

УДК 398.3

**BRITISH AND BELARUSIAN SUPERSTITIONS: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES**

**Н.А. Кухарчук, В.М. Мелюх, 3 курс**

Научный руководитель – **Л.А. Изотова**, преподаватель

**Полесский государственный университет**

Superstitions have been an intriguing aspect of human life throughout history, shaping beliefs and behaviors in diverse cultures worldwide. Thus, superstitions continue to influence people's everyday decisions and perceptions.

According to the Britannica Dictionary, a superstition is 'a belief or way of behaving that is based on fear of the unknown and faith in magic or luck: a belief that certain events or things will bring good or bad luck' [1]. In addition, in accordance with the definition given in Cambridge Dictionary superstition is 'a belief that is not based on human reason or scientific knowledge, but is connected with old ideas about magic, etc [2].

Superstitions are often confused with omens, because they are very similar in their construction. But there are significant differences between these two concepts. For the most part, the sign carries information about the obvious cause-and-effect relationships between one natural phenomenon and another, and superstition has a mystical subtext. Obviously, superstition is an extremely ancient phenomenon, directly related to mythological and magical thinking [3].

Both Great Britain and Belarus are known for the diversity of their culture, traditions and folklore. Quite a lot of superstition have arisen on folklore. The folklore in Great Britain and Belarus is very different, therefore, superstitions are also of different nature. It is also necessary to add that similarities and differences of superstitions in these countries depend also on how different the history of these two countries is and how different the territory of their habitation is. The problematic issue of our study is the analysis of the peculiarities of superstitions in Belarusian and English cultures.

Having studied the literature, we have identified the most popular superstitions that are common in both Britain and Belarus.

In Britain and Belarus, many superstitions are associated with mirrors. It is known that a broken mirror brings misfortune, illness and even the death of a close relative. In English, it sounds like this: 'Breaking a mirror equals 7 years of bad luck' (*'Разбитое зеркало – 7 лет несчастья'*) [4]. It was believed that the mirror reflects not the body of a person, but his soul, so if you break the mirror, the soul of a person breaks [3].

Aside from that, of particular importance in both countries are the superstitions relating to wedding ceremonies. The most famous wedding superstition is the tossing of the bride's bouquet. In English, it sounds like: 'If a girl catches the bride's bouquet after a wedding, she will be next to merry' (*'Если девушка поймает букет невесты на свадьбе, она следующая выйдет замуж'*) [4]. That's why both young British and Belarusian women try to catch the bride's bouquet at the wedding. It is important to note that it was not always the bouquet that was thrown. In some parts of England, it was a cake or a head of cheese and even the bride's stocking.

There are also superstitions about wedding dates. For example, many people in Belarus and Britain believe that it is impossible to get married during Lent. In this case there is a saying 'If you merry in Lent, you will live to repent' (*'Кто в пост женится, всю жизнь кается'*). Moreover, the day of the week should be chosen thoughtfully, in Britain there is a saying 'Monday for health, Tuesday for wealth, Wednesday best of all, Thursday for losses, Friday for crosses, Saturday for no luck at all' (*'Понедельник – к счастью, вторник – к богатству, среда – лучший день для свадьбы, четверг – к потерям, пятница – к ссорам, суббота – к неудачам'*) [5].

There is another interesting superstition concerning the bride's dress: 'Married in white, you have chosen right; married in black, you'll wish yourself back' (*'В платье ты белом – выбор твой верный, черное возьмишь – от мужа уйдешь'*) [5].

Moreover, similarities in superstitions associated with the number 13 are evident in both Britain and Belarus. In both cultures, the number 13 is seen as hapless and bringing bad luck. In Britain, this superstition manifests itself, for example, in the fact that many buildings skip the 13th floor by omitting it in the numbering, and in the fact that some people avoid gathering around a table of 13. In Belarus, the combination of the number 13 is also considered unfavourable, and many people try to avoid it when making important decisions or planning events.

In addition, both British and Belarusian cultures believe that scattering salt will result in bad luck and quarrels. There is a belief that if you scatter salt, you should throw some salt over your left shoulder to ward off evil spirits or demons.

However, there are many differences between British and Belarusian superstitions. One of the most important differences is the interpretation of the superstition when a black cat runs across the road. If in Belarus it means bad luck, in Britain a black cat symbolises happiness and good luck. From the British point of view, it sounds like this: 'If a black cat crosses your path, you will have good luck' (*'Встретить чёрную кошку к удаче'*) [3].

Superstitions associated with the ladder have differences in perception and interpretation in Britain and Belarus. In Britain, it literally sounds like this: ‘Do not walk under the ladder’ (*Пройти под лестницей! – к несчастью*) [3]. It is believed that if you pass under the ladder, which is leaned against the house - a bad sign, because the ladder, the wall and the earth form a triangle - the symbol of the Trinity, so to pass through it - means to commit blasphemy. In turn, Belarus has its own superstition connected with the ladder. For example, there is a belief that if you climb the stairs holding a cracked handrail, you can attract bad luck and misfortune.

Another very British superstition is about umbrellas. In Britain it is said: ‘Do not open an umbrella indoors’ (*Открыть зонтик в помещении – к горю и дождю*) [3]. It is believed that opening an umbrella indoors can bring bad luck on a person, or at the very least bad weather. In Belarus, on the other hand, it is accepted to open an umbrella indoors to dry it out.

Besides that, there is also a superstition in Britain that if you scratch your left hand, you will give money away. In Belarus, it is believed that if you scratch your left hand, on the contrary, it promises great wealth.

Having analysed superstitions in Britain and Belarus, it must be admitted that there are similarities in common superstitions, such as beliefs about bad luck with a broken mirror or scattered salt. However, there are also differences in the superstitions of Belarus and Britain. This is because of the historical, cultural and religious peculiarities of each country. The differences are also influenced by the social and economic status of the country, the educational level of the population and geographical features. Although superstitions may be regarded as illogical beliefs, they play a significant role in shaping people's worldviews and behaviour.

### Literature

1. The Britannica Dictionary [Electronic resource] / Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. – Mode of access: <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/superstition>. – Date of access: 06.03.2024.
2. Cambridge Dictionary Online: Free English Dictionary and Thesaurus [Electronic resource] / Cambridge University Press & Assessment. – Mode of access: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/ru/>. – Date of access: 06.03.2024.
3. Differences between beliefs and superstitions [Electronic resource] / FernFlower Group. – Mode of access: <https://www.fern-flower.org/en/articles/differences-between-beliefs-and-superstitions>. – Date of access: 06.03.2024.
4. Объединенное королевство [Электронный ресурс] / Официальный сайт детского языкового Лагеря «Объединённое королевство». – Режим доступа: <https://ukcamp.ru/blog/>. – Дата доступа: 06.03.2024.
5. Lim English [Electronic resource] / Lim English. – Mode of access: <https://lim-english.com/posts/primety-i-sueveriya-v-velikobritanii/>. – Date of access: 06.03.2024.