



What Is This Module About?

Traditional beliefs, practices and superstitions are part of a people's culture. Every society has its own set of traditions. These originated from way back and have been handed down through generations.

In this module, you will study about some traditional beliefs, practices and superstitions existing in the home and community. You will also study the explanations of some traditional beliefs and practices.

This module is divided into two lessons:

Lesson 1 – *Traditional Beliefs, Practices and Superstitions*

Lesson 2 – *Explanation of Some Traditional Beliefs and Practices*



What Will You Learn From This Module?

After studying this module, you should be able to:

- ◆ identify existing traditional beliefs, practices and superstitions in the home and community;
- ◆ discuss the consequences or effects of traditional beliefs and superstitions to personal and community development; and
- ◆ explain the existence of these traditional beliefs and practices.



Let's See What You Already Know

Before you begin studying this module, answer the simple test below to determine how much you already know about our topic.

Put a check mark (✓) in the blank if the statement is a traditional belief or superstition, and put an X-mark (X) if it is not.

- ___ 1. A sick person should not look at the moon.
- ___ 2. A plant will grow healthy if watered regularly.
- ___ 3. Sweeping the floor at night will bring bad luck.
- ___ 4. Fishermen get a poor catch of fish when there's a full moon.
- ___ 5. A black butterfly is a sign that someone you love will die.
- ___ 6. A child who drinks milk and eats regularly will grow healthy and strong.
- ___ 7. If there's a will, there's a way.
- ___ 8. If a spoon drops from the table, a female visitor will arrive.
- ___ 9. Boiled guava leaves is an effective remedy for infection and wounds.
- ___ 10. A woman who sings while cooking will become an old maid.

Well, how was it? Do you think you fared well? Compare your answers with those in the *Answer Key* on page 26.

If all your answers are correct, very good! This shows that you already know much about the topic. You may still study the module to review what you already know. Who knows, you might learn a few more new things as well.

If you got a low score, don't feel bad. This shows that this module is for you. It will help you understand important concepts that you can apply in your daily life. If you study this module carefully, you will learn the answers to all the items in the test and a lot more! Are you ready?

You may go now to the next page to begin Lesson 1.

Traditional Beliefs, Practices and Superstitions

Suppose you are walking on the street with your grandfather and you come across a black cat. Your grandfather takes your hand and pulls you quickly towards the opposite direction. What do you think is the reason for your grandfather's action?

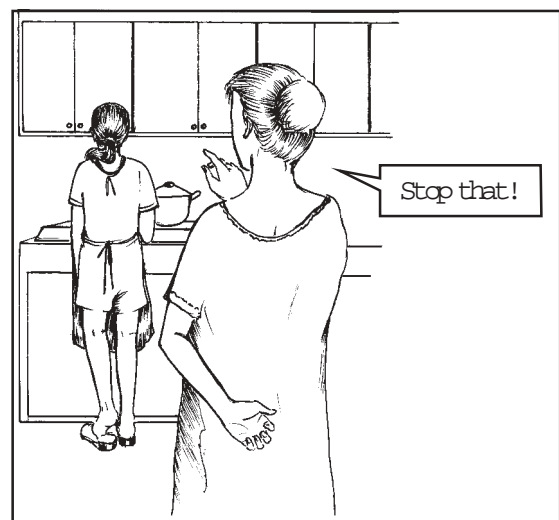
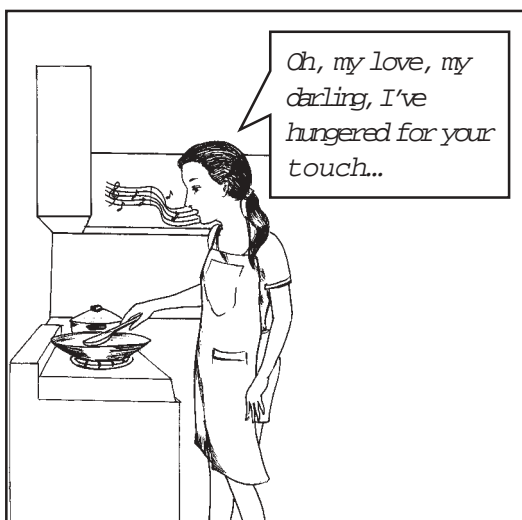
It may be that your grandfather believes in the superstition that a black cat is unlucky. And so he quickly avoided the cat. Have you heard about this superstitious belief?

Traditional beliefs, practices and superstitions are part of our rich and colorful culture. These beliefs have been handed down to us by our forefathers and we still hear them from our parents, grandparents and other elders.



Let's read

One day at Maria's house...





The dialogue you have just read shows an example of a superstitious belief. There are still a few people who think that singing in the kitchen while cooking would result to being a spinster. Perhaps, you too have heard this from your mother or grandmother.

