

# CORK BUTTER MUSEUM

## History Lesson 2 Activity Sheets



# Butter Beliefs



| Lesson Four |              |  |
|-------------|--------------|--|
| History     | Strand:      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Story.</li> <li>• Continuity and change over time.</li> </ul>                         |
|             | Strand Unit: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stories from the lives of people in the past.</li> <li>• Food and farming.</li> </ul> |

## What will I learn?

- In early Ireland, lack of education meant that butter-making was often a task of great difficulty. People learned by doing things and discovering for themselves or by word of mouth.
- Butter-making was often linked with superstitions and therefore was carried out alongside rituals that people believed ensured the butter was of good quality.



## The Butter Museum Dictionary!

Match the word with the correct meaning. Use your dictionary to help you! There is one answer done for you, match up the rest!

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Food production       | Imaginary tiny creatures, often human-like in form and thought to have magic powers.   |
| Word of mouth         | A person who practices a religion that worships many gods. A belief system before Christianity.  |
| Generations           | The act or process of making or producing food.  |
| Iron                  | ▲ The tradition of passing information to another person by speech, not books.   |
| Trial and error       | Plural of generation; An entire group of people who were born around the same period of time.  |
| Rituals               | Plural of Piseog; An Irish superstition usually told in story form.  |
| Ward off              | The luck of a particular person that enables them to produce good quality butter.  |
| The fairies           | To beat or shake in a churn to make butter.  |
| Supernatural forces   | To keep away or drive off an attack or something that could cause harm.  |
| Pagan                 | The process of solving a problem or learning how to do something by trying out a variety of methods, until the desired result is achieved. |
| Butterluck            | A set of actions always done in the same way. Rituals can be associated with religions or superstitious beliefs.                           |
| Piseog                | A heavy appliance with a flat surface that is heated and used to press wrinkles out of cloth.  |
| Churning              | A container in which cream or milk is beaten or shaken to form butter.   |
| Butter churn          | Not existing in nature or cannot be explained by natural laws.   |
| List of Irish fairies | Dullahan, Grogoch, Changeling, Pooka, Leprechaun, Banshee, Merrow.   |

In early Ireland, butter-making was often a task of great difficulty. Making consistently good butter could be very challenging. One major reason for this was the peoples' lack of education. There was no such thing as school, so people did not understand science, **food production**, cookery and many other things, except in the simplest of ways.



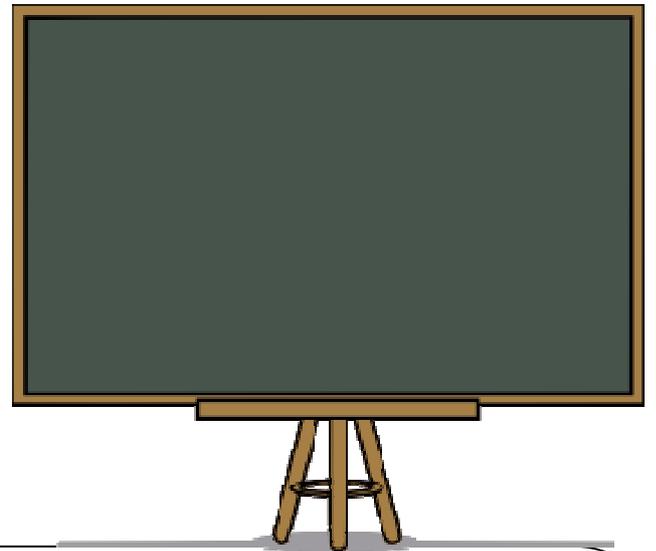
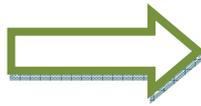
What's more, people could not even read or write! Today a person who has never made butter before could read the recipe and follow the instructions. However, people of the past learned by doing and discovering for themselves or by the information that had been passed down by **word of mouth** through the **generations** before them.



Imagine how the people of the past learned without the help of school or even books! They developed skills by trying things out for themselves, making many mistakes along the way. Even with the help of their families, they learned at a much slower rate. Today we still learn things by doing, especially before we go to school when we are very young.



### Activities



**(a) Can you name the things you learned by doing, without the help of books or school?**

**(b) Look at the activities below. Circle the activities that were learned by doing in red and by studying in blue.**



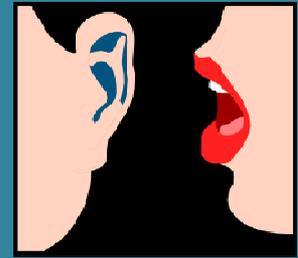
What's more, this information acquired by word of mouth might not even have been correct! Imagine how difficult it is to remember a story perfectly, word for word. Now imagine that same information is being passed on to another person and another and so on. Over time, that information could easily change by someone down the line mishearing it, telling it slightly differently or forgetting parts. After a few people have passed on that information it might have changed so much that is unrecognisable!



