

Around The World In 80 Superstitions

To make you more beautiful,
richer and generally
more successful.

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DISCLAIMER

Really and truly, if you are using anything in this book for some GCSE project, don't expect any credibility from anyone. Yeah and don't expect any of these superstitions to be true. Like all my very reliable international sources, I might have just made them all up. I hope you gain new experiences from this book and maybe something about yours or someone else's life might change; you know, something you do that someone is always nagging at you about, perhaps putting the toilet seat down, or something you now otherwise know you might be frightened to do.

Introduction

Have you ever fancied embarking on a journey but can not think of a worthwhile reason to do it? Perhaps to gain a better understanding of the world, or to earn an introspective satisfaction within the self? Journey is a symbolic word and it is more than about getting from "A-B". It is about that bit in the middle, a new experience and it is how you managed it that is perhaps most important.

As I am sure you managed to read the title and have found a decent excuse to go on this journey around the world. I would love to say enlightening superstitions are beneficial, but they are as much about death and being pleased with the chance to have lived so long in the first place, than just making life that bit more satisfying. So what is a superstition? The Encarta dictionary says it is...

"an irrational but usually deep-seated belief in the magical effects of a particular action or ritual, especially in the likelihood that good or bad luck will result from performing it."

Bear that in mind when you are chanting passages from the bible backwards and standing on your head.

What do superstitions normally talk about? Normally things that we can not explain, which are quite often things that we take fright to, that usually involves life and death, good and bad luck, a sign or an omen that foretells an action and generally things out of our control. Before modern policing, were superstitions an effective form of control?

Superstitions are all supposed to be hocus pocus stories to tell to children for fun and excitement, but maybe we all have a desire to believe in things, especially if we do not have much control over our own lives. Especially to make ourselves more beautiful, richer and generally a little bit more successful. Feng Shui is a superstition as much as it is an art and a practice directly involved in many people's lives around the world. But what is the line that differentiates superstition from reality. Could it be merely the amount of people who subscribe to the belief?

These are all really good questions and in this book I don't intend to answer any of them. That is for you to work out if you really want to. What I will do with this book is take you on a journey around the world highlighting some stories and omens that scare the shit out of me, but you might be all right! Stay alive, looking beautiful, be rich and be successful.

And just to get you started here are a few myths why “Friday The Thirteenth” the classiest of all superstitions is supposed to be unlucky. Note – this book has no thirteenth superstition, a bit of a rip-off, I’d ask for your money back if I were you.

Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden on a Friday and Noah’s flood started on a Friday. It was the thirteenth apostle, Judas, who betrayed Jesus, it was a Friday. Don’t know why it was a good Friday, especially for Jesus. Christians also noted that twelve witches plus one devil are present at Satanic ceremonies so Friday and 13 make a deadly combination.

According to the book “Dungeon, Fire, and Sword” on the forementioned day, the King of France, put the last Grand Master of the Knights Templar, Jaques DeMolay, to the stake and burned him alive. As history was written, it reads the Templars were secretly Satanists. In reality the King was jealous of their wealth and power the Pope excommunicated them. The Knights Templar were the richest group in Europe and were loved by most of the ‘common’ folk. As he was burning, DeMolay cursed the Pope and King of France to die within the year, which they both did.

If you have 13 letters in your name, you will have the devil’s luck. Jack the Ripper, Charles Manson, Jeffrey Dahmer, Theodore Bundy and Albert De Salvo all have 13 letters in their names. Bear in mind it only costs £10 to change your name by depol.

More than 80 percent of high-rises lack a 13th floor. Many airports skip the 13th gate. Airplanes have no 13th aisle. Hospitals and hotels regularly have no room number 13. Italians omit the number 13 from their national lottery. On streets in Florence, Italy, the house between number 12 and 14 is addressed as 12 and a half. Many cities do not have a 13th Street or a 13th Avenue.

England

So here we are, as we look outward from the “The Reform Club” on Pall Mall as did Phileas Fogg however many years ago. Some would say being stood on such an ostentatious doorstep is a bit of good fortune in itself. While planning your journey, I would suggest not starting in the autumn as our hero did. This could bring you that little bit closer to one of England’s lesser-known and less optimistic superstitions. In the current climate, it does not seem so unlikely. If a rose blooms in autumn, it predicts there will be an epidemic of disease the next year. Turn the tables and say, if it snows in summer, then you must be in Great Britain. Where else?

