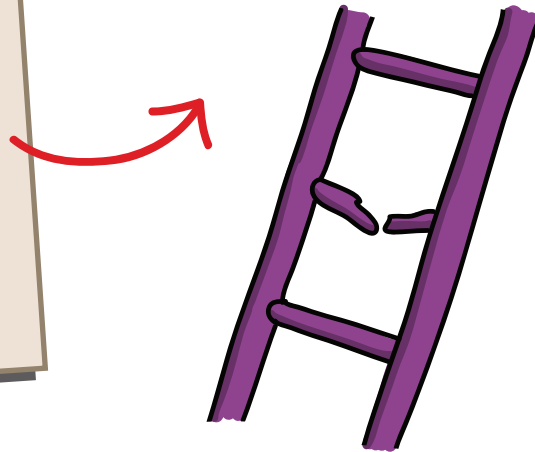
Specifically, these stories often tied black cats to witches, which makes sense because many Pagans were accused of being witches.

The Egyptian goddess named “Bast” was also in the form of a black cat. What other famous black cats can you think of?

Many cultures and ancient religions revere certain animals or fear certain animals. Can you think of any other animals that are the root of a superstition?

The Origins of Western Superstitions

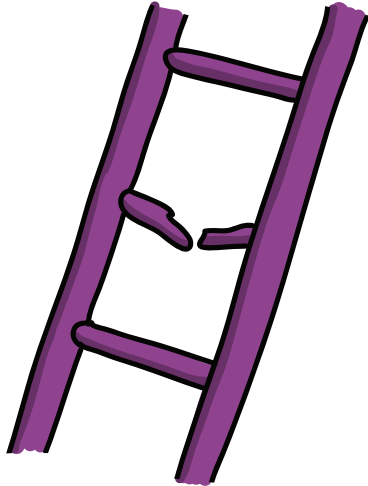
Walking Under a Ladder



Some say that walking under a ladder will bring bad luck! How do you think this superstition began? Write a story telling how or why you think it got started.

Do you believe in this superstition? Why or why not?

Walking Under a Ladder



The Real Origins:

As it turns out, early Christians felt the triangle was a sacred sign that represented the Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. When a ladder was pushed against a building, it would form the shape of a triangle, and thus, by walking under it, you were breaking the triangle.

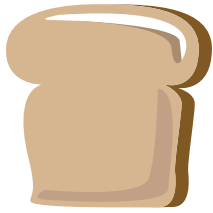
This was such a bad thing to do that early Christians would often label anyone who walked under a ladder to be a witch in league with Satan! Back in those days, that would be even worse than having a bucket of tools fall on your head.

If “breaking a triangle” is bad luck, are there other daily activities you can think of that may bring bad luck in the same way?

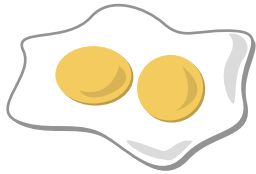
Imagine you lived centuries ago and you just walked under a ladder on accident! How would you counter the bad luck given from walking under a ladder? Would you use an herbal remedy, a counter-curse or a ritual? Be creative!

FOOD VOODOO MATCH-UP

Draw a line to match each food item with the superstition it carries.



Air bubble in your bread



2 yolks in an egg



Cross on your loaf



Black spot on an egg yolk



Garlic



Spilling Salt



Egg with no yolk

Bad omen

Protection
against the devil

Bad luck

Good omen: A marriage
is coming soon

Extremely bad omen

Bad omen:
Someone will die soon

A sign to ward
off evil or the devil

NAME: _____

FOOD VOODOO

All around the world there are different cultures that have superstitions about certain foods.

Do you have any food superstitions? Good or bad? List them below.

	FOOD	MEANING
GOOD	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
BAD	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

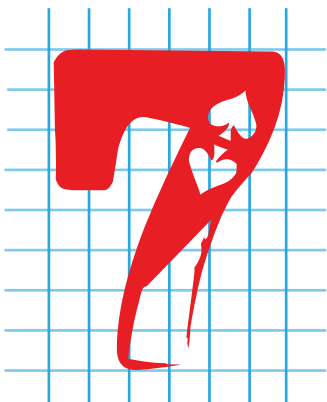
SUPERSTITIONS IN NUMB3R5!

In every culture around the world people hold a set of beliefs that are not based on reality, but rather on luck, prophecy or folklore. Many of these superstitions are about numbers. However, like all superstitions, there is a story to explain why certain numbers are lucky or unlucky.



In western culture, **THE NUMBER 13** is considered a very unlucky number. It's also common to consider any Friday that lands on the 13th of the month to be considered a very unlucky day. Most people believe in the bad juju associated with of the number thirteen without even knowing why! There are actually many different stories that can explain the superstition.

In Christianity, there were 13 people at the Last Supper, including Judas who was rumored to be the last person to sit at the table. In Viking lore, Loki was the 13th god. In the story of Norna-Gest, uninvited guests showed up at an infant's birthday party, bringing the number of guests up to 13, and the last of the guests cursed the child. Ancient Persians also believed that the 12 signs of the Zodiac would each rule the earth for a thousand years, but after the cycle ended in the 13th millennia, the sky and earth would collapse into chaos.



