

# Moon facts and myths

There are many superstitions about the Moon. For example, in Roman mythology there was a Moon God and modern literature often talks about werewolves which show themselves when there is a full moon. Why are we so fascinated by the Moon?

Belief in the power of the Moon was very common in the past. Many people used to believe in 'Moon madness'. The Latin word for the Moon is 'Luna', and this is the origin of the words *lunatic*, meaning a mad person, and *lunacy*, meaning madness. Many people still believe that the Moon affects people's behaviour, especially a full moon. For example, they believe that animals bite people more, there is more violence and there are more murders during a full moon. However, there is no clear proof of this.

People also see a connection between the Moon and good things. We say 'I'm over the Moon' to say that we're very happy about something. Also, for centuries the full moon in folklore was a reason for celebration, especially before modern lighting, but that was possibly because the night is brightest when there is a full moon, which creates the best lighting for feeling carefree and having fun. Maybe this is why many ancient festivals took place when there was a full moon.

A 'Blue Moon' is the name for the second full moon in a calendar month. We probably call it a Blue Moon because when Krakatoa erupted in 1883, the volcano produced a lot of dust and the Moon actually looked blue in colour, which was very unusual, so people started to say 'once in a Blue Moon' for something that doesn't often happen. Because there are about 30 days between full moons, it is unusual to have two full moons in a month, so a Blue Moon is rare.

The Moon's orbit around the Earth is not exactly a circle. When the Moon is at its nearest point to the earth we call it a 'Supermoon'. At this time the Moon looks larger and brighter than normal. On 19 March 2011 there was a Supermoon and many people around the world looked at the sky to see this fascinating event.

People will always be interested in the Moon and there are already plans to send the first tourists into space in 2012, so there could be trips to the Moon in the future!

**1** Which paragraph in the text (1–6) talks about each of the following?

- |  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| 1 travelling to the Moon in the future   | paragraph _____ |
| 2 the Moon and positive things happening | paragraph _____ |
| 3 Supermoons                             | paragraph _____ |
| 4 the Moon and negative things happening | paragraph _____ |
| 5 Blue Moons                             | paragraph _____ |
| 6 a Moon God                             | paragraph _____ |

**2** Read the article and decide if the sentences are true (T) or false (F). Circle the correct statements and correct those that are false.

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1 It is sure that more negative things happen when there is a full moon. | T/F |
| 2 Many ancient festivals happened when there was a full moon.            | T/F |
| 3 There can be a Blue Moon in February.                                  | T/F |
| 4 Blue Moons are not common.   | T/F |
| 5 It is called a Supermoon when the Moon is nearest to the Earth.        | T/F |
| 6 Tourists will travel to the Moon in 2012.                              | T/F |

3 Complete the table with the missing comparatives and superlatives.

adjective	comparative	superlative		adjective	comparative	superlative
bright				good		
near				unusual		
large				common		

4 Complete the sentences using comparatives or superlatives from the table above.

- Many people believe crime is \_\_\_\_\_ when there is a full moon.
- When the Moon is at its \_\_\_\_\_ point to the Earth, it's called a Supermoon.
- The Moon looks \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ when it's a Supermoon.
- It's \_\_\_\_\_ to have two full moons in a month than just one full moon.
- A full moon is the \_\_\_\_\_ time to celebrate because the night is \_\_\_\_\_.

5 Match the prepositions from the box to their partner from the text.

by    about    about    about    for    for    in    in    of    of

- |                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 superstitions _____ | 6 origin _____     |
| 2 fascinated _____    | 7 proof _____      |
| 3 talk _____          | 8 reason _____     |
| 4 believe _____       | 9 interested _____ |
| 5 happy _____         | 10 name _____      |

6 Make sentences about the Moon using the word partnerships from exercise 5.

7 Discuss these questions with your partner(s).

- What was the most interesting or surprising thing you learned about the Moon?
- Do you have any expressions connected with the Moon in your language?
- Do you know any other myths about the Moon?
- Would you like to travel to the Moon?

## Glossary

- superstition (noun)** - a belief that things like magic or luck have the power to affect your life
- myth (noun)** - an ancient traditional story about gods, heroes, and magic
- mythology (noun)** - the study of myths
- full moon (noun)** - the Moon when it looks like a complete circle
- werewolf (noun)** - an imaginary creature who is human during the day but becomes a wolf at night when there is a full moon
- fascinated (adj)** - very interested or attracted by someone or something
- mad (adj)** - an impolite way to talk about someone who is mentally ill
- madness (noun)** - the state of being mad
- proof (noun)** - information or evidence that shows that something is definitely true
- century (noun)** - a period of 100 years
- folklore (noun)** - traditional stories and beliefs from a particular region or community
- carefree (adj)** - happy and without any worries, or problems
- calendar month (noun)** - one of the 12 periods of time we divide a year into, for example January, April, or December
- volcano (noun)** - a mountain that forces hot gas, rocks, ash, and lava (= melted rock) into the air through a hole at the top
- erupt (verb)** - if a volcano erupts, it explodes inside and flames, rocks, and lava come out of the top
- orbit (noun)** - the path taken by an object moving around a larger object in space