Maybe you could start your 80 superstitions by finding a wedding. This is of course only if you are a fine maiden, dreaming of marriage; so guys, find some other superstition to get hitched. Mistletoe springs to mind. To dream of marriage, find a wedding, you will need a couple of pieces of cake, one to celebrate the occasion and the other for the pillow. That’s right for the pillow! I wasn’t going to suggest the pillow would enjoy a midnight feast. For if thy vestal virgin (yeah right) were to place the cake under the pillow, then sleep, thy shalt have dreams of thine true future husband. If you are a married man and you see your wife putting a piece of cake under the pillow, try not to think too much into it. The Iroquois believed that cake at a wedding brought good luck. Each cake was first inspected for demons by the witch doctor, who then anointed them for the bride to present to the groom. Obviously fairy cakes. I bet he had first dibs on the pieces too. Definitely good luck to have cake at a wedding. What happens at weddings? Somebody always embarrasses themselves and it’s not going to be in front of people who will forget it or are never seen again, no it’s going to be in front of Auntie Mabel, who will have had her camera at the ready for eons. She has experience of weddings and knows there are always people doing something stupid. Then what happens at the next get together? Well that involves talking about anything in shared knowledge. Yeah, pleasant dreams Prince Charming! Just make sure it isn’t a wedding where you know anyone!

As we are all caring, sharing people why not try this one out the next time you know someone who is getting married. Alternatively, you could always save it for yourself because you always have all the best ideas and question why anyone else should have the luck? A later English custom was for each guest to bring cakes or spiced buns to the wedding. Cakes and weddings are quite consistent in terms of good luck aren’t they? They are placed in a large mound, which the bride and groom had to stretch over and kiss with the hopes of not knocking any of the cakes or buns off. If they managed this, I think they would

be assured lifelong prosperity. Nice baps Aunty Mabel! You will have the vicar salivating! If you knock some of the cakes over, does this mean that the happy couple will get a divorce?

Some farmers would not touch a plough unless it had rowan handles. Rowan is a tree, which in case, you didn't already know, has dense wood, so therefore has been deemed as perfect for all kinds of things like increasing one's psychic powers. Its branches were often used for dowsing rods and magical wands. Of course, I would not think anything else could be more appropriate to use as handles on your plough to scare away evil spirits than having rowan. I am sure evil spirits are particularly interested in ploughs and potatoes as I think it would be more fun scaring cats, dogs or small children in the hopes of causing any other type of relentless destruction. On the Isle of Man, they used to tie the stuff to the tails of cattle. I dread to think what the poor creatures must have looked like. Would you call the RSPCA? In Yorkshire they like to go that little bit further with the saying "if your whipstock is made of rowan, you may ride your nag through any town." Of course, it is debatable what or who they consider to be the nag. Anyway could you ride through any town without it? Is that why in the '80's people put those things hanging off the back of the car, which apparently reduced static electricity – they secretly have a thread of rowan through it. Rowan was carried on boats to avoid storms, kept in houses to guard against lightning, and even planted on graves to keep the deceased from haunting. If you are now desperate to find some, a grave is probably the most likely place to find some. It was also used to protect one from witches or as wood to fuel the fire to burn witches.

As the old adage goes, it is better to give than to receive. In Norfolk, giving your lover an orange was supposed to ensure requited love. It's a hard gift to receive and feel enthusiastic about, an orange? Perhaps a chocolate orange would promote a better response. If only life was that simple?

Lettuce was believed to be dangerous to women. If this was a better known superstition, all you guys could chase women down the street with lettuce. It was thought to induce infertility. A woman in Richmond carefully counted the number of lettuces in her garden, frightened of the potential effect. If she was anorexic, it would not be such a surprise that she would become sterile if only eating lettuce. Therefore, she obviously had psychological problems, which might suggest she was paranoid. Perhaps she had nightmares of lettuces coming to life and coming to get her. Dangerous, oooh er.

The herb "sage" is said to have the ability to impart wisdom. Apparently, a garden with lots of sage is said to be a sign of a woman with strong will. One man in Oxford cut a huge portion down in his garden because he didn't want

people to think that his wife was the boss. I could understand that, if maybe they decorated their house with pink and lacy frills and stuff, but sage? Apparently if you stuff dead animals with a special mixture of magical herbs including sage, stick it in the oven for an hour and a half and eat it. It has been known to give the spellbinder appreciation from those that devour this formula. Do this and expect to hear responses like “nice cooking”.

