



A Dictionary of Superstitions

Iona Opie (Editor), Moira Tatem

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Is it good or bad luck to mention a pig to a fisherman? What does it portend when you break a double-yolked egg? Or when you witness a headless shadow? How many frogs do you need to cure whooping cough? And what's all this about black cats?

Ranging from the familiar to the bizarre, and including everything from spells and omens to rituals and taboos, this delightfully informative dictionary covers a wide array of popular superstitions, touching on virtually every aspect of human culture. They embrace family life and the lore of farmers, sailors, miners, and actors; offer advice on the signs to observe when contemplating a journey or a marriage; reveal the significance of animals, plants, stones, colors, food and drink, the elements, and heavenly bodies; outline the precautions to be taken after a death in the house or during a thunderstorm; and disclose the motives behind seasonal customs at New Year, in May, at Halloween, and Christmas. Each entry is arranged alphabetically according to its central idea or object, and illustrated with a selection of chronologically ordered quotations that indicate the history and development of each belief. And a thematic index helps the reader discover surprisingly coherent patterns in these mysterious and often misunderstood methods of comprehending the world and overcoming its perils, and shows the strong underlying connections with witchcraft and pagan religions.

Superstitions have never before been treated in such depth or on such a scale. An entertaining volume for anyone curious about the beliefs of the past, *A Dictionary of Superstitions* also makes a valuable contribution to the study of folklore, providing the first systematic account of beliefs that form an integral part of our social life.

A Dictionary of Superstitions Details

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Sammich says

Learned a lot about where most if not all superstitions stem from. I also learned about how crazy the world is. Did you know that if you have a latern on your dinner table then you're dooming your cattle to die?

DUN DUN DUUUUN

Jeff Beland says

One of my favorite reference books for superstitions.

Genean says

This book reads like few others. Long held superstitions based on various subjects are sourced back to their further most quotes and reflected upon. Some of the explanations are eye opening yet many help when unravelling such things as 'nonsense poems'. This is not to be mistaken for a symbols dictionary. For all the wives tales told in the past there are some that resonate with our current sense of expression. This book is for those interested in that derivation.