### Activity

#### Try playing Chinese whispers:

Ask the teacher to think of a sentence and whisper it to one pupil. Continue to pass the message around the classroom from person to person until the last person hears the sentence. Now let him or her speak aloud exactly what he or she has heard to the entire classroom.



Compare this new sentence to the original sentence and see how much it has changed in the process! This is just one example of how information can change if it is not written down.

**Start sentence**

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**End sentence**

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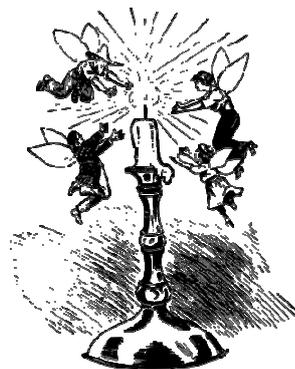


Butter-makers of the past often made the butter by **trial and error**, along with a few details remembered from the time they had been taught. Within families, there was a certain pride in making better butter than a neighbouring family. A family's unique and sometimes strange method of making butter was a secret that was kept strictly within the family.

In those times people feared anything that they thought might affect their butter. As a result, the actual butter-making method was often linked with superstitions and therefore was carried out alongside very strange methods or **rituals** that people believed ensured the butter's good quality. People believed that these rituals would ensure certain good luck, known as '**Butterluck**' when making the butter and most importantly, help **ward off** the **fairies**.



In old Ireland the fairies were thought to be the **supernatural forces** that caused all sorts of mischief. In those times, people were very cautious not to anger or even get the attention of the fairies. There were many **Piseogs** or stories that told of the terrible bad luck that could easily befall people who didn't take care around the fairies. These stories were used as words of warning. As butter was so valuable to people, the butter-making building was deliberately built as far away as possible from where the fairies were thought to live. One could not risk them interfering with the butter!



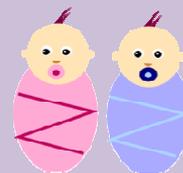
### Activities

**Read the old Irish fairy tale or 'Piseog' and answer the questions afterwards.**



A long time ago there lived a man and his wife, with a set of twins whom the woman loved dearly.

One day she visited a neighbor who lived a great distance away. She did not want to go leaving her poor helpless babies all alone in the house, but felt like she had no choice. She had recently heard tell of supernatural forces haunting the neighbourhood and hoped the babies would be safe without her.



She came back as quickly as she could manage but on her return journey she thought she saw some fairies in blue petticoats crossing her path despite it being midday. This frightened her and she expected the worst. She hurried home, only to find her sweet little babies in the cradle fast asleep and everything as it should be.

But as time went on, the couple suspected something was not quite right with the babies because although weeks went by and they were being fed they simply would not grow.



Then the man said one day: "They can't be ours!"

But the woman said in despair: "Who else could they be?"

And so they had a great argument and the man blamed his wife for letting harm come to the twins. They simply still did not know what to do.



The woman grew very sad, but made up her mind all the same one evening. She needed to see the Wise Man of Llanidloes, who knew a great many things and would know what to do.

She travelled far to see Llanidloes and explained to the Wise Man what had happened. The wise man thought for a moment. "Soon will arrive a harvest of oats and rye", he said. "At the time that you are preparing dinner for the reapers, remove the shell from one hen's egg and boil some potage in it. Then you must quietly take it to the door as if you were to give this to the reapers for dinner. You must listen to see if the twins speak. If you hear them speaking of things no child should know, you will understand that they are no children of mortals. Seize them and throw them without thought into the waters of Lake Elvyn. But if you don't hear anything strange, do not harm them."



So the woman waited patiently until the day of the harvest. On that day the woman remembered the wise man's words. She placed the eggshell on the fire, removed it and took it to the door. She waited, listening nervously. Then one child said to the other:



"Acorn before oak I knew, an egg before a hen but I never heard of an eggshell brew a dinner for harvest men." It was a rhyme of wisdom, impossible for a baby to know.

She returned to the house at once, took the children from their cradles and flung them into the Llyn. Then the fairies flew out to save their babies. When the couple returned home the human babies were back in their cradles and the couple rejoiced the return of their own.