According to some people, a man started this belief because he wanted to stop girls from singing while cooking. Maybe he was afraid that when the person cooking sings, some saliva spray might get into the food.



Let's Think About This

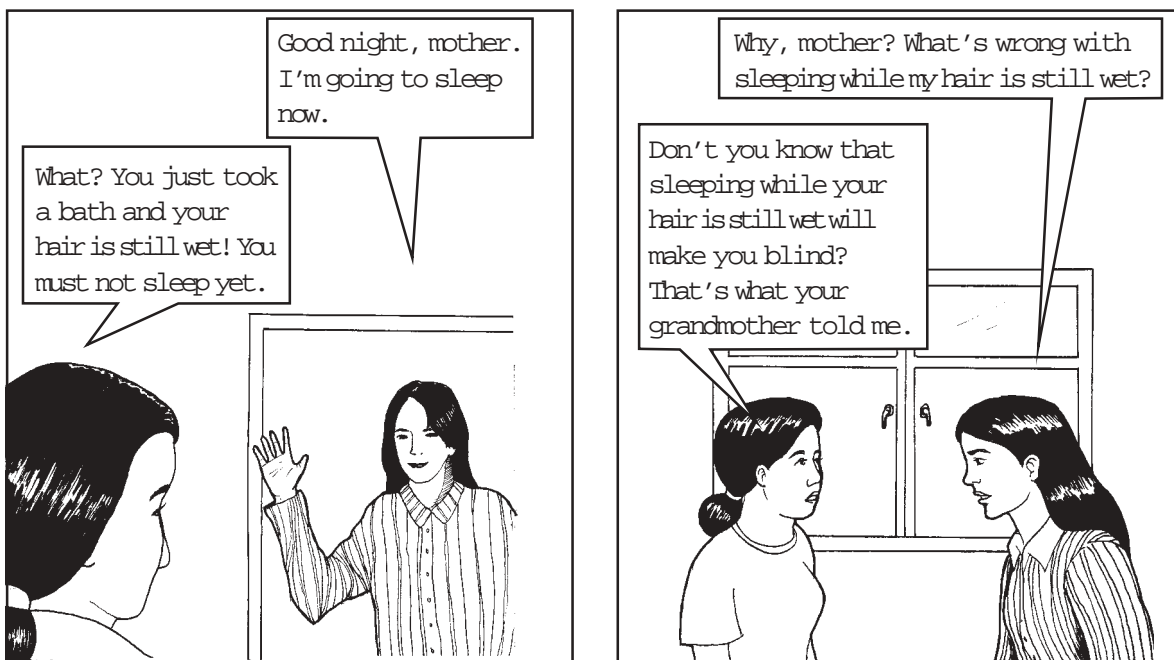
Do you believe that when a girl sings while cooking she will become a spinster? Why or why not? You may write your answer below.

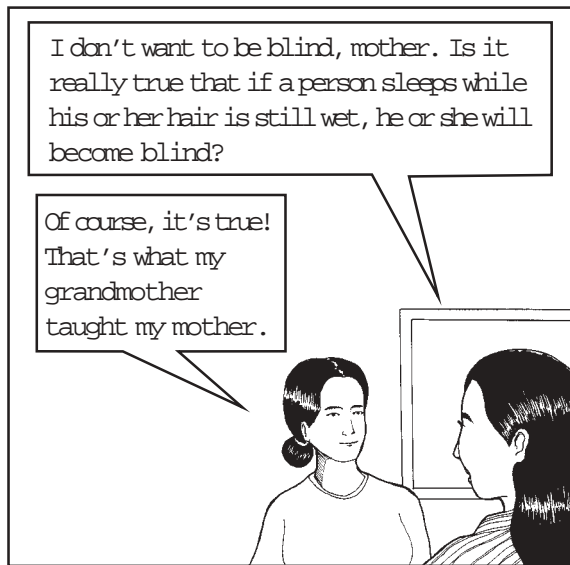
Compare your answer with the sample answer given in the *Answer Key* on page 26.



Let's Read

Read the comic strip to learn of another superstitious belief.

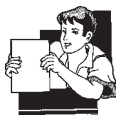




Let's Think About This

What can you say about the dialogue you have just read? Perhaps you have heard your older relatives warn that *sleeping while your hair is still wet causes blindness*. Do you also believe this? Why or why not? You may write your answer below.

Have you finished answering? Compare your answer with the one given in the *Answer Key* on page 26.



Let's Learn

Many people still believe that sleeping while the hair is still wet causes blindness. This belief has been passed on from one generation to another and is still upheld by many people today. However, science has proven that this belief is false. According to the *Samahan ng mga Optometrist sa Pilipinas* (SOP), there is no connection between sleeping while the hair is still wet and blindness. They said that mothers who simply don't want the pillows to get wet might have started this false belief.



