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**Julia Vitko**

Poltava National Technical Yuri Kondratiuk University  
Scientific advisor: Anna KonstantynovnaPaveleyeva

### **BRITISH SUPERSTITIONS**

Superstition is a belief in a non-physical (i.e. supernatural) causality: that one event causes another without any physical process linking the two events. The word 'Superstition' comes from the Latin 'super' which means 'above', and 'stare' which means to stand. Those who survived in a battle were called 'superstitians', since they had outlived their fellow warriors and therefore stood above them. "All superstition has grown from something, there is no smoke without fire. Who was the first one to decide that opening an umbrella in a house is bad luck? Who was the first to walk under a ladder and suffer the consequences? Who hung a horseshoe the wrong way up, smashed a mirror and spilled the salt? Who first branded Friday 13th as a day on which luck would run out?", - affirms P. Lorie [5, p. 17]. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries life was hazardous, and the central feature of day-to-day existence was a preoccupation with finding explanations for fortune and misfortune. Religion, diseases and fire might have been the most essential elements in the background of the beliefs of superstition. Even nowadays superstition is still with us as a tradition.

Superstition is a part of British culture today. Although superstition was more alive a hundred years ago, there are still superstitious people around, both young and old. Some people though, clame not to be superstitious, but it is still a part of them. There are many superstitions in Britain, and even those who think they are nonsense often follow them "just in case". They make British people act in strange ways, believe in odd things and leave them unable to explain reasons why.

One of the most widely-held superstitions in Great Britain is that it is unlucky to open an umbrella in the house, as it will either bring misfortune to the person that opened it or to the household. The person who opens an umbrella in fine weather is very unpopular. Like we, British people believe, that the number 13 is unlucky and when the 13th day of the month falls on a Friday, most of the people prefer to stay at home.

Like in Ukraine, it's lucky to find a clover plant with four leaves or to hang a horseshoe over the door the right way up and it's very unlucky to cut fingernails on a Friday or Sunday or to walk under a ladder. If you must pass under a ladder you can avoid bad luck by crossing your finger and keeping them crossed until you've seen a dog. Unlike our country, it is lucky in Great Britain to meet a black cat. Black cats may even be seen on many greeting and birthday cards in Britain.

The worst misfortune that can befall you is breaking a mirror, what will bring you seven years of bad luck. This superstition is supposed to have originated in ancient times, when mirrors were considered to be tools of the gods. And at last there is a superstition of touching wood for luck. This measure is most often taken in Britain if you have said or done something wrong or stupid.

A great deal of British superstitions is connected with parts of the body. For example, red hair is associated with fiery-tempered people (e.g. Cleopatra and Queen Elizabeth I). It is also said to be unlucky to have your hair cut when the moon is in the wane as this will cause it to fall out and lose its luster. If you bite your tongue while you are eating then you have recently told a lie. It is not advisable to eat anything when a funeral bell is tolling or toothache will follow. The British also think that laughter before breakfast will end in tears before supper.

From the time of Edward the Confessor, kings of England are said to have had the power to 'heal by touch'. Conversely, the hand of an executed criminal, cut from his body while still on the gallows, was said to have healing powers as well as providing its owners with the ability to commit crime and robbery without fear of detection by stupefying all those who saw it. If the palm of your right hand itches you will receive money; if the left palm, you will lose some ('left, lose; right, receive'). Two people should never wash their hands together in the same water - this will lead to a quarrel between them.

Even signs of disease cause strange, to our opinion, omens. People in Britain are sure, that sneezing 'once foreshadows a wish, twice a kiss, three a letter, four something better'. In Scotland, a newborn child is said to remain under 'the fairy spells' until it has sneezed for the first time. It was also

believed that an idiot could not sneeze, so that a child's first sneeze was important from this point of view. Yawning can lead to evil spirits entering the body unless you cover your mouth with your hand and shiver means that someone is walking over your (eventual) grave.

There are hundreds of superstitions, widely-spread on the British Isles, connected with things, weather, laws of nature, human body, birds and animals, holidays and even tea leaves and tea drinking. All of them are very interesting and unusual and some are even opposite to Ukrainian superstitions, what makes them unique and awesome.

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**Zimnukhova Kate**

Kerch Institute of Economics and Humanities  
Tavrida National University named after V.I. Vernadsky  
Scientific advisor: Yenygen D.V.

#### NEW ZEALAND CULTURE TIPS

**New Zealand** is an island country in the south-western Pacific Ocean comprising two main landmasses (the North Island and the South Island) and numerous smaller islands.

##### **Culture of New Zealand**

Early Māori adapted the tropically-based east Polynesian culture in line with the challenges associated with a larger and more diverse environment, eventually developing their own distinctive culture. Social organisation was largely communal with families (whanau), sub-tribes (hapu) and tribes (iwi) ruled by a chief (rangatira) whose position was subject to the community's approval.

The British and Irish immigrants brought aspects of their own culture to New Zealand and also influenced Māori culture, particularly with the introduction of Christianity. However, Māori still regard their allegiance to tribal groups as a vital part of their identity, and Māori kinship roles resemble those of other Polynesian people.

More recently American, Australian, Asian and other European cultures have exerted influence on New Zealand. Non-Māori Polynesian cultures are also apparent, with Pacifica, the world's largest Polynesian festival, now an annual event in Auckland.

The largely rural life in early New Zealand led to the image of New Zealanders being rugged, industrious problem solvers. Modesty was expected and enforced through the "tall poppy syndrome", where high achievers received harsh criticism. At the time New Zealand was not known as an intellectual country. From the early 20th century until the late 1960s Māori culture was suppressed by the attempted assimilation of Māori into British New Zealanders. In the 1960s, as higher education became more available and cities expanded urban culture began to dominate. Even though the majority of the population now lives in cities, much of New Zealand's art, literature, film and humour has rural themes.

#### ESP

**Helen Aboleshina**

Kerch Institute of Economics and Humanities  
of Tavrida National University  
Scientific advisor: S.Chernikova