

Book: Passages 2

Level: 11th

Unit: 4

Objective: Talking about superstitions.



Amber

Amber beads, worn as a necklace, can protect against illness or cure colds.

Animals

- » One crow's bad, Two's luck, Three's health, Four's wealth, Five's sickness, Six is death.
- » If a dog howls 3 times, someone is going to die.
- » When eating a fish, you should begin at the tail and work towards the head.
- » A rabbit's foot will bring luck and protect the owner from evil spirits if carried in the pocket.

Apples

- » Think of five or six names of boys or girls you might marry, As you twist the stem of an apple, recite the names until the stem comes off. You will marry the person whose name you were saying when the stem fell off.
- » An apple a day keeps the doctor away.
- » If you cut an apple in half and count how many seeds are inside, you will also know how many children you will have.

Baby

To predict the sex of a baby: Suspend a wedding band held by a piece of thread over the palm of the pregnant girl. If the ring swings in an oval or circular motion the baby will be a girl. If the ring swings in a straight line the baby will be a boy.

Bad Luck

- » A bat flying into the house.
- » An owl hooting 3 times.
- » 3 butterflies together.

- » Hearing a rooster crow at night.
- » Getting out of bed left foot first.
- » A picture falling.

Reverse your luck by turning three times counter clockwise.

Baseball Bat

Spit on a new bat before using it for the first time to make it lucky.

Bed

- » It's bad luck to put a hat on a bed.
- » Placing a bed facing north and south brings misfortune.
- » You must get out of bed on the same side that you get in or you will have bad luck.
- » When making the bed, don't interrupt your work, or you will spend a restless night in it.
- » Never turn your mattress on a Sunday, or change a bed on Friday or you'll have bad dreams.
- » Make the foot of the bed before the head, or else my dear, you'll never wed!

Bell

- » The sound of bells drives away demons because they're afraid of the loud noise.
- » When a bell rings, a new angel has received his wings.

Birthday Cake

If you blow out all the candles on your birthday cake with the first puff you will get your wish.

Bread

- » To cut bread in an uneven manner is a sign that you have been telling lies.
- » Before slicing a new loaf of bread, make the sign of the cross on it.
- » A loaf of bread should never be turned upside down after a slice has been cut from it.

Bridge

If you say good-bye to a friend on a bridge, you will never see each other again.

Broom

- » If you sweep trash out the door after dark, it will bring a stranger to visit.
- » If someone is sweeping the floor and sweeps over your feet, you'll never get married.
- » Never take a broom along when you move. Throw it out and buy a new one.

- » To prevent an unwelcome guest from returning, sweep out the room they stayed in immediately after they leave.

Bugs

- » If a bee enters your home, it's a sign that you will soon have a visitor. If you kill the bee, you will have bad luck, or the visitor will be unpleasant.
- » A swarm of bees settling on a roof is an omen that the house will burn down.
- » If the first butterfly you see in the year is white, you will have good luck all year.
- » Three butterflies together mean good luck.
- » A cricket in the house brings good luck.

Candles

If a candle lighted as part of a ceremony blows out, it is a sign that evil spirits are nearby.

Cat

- » If a black cat walks towards you, it brings good fortune, but if it walks away, it takes the good luck with it.
- » Keep cats away from babies because they "suck the breath" of the child.
- » A cat onboard a ship is considered to bring luck.

Cedar Tree

If half a cedar tree dies on a couple's property, one half of the couple is going to die.

Cemetery

- » You must hold your breath while going past a cemetery or you will breathe in the spirit of someone who has recently died.
- » Tuck your thumbs into your fists when you pass a cemetery, it will protect your parents.

Cigarettes

It is bad luck to light three cigarettes with the same match.

Clock

If a clock which has not been working suddenly chimes, there will be a death in the family.

Clover

- » It's good luck to find a four-leaf clover.

- » Clover protects human beings and animals from the spell of magicians and the wiles of fairies, and brings good luck to those who keep it in the house.

Coins

It's bad luck to pick up a coin if it's tails side up. Good luck comes if it's heads up.

Comb

To drop a comb while you are combing your hair is a sign of a coming disappointment.

Corpse

- » If a woman is buried in black, she will return to haunt the family.
- » If a dead person's eyes are left open, he'll find someone to take with him.
- » Mirrors in a house with a corpse should be covered or the person who sees himself will die next.

Crack

- » Don't step on a crack on a sidewalk or walkway.
- » Step on a crack break your mother's back.

Fingers Crossed

By making the sign of the Christian faith with our fingers, evil spirits would be prevented from destroying our chances of good fortune.

Fork

To drop a fork means a man is coming to visit.

Friday the 13th

The sixth day of the week and the number 13 both have foreboding reputations said to date from ancient times. Their inevitable conjunction from one to three times a year denotes more misfortune than some can bear. Folklorists say it's probably the most widespread superstition in America (and no doubt in other parts of the world, as well).