Let's Read

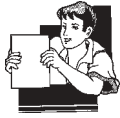
Let's look at another superstitious belief through the comic strip below.



Let's Try This

If you were Anna, what would you do? Would you follow your mother's advice? Or would you keep the handkerchief? You may write your answer in the spaces below.

Compare your answer with the sample answer given in the *Answer Key* on page 26.



Let's Learn

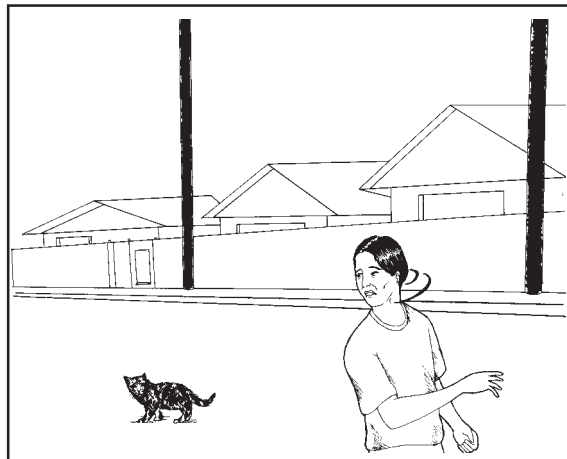
Filipinos have many traditional beliefs, practices and superstitions. There are ones about life and death, marriage and courtship, pregnancy and birth, health, agriculture, and many others.



Let's Read

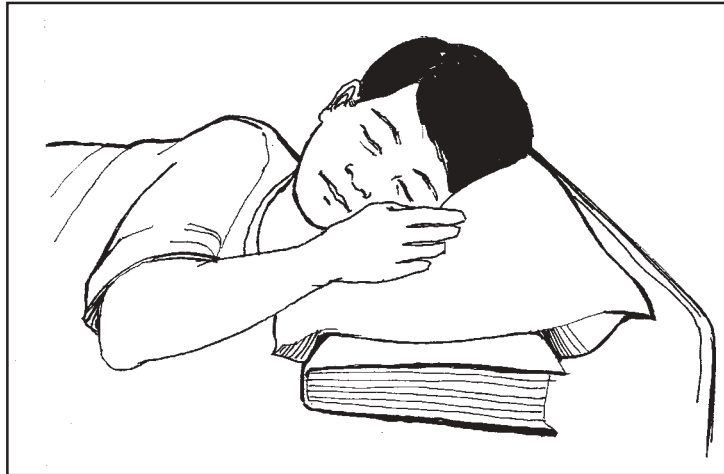
Here are other traditional beliefs and superstitions you might have heard from your grandparents, parents and other elders. Read and understand them first. After that, review them again. Have you heard about these superstitions? Do you believe in them? Put a check mark (✓) before the ones which you think might be true, or which you yourself believe in. Place the mark inside the small boxes.

- A woman about to get married should not wear pearls because these bring bad luck.
- If you see a black cat while walking on the street, you must avoid crossing its path so you won't have bad luck.



- If a dog digs in a yard or near a house, somebody in that house will die.
- If a pregnant woman craves a certain food and the husband or some other person doesn't get the food for her, she will have a miscarriage.
- A female visitor will arrive if a spoon falls off the table during a meal.

- Sleeping with books under your pillow will make you intelligent.



- A dead person should be buried at three o'clock in the afternoon to avoid further death in the family.
- A dog howling at night indicates the presence of bad spirits.
- If a pregnant woman cuts her hair, her baby will be born hairless.
- A pregnant woman who eats twin bananas will give birth to twins.





Let's Try This

Below are some situations that people encounter every day. What would you do if you were in these situations? Choose between the two options provided and draw a smiling face (☺) in the blank before the item of your choice.

1. A friend who is about to get married wants to find out if her wedding gown fits. Her mother told her that if she tried it on, her wedding would not push through. Not sure what to do, your friend comes to you for advice. You would tell her to:
 a. follow her mother's advice because you also believe that the wedding won't push through if she tried her wedding gown on.
 b. go ahead and try her wedding gown on. What her mother told her is only a superstitious belief with no scientific basis.
2. Your girlfriend/boyfriend gave you a beautiful handkerchief for your birthday. When you told your mother about it, she asked you to return the handkerchief because you and your loved one will break up if you don't return the gift. You would:
 a. return the handkerchief even though it is important to you and you know your girlfriend/boyfriend will be hurt. Your relationship is more important.
 b. keep the handkerchief because it is a precious gift. It has nothing to do with the outcome of your relationship.
3. One night, your cousin asks if she could borrow three cups of rice grains because they have nothing to eat. Then your husband/wife tells you that lending rice grains at night would bring bad luck. You would:
 a. tell your cousin to go back tomorrow because it would bring bad luck if you lend her rice grains at night.
 b. give her the rice grains she needs. You know how badly they need it and what your wife/husband told you is only a superstition.