Who would have thought someone could create a superstition out of cinders from a fire. Well actually, it sounds quite feasible since it is the end product of a huge abundance of energy acting as a chemical catalyst. Okay, if an oval cinder spits out, called a coffin, it means that a death in the family is to be expected. A square cinder, called a cradle, means that a birth is to be expected. Have a big fire and I am sure there are going to be lots of births and lots of deaths because of you.

Getting out of bed, for most, is always going to be on the wrong side. There is logic behind the old saying, when seeing someone with “bed head” attitude. They must have crawled out the left side. “Sinister” is the Latin word for left which is of course a very significant language whilst discussing superstitions, since no-one actually speaks it today apart from a bunch of Catholics and archaeologists. We know how superstitious they all are don’t we. Another superstition says that you should get out the side you entered. Pagan beliefs suggests, you should always sleep facing east-west like the rising and setting sun. Feng Shui states that it is bad fortune to have a direct path leading from the door of the bedroom to the bed. At the moment we are still in Britain, so you not allowed to take part in Feng Shui and expect it to work. Anyway, it has something to do with having a flow of energy disturbing you through your sleep. This is more of a physiological thing, so there is a chance we could bypass this as being Pagan rather than pure make believe.

Before departing the white cliffs of the south coast, do what is traditional yet what most Brits have never done. Ride a donkey on the beach. Riding a donkey is supposed to cure toothache, whooping cough and ouch, haemorrhoids. Is this really likely to improve anything? This is hardly a superstition to try if you want to become more beautiful and more successful, or even if you do have haemorrhoids, but just think that a ride a day will keep the dentist away and the doctor away from fiddling with your arse.

France

In Normandy, it was considered unlucky to pick or eat blackberries after 11 October, which is Old Michaelmas Day. As it was believed that old Satan fell into a blackberry bush on this day and scratched him. It is believed the dirty devil

spat on the blackberries and poisoned them. If Satan is supposed to be some supreme being, would thorns really hurt him? In addition, maybe he only spat on them because they tasted disgusting? Come on, how many blackberries do you still find after this day? Maybe quite a lot in France!

Go down the crossroads at midnight with a black cock and you would expect to meet something a little more extreme than a bunch of kids hanging out at a bus shelter with mopeds. Shout "Poule noir a vendre" and the devil is supposed to appear, claim the cock and leave a pile of gold coins. Stop reading tabloids! This really sounds like a superstition worth trying out with real faith that something might happen. But what would Satan want a black cock so much as to exchange it for a pile of gold? Why not be a little bit more imaginative with your choice of props? You know perhaps take a picture of Chris Eubank, you get me?

Assuming that Satan isn't interested in your black cock, you could always take a black cat for plan b. French peasants thought that black cats could find buried treasure. Really? Hopefully you would have also found an intersection where five roads are connected, then turn the cat loose and follow him. There is nothing to say you cannot do this in any other country. Just decide what motivation the cat needs to help you find a load of dosh. Perhaps if you took a dog instead, a black one of course, set Scooby loose and you might be more successful. At the worst, he may just cock his leg up on a cash point or on a flash car. Its still a source of cash!

Sometimes cocks were used to detect criminals. The birds would be placed in upturned baskets and the suspects would touch the rim of the basket. If the cock crowed, the suspect was guilty. "What magical creatures cocks must be!" That's the words of Aunty Mabel.

In St Malo, it is deemed good luck to throw the first fish of the season back. First they must pour a lot of wine down it's throat. I am not sure how you could benefit from doing this unless you are a fisherman, in which case you would surely be on the path to success. I think it's good to hear that the fish joins in the celebration of its own demise too.

This is a superstition to protect you from harm, in Scotland it is believed if you do this on the morning of Beltane (the first day of summer, i.e. Mayday) it will make you more beautiful! Spot on! A superstition that sounds like it will really work! I am thinking of Britt Ekland's arse in the Wicker Man. In France and Spain, people rolled naked in dewy grass to protect themselves from skin diseases. As a hint, it sounds that it depends on where you roll naked in dewy

grass, which makes a difference. Why not try this one in Alaska on New Years Eve and see what happens? You loose weight after going into hypothermia and your skin tightens across your skeleton.

Monte Carlo

The six most popular lucky charms to be carried by gamblers are locks of hair, animal bones, holy relics, four leaved clovers, hooves and coins. Well they are hardly imaginative omens, more like safe bets. What does anyone expect to do with a lucky coin? Do you have to spend the penny first? Can you imagine running home to tell your mum you have a lucky coin? What about those holy relics? What religion condones gambling your life away? I have noted that places renowned for gambling tend to have the most superstitions surrounding them. A hundred years ago a pretty girl was expected to be sufficient to bring gamblers a bit of luck. I think it's a bit of good luck if you are a pretty girl and are in Monte Carlo. You know, around all those fat arse rich men who are looking a beautiful maiden to bring them good luck. Sounds like a very active and balanced relationship. Remember to go rolling in the grass naked first. If an unlucky player commits suicide, anyone who plays against the bank is expected to win.

