

SHOES

The Agony and the Ecstasy

Shoe traditions from around the world

There are many traditions that relate to shoes. Some of the well known ones link to weddings as they are thought to bring good luck to the bride and groom. The best known wedding tradition which still takes place is to tie shoes to the back of the newlyweds' car. This has evolved from the Tudor custom where guests would throw shoes at the newlywed couple. It was considered lucky if they or their carriage were hit.



A less well known tradition is for the bride's father to give the groom a pair of the bride's shoes. This symbolises the passing of responsibility for the daughter from the father to her new husband. A variation of the custom is for the groom to tap the bride on the forehead with one of the shoes to assert his dominance.

Traditionally a bride will throw her bouquet over her shoulder. This ritual was originally performed with shoes instead of flowers. Young women wanting to marry may also throw a shoe over their shoulders and towards the door. If the shoe lands with its toe pointing towards the door, the girl will marry within a year.



Most cultures have traditions and customs related to shoes. In Europe shoes have been used as lucky charms in buildings. People have often found shoes that have been deliberately hidden in buildings; under floors, up chimneys and bricked up in walls. One of the shoes in the exhibition was discovered in the foundations of a building in Sunderland.

In Greece overturned shoes (soles up) are considered bad luck and possible omens of death. Luckily there is a remedy, if you should accidentally take your shoes off and they land soles up, turn them over immediately and say 'Skorda' (garlic)'.

A Jewish tradition, following a death in the family was to take their shoes out to the woods and throw them in all directions. Variations on this tradition state that shoes of a dead person should not be worn again. Today, some Jewish people will still destroy or throw a dead relative's shoes away rather than giving them to someone else to wear.

According to a Judaic rite, an unmarried brother-in-law of a childless widow is obliged to marry her. The widow can release him from this obligation by publicly removing a ritual halizah shoe from his foot. He is then free to marry someone else

The Christmas season also has its own traditions. Shoes should not be given as gifts, as this would mean your friends would walk away from you. However according to an old English custom, 'If you do not give a new pair of shoes to a poor person at least once in your lifetime, you will go barefoot in the next world' they are therefore often given to poor people at Christmas.

In Greece, burning old shoes during the Christmas season is said to prevent misfortunes in the coming year.

In the Islamic faith, worshippers are required to remove their shoes before entering a mosque. This avoids bringing the unclean world onto holy ground

In China, a child's shoe may be adorned with a fierce animal such as a tiger. The animal is meant to protect him from evil spirits.

A Native American custom was to put a hole in the sole of the shoes of an infant to let bad spirits escape.

An age-old funeral ritual is burying a pair of shoes with the deceased. Though no one knows the origin of the custom, it is perhaps in hope that the departed will walk comfortably in the after life.

It was a Chinese custom to toss the bride's red shoe upon the roof of the house on her wedding night as a sign of love and harmony.

A custom of the Zuni people of the United States Southwest was to have a woman's wedding boot made by her fiancé.

When a king dies, the Ashanti people of West Africa paint their sandals black. Japanese samurai warriors wore shoes made of bear fur, in the belief that the animal's strength could be transferred to the wearer.

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Shoe quotes

The range of associations that people have made with shoes can be seen in the variety of quotes that can be found which involve shoes. Here is a list of a few, ask the class if they can think of any more.

I cried because I had no shoes, then I met a man who had no feet.

Anonymous

Before you criticize someone, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way when you criticize them, you are a mile away from them and you have their shoes.

Anonymous

Three quarters of the miseries and misunderstandings in the world would finish if people were to put on the shoes of their adversaries and understood their points of view

Mahatma Gandhi

You never truly know someone until you've walked a mile in his shoes.

Anonymous

A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is still putting on its shoes

Mark Twain

Yet if a woman never lets herself go, how will she ever know how far she might have got? If she never takes off her high-heeled shoes, how will she ever know how far she could walk or how fast she could run?

Germaine Greer

Between saying and doing, many a pair of shoes is worn out.

Iris Murdoch

Always put yourself in others' shoes. If you feel it hurts you, it will probably hurt the other person, too.

Anonymous

Value yourself. The only people who appreciate a doormat are people with dirty shoes.

Anonymous

The true artist has the planet for his pedestal; the adventurer, after years of strife, has nothing broader than his shoes

Ralph Waldo Emerson

It is better to wear out one's shoes than one's sheets

Italian Proverb

I did not have three thousand pairs of shoes, I had one thousand and sixty.

Imelda Marcos

He that waits for a dead man's shoes may long go barefoot.

French Proverb

The cobbler always wears the worst shoes

Traditional Proverb

A man hasn't got a corner on virtue just because his shoes are shined.

Anne Petry

My shoes are special shoes for discerning feet.

Manolo Blahnik

Regular feet can't be affected by irregular shoes.

Chinese Proverbs

You will put on a dress of guilt and shoes with broken high ideals

Roger McGough

The shoe's on the other foot now

Traditional Proverb

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Shoe Website links

Please preview all sites before using with your group to ensure that they are suitable.

Useful shoe information sites

The exhibition website of **Shoes the Agony and the ecstasy**

www.twmuseums.org.uk/shoes

Bata shoe museum

<http://www.batashoemuseum.ca/>

A website related to a shoe exhibition lots of information about the history of shoes

<http://www.dundee.gov.uk/shoe/>

A site with a whole host of links to shoe resources on the web

<http://www.emints.org/ethemes/resources/S00000639.shtml>

Shoe lesson plans links

A lesson plan about looking at familiar objects from different viewpoints

<http://www.cdm.org/i/Resources/Articles/TAL-LookatYourShoe.pdf>

Creative writing lesson plan KS3

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=265

Drama and Dance lesson plan for KS2

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2272/>

Design technology lesson plan KS3/4

http://www.swe.org/iac/LP/triathlete_01.html

An art project all about shoes

<http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/middle/marsha-shoes.htm>

Links to shoe related lesson plans

<http://www.lessonplanet.com/search/newsearch?keywords=shoes&rating=&oldgrade=all&media=lessons&x=31&y=11>

Maths activity for KS1

http://www.eduref.org/cgi-bin/printlessons.cgi/Virtual/Lessons/Mathematics/Process_Skills/MPS0007.html