

EVERYDAY LIFE

Age: Teen/Adult

Level: Upper-intermediate–Advanced (B2-C1)

Time: 60–90 minutes

Activity: In this lesson, students will:

1. discuss and read about superstitions;
2. identify common features of ‘clickbait’ articles and ‘listicles’;
3. practise writing a text for entertainment.

Language focus: Vocabulary related to superstitions, features of texts written to entertain (hyperbole, sarcasm, etc)

Materials: One copy of the worksheet and reading text per student; one copy of the Warmer handout if using option 1 of the warmer, or blank paper if using option 2; one copy of the Phrase cut-ups handout per pair of students for Exercise 5 (optional); internet access for Exercise 6.

PROCEDURE

Warmer

Both options 1 and 2 are designed to activate students’ prior knowledge of this topic.

Option 1: Give students the Warmer handout. Students discuss the images together and decide what the theme of the lesson is. Answers might vary, but they will likely conclude that ‘luck’, or ‘good/bad luck’ is the theme. At this point, you can teach the word ‘superstition’ if it is unknown.

The Macmillan English dictionary definition of superstition: *a belief that things such as magic or luck have the power to affect your life.*

Once the theme of the lesson has been elicited/explained, ask the students to see if they can divide up the images into those which are lucky and those which are unlucky. (Be careful – some images represent both good and bad luck depending on the country).

Key:

umbrella – opening an umbrella inside a building is considered unlucky

broken mirror – unlucky

rabbit – lucky

salt – lucky

mixed images photo – the single magpie, black cat, broken mirror, walking across cracks in the pavement and walking under a ladder are all considered unlucky (though a black cat is also considered lucky in some countries, including the UK)

Friday 13th – unlucky

knocking on wood – lucky

four-leaf clover – lucky

horse shoe – depending on the country/culture, and which way up it is placed, this can be either lucky or unlucky

Option 2: Dictate the following words. Students write them either in a notebook or on blank paper provided by the teacher.

umbrella, rabbit, salt, black cat, mirror, thirteen, ladder, bird poo

Clarify the meaning of any unknown words, and check spelling if necessary.

Working in pairs, ask students to organise the words into two categories. Don’t say what the categories are (i.e. don’t mention good or bad luck). They might come up with different, creative ideas, or they might notice the topic of the lesson.

After feeding back on the students’ categories, announce the correct answer / theme of the lesson: superstitions.

Key (possible answers):

Good luck signs/symbols

Rabbit – saying rabbit on the first day of the month

Bird poo – being pooped on by a bird

Salt – throwing spilt salt over your shoulder

Bad luck signs/symbols

Umbrella – opening an umbrella indoors

Black cat – a black cat crossing your path (this is also good luck in some cultures)

Mirror – breaking a mirror is seven years bad luck

Thirteen – an unlucky number in some cultures

Ladder – walking under a ladder

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Exercise 1

Students discuss the questions in pairs.

Exercise 2

This lesson focuses on two types of entertainment texts: **clickbait** and **listicles**. The following are the Macmillan English Dictionary definitions of these two types of article:

listicle: an article, especially on the internet, that consists of a list of separate items rather than a continuous text.

clickbait: a link on a website that is designed to catch people's attention and encourage them to read on.

Part a is a preview task, which orientates students to the text and activates existing knowledge of this text type (clickbait, listicles). Do not hand out the text at this stage, just ask students to read the text title only.

Key (possible answers):

1. You might find this text online; this might be an article widely shared on social media.
2. The purpose of the text might be to entertain.
3. The title suggests that this article will be in a list format; it may include short paragraphs describing each item in the 'top 5' list.
4. The text probably won't be serious; it might be chatty or informal, as if the writer is speaking to the audience.

Students then read the text for gist to check their predictions, and discuss their findings in pairs.

Part b is a comprehension task. Students answer the comprehension questions according to the text.

Key:

1. Online subscribers to the website – the article is based on data gathered from a poll of online subscribers.
2. Respondents completed a survey, ranking superstitions based on how believable they were. Respondents were also encouraged to comment further about each superstition.
3. If you break a mirror you get seven years bad luck – 'a massive 90% of subscribers ... believed that'.

4. One – *never wear blue on a Thursday*. This superstition was invented by the writer/website to trick subscribers.

Exercise 3

The purpose of **part a** is to highlight some vocabulary in the article that may be new for the learners, depending on their level. If learners need extra support with this, direct them to the vocabulary in the text first. Tell them to scan the text to find the following words and underline them:

gullible, ranked, massive, prove, proof, a thing of the past

Note: The words in the text in bold are NOT possible answers. They are used in Exercise 4.

