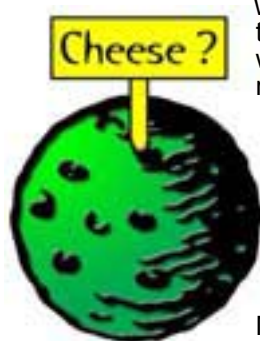


## Green Cheese?

**The Earth is flat and the Moon is made out of Green Cheese!**



What we once thought of as true, we know now is rubbish!

Did you know it's bad luck to kill a bee? Or that you should only have a hair cut in the 2 weeks following a New Moon? No? Well you must know that to protect a girl from evil, she should dress in red, or have a red ribbon in her hair. OK... at least you know that the Egyptian Pyramids were built by aliens from space!

All these kooky things, and thousands more, were once believed to be true. (In fact some people **still** believe the Egyptian Pyramids were built by aliens!) They were invented for many reasons, some of them based on common sense, like it's bad luck to walk under a ladder. While it's not really bad luck, it can be a little dangerous.

Most superstitions, myths and strange beliefs are now forgotten, lost in the flow of history. I guess those ones weren't true! Many others are also on the way out, no longer needed and just becoming plain silly. I'm sure you know of some yourself.

Imagine what the world was like for our ancestors, just 1000 years ago. They had no way of really testing many superstitions and it would not even cross their minds to do so! It was also thought to be a crime to question these things. This would still be the case today, but something came along, something also invented by humans, that began to change things.

Science and what's known as 'critical thinking' are the best methods we have to examine myths and superstitions. No one now really thinks the moon is made of green cheese! With science, anything can be questioned and people are no longer afraid to look for the real evidence behind strange beliefs. Most of the time, there is no evidence there at all.

The end of superstitions? Well, we can only keep our fingers crossed for luck!

## Bad Luck? – Behold 13

Gillian Investigates



**This article is so good, you'll want to read it 13 times!**

Have you ever had someone tell you never to step on the 13<sup>th</sup> stair, or sit on the number 13 seat, or have 13 people sitting at a table, because 13 is an unlucky number? It's believed by many people that, for a particular reason, having anything that results in the number 13 will result in immediate or eventual bad luck. But what kind of reasons are these?

The Ancient Egyptians, who believed that the number 13 meant good luck, rather than bad luck, originated the significance of the number 13. Their belief was that there were 12 steps up the ladder to eternal life and knowledge, and to take the thirteenth step meant going through death and into everlasting life. 13 was, for the Egyptians, associated with immortality.

13 being a symbol of bad luck came first from the Romans, who apparently found that the number 13 was associated with bad omens, particularly those resulting in death and destruction.

A common belief as to why the number 13 is bad luck nowadays is the Christian belief. At the last supper, Judas Iscariot was the thirteenth person to sit at the table where Jesus was sitting, and he would later betray Jesus, leading to his crucifixion. This belief is the main reason why it's considered very bad luck for thirteen people to sit at one table. As Professor Trelawney says in Harry Potter and the Prisoner Of Azkaban, '...when thirteen dine together, the first to rise will be the first to die!'

Norse Mythology has a very similar story. The Christian story is believed to come from this particular myth. Twelve deities sat down for a Gods' feast when Loki, the god of mischief, decided to crash the party. He brought the guests numbers up to thirteen, and he caused one of the gods to die during the meal.

It is still believed widely that the number 13 holds bad luck, and in a lot of hotels there is no room 13, and in some skyscrapers there is no thirteenth floor. (This worries me. I mean what do they do with all that empty space?)

Is the number 13 really unlucky? Well, I suppose that depends from person to person. For me, it's not really that unlucky a number. I tend to find the number 1 to be quite unlucky however. Because 1 tends to be:

The last Mars bar left in the Celebrations box before your brother finds it and you're stuck with Bountys.

The number more people that seem to creep in front of you in the line while you're waiting to go on a ride at Wonderland (this tends to happen about 50 times)

The number of people normally on a stage in front of a large audience (you being that one person)

And finally, the number of minutes normally left at recess before you realise you have Maths next period.

# 13



**Aries** 19 April - 13 May

A worrying period has just finished and it is now time for you to unwind. Become involved in team sports to work off some of your excess energy. The numbers 3, 26 and 83,439 will indicate an event of some significance for you. Watch our for people with an 'e', 'a', 'w' or any other letter of the alphabet in their name.