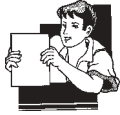
4. While at the dining table, your daughter accidentally spills some rice on the floor. Remembering that your mother told you that sweeping the floor at night will bring bad luck, you:
- _____ a. decide to leave the cleaning for tomorrow. You don't want to have bad luck.
 - _____ b. clean the mess anyway. You know that bad luck is not connected with sweeping the floor at night.
5. A stray dog bit your son. Your grandfather knows that your son is fearful of injections so he suggested that instead of taking him to the doctor, you should just kill the dog so the rabies in your son's body would die, too. You only want what's best for your son, so you would:
- _____ a. not take him to the doctor so he won't undergo the needed injections. You would just make sure that your grandfather kills the dog immediately.
 - _____ b. take him to the doctor immediately. You would rather let him undergo the needed injections than take a chance with his life. You know that modern medicine is a much better option than superstition.

Have you finished answering? Compare your answers with those in the *Answer Key* on page 26.



Let's Think About This

Have you tried asking the elders in your family or community about the reasons behind their superstitious beliefs? If you have, you probably noticed that they couldn't seem to come up with reasons. Instead, they probably told you that their ancestors have passed these beliefs to them, and you should therefore follow them. They probably also said, "*Walang mawawala kung susundin natin!*" Literally, this means that we wouldn't lose anything by following these beliefs. Is this true? Will nothing bad happen out of following these beliefs? What do you think are the consequences of following these beliefs? Think about your answers to these questions before proceeding to the next section of this lesson.



Let's Learn

Traditional beliefs, practices and superstitions are part of Filipino culture and they have been passed on through generations. These beliefs and practices have been with us for ages but most of them are false and misleading. Let us study the consequences of following these beliefs.

It promotes fatalism.

Fatalism means leaving everything to chance or fate. When you follow superstitious beliefs without looking for the real reasons behind them, you are, in effect, putting your future in the hands of some unknown force. For example, the success of your activity on a particular day will depend on whether you pass a black cat or see a brown butterfly and not on your perseverance and determination to succeed.

It may prove dangerous or fatal.

Sometimes when a member of our family gets sick, instead of taking him/her to the doctor, we apply our own homemade remedies based on our beliefs. We also consult *albularyos* or quack doctors who perform rituals to drive away the bad spirits that have caused the person to be sick. Self-medication and treatment by untrained persons are dangerous. Instead of curing the disease, their “remedies” might worsen the condition and might even lead to death.

The individual becomes narrow-minded.

Because people choose to follow or believe in superstitions, they no longer try to look for other explanations on why certain things happen. They become narrow-minded and lose their ability to look into the broader nature of things.

It hinders the development of the community.

There will be no growth and development in the community if, instead of working hard, the people would stake their lives on luck or chance. Since people are also narrow-minded, they will not welcome change and any new ideas that will help develop their community. Instead, they will be stuck in their old ways of life and beliefs.

Although superstitious beliefs are part of our colorful tradition, we should think twice before following them. They may seem harmless at first, but there are many instances when following them may lead to harm and danger.

We must be extra careful, especially when dealing with illnesses and our health. Before you follow beliefs or practices, be sure to know their scientific basis or explanations. In Lesson 2, you will learn about the explanations of some of our superstitious beliefs.



Let's Try This

1. What other traditional beliefs, practices or superstitions about marriage do you know? If you are about to get married, will you follow these practices? Why or why not?

2. Supposing these situations happened to you, what will you do?
 - a. After playing in the field, your younger brother complained of stomachache. The elder folks in your community jumped to the conclusion that your brother was being played with by elves and should be brought to the albularyo. Will you follow their advice?

- b. You are on your way to a job interview. As you are walking towards the bus stop, you see a black cat standing in your path. What will you do? Will you still proceed to your job interview even though you know that black cats bring bad luck?

Compare your answers with those in the *Answer Key* on page 27.



Let's See What You Have Learned

Before you go to the next lesson, answer the test below in order to determine how much you have learned.

Put a check mark (✓) in the blank if the statement is a traditional belief, practice or superstition and put an X-mark (X) if it is not.

- _____ 1. A pregnant woman who eats twin bananas will give birth to twins.
- _____ 2. A child who eats plenty of fruits and vegetables will grow healthy.
- _____ 3. You will catch plenty of fish if the clouds are shaped like fish scales.
- _____ 4. A house with stairs facing the main door will bring bad luck.
- _____ 5. If a man and a woman get married in the month of February, they will be separated from each other.
- _____ 6. If a black butterfly enters a house, this means that someone in that house will die.
- _____ 7. If a person dreams of a snake, this means he/she will have plenty of money.
- _____ 8. If you talk to a plant, it will grow healthy.
- _____ 9. A person who works hard will achieve his/her goals.
- _____ 10. It is difficult to catch fish if there is no moon because bad spirits frighten them away from the surface.

