ATENA
LEARNING MADE RELEVANT

ADVENTURERS

It's Friday the 13th! (November 13, 2026)

TEACHING GUIDE

ℹ️ **What is it about?** Friday the 13th, a date that many people link to bad luck. 🐈‍⬛

👤 **Who is it about?** Superstitious people, who are more careful on that day. 😬

🌍 **Where is it happening?** Mostly in Europe and North America. In Spain and Latin America, Tuesday the 13th is the scary one!

🕰️ **When did it happen?** On Friday, November 13, 2026. It's already the third one this year! 📅

❓ **Why is it important?** Because this superstition is more recent than you might think… and it even gave birth to some fancy words! 🤓

🎯 **For this activity, your goal will be to learn a little more about Friday the 13th and the number 13!**

OBJECTIVES

- Discover the surprisingly recent origin of the Friday the 13th superstition
- Understand what an etymon is and break down learned words of Greek or Latin origin
- Look up the etymology of words in an online dictionary
- Do amazing calculations with the number 13 (multiplication, squares, division)
- Use a calendar to find Fridays the 13th

COMPETENCIES

- Read and understand an informational text
- Search for information in an online dictionary
- Analyze how words are formed
- Perform calculations and observe patterns
- Show creativity in writing

SUBJECTS

- **English**
  - Reading an informational text
  - Etymology, Greek and Latin roots
  - How learned words are formed
- **Mathematics**
  - Multiplication and square numbers
  - Division and repeating decimals
  - Reading a calendar
- **Social Studies / Culture**
  - Beliefs and superstitions
  - Historical landmarks (14th to 20th century)

DURATION

- Approximately 45 minutes

GETTING STARTED

- Ask the students which superstitions they know (black cats, broken mirrors, ladders…)
- Ask them whether Friday the 13th scares them, and why
- Ask them how long they think this superstition has existed
- Write “phobia” on the board and ask them what the word means

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

STEP 1 — Where Does Friday the 13th Come From? Reading a text on the history of the superstition, then five questions.

Q1 — Friday and 13 were each considered unlucky separately; the first mentions of “Friday the 13th” date back to the 19th century.
Q2 — The death of Italian composer Gioachino Rossini, on Friday, November 13, 1868.
Q3 — The novel Friday, the Thirteenth (1907) was a big success; afterwards, newspapers talked more and more about Friday the 13th.
Q4 — There is no proof linking the arrest of the Knights Templar (Friday, October 13, 1307) to the birth of the superstition.
Q5 — Tuesday the 13th in Spain; Friday the 17th in Italy.

STEP 2 — Fears with Fancy Names. Looking up the etymology of five phobias on Wiktionary, then inventing a phobia.

Q6 — triskaideka (“thirteen”) + phobia (“fear”): fear of the number 13.
Q7 — Paraskeví (“Friday”) + dekatría (“thirteen”) + phobia (“fear”): fear of Friday the 13th.
Q8 — arachno- (Greek arákhnē, “spider”) + phobia (“fear”): fear of spiders.
Q9 — acro- (Greek ákros, “highest”) + phobia (“fear”): fear of heights.
Q10 — nycto- (“night”) + phobia (“fear”): fear of the night (the dark).
Q11 — Personal answer (e.g. arachnonyctophobia: fear of spiders at night).

STEP 3 — 13 by the Numbers! Calculations and patterns around the number 13, using a calendar.

Q12 — The number is written twice (254 → 254,254), because 7 × 11 × 13 = 1,001.
Q13 — 169 and 961: the digits of the results are reversed, just like 13 and 31.
Q14 — Only one each year: June 2025, August 2027 and October 2028.
Q15 — 1 ÷ 13 = 0.076923 076923... The period is 076923 (6 digits).
Q16 — 158 years (2026 − 1868).

WRAPPING UP

- Hold a group discussion: is the superstition as old as the students thought?
- Compare the phobias the students invented and break a few of them down on the board
- Remind them that a Friday the 13th is no luckier or unluckier than any other day

FURTHER EXPLORATION

📖 Heather Alexander. *The Good Luck Book: A Celebration of Global Traditions, Superstitions, and Folklore.* DK Children.