**Taurus** 14 May - 19 June

You are so STUBBORN. You might think this gets you what you want! Stubbornness is one of your most significant characteristics. This may make it appear as though you are in control but it does not make people inclined to help you. If you do need help, try calling out "HELP" as calling out "RATS" won't bring much help. (Unless there are some cats about.)



**Gemini** 20 June - 20 July

This would be one of the yuckiest star signs you could possibly have. You know what Gemini means don't you? You're two faced. In fact you should consider checking to see if you were adopted to see if there's any way you might have been born under a far better sign than this one...like Sagittarius or maybe even Ophiuchus!



**Cancer** 21 July - 9 Aug

Cancer people are extremely modest - and they have much to be modest about. Perceptive Cancerians have discovered that the best way to appear more intelligent than they really are is to say nothing. Others insist on opening their mouths and giving the game away. As smart as you are, you sometimes forget to forget how smart you are.



**Leo** 10 Aug - 15 Sept

It isn't your imagination - people really are ignoring you. So I better do the same..... Are you still here? Well, there is nothing here for you to read you know. Nothing. Not a word. Now stop reading this! You're not stopping.... go on, stop! The stars say you don't even believe in Astrology! Maybe the stars are wrong? No... it's you. It's your fault for reading this!



**Virgo** 16 Sept - 30 Oct

Storms are approaching and the path you are about to take is treacherous. Turn back before it's too late. If this means nothing to you I'll bet you are really confused right now. I am and I'm the one making this... err, interpreting the stars for you. The stars never lie, they do twinkle a lot.... just like that song.. you know... Twinkle twinkle little ... whatever.



**Libra** 31 Oct - 22 Nov

Librans are well balanced - but you are the exception. Events this month will conspire to take you to giddy heights and then bring you crashing back into reality. The colour orange will be a warning especially if you notice it around you on a Tuesday. If you notice it on a Friday, just ignore the last line. If a Monday, you should change your star sign!



**Scorpio** 23 Nov - 29 Nov

You are going to meet someone who is going to have a huge impact on your life. This person will lead you down the path that sets you on to your life's work. His name begins with a "D" and you will meet at ten minutes past eight. If this does not happen then you were not in the right place at the right time. Or maybe the right place at the wrong time?



**Ophiuchus** 30 Nov - 17 Dec

Well haven't you been the sneaky one? Since not many people are aware of this sign this makes you a personality of mystery. You enjoy lurking in wait and taking people by surprise. You really need help. Oh well, at least you can boast about having a rare star sign. I'm not sure what it all means, but it's fun to make this stuff up!



**Sagittarius** 18 Dec - 18 Jan

People born under this sign have a superior intellect, outstanding physical beauty and overwhelming modesty. This is to make up for the annoying practice of other people giving you combined Christmas/Birthday presents. Fortunately your undeniable diplomacy and tact make it possible to still be a hero figure for less fortunate star signs.



**Capricorn** 19 Jan - 15 Feb

You have a tendency to take things to extremes. You just don't know when enough is enough. You have been working far too hard lately and you need to take some time out. Take up a new sport. Get out in the fresh air. Hang gliding is not recommended. The word 'you' is repeated and repeated many times in this star sign. You better read it again.



**Aquarius** 16 Feb - 11 March

A friend is about to make a revelation and it will catch you by surprise. You are the kind of person who makes it easy for people to confide in you. You have depths that most people cannot see. Saturday is a good day to wash your hair. If you have a wig, try washing it on Thursday but only under a full moon. A photo of the moon will do if it's cloudy outside.



**Pisces** 12 March - 18 April

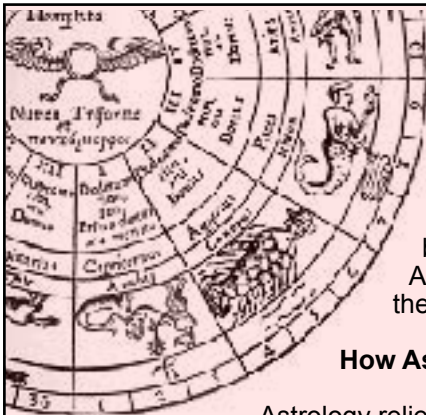
You will be drawn towards water over the next month or so. Take special care when going into the sun. Outdoor activities will occur with greater frequency and you should use these occasions to recharge your batteries. You like fishing or eating fish or looking at fish or going to see movies about fish. Or maybe not. I like fish! Well, no. I like chips better.

