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## LESSON NOTES

# Culture Class: Italian Superstitions and Beliefs #1

## Seeing a Black Cat and Finding a Ladybug

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## CONTENTS

- 2 Italian
- 2 English
- 2 Vocabulary
- 2 Sample Sentences
- 3 Cultural Insight

# 1

# ITALIAN

1. incrociare un gatto nero
2. trovare una coccinella

# ENGLISH

1. meeting a black cat
2. finding a ladybug

## VOCABULARY

Italian	English	Class	Gender
gatto	cat	noun	masculine
nero	black	adjective	masculine
coccinella	lady bug	noun	feminine
desiderio	wish	noun	masculine

## SAMPLE SENTENCES

<b>Avevo un gatto nero.</b> "I had a black cat."	<b>Gli Italiani credono che se un gatto si lava dietro le orecchie pioverà.</b> "Italian people believe that if a cat washes behind its ears, it will rain."
<b>Il nero è il colore del lutto.</b> "Black is the color of mourning."	<b>Io non ho vestiti neri.</b> "I don't have black clothes."

<p><b>Voglio comprare un paio di scarpe nere.</b></p> <p>"I want to buy a pair of black shoes."</p>	<p><b>I gatti neri non portano sfortuna.</b></p> <p>"Black cats don't bring bad luck."</p>
<p><b>Le coccinelle sono rosse a puntini neri.</b></p> <p>"Ladybugs are red with black spots."</p>	<p><b>Quando incontri una coccinella significa che sei fortunato.</b></p> <p>"When you meet a lady bug, it means you are lucky."</p>
<p><b>Esprimi un desiderio.</b></p> <p>"Make a wish."</p>	

## CULTURAL INSIGHT

### ***Incrocicare un gatto nero - "Meeting a black cat"***

In Italy, it's believed that a black cat is an omen of bad luck, especially if it crosses your path. It's because in the past, black cats were often thought to be witches' accomplices. Some people even believed that the Devil himself could transform into a black cat.

### ***Trovare una coccinella - "Finding a ladybug"***

In Italy, it's believed that a ladybug will bring you good luck. Don't kill it, or you'll have bad luck instead! If a ladybug lands on your fingertip and you can make a wish before it flies away, your wish will be granted.

## LESSON NOTES

# Culture Class: Italian Superstitions and Beliefs #2

## Walking Under Ladders and the Horns Gesture

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- 2 Italian
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- 2 Cultural Insight

# 2

# ITALIAN

1. passare sotto una scala
2. fare le corna

# ENGLISH

1. walking under a ladder
2. making the horns gesture

## VOCABULARY

Italian	English	Class	Gender
scala	ladder	noun	feminine
sfortuna	misfortune	noun	feminine
corna	horns	noun	feminine
scaramantico	propitiatory	adjective	

## SAMPLE SENTENCES

<b>Sono salito sulla scala.</b> "I climbed on the ladder."	<b>Non credo alla sfortuna.</b> "I don't believe in misfortune."
<b>I tori hanno le corna.</b> "Bulls have horns."	<b>È un gesto scaramantico.</b> "It's a propitiatory gesture."

## CULTURAL INSIGHT

## ***Passare sotto una scala - "Walking under a ladder"***

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In Italy, it's believed that walking under a ladder will bring you misfortune. This is because, when leaned against a wall, it forms a triangle (ladder, wall, ground), which is the symbol of the Holy Trinity. Thus, walking through the triangle is considered akin to blasphemy.

## ***Fare le corna - "Making the horns gesture"***

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In Italy, it's believed that making horns with your fingers pointing down can ward off bad luck. This propitiatory gesture is to protect yourself against ill fate, and it's similar to *toccare ferro* ("touching iron"), the Italian equivalent of touching wood.

## LESSON NOTES

# Culture Class: Italian Superstitions and Beliefs #3

## Friday the 17th and the Number 13

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- 2 Italian
- 2 English
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- 3 Cultural Insight

# 3



# ITALIAN

1. venerdì 17
2. numero 13

# ENGLISH

1. Friday the 17th
2. number 13

# VOCABULARY

Italian	English	Class	Gender
venerdì	Friday	noun	masculine
lapide	tombstone	noun	feminine
numero	number	noun	masculine
tavola	table, board	noun	feminine

# SAMPLE SENTENCES

<b>Venerdì è il giorno dopo giovedì.</b> "Friday is the day after Thursday."	<b>Domani è venerdì.</b> "Tomorrow is Friday."
<b>Venerdì sera andiamo in discoteca?</b> "Let's go to the disco Friday night."	<b>Sulla lapide c'è un'incisione.</b> "On the tombstone there's an inscription."

