



# Superstitions

## Introduction

This resource is intended as a brief directory of superstitions from around the world.

### Things that bring bad luck

Bananas – sailors consider them bad luck on board a ship

Bed – don't leave a hat on a living person's bed (Italy)

Bed – don't leave an indentation for the devil to fill (England)

Bed – get out on the same side you got in (Ancient Rome)

Black cats – don't let them cross your path

Cheers – don't do it with water; it wishes death upon the person / people you are drinking with (Germany)

Cheers – look the other person in the eye (France)

Chewing gum – don't chew it after dark; it will transform into the flesh of the dead (Turkey)

Crying on 1<sup>st</sup> January

Entering a room – don't do it with your left foot (Spain)

Friday 13<sup>th</sup>

Full moons – associated with chaos

Funerals – don't go straight home; otherwise a bad spirit might follow you to your house (Philippines)

Goat meat – causes women to grow facial hair (Rwanda)

Good luck – actors consider it bad luck to say 'good luck'; instead they say 'break a leg'

Haircut – don't get one on a Tuesday (India)

Handbag – don't let it touch the floor or you'll become penniless (Brazil)

Happy birthday – don't say it before someone's birthday (Russia)

Itchy left hand – you'll lose money (Turkey)

Knitting – doing it outside prolongs winter (Iceland)

Knives as gifts – receiving a knife as a present is supposed to sever the relationship; to stop this, give a coin in return

Ladders – don't walk under them

Macbeth – actors avoid saying the name of the play when in a theatre

Magpie – a single magpie brings bad luck

Marrying in green

Mirrors – breaking one causes seven years bad luck

Mirrors – don't place two opposite each other; it opens a doorway for the devil (Mexico)

Number 4 – sounds like death (China)

Number 13

Number 43 – taboo as numbers for maternity wards as number means "stillbirth" (Japan)

Number 666

Pavement cracks – don't step on them

Pregnancy – don't eat asymmetrical foods; it will cause the baby to be ugly (Korea)

Owls – hearing their hooting in the night is an omen of bad luck (Egypt)

Rainbows – pointing at one is bad luck (Navajo)

Red sky in the morning – warning to shepherds and sailors

Salt – throw it over your shoulder if you spill it

Shoes – don't put new shoes on a table; it heralds the death of a loved one (UK)

Singing at the dinner table – it invites the devil (Netherlands)

Sleep – don't sleep with your head facing north; that's how dead people are laid to rest (Japan)

Sleep – don't sleep on the ground (South Africa)

Sneezing – if it is 'blessed' (by someone saying 'bless you'), it prevents imminent death!

Stairs – crossing on the stairs brings bad luck

Umbrellas – don't open them indoors

Walking backwards – it shows the devil which way you're going (Portugal)

Wearing red – don't wear it during a thunderstorm; it attracts lightning (Philippines)

Wedding – the bride and groom shouldn't see each other before the ceremony

Whistling – doing it indoors invites evil (Lithuania)

Yellow flowers – don't give as a gift; it signifies infidelity (Russia)

### **Things that bring good luck**

Acorn – promotes eternal youth (Ancient Britain)

Albatross – considered good luck by sailors

Bird poo – brings wealth (Russia)

Chimney sweeps

Crossing fingers

Dreamcatcher (Native American)

Elephants

Finding a penny and picking it up

Four-leaf clover

Horseshoe

Itchy right hand – you'll gain money (Turkey)

Knock on wood

Ladybirds

Lucky pennies

New Years' Eve – eat twelve grapes for each stroke of midnight (Spain)

Number 7 (Japan)

Number 8 (China)

Pig (China / Germany)

Pinching the bride before a wedding (Egypt)

Polka-dots – wear them on the 31<sup>st</sup> December (Philippines)

Rabbit's foot

Rain on wedding day – brings wealth and fertility (India)

Rainbows

Red envelopes

Rice – sprinkling the bride with rice on her wedding day brings fertility

Scarecrow burning – if done on the 1<sup>st</sup> January, it burns away all the bad luck from the previous year (Ecuador)

Sixpence – placed in a brides' shoe on the day of a wedding, it brings good luck

Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue – brings a bride good luck on her wedding day

Spider – when found in a wedding dress, it brings the bride good luck

Swallow (Korea)

White heather (Ireland)

White rabbit – say it on the first of the month

White rat (Roman empire)

Wishbones



# ENDNOTE

## Bio:

This resource has been created by Matt Kendrick. Matt is a writer, editor and teacher based in the East Midlands, UK. His short fiction has been widely published both online and in print. He has been placed or listed in various writing competitions including Bath, Flash 500, the Oxford Flash Fiction Prize, Reflex and Leicester Writes. His work has been included on the Biffy 50 list for 2019-20, in Best Microfiction 2021, Best Small Fictions 2022 and the Wigleaf Top 50 list for 2022. He has also been nominated for Best of the Net and the Pushcart Prize.

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