**(a) How did the woman know that something was wrong?**

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**(b) Why do you think the man blamed his wife?**

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**(c) In your opinion which type of fairy swapped the babies? Give a reason for your answer? \*Study the clues on the next page to help answer this question!**

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**Dullahan**

It appears as a headless horseman clothed all in black. The wild horse it rides breaths fire and it makes the sound of thunder as it gallops by. If this fairy stands still there will most certainly be a death in that area. It also said to call out the name of the person who is about to die.

**Grogoch**

It looks like a small ancient man, with a coat of thick reddish fur and wearing only twigs and dirt. These fairies are mostly invisible to people, but will show themselves to a person who has gained their trust. If the fairy takes a shine to you, it may follow you home to help with housework and other jobs such as, planting and harvesting. As a reward, it will expect a jug of fresh cream.

**Changeling**

This baby fairy is taken into a human household in the place of the original human child. It takes on the appearance of a baby with the wrinkled, crooked features of an old person. These fairies are ill-tempered and will often amuse themselves by using dark magic in the household, spreading bad luck upon the adopted family. They enjoy playing the Irish pipes or the flute with incredible skill.

I've heard that there are seven types of Irish fairy!

**Pooka**

This is Ireland's most feared fairy, a shape shifter with a number of terrible forms. It's usually seen as a smooth dark horse with burning eyes and a tattered mane. It is very destructive and likes to ruin crops, terrorise farm animals and kidnap people travelling late at night, dropping them into bog holes. It has even learned human speech and sometimes will call the names of people it wants to take out on its nightly hunts.

**Leprechaun**

This fairy comes in the form of a tiny old man who has drunk too much. It likes to steal or borrow from humans and enjoys causing mischief in the home. It guards its treasure fiercely, storing it in crocks or pots. If captured the fairy will offer gold for their freedom but once it has gone, the gold will disappear.

**Banshee**

This fairy is a symbol of death. She takes on two main forms; a noble nurse and a withered old hag, with grey hooded cloak and robes. She is heard more often than seen. Her cry is one of mourning and can be heard warning of the death of a family member in the near future, however she can only foresee deaths in old Irish families.

**Merrow**

These beautiful female fairies live in the ocean. Their legs are human-like but their feet are flatter and webbed. They are known to wear seal skins and caps made from feather that helps them swim and breathe underwater. If the fairy wishes to set foot on land, she must leave her clothing behind. If these clothes are found by a human, they have complete control over the fairy. Men have been known to take these fairies as wives and have children with them but if the fairy finds her clothing she will abandon her family at once and return to the sea.

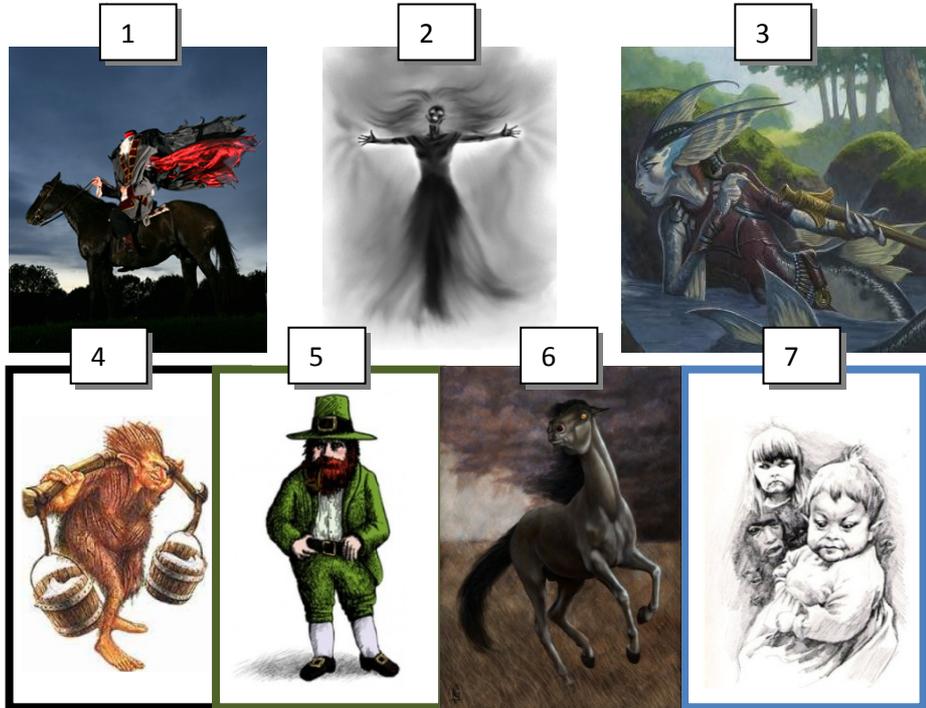




## Activity

**Can you tell the fairies apart? Match the image to the correct name. See the descriptions above for help!**

|    |
|----|
| 1= |
| 2= |
| 3= |
| 4= |
| 5= |
| 6= |
| 7= |



Throughout the butter-making process, many rituals were practised to make sure the fairies didn't meddle with the butter or the cows, as the source of the butter. These rituals were meant to please the fairies or better still, keep them away. A mixture of **Pagan** and Christian prayers were usually spoken aloud throughout the butter-making process, especially during the **churning**, as this was thought to be the trickiest part.