If you are that fat arse rich man preying on young and vulnerable pretty girls, try rubbing your luck up against the statue of a bronze horse instead. There is one outside the Hotel de Paris, which is believed to bring good luck to gamblers who rub. The horse's knee that is.

Germany

The Swallow is believed to be the devil's servant and brought nothing but poverty. Why do most superstitions involving the devil include evil? How about a bit of lust or some self indulgence for a change? Megalomaniacs in films are always portrayed as wanting to use the power of the devil to be powerful and never really to be evil. A dead swallow is said to improve eyesight, cure palsy and relieve kidney problems. But, I have no idea what anyone would need to do with a dead sparrow to help with these health issues, perhaps bake it in a cake? Or was that black birds?

The dwarfs in "Snow White" are based on a German belief. Outside Koln on the Rhine, there are 7 mountains believed to be dropped from the shovels of a giant. Bear in mind, this area is particularly flat. The dwarfs live underground, mining and storing gold, silver and especially gems. If you favoured a dwarf, he might reward you, with what at first would appear to be a mound of coal, but would later be revealed as a collection of jewels. That's what I call magic!

Spain

In Andalusia, tying a stag's horn up with hair from a mare's tail is supposed to give an individual special powers in healing illnesses. Possibly healing being delusional.

Malta

If you cross your eyes and the wind blows, an angel may pass and you will remain like that forever. So next time you see someone who is particularly ugly, you can only guess what faces they must have been pulling at angels.

If a pregnant woman wishes for something (usually food) and can't have it she should touch her bottom so that when the child is born the "wish" (sort of birth mark) will be on his bottom and not evident.

If two people or more say the same thing at the same time, they should rub their nose so that they will get married or so that they will have fantastic luck. In the case of girls, if you don't do so, you will become a nun.

A bull's horn or a bull's skull should be placed on a door to ward off evil spirits. Sometimes a horseshoe is used. I can really understand how these would ward off evil spirits. I think this was made up by a travelling salesman selling bulls horns and horseshoes as magical placebos.

Greece

Somebody must have noticed a familiar family resemblance whilst looking at trees. Sounds weird? In Greece, the ash tree was considered to be the ancestor of man. It was apparently connected with lightning, fire and clouds. That's probably another relative, perhaps Aunty Mabel? By chance, could there have been an owl sitting in the tree. Owls were dreaded in Roman times and were considered an omen of death. However, in Greece, it was considered to be the bird of Athene, Goddess of Wisdom and has since become synonymous with wisdom. Too wit to die? Yes I know its not funny, it belongs in a Christmas cracker!

The Greeks think a garnish looks so good on the side of the plate that when you are dead and buried, it gets put on your grave too. Parsley in ancient Greece was associated with death and graves were topped with the breath freshener. If you planted it on Good Friday, this was considered to be lucky. If you were daring enough to transplant the plant, it would bring a speedy death

to someone nearby. Terrifying stuff!

Israel

Although considered to be good luck everywhere now, the spiritual have sought supernatural protection where juniper grows. According to an Italian legend, the juniper tree saved Jesus on his escape from Herod to Egypt. As if Jesus needed supernatural help. What did the tree do? Tell dirty jokes to Romans so they killed themselves laughing? Gin of course contains juniper as flavouring; so if you need supernatural protection, fill yourself up on gin. That will get the most discerning Roman soldier laughing. It is a poorly known superstition, that gin makes you appear richer, more beautiful and just generally, a little more successful. Unfortunately, this is only made apparent to yourself after several large measures if you look in the mirror.

The ancient Hebrews believed the ashes of a black kitten would enable one to see demons. A mistake for peyote? Is it possible that the ashes of a white cat would enable one to see angels? It must be rather unlucky if you find yourself reincarnated into a black cat! You would never get affection because of all the huge variety of superstitions surrounding you, being patted probably means there will be a bad harvest or you will die of some rare fatal disease. Lets hope karma has nothing to do with your reincarnation.