Have you finished answering? Compare your answers with those in the *Answer Key* on page 27.

How well did you do? If you got a perfect score, congratulations! You are more than ready for our next lesson.

If your score is 8 or 9, that's very good. You just need to study the difficult points you have encountered in this lesson.

If your score is 7 or lower, you need to study the whole lesson again in order for you to understand it better.



Let's Remember

There are still many traditional beliefs, practices and superstitions existing in the Filipino home and community today. Even though most of these beliefs are false and misleading, many Filipinos believe them because they have been handed down to us by our elders.

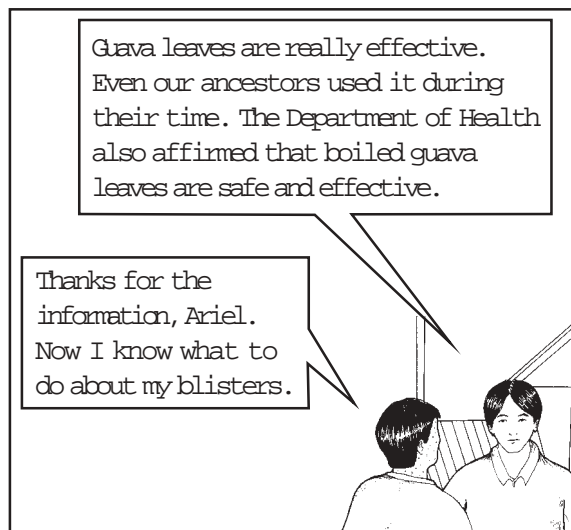
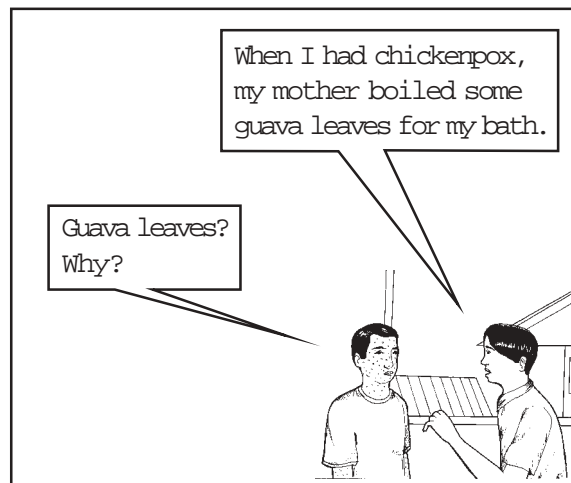
You may now turn to the next page for Lesson 2.

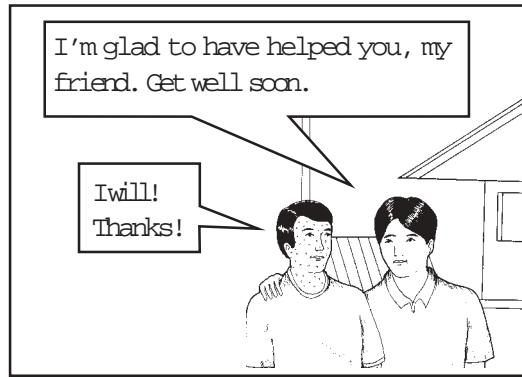
Explanation of Some Traditional Beliefs and Practices

In Lesson 1, you have learned some of the traditional beliefs, practices and superstitions existing in the Filipino home and community. Even though most of these beliefs and practices are false and misleading, some of them do have scientific explanations and are therefore true or reliable. In this lesson, you will study some traditional beliefs and practices and their scientific explanations.



Let's Read

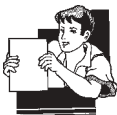




Let's Think About This

Do you believe that boiled guava leaves are really effective for wounds and infections? Do you know other plants that may be used as remedies for different illnesses? You may write your answers below.

Compare your answers with those in the *Answer Key* on page 27.



