

Read the text carefully and do the exercises below:

AN UNLUCKY DAY

Do you think Friday the 13th is particularly unlucky? If so, you're not alone. Forty-one per cent of British people worry about what might happen on this date, and four per cent dread it.

Where does the superstition about Friday the 13th come from? Some people point to the fact that many ancient cultures feared Friday and the number 13. For instance, in ancient Rome, Friday was the day for executions. Jesus was crucified on Good Friday, and there were 13 people at the Last Supper. The Hindus believed that it was unlucky for 13 people to gather in one place. The ancient Egyptians associated the number 13 with death. However, before the 19th century, there is no evidence that people feared Friday the 13th. Therefore, some scholars conclude that the superstitions about Friday the 13th are a modern phenomenon.

Today, because of this superstition, some people in Britain stay home on Friday the 13th in order to avoid having an accident. The likelihood of a road accident is, in fact, according to a study in a medical journal, 50 per cent higher on Friday the 13th. Researchers believe that this is due to drivers being especially nervous. The fact that the number of people killed in air crashes is just average on this day helps to support the researchers' claim. Also, a number of famous catastrophes have occurred on Friday the 13th, yet just as many disasters have happened on other dates. Based on the statistics, there is no reason to fear Friday the 13th.

But try telling that to Bob Renphrey, a British man who has had more than his share of bad luck on Friday the 13th. On this date, Bob has been run over by a motorbike, suffered five car crashes, fallen through a glass door and been fired from his job. One year a television station wanted to interview him about his misadventures, but he refused, and instead stayed in bed all day. "There's no way I'm going anywhere tomorrow," he said. "It would be a disaster."

1 Answer the questions using your own words as much as possible:

Do a large majority of British people worry about Friday the 13th?

According to historical evidence, were people scared of Friday the 13th before the 1800s?

Are there more car crashes on Friday the 13th?

Why do you think that Bob Renphrey refused to go to the television interview?

What do **you** think about Friday the 13th (or Tuesday the 13th)?

2 Find words or expressions in the text that mean:

greatly fear

for example

meet together

possibility

bad luck