Egypt

What could be a better life than watching cats all day long? On the other hand, how about being a sacred cat for a living? Well you would have to be an Egyptian Priest, watch some cats and then make some spooky predictions. The priests interpreted the cat's movements - twitch of a whisker, yawn, or stretch - into a prediction of an event that would happen in the future. How about the numbers on the national lottery? Perhaps you could get a huge carpet with numbers on it like a game of Twister? Whichever numbers the cats sit near are their predictions. Worth a try? In our experiment, nine out of ten cats preferred the number seven.

This is a really complicated superstition, so pay attention. Some Arabs believe that if a hyena steps on to a man's shadow, it will deprive the man of speech. Apparently a dog could do the same thing to a hyena. However, if the dog was standing on a roof so that it's shadow fell on the ground and a passing hyenas stepped on it. The dog would fall to the ground. Why would a dog be standing on a roof? Hardly a superstition to benefit from but the moral of this story...

Africa

Amongst the Azande, a tribe from slightly north of central Africa, if a baby sprouts teeth from the top jaw first, called an "irakorinde" meaning "he has bad teeth!" (how original) the baby will bring bad luck to the crops. If at the very least, the child would be asked if they would be so kind as not to eat the first crops of the harvest, especially peanuts or corn as this would increase the effects.

Again the Azande believe that some women give birth to cats. And if anybody sees this, the voyeur should expect to die. She must be having kittens? I can imagine anyone watching would perhaps more likely die of shock. What kind of cats could they be? At the moment I am imagining something like a lion or cheetah, but maybe this superstition reveals the true origins of the sphinx. Ouch!

The modern world is full of things that you can turn things on instantly. I mean switches that cause an instant effect, like light switches. You can pick up a phone and dial for a takeaway and however many minutes later, you open your door and there it is. We all know most of Africa is not so technology able as Europe and has fewer luxuries. How about instead of picking up the phone to get a 14 inch Margarita, you fancy some rain instead? Don't pick the phone up monkey brains, throw some beetles in a lake? Yep, this is an old African superstition. I can not see how this could make you more successful. Unless that is, if you are in some barren wasteland, where there isn't a lake and you turn a desert into fertile land. Such an action might make give you some god like status, you know all the worshipping malarkey and perhaps have some sacrifices on your behalf! Yeah, that is success, being worshipped like a god!

Iraq

There used to be a gate in Baghdad that natives believed would give untold wealth to anyone who happened to pass through it at a particular instance in a 24 hour period of time. The gate was bricked up in 1906 after congregating crowds became unmanageable. I believe George Bush with his force of intelligence is still looking for it.

The ancient Teutons believed that at Easter, rabbits laid eggs. That is perhaps the origin of the "Easter Bunny." This is a conflict upon superstition because I can not believe Muslims would believe in the Easter Bunny. Celebrating Easter?

Afghanistan

When in Rome act like the Romans blar blar blar, so when in Afghanistan, be as superstitious and lucky as the Afghans. Well that doesn't exactly make much sense but if you want to be successful it has to be the place to be! If your palm itches, it means that you will be given some money. If you fancy marking out lines on the ground, say for a game of football, such a superstitious action will apparently land you in debt. If you sit on the threshold, its your father who will be in debt. If you go to his house to tell him the bad news, arrive when others are just starting their meals; it means that your mother-in-law likes you very much. So you have told you dad he will be in debt, your mother in law now likes you very much now, so if a mag-pie is sitting on the wall, forget all that one for sorrow hoo hah because it means you will receive a message. A magic message no doubt. You get back home, delve into your pocket to grab your keys and I bet you can not resist to give them a little shake, you know a little Jimmy Saville Jangle. You never know it is supposed to bring on a fight. We are talking about superstitions here. Clicking scissors apparently does the same trick! If you are using them to cut cloth, I have heard it is no good to cut your tailoring on Tuesday. Some people believe going outside with their bald head exposed will have the same effect as throwing beetles into lakes. Yeah, apparently it starts to rain. Just remember those thoughts about what God must be doing when it's raining. Starts to make sense when you think that if you were in God's shoes, what would you do if you saw someone's bald head reflecting all that solar energy straight back at you. Well at least get up to some mischief!