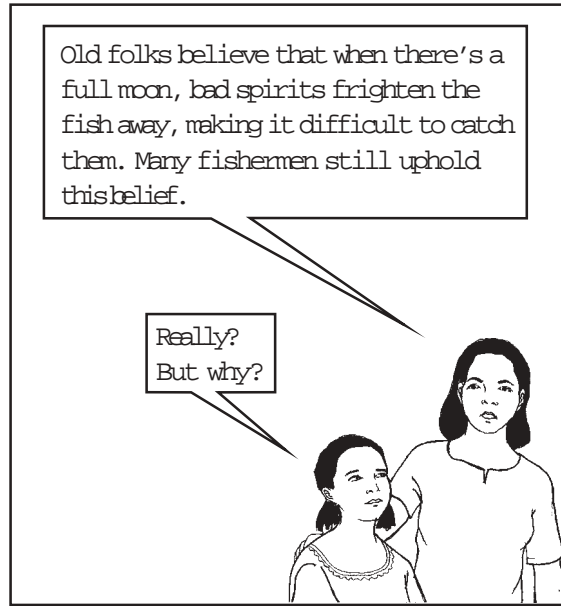
Let's Learn

Many Filipinos are still very traditional when it comes to their health. They prefer herbal plants to modern medicines. The traditional belief that herbal medicines are effective and have no side effects has good basis. The Department of Health even released a list of medicinal plants for major health problems in the Philippines. This proves that not all traditional beliefs are false or misleading.



Let's Read

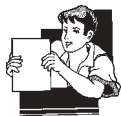
Let's take a look at another traditional belief and practice.



Let's Think About This

Do you believe that bad spirits frighten the fish away from the water surface when there's a full moon? Why or why not? You may write your answer in the spaces below.

Read on to know if your answer is correct.



Let's learn

Do you want to know why fishermen get a poor catch when there's a full moon?

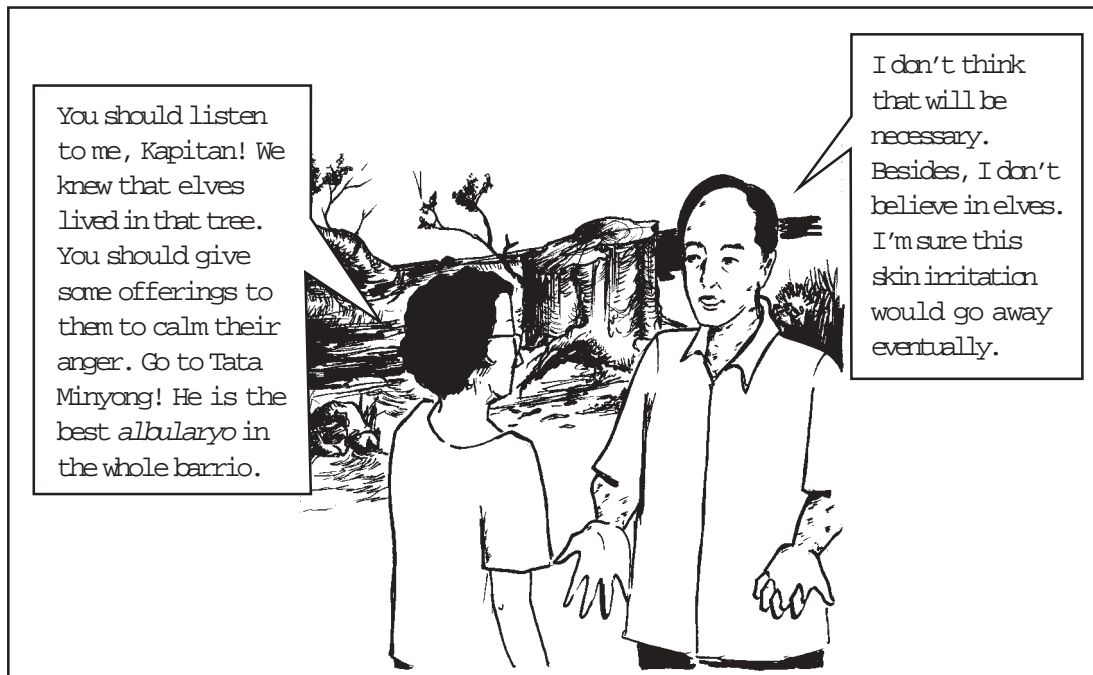
The combined gravity of the sun and moon is at its strongest during a full moon. Gravity is the strong force that pulls at the earth's oceans. That's why there is a high tide during the full moon. At high tide, it is hard to catch fish because they are frightened by the light coming from the moon and they can see the fishnets, so they swim away from the surface of the ocean. Also, the fish tend to spread to different parts of the ocean during this time. Hence, it is difficult to catch many fish at a single throw of the fishnet.



