

■ What are the most common superstitions in Britain? –

There are many superstitions in Britain, but one of the most widely held is that it is unlucky to walk under a ladder - even if it means stepping off the pavement into a busy street.

If you must pass under a ladder you can avoid bad luck by crossing your fingers and keeping them this way until you have seen a dog.

Alternatively you must lick your finger and make a cross on the toe of your shoe, and not look again at the shoe until the mark has dried.

Another common superstition is that it is unlucky to open an umbrella in the house - it will either bring misfortune to the person that opened it or to the household.

Anyone opening an umbrella in fine weather is unpopular, as it inevitably brings rain!

The number 13 is said to be unlucky for some reason, and if the 13th day of the month falls on a Friday, and one wishes to avoid an suspicious event had better stay indoors.

The worst misfortune can be for you to break a mirror as it brings seven years of bad luck.

The superstition is supposed to have originated in ancient times, when mirrors were considered to be tools of the gods.

Black cats are generally considered lucky in Britain, even though they are associated with witches. It is especially lucky if a black cat crosses your path - although in America they believe the opposite.

Exercises:

1 Can you mention some Hungarian superstitions in connection with the subjects above?

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2 Can you mention some others? Briefly describe them.

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