

Friday the 13th is considered a day in which bad things occur. It is a superstition. A superstition is a belief of something ominous without actual reason. The origin of this superstition is unclear. Both Friday and the number 13 have been considered unlucky for hundreds of years. Bad luck associated with the number 13 may have biblical roots. Some believe Eve bit the apple from the Tree of Knowledge on the 13th day. Others point to the idea that there were 13 people present for Jesus's Last Supper, the day before Good Friday. The number 13 was considered so unlucky, that many hotels and buildings were built without a 13th floor! It wasn't until the 20th century, however, that Friday and "13" were paired together in bad luck. In 1907, author Thomas Lawson wrote *Friday, the Thirteenth*. The book was about a stock broker who purposely caused the stock market to crash on that day.

The Friday the 13th superstition, however, gained serious traction with the *Friday the 13th* horror film series. Originally released in 1980, the story centers around the "ghost" of Jason Voorhees. In the movie, Jason, with his iconic hockey mask, hunts the hapless characters who come to vacation at Crystal Lake – the lake he drowned in as a child. Twelve movies later, the *Friday the 13th* series remains one of the most successful horror film franchises in history.

Is Friday the 13th actually unlucky compared to other days? Not really. There is no actual evidence to suggest that events that have occurred on Friday the 13th throughout history are worse than events that have occurred on other days. Some studies have shown that Friday the 13th is actually safer than other days, because people are more anxious and attentive. People may actually find Friday the 13th to be lucky. It is thought that air travel is cheaper and booking a wedding is much cheaper on Friday the 13th than other days. It is clear, however, that Friday the 13th will be around for a long time. Over the next 4,800 months, the 13th will occur on Friday more than any other day!

1. Which of the following is a superstition?

- A. Eating a lot of fatty foods can lead to heart problems
- B. Stepping on a sidewalk crack can cause injury to someone far away
- C. Sleeping less than eight hours per night can lead to poor health outcomes
- D. Texting and driving can be very dangerous to others on the road

2. When were Friday and the number 13 first paired together in bad luck?

- A. In the Bible
- B. When Eve bit the apple
- C. The Last Supper
- D. The 20th century

3. What does “traction” mean in the following sentence?

The Friday the 13th superstition, however, gained serious traction with the *Friday the 13th* horror film series.

- A. fiction
- B. popularity
- C. disbelief
- D. excitement

4. What is implied in the final sentence of the second paragraph?

- A. People really believed that Jason Voorhees was real
- B. People were really entertained by the Friday the 13th movies
- C. People really believe that Friday the 13th is an unlucky day
- D. All of the above

5. Evidence suggests...

- A. Friday the 13th is no more dangerous or unlucky than other days
- B. Friday the 13th is more dangerous and unlucky than other days
- C. Friday the 13th is the most dangerous day of the year
- D. Friday the 13th is actually less safe than other days that fall on the 13th

6. Why might flights be cheaper on Friday the 13th?

- A. Because pilots don't like to fly on Friday the 13th
- B. It is harder for airlines to sell tickets on Friday the 13th
- C. Airlines are trying to get people to stop believing in superstitions
- D. Evidence has shown that more airline crashes occur on Friday the 13th

7. If the answer to a question is “because people are more anxious or attentive,” what might the question be?

- A. Why is Friday the 13th so scary to people?
- B. What evidence is there to show Friday the 13th is more dangerous than other days?
- C. Why do more people crash their cars on Friday the 13th?
- D. Why might Friday the 13th actually prove safer than other days?