Se v e n is considered a very lucky number in many societies, mostly due to religious origins. For example, the seventh day of the week is the Sabbath (the holy day). There were seven golden candlesticks in Solomon's temple. Furthermore, the number seven was considered the number of completion in the Bible.

Some people believe that the seventh son born in a family would be born with special powers, and likewise the seventh daughter born in a family would be born with healing abilities. Interestingly enough, seven represents luck in virtually every casino in the world! Seven is a winning roll in craps when there is no number chosen. Additionally, spinning a "777" on the machine means you've hit the jackpot.

SUPERSTITIONS IN NUMB3R5!

Do you have a “lucky number”? Why is it lucky to you? Tell a story about a time when that number brought you good luck.

In some buildings, there is no floor #13 or no room #13, because some people consider it such a bad omen. Is this too extreme? Why or why not?

SASQUATCH

Do you believe in Sasquatch or Bigfoot? Some people have reported seeing an ape-looking creature in the woods. Below are some signs you may have been close to seeing Sasquatch.

You may be near Sasquatch if:

1. you're in the woods or a mountain setting.
2. you see HUGE footprints in the ground.
3. the creature you see in the distance isn't a bear.
4. you hear grunting with human characteristics.
5. you smell body odor much worse than your big brother.

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Do you think it's possible for a human-like animal to be wandering the woods unseen?



HAUNTED HOUSES

Have you ever been inside a haunted house? Do you even believe that they could exist? Below are some signs you may have been inside one before. Use the empty spaces to create your own.

Top ten signs you have been in a haunted house:

10. The door will usually open itself.
9. Lights might turn on and off by themselves.
8. You will often hear footsteps when you are alone.
7. A cold breeze is common, even if all your windows are closed.
6. If you see a ghost, you can pretty much accept the fact that your house is haunted.
5. _____

4. _____

3. _____

2. _____

1. _____



CREATIVE WRITING

Imagine you were a famous writer. However, every story you wrote actually happened in real life. What seems like good and bad luck to some people would actually be because of you. How would you handle something like that? What kind of stories would you write? Use the space below to write about your experience.



Cursed Creative Writing

Lots of people around the world seek witches and medicine men to break curses and spells they believe to have. Look at the list below to see if you've been cursed.

Use the empty spaces to create your own.

You may have a spell on you if:

1. your hair is growing at an alarming rate.
2. your voice is changing into an animal sound.
3. the wings on your back are bigger than yesterday.
4. the only word you can say is "rib-bit".
5. you're madly in love.

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

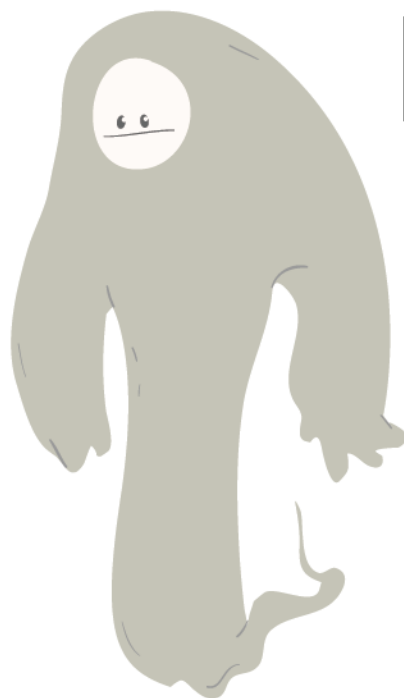


Imagine you had a spell on you that turned you into an animal. How would the spell be broken?
How do you live with the spell? Be descriptive and creative!

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A GHOST?

Top ten signs you have seen a ghost:

10. He just walked through the door.
9. You just saw your Aunt Betsy in the kitchen. She's been dead for ten years.
8. Your dog continues to bark non-stop at the wall.
7. Floating objects in your room.
6. The air around you is cold even though the heater is on.
5. The moaning isn't your dad snoring.
4. _____
3. _____
2. _____
1. _____