India

A diamond believed to have been ripped from the forehead of an Indian idol by a wandering French mendicant, brought death and ill fortune to most of its successive owners. Said to have come into possession of Louis 14th, who gave it to his mistress, Mme de Montespan, legend traces the 44 1/2 carat stone through the hands of Marie Antoinette, executed in 1793, to Henry Thomas Hope, an English banker who bought the stone in 1830. From then, the Hope Family fell on evil times and subsequent owners who also met with tragedy or misfortune included Jacques Colet, suicide, Prince Ivan Kanitovitsky was murdered; Sultan Abdul Hamed of Turkey was dethroned, Simon Montharides and his family were killed by a shying horse, and a number of others. Around 1907 an American, Evalyn Walsh Mclean, bought the stone for £8,000, then about £40,000. Soon after, Mrs Mclean lost a son, a daughter and her husband in tragic circumstances. Her heir, Miss Evalyn Mclean, too was found dead at Dallas, Texas in mysterious circumstances on 13 December 1967. So diamonds are a girl's best friend?

Burma

If you started your journey in Autumn I am sure you might just make it down to Malaysia for spring time. Whoever is fortunate enough to be the first to see a white butterfly in summertime would be credited with good fortune throughout the year. I am sure if you really wanted to have a fortunate year; you could buy a couple thousand chrysalises up and make them think it is time to hatch. Here and in Egypt, “Winlaik-Pya” butterflies are thought to fly as ghost souls. The newly dead were believed to inhabit butterflies for a while and for a while hover, semi-visible above the deceased body. If a golden butterfly was seen at the funeral, it was expected to create longevity for the mourners.

Malaysia

There are some things we all know are bad luck to do, do we still do them? How about opening an umbrella inside? In Malaysia a worthwhile explanation for this is that you may find a snake resting in it. I am sorry it couldn't be a pile of treasure!

Another superstition suggests that if you are a young lady you may wish to refrain from singing whilst cooking. It is believed that you are asking for an aged husband. That's no bad thing if you are desperate to get hitched. No wonder those “two fat ladies” on the television were always cooking. Your secret is out! Apparently it is a mere myth more than any trustable superstition. It is believed that a woman's brain isn't capable of doing very much, in fact not much at all. A woman isn't expected to be able to cook and sing at the same time and might get things mixed up. I would love to see such a mix up. Can you imagine words being mixed into a cake and whatever goes into a cake coming out of the woman's mouth? Eugh!

It is understood that children are best given a watchful eye. No surprises there then, but in particular at sunset. Apparently, this is the time ghosts are going to hanging about more time than any other.

Vietnam

Snakes and turtles crawling across the road? Can you pull any superstitions out the hat with this one? In the snake tradition, if one sees a snake slithering across the road, it usually denotes that a wish or plans the will proceed smoothly. However, if the person sees a turtle crossing the road, then the person's plans will be delayed. So if you see a snake crawling across the road, think nice things.

Indonesia

Yeah! Just think of something absolutely ridiculous and then say that it means something. Indonesians have got this one down to a 't'. If you sew a button onto a shirt whilst wearing it, you will become really ill and stay for at least a month. If that isn't bad enough, you will be destined to fail in your attempts to make a living. All that for sewing a button on a shirt? Either that or everyone can see your chest!

I heard it is also believed to be really bad to comb your hair while walking. Fonz put the comb down and put your hands up in the air. This superstition dictates that if you do, you will be left in an embarrassing situation. Walking into a lamp post no doubt?

Water is a bit of a mysterious particle. It is a flow of liquid energy, we are made mostly of it, when it is hot it goes up in the air and when it is colder it comes down again. Seems like a good thing to make superstitions from. In Indonesia they have a superstition, not out of water but the water closet. If you so happen to spend a little too long in the bathroom, this is enough to make your face appear old.

Yet again, if you are afraid of looking older maybe you should avoid taking a bath or shower during the afternoon hours as this increases the aging process. I have heard it has something to do with meaningless superstitions. For hopeful women preparing for a Saturday night out, as PJ Harvey said "wash that man right out of my hair" you may find that difficult if you believe in a superstition that if an unmarried woman washes her hair on a Saturday, this would cause her to marry a man who is difficult to please.

It is more common sense than anything else knowing you can make judgments about someone through their actions. Women if you have managed to surpass the ability to sing whilst cooking, remember when a meal that is too salty, that the cook is in love and wishes to marry. Hint hint!

If you come across a piece of cayenne chilli in a pan for absolutely no apparent reason, this is a sign that a disaster is about to occur. You burn your mouth?