<p><b>Il tredici è un numero primo.</b></p> <p>"Thirteen is a prime number."</p>	<p><b>Qual è il numero di targa della tua macchina?</b></p> <p>"What's the number plate of your car?"</p>
<p><b>Ecco il mio numero.</b></p> <p>"Here's my number."</p>	<p><b>Sediamoci a tavola.</b></p> <p>"Let's sit at the table."</p>
<p><b>Aiutami a preparare la tavola.</b></p> <p>"Help me prepare the table."</p>	

## CULTURAL INSIGHT

### *Venerdì 17 - "Friday the 17th"*

In Italy, it's believed that Friday the 17th is an extremely unlucky day. It's because Friday is believed to be the day Jesus died on the cross. Also, in ancient Rome, 17 was written with the letters XVII, the same letters used to carve on tombstones meaning "I lived" (VIXI).

### *Numero 13 - "Number 13"*

In Italy, it's believed that 13 is a lucky number, especially when gambling. There are several exceptions to this. For example, 13 people sitting at the dinner table is considered bad luck. This is because there were 13 people at the table during the Last Supper, and then Jesus was betrayed.

## LESSON NOTES

# Culture Class: Italian Superstitions and Beliefs #4

## Breaking a Mirror and a Little Red Horn

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# 4

# ITALIAN

1. rompere uno specchio
2. cornetto rosso

# ENGLISH

1. breaking a mirror
2. little red horn

## VOCABULARY

Italian	English	Class	Gender
rompere	to break	verb	
cornetto	little horn	noun	masculine
malocchio	evil eye	noun	masculine
specchio	mirror	noun	masculine

## SAMPLE SENTENCES

<b>Rompere uno specchio porta sfortuna.</b> "Breaking a mirror is bad luck."	<b>Questo cornetto è un amuleto.</b> "This little horn is an amulet."
<b>Il malocchio è una specie di maledizione.</b> "The evil eye is a sort of curse."	<b>Lo specchio è appeso alla parete.</b> "The mirror is hanging on the wall."
<b>Hai rotto lo specchio.</b> "You broke the mirror."	

# CULTURAL INSIGHT

## ***Rompere uno specchio* - "Breaking a mirror"**

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In Italy, it's believed that if you break a mirror, you'll have 7 years of bad luck. One possible explanation is that the Romans believed that when a person looked into a mirror, their soul was transferred into it. If the mirror was damaged, the soul would be damaged too.

## ***Cornetto rosso* - "Little red horn"**

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In Italy, a little horn is considered an amulet of good luck. It resembles a chili pepper, and though it's usually red, it can also be made of gold or silver. People, especially in Southern Italy, may wear it for protection against the evil eye or hang it in the car to prevent accidents.

## LESSON NOTES

# Culture Class: Italian Superstitions and Beliefs #5

## Spilling Salt and Finding a Four-Leaf Clover

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# 5

# ITALIAN

1. rovesciare il sale
2. trovare un quadrifoglio

# ENGLISH

1. spilling salt
2. finding a four-leaf clover

## VOCABULARY

Italian	English	Class	Gender
rovesciare	to spill	verb	
quadrifoglio	four-leaf clover	noun	masculine
portafortuna	good luck charm	noun	masculine
sale	salt	noun	masculine

## SAMPLE SENTENCES

<b>Giuda rovesciò il sale.</b> "Judas spilled the salt."	<b>Ho trovato un quadrifoglio!</b> "I found a four-leaf clover!"
<b>Questo è il mio portafortuna.</b> "This is my good luck charm."	<b>Nel Medioevo il sale era prezioso.</b> "In the Middle Ages salt was valuable."
<b>Aggiungi solo un pò di sale.</b> "Just add a bit of salt."	

# CULTURAL INSIGHT

## ***Rovesciare il sale - "Spilling salt"***

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In Italy, it's believed that spilling salt on the table will bring you bad luck. This is because, in ancient times, salt was an extremely valuable commodity. Even Leonardo da Vinci must have been aware of this superstition, because in *The Last Supper* he chose to portray Judas spilling the salt.

## ***Trovare un quadrifoglio - "Finding a four-leaf clover"***

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In Italy, it's believed that if you find a four-leaf clover, you should keep it because it's a good luck charm. This is because clovers usually have three leaves, and four-leaf clovers are extremely rare to find.