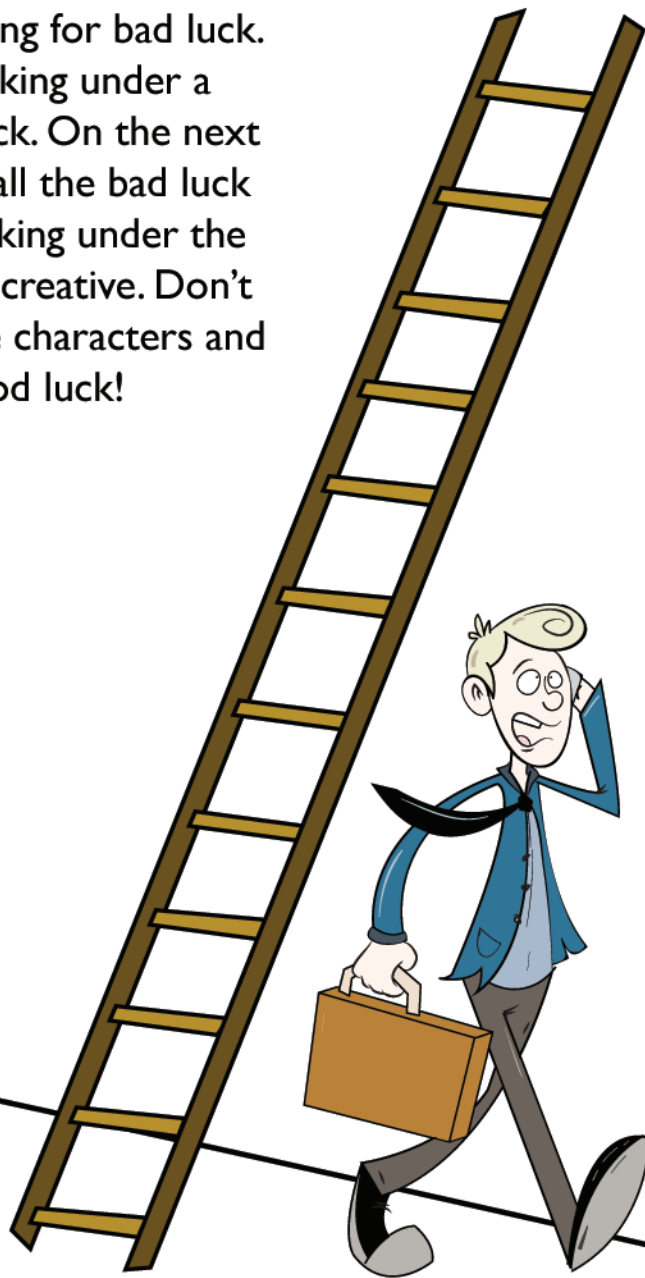


Do you believe in ghosts?

What Will Happen?

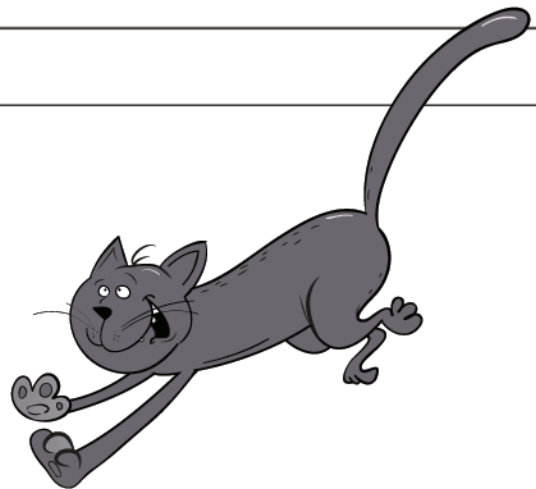
The man below is just asking for bad luck.

Anyone knows that walking under a ladder is extremely bad luck. On the next page write a story about all the bad luck the man will get after walking under the ladder. Be descriptive and creative. Don't forget to add elements like characters and environments. Good luck!



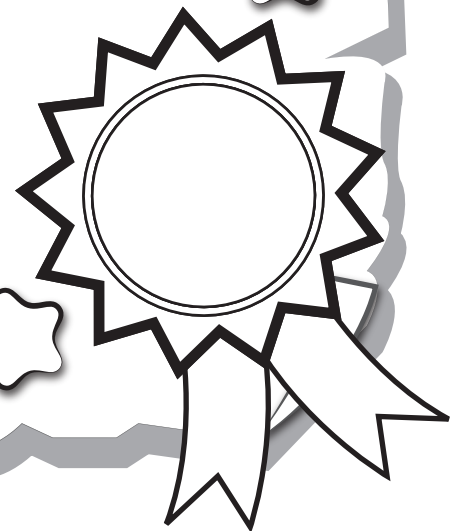
CREATIVE WRITING

Are you superstitious? There are many superstitions around the world and they vary from culture to culture. What superstitions do you believe in? Use the space below to write your superstitions as well as your opinion about them.



Great job!

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Answer Sheets

Superstitions: Ideas for Writing

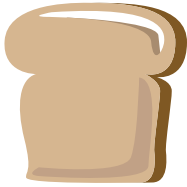
Food Voodoo

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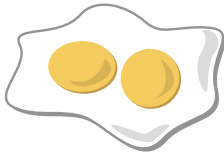
Answer Sheet

FOOD VOODOO MATCH-UP

Draw a line to match each food item with the superstition it carries.



Air bubble in your bread



2 yolks in an egg



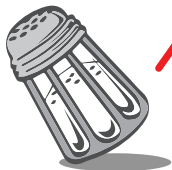
Cross on your loaf



Black spot on an egg yolk



Garlic



Spilling Salt



Egg with no yolk

Bad omen

Protection against the devil

Bad luck

Good omen: A marriage is coming soon

Extremely bad omen

Bad omen: Somone will die soon

A sign to ward off evil or the devil