Since we are talking about meal times, let's sit at the table and have a nice family dinner. First off avoid eating rice from a small plate as this would cause your close relations to despise you. This really doesn't make sense does it and sounds like a bedtime story from old Aunt Mabel. But since they are on the other side of the table you could just ask that miserable lot why they would be so upset. If 13 people sit down, one of them will die before the year is over. Kids if you want to travel abroad, eating lots of chicken wings might just help

you get on your way. Singing at the table will mean that you will fail at whatever you persevere in doing. Whatever your place on the table, eating in front of the door would create difficulty in finding a marriage partner. Perhaps because it looks as though you can't wait to get up and leave. This is no better position to sit than eating from the corner of a table as this would cause problems with the in-laws and your marriage will be in a wreck. I predict, let's say 2hrs. And one final note, children sit still and avoid moving places at the table, this would cause you to have a new mummy or daddy. He isn't really your Uncle Billy. I think the point I am trying to make is, try to avoid having family dinners; you know there will always be an argument of some kind. I am talking out of personal experience as well!

If you managed to secure some fortunes, probably not with the aid of this book, and intend to build your own home, avoid building facing north as this would cause the owner to fail to acquire riches. More than that avoid building your house facing an open field as this would cause the owner to become a little loose when it comes to spending cash. The kitchen should not face the front door as this would cause a bit of financial hardship. If you really want some unfortunate circumstances, why not build a garage at the back of the house. If you want life to get worse, build yourself a really high wall. At least 2m and your business partners might desert you leaving you with no other option than to declare yourself bankrupt. Building a pool inside the house would cause bad luck and the members of the family will alternately be stricken with illnesses; just like living in a house with no back door. It must be something to do with taking a lump of coal from the fire out the back door on new years eve and walk in through the front door with something fresh for the fire. No questions as to why it takes so long to be an architect. If you fancy some good luck for a change take some soil from the garden of your old home and sprinkle it in the vicinity of the new to continue goodness and wellbeing. In Yorkshire, it is believed when you move into a new house, you must carry a loaf of bread and a plate of salt into each room. Grim up north. Placing red onions, chilies and turmeric in a bag and hung above the front door protects the house and family against black magic and negative entities. That's why the lady loves black magic.

When it comes to biting lips, if you habitually bite the lower lip this causes bad luck. Don't start biting your top lip instead as this apparently causes lots of financial problems. If you are a promiscuous lady, did you have your buttocks beaten as punishment whilst a child? This severe punishment is a superstition, which makes you sexually hyperactive as an adult. If you pull the hairs of your eyebrows as this would result in rarely achieving sexual satisfaction. One should avoid giving handkerchiefs to one's lover, as this would result in a break

in the relationship.

Craig David, the extremely, unbelievably talented singer-songwriter wrote some ballad after hearing a superstition about the day women start their period. If it starts on a Sunday, you will meet an old friend. On a Monday, you will soon acquire luck. Fancy a Tuesday and you will soon be enjoying yourself in the next days. Wednesday you will have an argument soon. Thursday you will experience an unfortunate incident and feel rather sad. On a Friday, you will soon have a bit of fun. As for Saturday, you will soon have a pleasant surprise. Therefore, people you can predict what will happen in the future by finding out when women start their periods. It is a bit like those Egyptian priests watching the cats. Mother earth blardy blardy blah.

As for cats, it is widely known, if you didn't know that if you see him licking his foot, this means that someone close to us will acquire a windfall of cash within one month.

It is advisable to swim in a lake during full moon, as this would cause one to become highly attractive. Do this over Beltane and remember to roll in the dewy grass.

Australia

The aborigines sometimes stab an enemy's shadow as a way of attacking the person. When they are working magic against an enemy, they are careful not to allow their own shadows to fall on the spell object. Some aborigines spit whenever a dead man's name is mentioned to change bad luck to good

Philippines

Wearing polka dots on New Year's Eve brings lots of money to your pocket. The dots symbolize coins. By wearing polka dots, one is drawing money to themselves. By wearing polka dots, you will be entering the New Year wealthy since the dots are taking place of the money that is to come. Is that an excuse for wanting to look like Betty Boo?

China

Many Chinese, Korean and Japans coins have little marks on their reverses which resemble nail marks. It is said that a Chinese empress left her nail marks on a clay coin mould and because her touch was considered celestial

and the mark likely to bring good luck. It was subsequently imitated. Therefore, you now know exactly what to do if you find an oriental coin.

California

If you are newly married and want children try out this superstition frequented by the Dutch in Pennsylvania. Place a cat in an empty cradle and the cat will to grant a wish for your children. Knowing how cats are linked to evil superstitions I am sure it is sure to only wish evil upon the child, especially since they have tendencies to be jealous of any squabble for affection. When you see a one-eyed cat, spit on your thumb, stamp it in the palm of your hand, and make a wish. The wish will come true. Really?