Those who know about these things, inform us that Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden on a Friday, Noah's flood started on a Friday, and Christ was crucified on a Friday. Christians also noted that twelve witches plus one devil are present at Satanic ceremonies so Friday and 13 make a deadly combination.

God Bless You

When the great plague swept Europe, sufferers began sneezing violently which was a sign of death. At the same time, it was expected that anybody sneezing would cover their mouth with a cloth or their hand. This was obviously to stop the spreading of the disease, but many believed that it was to keep the soul intact. Up until this time, the opposite was true. Those who sneezed were congratulated, as it was believed that a violent sneeze would expel evil from their bodies.

Good Luck

- » Spilling wine while proposing a toast.
- » Looking at the new moon over your right shoulder.
- » Picking up a pencil in the street.
- » Finding a ladybug on you.
- » Carrying an acorn with you will bring good luck.
- » Finding and keeping a four leaf clover will bring you tremendous good luck.
- » Dolphins swimming near a ship.
- » A spider spinning in the morning.

Reverse your luck by turning three times counter clockwise.

Hand

- » If the palm of your right hand itches it means you will soon be getting money.
- » If the palm of your left hand itches it means you will soon be paying out money.

Hiccups

People with hiccups were once thought to be possessed by the devil.

Horseshoe

- » A horseshoe, hung above the doorway, will bring good luck to a home. In most of Europe protective horseshoes are placed in a downward facing position, but in some parts of Ireland and Britain people believe that the shoes must be turned upward or "the luck will run out."
- » A horseshoe hung in the bedroom will keep nightmares away.

Knock on Wood

It was believed that good spirits lived in trees, and that by knocking on anything made from wood, we could call upon these spirits for protection against misfortune.

Ladder

It is bad luck to walk under a ladder.

Lipstick

When making up, an actress regards it as a sign that she will receive a good contract if she accidentally smears some lipstick on to her teeth.

Mirror

- » To break a mirror means 7 years bad luck.
- » It is unlucky to see your face in a mirror by candlelight.
- » A mirror should be covered during a thunderstorm because it attracts lightning.
- » If a mirror in the house falls and breaks by itself, someone in the house will die soon.

Money

Greeks believe that Money attracts money, so never leave your pockets, purses or wallets completely empty and never completely empty your bank account. Always leave at least a coin or two. It was also considered good luck to give a gift of a wallet or a purse with a coin or two in it.

Nails

Don't cut your nails on Sunday or you'll see your blood the next day.

New Year's Day

How you start the year is how you will end it, so you must ensure that you are wearing new clothes and looking your best, have paid off all your debts and are with your partner (to ensure that you are still with them at the next New year).

Nose

If your nose itches...

- » You will soon be kissed by a fool.
- » You will get in a fight.
- » You will get money soon.

Penny

- » See a penny, pick it up, all day long you'll have good luck!
- » See a penny, let it lie, all day long you'll have to cry.

Photograph

If 3 people are photographed together, the one in the middle will die first.

Salt

- » Put salt on the doorstep of a new house and no evil can enter.
- » Bad luck will follow the spilling of salt unless a pinch is thrown over the left shoulder into the face of the devil waiting there.

Salt used to be an expensive commodity used mainly for medicinal purposes. For this reason, spillage was to be avoided at all costs. The idea that it is unlucky to do so probably stems from the belief that Judas spilt salt during the last supper.

Scissors

- » Dropping a pair of scissors is said to warn that a lover is unfaithful.
- » Breaking one blade of a pair of scissors is an omen of quarreling and discord; if both blades are broken at once; a calamity is to be feared.
- » Scissors should always be sold, they should never be given.

Shoes

If you accidentally see footwear turned over (ie: shoes, slippers, etc.) you will quarrel with someone close to you.

Sneeze

- » Place a hand in front of your mouth when sneezing. Your soul may escape otherwise.
- » The devil can enter your body when you sneeze. Having someone say, "God bless you," drives the devil away.

Star

It's good luck when you see a falling star. Make a wish on it and it will come true.

Theater

- » The play Macbeth is considered the unluckiest play in theatre. It is such bad luck that actors don't like to mention the title. They refer to it as "The Scottish Play" or "Mr. and Mrs. M" or "That Play".
- » When rehearsing a play, the actors ensure that they are perfect in every line except the last one, or tag, as it is called. This is never uttered until the first night of the actual performance,

when the success or otherwise of the production is ascertained by the extent of the applause which follows the last line.

- » Actors never wish each other "good luck" before a performance as it might have the opposite effect. It's safer to tell an actor heading for the stage to "break a leg", "knock 'em dead", or "see you on the green".

Thirteen

If 13 people sit down at a table to eat, one of them will die before the year is over.

Tongue

- » If you bite your tongue, someone is talking badly about you. Bite your sleeve to make them stop.
- » Biting your tongue means you are going to kiss a fool.

Umbrella

It's bad luck to open an umbrella inside the house, especially if you put it over your head.

Wood

Knock three times on wood after mentioning good fortune so evil spirits won't ruin it.