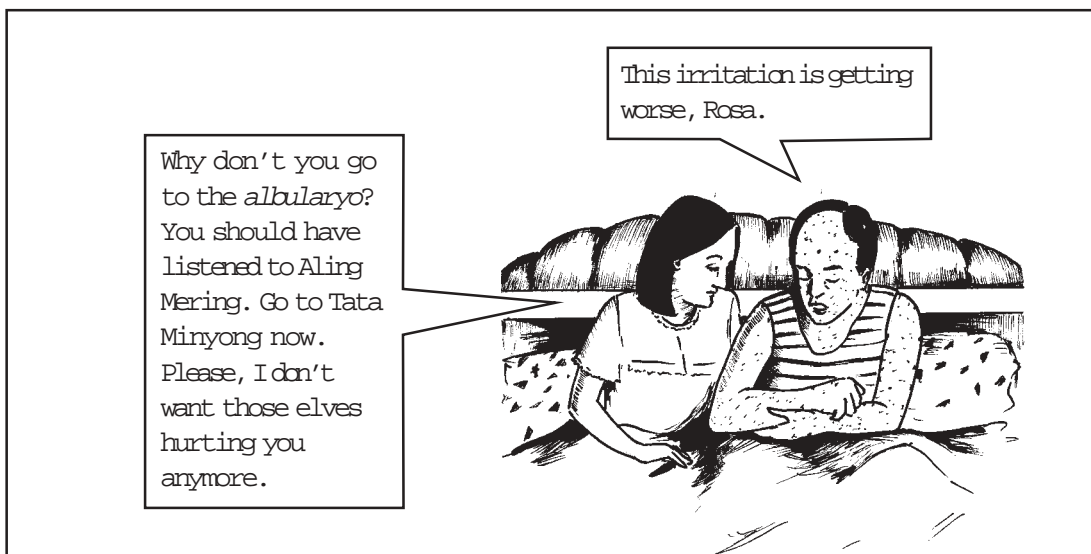
Let's Read

In preparation for the barrio fiesta, Kapitan Teban, the barangay captain of Barangay Masigasig, led the cleaning of the whole neighborhood, as well as the felling of an unsightly old tree at the back of the barangay hall. He helped in pulling down the vines that entwined the tree. The next morning, he was surprised to find that his face had become red, swollen and itchy.





Kapitan Teban ignored the advice of the elder folks because he did not believe in elves. But his skin trouble got worse. One day, when he was talking to his wife...



Kapitan Teban went to the *albularyo* and submitted himself to the *lamping* ceremony. After the ceremony, the old medicine man got some coconut oil and anointed Kapitan Teban's face with it. Surprisingly, the Kapitan's itchy and hot sensation completely disappeared. Since then, the swelling and redness of his face gradually disappeared.



Let's Think About This

Read and answer the questions below.

1. What do you think was the cause of Kapitan Teban's skin trouble?

2. Do you agree with what Aling Mering told him?

_____Yes _____No

Explain your answer.

3. What do you think cured Kapitan Teban's skin trouble?

Compare your answers with the explanation below.

Physicians treating skin diseases frequently encounter the case of Kapitan Teban. It is a simple case of *dermatitis venenata*, an acute inflammation of the skin caused by contact with some irritating substance. Most likely, some irritating leaves of plants or hairs of moths and caterpillars fell on or came in contact with Kapitan Teban's skin while he was pulling down the vines from the tree.

The application of oil, whether it had gone through the *lamping* ceremony or not, would certainly relieve the itchiness, redness and swelling. This is due to the emollient property of oil which, like lard, can sooth irritated skin.



Let's Try This

If you want, you can try to go through Kapitan Teban's experience by doing this experiment:

- ◆ Apply or rub a moth on your forearm. Very soon, itchiness, redness and swelling of the rubbed skin will follow.
- ◆ Apply any freshly prepared coconut oil. You will be quickly relieved of the itching while the swelling and redness will gradually disappear.

This experiment proves that Kapitan Teban's ailment was not caused by angry elves, as the elders believed, but by some external irritating substances.



Let's See What You Have Learned

Before you take the post-test, answer the test below to determine how much you have learned. Encircle the number if the statement describes a traditional belief with scientific explanation. Write its scientific explanation in the space provided.

1. Sprinkling salt on the lid of a casserole will keep food warm.

2. *Calamansi* is an effective remedy for cough.

3. The wedding would not push through if the girl tries on her wedding gown before the ceremony.

4. A menstruating woman should avoid doing chores. She should rest instead.

5. A pregnant woman should not sit with legs apart because this might make the delivery difficult.

Have you finished answering all the questions? Compare your answers with those in the *Answer Key* on page 28. How well did you do? If you got a perfect score, congratulations! This means you really learned a lot from this lesson.

If your score is 4 or 5, that's very good. You just need to study the difficult points you have encountered in this lesson.

However, if your score is 3 or lower, you need to study the whole lesson again in order to understand it better.



Let's Remember

Not all traditional beliefs and practices are false and misleading. Some of these beliefs have scientific explanations and we just need to examine them critically to find out. Our ancestors did not have the modern knowledge and technology we have today, and so during their time, natural occurrences were explained irrationally. Now, we have the means to give the scientific explanations to some of our traditional beliefs and practices.



Let's Sum Up

The Filipino culture is rich with traditional beliefs, practices and superstitions. These are part of our colorful culture and have been passed on from one generation to another. We have beliefs and practices for different stages in our lives, such as:

- ◆ life and death;
- ◆ marriage and courtship;
- ◆ pregnancy and childbirth;
- ◆ work and leisure; and many others.