**Hang on! That's not MY star sign. - Oh yes it is!**

Behind the sun, even when you cannot see them, are the stars and constellations. The particular constellation behind the sun at the time of your birth is known as your 'sun sign' or 'star sign'. Many people don't realise that these constellations are not spread out evenly across the sky. Some are small, with the sun passing through in a matter of days, some are much bigger with the sun taking well over a month to get to the other side. And, there are 13 signs, not 12. (In fact there are hundreds of constellations depending on the culture.) All this is simply ignored by magazine and newspaper Astrologers even though this information is freely available.

## What is Astrology?

Richard Investigates



Many years ago, our ancestors had no idea what stars were or how far away they really are. By playing 'connect-the-dots', they found all sorts of shapes and patterns. Being clever and loving to tell stories, they made up all sorts of tales to try and explain the carpet of lights across the night sky. Over the years, some of them began to believe these stories were true! Superstitions about the powers of the people and creatures in these stories became part of many cultures and are still with us today, mostly in newspaper Astrology columns. Astrology itself is not a science. Most of it is simply made up on the spot to meet newspaper dead-lines.

### How Astrology seems to work

Astrology relies on a number things, none of them magical powers from the stars and planets.

Probably the most important thing is what's known as '**Barnum statements**' (named after the famous circus manager, P. T. Barnum). These are clever statements that seem to apply to anyone. For example:

***You have considerable unused capacity that you have not turned to your advantage. Disciplined and self-controlled on the outside, you tend to be worrisome and insecure on the inside. At times you have serious doubts as to whether you have made the right decision or done the right thing.***

One way to see if newspaper and magazine Astrologers are using Barnum statements is to ask your friend for their star sign. Say it's 'Aries'. You pretend to look for Aries, but in fact you pick another one like 'Leo' and read that one to them. Then ask your friend how accurate they thought it was. You may be surprised how well this trick works. In fact, why not try making up your own Astrology column?



***The constellation of Leo  
(or is it a Frog?)***

Barnum statements are one part of a far more interesting trick known as '**Cold Reading**'. This is used by all sorts of fortune tellers from Tarot card readers to people to read tea leaves. With practise, anyone can learn cold reading, no magical powers needed.

The science of **Astronomy**, the fascinating way we find out about the real nature of the stars and planets, grew out of the superstition of Astrology. We now know that the stars that make up any constellation are all at different distances from us and only make up the patterns we see when viewed from our planet. In fact many of the stars we see no longer even exist even though the light they gave off hundreds and thousands of years ago is still reaching our eyes. Anyone today can play 'connect-a-dot' with the stars and come up with as many shapes and patterns as our ancestors.

For more information about **Astrology**, see: <http://skeptdic.com/astrology.html>

For more information about **Cold Reading**, see: <http://skeptdic.com/coldread.html>

## Where oh Where is that Monster?

We have all heard of the famous monster of Loch Ness in Scotland. Sightings of "Nessy", have been reported for hundreds of years and there are even some fuzzy and blurry photos that seem to look like something, that could be a some kind of ... monster? Maybe.

To finally try and answer the question, 'Is there really a monster in Loch Ness?' once and for all, a team from BBC TV in the UK recently searched the Loch ('Loch' is the Scottish word for 'lake') with 600 sonar beams. They mapped the whole thing from shore to shore and top to bottom. No trace of any large animal or monster was found. It was very disappointing for the team, it would be cool if the monster was real, but it is important to know for sure, one way for the other.

