

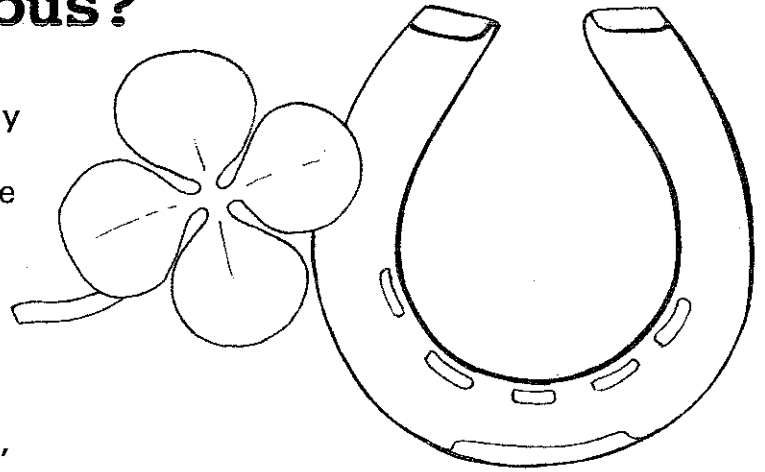
## Are You Superstitious?

Are you superstitious? Most people, even those who claim not to be, act superstitiously at one time or another. Superstition is a belief that a certain action or event can cause or foretell another possibly unrelated event. Where does this belief come from?

Throughout history, superstitions have been found in every human society. Many superstitions date back to the earliest times. For example, if a black cat crosses your path, it is thought bad luck will follow. A recent superstition claims that if one mentions a no-hit baseball game, it will cause the pitcher to give up a hit.

Superstitions fall into four categories. Some superstitions focus on important milestones such as birth, death, or marriage. For example: a person born on a Sunday will always be graced with good luck; on the day of a wedding, the groom should not see the bride prior to the ceremony or bad luck will follow them; and following a death, allow the spirit to leave the room by opening all doors and windows. A superstitious person would observe these practices to ensure safety or happiness as one moves from one stage of life to another.

Some superstitions are considered a type of magic. A newborn baby should always be carried upstairs before being carried downstairs to assure that the child rises in the world and has a successful life. A sick person should not be given cut flowers because the flowers will soon wither and die. Instead, give a potted plant which represents life and hope for recovery. Along the same line, when giving money as a gift, it should always be given in a purse or wallet to ensure that the recipient's purses or wallets will never be empty.



Casual superstitions are deliberate actions that ensure good luck, make something good happen, or avoid bad luck. The custom of throwing rice at weddings was initiated to assure that the couple would have many children. Carry a silver dollar or a rabbit's foot to bring good luck. To avoid bad luck, do not start a vacation on Friday, especially on the 13th. Sometimes casual superstitions are used in an attempt to bring bad luck to someone.

Sign superstitions foretell good or bad luck without any effort by the person involved. For example, finding a four-leaf clover, a horseshoe, or a penny will bring good luck. It is bad luck to spill salt or to break a mirror. Rain is coming soon if there is a ring around the moon, and a howling dog is a sign of death. In some cases the effects of signs can be reversed with an action. For example, after one spills salt he/she can cancel the bad luck by throwing a pinch of salt over the left shoulder.

Superstitions provide a way to overcome fears and insecurities. As long as people fear each other and feel uncertain about the future, superstitions will continue to thrive and new ones, reflective of today's lifestyles, will be created.



# Are You Superstitious?

Using what you learned about superstitions, complete the following graphic organizer. Write examples of each type of superstition under the correct heading.