Most—but not all—of these beliefs are false and misleading because they have no scientific explanations. We must be discerning and careful in following them. Before we follow these beliefs and practices, we must look for their scientific explanations and always consider their consequences. There are some traditional beliefs and practices that can be explained by science.



What Have You Learned?

Answer the following test in order to determine how much you have learned from the module. Draw a star (☆) on the line if the statement expresses a traditional belief, practice or superstition and a moon (☾) if it does not.

- _____1. You will become an old maid if you sing while cooking.
- _____2. Smoking is bad for your health.
- _____3. Herbal medicines like guava leaves are safe and effective.
- _____4. Bad spirits frighten the fish away when there's a full moon.
- _____5. Sleeping with your hair still wet will cause blindness.
- _____6. A black cat brings bad luck.
- _____7. A child who eats plenty of fruits and vegetables will grow up healthy.
- _____8. A male visitor will arrive if the fork falls off the table during a meal.
- _____9. A pregnant woman who wears pearls will have a miscarriage.
- _____10. Sweeping the floor at night will bring bad luck.

Have you finished answering all the items? Compare your answers with those in the *Answer Key* on page 28.

How well did you do? If you got a perfect score, congratulations! This means that you have learned a lot from this module.

If your score is 8 or 9, that's very good. You just need to review the difficult points you encountered in this module.

However, if your score is 7 or lower, you need to review the whole module in order to gain better understanding.



Answer Key

A. Let's See What You Already Know (page 2)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. 4 | 6. 8 |
| 2. 8 | 7. 8 |
| 3. 4 | 8. 4 |
| 4. 4 | 9. 4 |
| 5. 4 | 10. 4 |

B. Lesson 1

Let's Think About This (page 5)

Sample Answer: No, because singing in the kitchen while cooking does not determine if a girl will get married or not.

Let's Think About This (page 6)

Sample Answer: No, because science has never proven that sleeping while your hair is still wet causes blindness.

Let's Try This (page 7)

Sample Answer: I would keep the handkerchief because it is a precious gift and my loved one will be hurt if I return it.

Let's Try This (pages 10 – 11)

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. b | 4. b |
| 2. b | 5. b |
| 3. b | |

Let's Try This (page 13)

Compare your answers with those given below. Note that your answers may be different from them.

1. Some of the practices or beliefs related to marriage that I'm aware of include the following: (a) On the eve of their wedding, the bride and the groom must not see each other. If they do, their marriage will not be successful and might lead to separation. (b) In order for the marriage to work out, the bride must wear something that is old, something that is borrowed and something that is colored blue during the wedding. I do not believe in these practices. The success of a marriage or any relationship does not depend on following these practices, but on the effort of both husband and wife to make their marriage last.

2. (a) I will immediately take my younger brother to the doctor. I am confident that the doctor will find the reason and the cure for my brother's stomachache. I don't want to risk his health and his life by bringing him to the albularyo.

(b) I will proceed to my interview. The outcome of my interview does not depend on the black cat that is supposed to bring bad luck, but on how I will present myself and answer the questions of the interviewer.

Let's See What You Have Learned (page 14)

- | | | | |
|----|---|-----|---|
| 1. | 4 | 6. | 4 |
| 2. | 8 | 7. | 4 |
| 3. | 4 | 8. | 8 |
| 4. | 4 | 9. | 8 |
| 5. | 4 | 10. | 4 |

C. Lesson 2

Let's Think About This (page 17)

Sample answer: Yes, because guava leaves have certain substances that fight infectious bacteria. There are many other plants or herbs that can help cure certain diseases. For example, ginger or *luya* can also be used to cure sore throat. Garlic is known to help ease hypertension (high blood pressure) and related heart conditions.

Let's See What You Have Learned (pages 22–23)

1. When salt gets warm, it adds moisture inside the casserole and thus keeps the food warm.
2. *Calamansi* fruit is used as a refrigerant and remedy for coughs.
3. This belief has no scientific explanation.
4. A menstruating woman is usually easily irritated and exhausted. That is why it is not advisable for her to do chores, especially heavy or tiring ones.
5. This belief has no scientific explanation.

D. What Have You Learned? *(page 25)*

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. H | 6. H |
| 2. m | 7. m |
| 3. H | 8. H |
| 4. H | 9. H |
| 5. H | 10. H |



Glossary

Dermatitis venenata Acute inflammation of the skin caused by contact with some irritating substance

Fatalism Leaving to chance or fate one's success, future or the outcome of his or her efforts

Gravity Strong force (usually a pull) exhibited by the earth, moon or other celestial bodies

Superstition Beliefs or practices resulting from false conception of the real causes of things; fear of the unknown and extreme belief in supernatural forces



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