Catch a falling leaf, and you will have 12 months of happiness. I tried before. I nearly fell into a lake but ran straight into a park bench. All for the sake of researching quality journalism!

During Halloween, a woman who apple bobs can take the seeds and give them names of men she likes. She then has to place them near a fire, the one that pops first will be the man of her life.

If you are having difficulty making up your mind between two people, places or situations just take two apple seeds and assign one to each of your choices. Stand in front of a mirror and stick the seeds on your forehead. The one that falls off last is the right choice. For people desiring to know the initial of the person who will be their next relationship, take an apple seed and stick the seed to your forehead. Recite the alphabet. The letter you are saying when the seed falls is the initial you seek. Counting the seeds was also a form of divination. To find out what the future held, people would cut an apple in half and count the seeds in the core. If the seeds were even in number, good luck was coming. An odd number indicated a disappointment and cutting one of the seeds in half indicated that the future could hold hard lessons and uncertainty. I suppose playing with apples is one way of wasting time.

How about this? Chicory was believed to make a person invisible. Fuck me, I thought that was peyote? For this reason, chicory became a common accessory amongst travellers or gold prospectors and was carried in pockets. No, if you read tabloid newspapers, you might also want to mix it with Moonwort and Springwort as apparently it was useful for opening locks or removing obstacles. Huh? Especially if it had been gathered at midnight on July 25 or St James' day.

Nevada

Las Vegas is supposed to have more superstitions per head than anywhere else in the world. It is considered unlucky to play cards at a table with no green covers as they are thought to be the most auspicious. If gamblers are suffering from a bit of bad luck, getting up and walking around all the tables and chairs is expected to resolve this. I can understand this might bring luck whilst playing poker.

Texas

Girls from Texas carried toads around to attract love. Perhaps while going home alone on an unsuccessful Saturday night on the pull; it is worth seeing if a kiss does turn into Prince Charming.

Minnesota

Get this, another completely unbelievable and random superstition to increase paranoia in girls with thoughts of getting married. In St Cloud, take the front door key, insert it into a Bible at the Song of Solomon, and then tightly wrap it in some stockings. Support the Bible by placing your two third fingers under the key. If while she recited a text of Solomon and the bible turned under her supporting fingers, she would marry soon; if however the Bible did nothing, then she would die a spinster. Hah hah hah! An evil one no doubt.

Illinois

Here it has been believed that a child born with a double crown would live on two continents. However, in Georgia this superstition would represent the child acquiring a similar nature and disposition to those of the person who first carried him out of doors.

Connecticut

Discard your banana skin and contemplate the worst. You never know, a witch could retrieve it, burn it, resulting in you dieing a very painful death. That is why bananas are the most eaten fruit in the world and there is so much evil! If you chuck your skin into a bin, I doubt the witch really wants to rummage around in all that other crap just to make sure you have a very painful death. So eating bananas is a safe bet?

New England

Rain before seven, clear before 'leven; sun at seven, rain at 'leven. Simple as that. Alternatively, how about, onion's skin very thin, mild winter coming in, onion's skin very tough, coming winter cold and rough. Stop, collaborate and listen, Ice ice believing it! Or red in the morning, sailors take warning, red at night, sailor's delight. This isn't a superstition, just common sense and unless you have skin as thin as an onion's and not too close to the skin of custard from school dinners, you should be all right.

Maine

An old saying from Portland declared. Beware of that man, be he friend or brother, whose hair is one colour and moustache another. Collars and cuffs?

Ireland

If you are a guy, steal a hair from the head of your beloved, take it to Ireland and, thread it on a needle, then dig up a corpse and pass the needle through the arm. This will make you completely irresistible to the girl. You zombie.

A white horse is believed to give the owner special powers in curing illnesses. However, the catch is that the horse has to be ridden at the time of consultation to actually work.

Scotland

Whilst playing cards, a run of black spade cards has been regarded as an omen of death or disaster. It is believed that Mary Queen of Scots had her execution forecast by spade cards. Donald Campbell was playing cards the day before he died breaking the "world water speed record," he picked an ace of spades and then the queen of spades. But sounds like Donald got a good hand, what did he win? A boat? A cursed one that the owner possibly couldn't wait to get rid of. Why not play with three houses instead to take away the looming possibility. Or "Top Trumps" perhaps make up a whole new suit called shovel. This book is supposed to be optimistic, giving good ways to really change your fortune – okay, if you are royalty or about to take part in a feat of extreme bravery for your own ego boost, don't play with cards, play with matches instead. Make that a lasting thought and don't forget to roll naked in the dewy grass at Beltane!