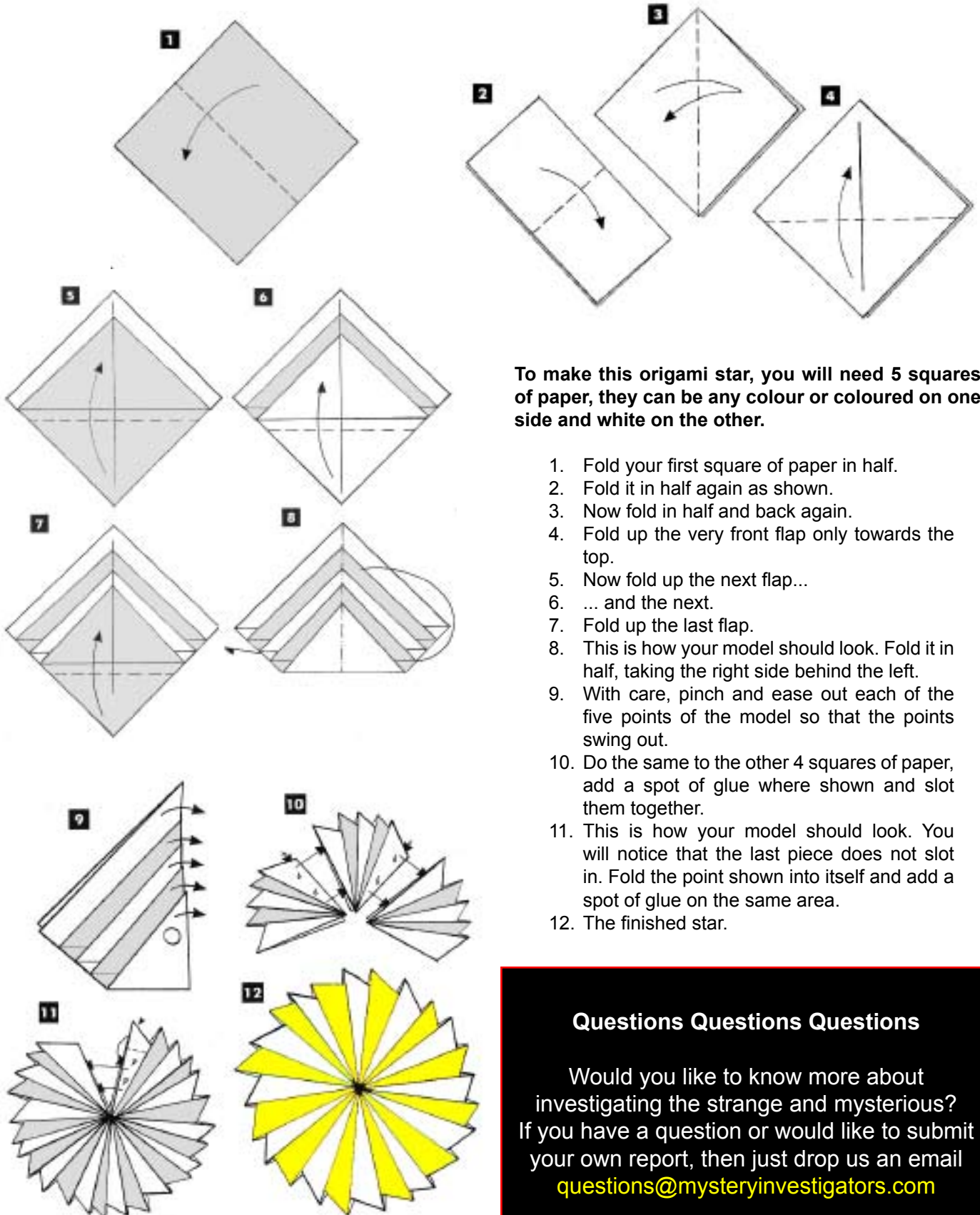
Despite this, people keep reporting seeing a monster! How could this be when the monster isn't there? Another experiment may have answered this. The BBC team also hid a square fence post just beneath the water. When a party of tourists came by, the team secretly raised the post so it bobbed up quickly and then disappeared. Some of the tourists reported seeing not a fence post, but the monster, even going so far as to describe its head!

Sometimes, people see what they want or expect to see. Their brains fill in all sorts of details that simply aren't there at all. This happens quite often with all sort of things from sightings of ghosts to UFOs.



## Make an Origami Star

The real stars are millions and millions of kilometres away. Here's one way to make your own star a little closer to home.



To make this origami star, you will need 5 squares of paper, they can be any colour or coloured on one side and white on the other.

1. Fold your first square of paper in half.
2. Fold it in half again as shown.
3. Now fold in half and back again.
4. Fold up the very front flap only towards the top.
5. Now fold up the next flap...
6. ... and the next.
7. Fold up the last flap.
8. This is how your model should look. Fold it in half, taking the right side behind the left.
9. With care, pinch and ease out each of the five points of the model so that the points swing out.
10. Do the same to the other 4 squares of paper, add a spot of glue where shown and slot them together.
11. This is how your model should look. You will notice that the last piece does not slot in. Fold the point shown into itself and add a spot of glue on the same area.
12. The finished star.

### Questions Questions Questions

Would you like to know more about investigating the strange and mysterious? If you have a question or would like to submit your own report, then just drop us an email [questions@mysteryinvestigators.com](mailto:questions@mysteryinvestigators.com)

or visit our web site at [www.mysteryinvestigators.com](http://www.mysteryinvestigators.com)