Worksheet: The Psychology and History of Superstitions

Name:

Surname:

Grade: 11

Subject: English Language

Topic: Belief Systems & Critical Thinking

Source: Google Arts & Culture - “Why are we superstitious?” by James Brown

Instructions: Complete the following tasks based on your understanding of the article.

Part 1: Multiple Choice (Single Correct Answer)

1. According to the article, what is the fundamental psychological principle behind the formation of superstitions?

a) A desire to control unpredictable outcomes.

b) A deep-seated fear of the supernatural.

c) A genetic memory from our ancestors.

d) A lack of scientific education.

2. The article suggests that the “illusion of control” is most powerful in situations that are:

a) Completely safe and predictable.

b) Highly important and uncertain.

c) Governed by strict rules.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

d) Already explained by science.

3. What historical example is used to illustrate classical conditioning in the context of superstition?

a) A bowler who performs a ritual before throwing the ball.

b) B.F. Skinner's experiments with pigeons.

c) Ancient Roman augurs reading bird entrails.

d) A baseball player wearing a lucky shirt.

Part 2: Multiple Choice (Multiple Correct Answers)

4. Which of the following statements are identified in the article as reasons why superstitions persist? (Select all that apply)

- [ ] They are always based on factual evidence.
- [ ] They can reduce anxiety by providing a sense of control.
- [ ] They are a form of cultural tradition that is passed down.
- [ ] They are a result of our brain's tendency to find patterns (apophenia).
- [ ] They have been proven to directly influence future events.

Part 3: Fill in the Blanks (Drag and Drop)

Instructions: Complete the paragraph by dragging the correct words from the word bank into the blanks.

Word Bank:

patterns, conditioning, control, reinforced, uncertainty

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Superstitions often arise from our brain's innate need to find (1) _____ in the world. This is particularly true in situations of high (2) _____. When a random action is followed by a positive outcome, the behavior is (3) _____, a process similar to Pavlovian (4) _____. This creates an "illusion of (5) _____" where we believe our ritual can influence chance.

Part 4: Matching

Instructions: Match the psychological or historical concept on the left with its correct description or example on the right.

Concept	Description/Example
1. Apophenia	A. A famous behaviorist who demonstrated superstitious behavior in pigeons.
2. Illusion of Control	B. The tendency to perceive meaningful connections between unrelated things.
3. B.F. Skinner	C. A bowler who twists and shuffles before throwing the ball, believing it affects the outcome.
4. Classical Conditioning	D. The learning process where a neutral stimulus becomes associated with a significant event.

Part 5: Short Answer

6. In your own words, explain the difference between a superstition and a religious practice, according to the perspectives mentioned in the article.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Part 6: Open-Ended Question

7. The article concludes that superstitions are a natural product of how our minds work. Do you believe it is possible, or even desirable, for society to overcome superstitious thinking entirely? Justify your answer with logical reasoning, considering both the psychological benefits and potential drawbacks of superstitions.

LIVEWORKSHEETS