

## THE NUMBER 13

- Many people believe that the number 13, and particularly the date Friday 13th, are unlucky. Fear of the number 13 is called *triskaidekaphobia*.
- In hotels, floor and room numbers often go from 12 to 14, and airlines sometimes do the same with seat numbers. A survey found that 41% of people in Britain worry if the date is Friday 13th. In hospitals, many people refuse to have an operation on that date.
- Every Friday 13th, the members of the Philadelphia Friday 13th Club in the USA have lunch together. Afterwards, they break mirrors, walk under ladders, open umbrellas indoors and do lots of other 'unlucky' things.



- Robert Renphrey has had four accidents on Friday 13th. He has broken bones, fallen into a river, been injured by a motorbike and walked through a glass door. Now he stays in bed if the date is Friday 13th.



- Superstitious sailors often used to refuse to go to sea on Friday 13th. In 1791, the British government decided to prove that they were wrong. They started building a ship on Friday 13th. They called it *Friday* and its first journey began on a Friday. No one ever saw the ship or its crew again.

- The American President Franklin Roosevelt was very superstitious. He never travelled on the 13th of the month, unless he really had no choice.
- Some people believe that, if you have a party with 13 people, something bad will happen. Many years ago, at the Savoy Hotel in London, there were 13 guests at a dinner table. The host of the party later died. Since that time, when there is a group of 13 people having dinner at the hotel, the waiters make an extra place at the table for Kaspar, a black wooden cat.



## Tasks

### **A** Read the text, then answer the questions.

- 1 What percentage of British people believe that Friday 13th is unlucky?
- 2 Who tries to prove that they aren't afraid of Friday 13th?
- 3 Why does Robert Renphrey stay in bed on Friday 13th?
- 4 What happened to the ship *Friday*?
- 5 Why didn't Roosevelt like travelling on the 13th?
- 6 If you take 12 friends to dinner at the Savoy, what will the waiters do?
- 7 Who or what is Kaspar?

### **B** Talk about superstitions in Slovenia. Generally speaking, are Slovenians superstitious? Are older people more superstitious than young people? If you aren't sure, do some research in the library and on the internet.