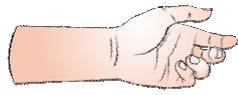


The cows needed protection above all else. The quality of the butter depended on the health of the cow. Saint Brigit crosses were hung above the cow house to protect the cows. Prayers were said to ensure they stayed healthy and holy water was thrown over them to prevent any illness developing.

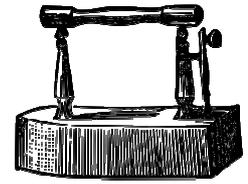


Did you know that Piseogs came from local Irish superstitions? Nowadays Piseogs are strongest in the West of Ireland.

There were even stranger rituals used still. People believed that certain actions would guarantee good butter. One method included spreading unsalted butter on the wall of the butter-making room to keep the fairies away. During the churning process special precautions were made. People believed that sprinkling salt over the lid of the churn, or placing a red-hot **iron** beneath the churn would



bring good luck. Iron was thought to protect against the fairies and any tricks they might play. The



strangest and most gruesome ritual of all was using the hand of a recently executed dead man to stir the milk in the **butter churn!**

Imagine living by those superstitions every day. Some rituals were not only difficult but plain silly! What's more, there was no proof that these rituals gave people good luck, or prevented bad luck. However, in those times people did them without questioning. People grew up hearing Piseogs about bad luck befalling people and therefore were afraid of the same happening to them. They couldn't risk not carrying out even one ritual in case bad luck followed.



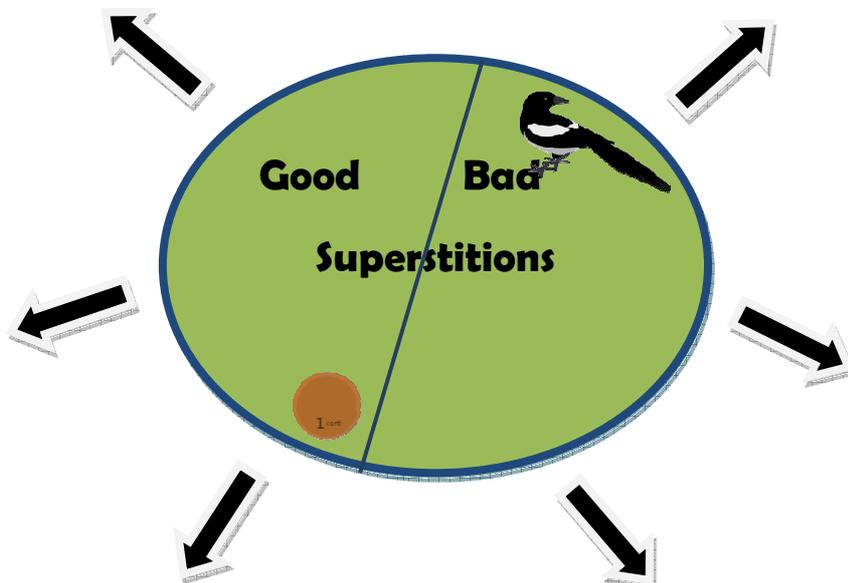
**Activities**



Superstitions usually involve one or more of the following: animals, objects, a certain situation or action and usually a person. They bring either good luck or bad luck.

**(a) Name a few superstitions that involve either good luck or bad luck. Try to name at least one superstition of each of the following: an animal, plant, object, or person making an action or in a situation.**

**(b) Can you remember a superstitious date?**



**Superstitious Penny Rhyme:**

Find a penny, pick it up. All day long, you'll have good luck!

\*Can you think of any more superstitious rhymes?

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**What have I learned?**

**Record four new facts that you didn't know before!**



**Fact 1:**

A light blue rectangular box with a yellow rectangular area on the left side. Inside the yellow area, there is a yellow rectangular block and a yellow trapezoidal block. To the right of the yellow area is a large, empty yellow rectangular box for writing.

**Fact 2:**

A light blue rectangular box with a yellow rectangular area on the left side. Inside the yellow area, there is a yellow rectangular block and a yellow trapezoidal block. To the right of the yellow area is a large, empty yellow rectangular box for writing.

**Fact 3:**

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**Fact 4:**

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