Students match each word to its definition, using the context to help if needed. For more challenge, leave learners to find the possible word/phrase themselves without directing them to possible options.

Key:

1. **rank** (v) = give something a place within a grading system
2. **proof** (n) = evidence
3. **massive** (adj) = huge, really big
4. **prove** (v) = find evidence that something is true
5. **a thing of the past** = something that no longer happens or exists
6. **gullible** (adj) = describing someone who is easy to trick

In **part b**, students complete the questions with some of the words above. They should discuss their choices with a partner.

Key:

1. Do you think you're a **gullible** person? Why / Why not?
2. How would you **rank** each of the superstitions from the article, based on the scale mentioned?
3. Where is the **proof** that man really walked on the moon?
4. Do you think that mobile phones will become a **thing of the past**? Why / Why not?

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Exercise 4

This activity exploits the use of different word forms in the text – for example, ‘prove’ and ‘proof’. It is a reminder to students that when they learn a new word they may in fact be learning three or four new words at the same time. It is good to encourage students to explore the new vocabulary they encounter to see if there are different word forms from the same root, or if there are any interesting collocates with the new word.

If you feel your students already record vocabulary in an effective way then it might be worth skipping this activity. If not, direct learners to the words in the text in **bold**. They add these to the appropriate column in the table (using the examples to guide them), and then decide/research other forms of these words.

Key (some possible answers):

Noun	Verb	Adjective	Adverb	Collocations/other
proof	prove (something)	proven		We can ‘disprove’ things too: find out that they are not true
ranking	rank (something)			world ranking (e.g. in sport)
superstition		superstitious		
science		scientific	scientifically	scientific research scientific evidence Popular science
truth		truthful	truthfully	tell the truth
stupidity		stupid	stupidly	stupid idea

Tips for the study skills activity

- Remind students that ‘knowing’ a word includes knowing how to pronounce it. You can model the correct pronunciation for them, and they can mark things like word stress. Alternatively, they can research this themselves in a dictionary. A useful website which has many examples of words used in natural spoken situations is www.youglsh.com
- A simple website for identifying common collocations of a word is www.just-the-word.com

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Exercise 5

This activity highlights some of the techniques used by the writer to engage readers. These are common features of texts written to entertain. Tell students to search for examples of each technique or feature in the text. When they finish (and have checked together) they could discuss any other features they feel are used by the writer.

Key (possible answers):

Feature	Example(s)
The writer directly addresses the reader to make the text feel more personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A massive 90% of our subscribers (that probably means you) ... Or, maybe half of you are just gullible
The writer uses rhetorical questions. These are not meant to be answered; they are used to engage the reader or get them thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Superstitions are a thing of the past, right?
The writer changes the formatting and style of the text to draw attention to certain features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Top 5 superstitions that people STILL believe! <p><i>The writer's (over)use of exclamations may also be identified</i></p>
The writer uses an informal, chatty tone to seem more personal	<p><i>There is evidence of this throughout the text. Examples include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rubbish! I don't believe that for a second! Contractions such as <i>you'll</i> Informal phrases like 'That sounds a bit extreme ...', and 'Yeah ...'

The writer uses sarcasm, which adds humour to the text

- They ranked each superstition on *our highly scientific scale*
- One helpful user wrote: 'because it is'. Thanks for that.

The writer uses hyperbole (exaggeration) to emphasise their point

- Here's the proof that people will believe anything.

Identifying these features may be a difficult task for some students. You can use the Phrase cut-ups handout to support them if needed. They can then search the text for other possible examples to add to their table.

Exercise 6

This activity is a chance for learners to apply what they have learnt about clickbait and listicles. Students can work alone or in pairs – they might prefer the support of working with a partner as the task is quite challenging. They may need access to the internet to research before writing their article (alternatively, this can be done as homework).

Students choose a topic and write a short 'listicle', in a similar style to the model text. Encourage them to include features of the model text as identified in Exercise 5. They could also try to include any new language or phrase from other stages of the lesson.

When they finish writing, have students peer correct each other's work. You may wish to create a checklist to highlight the success criteria for this task. See the Success criteria handout as an example, which you can use.

Students can offer feedback to each other on how effective their texts is, and how it could be improved. Finish by allowing students to read each other's texts and deciding which one they think is the most engaging and why.