

# Weird and Wonderful Wedding Traditions in Your Family Tree

Have you ever been to a wedding? Did the bride toss her bouquet or the couple smash cake on each other's faces? Wedding traditions can seem a little strange! But they come from meaningful customs passed down through generations. Let's explore some of the wild, wonderful wedding traditions in your family history.

Many old wedding customs involved luck and magic. Egyptian brides wore special amulet jewelry thought to bring health, wealth, and happiness. Chinese brides attached coins to their dresses to attract money. Greek brides tossed wheat for a bountiful harvest. Carrying the bride over the threshold kept evil spirits away. Almost every culture had traditions to bless the new marriage.

Other wacky weddings involved noise. In Germany, ringing bells ward off bad spirits. Guests banged pots and pans outside the newlyweds' window! Firing guns into the air was popular in early America. Even cannons boomed after royal weddings. All this racket supposedly protected the couple and announced the happy news.

Fun favorites like cake cutting and tossing bouquets also symbolized hopes for the marriage. Cutting the first slice together showed shared commitment. And the single woman who caught the bouquet was thought to be next to marry. Ancient Roman brides wore floral crowns, so tossing a floral bouquet carried on that ritual.

Have you heard this rhyme about weddings? "Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue, and a silver sixpence in her shoe." This tradition comes from Victorian England. Each item had meaning, like "old" for continuity and "blue" for faithfulness. The sixpence coin wished wealth. The bride gathered these special items to bring good fortune.

In India, brightly patterned henna tattoos are painted on the bride's hands using a paste. This temporary body art is called a mehndi. Intricate designs symbolize joy and beauty. The darker the henna stains, the more the groom was thought to love his bride. Applying henna could take hours, but the dazzling results were worth it.

Some cultures had quirky requirements to get married. In Scotland's Shetland Islands, couples had to knit their own socks before the wedding. This proved they could handle married life's chores. In former times, men in the Philippines had to

fight rivals in stick duels to win a bride! Thankfully more peaceful customs like sharing 13 coins replaced violent ones.

Your ancestors probably took part in some fascinating rituals. Maybe the couple drank mead, a fermented honey wine, at old Norse weddings. Or ate sugared almonds like Italians for sweetness. Jewish grooms stomped on glass to close the ceremony. Next time you go to a wedding, look for traditions that tie back long ago. Our families, and their wedding customs, keep evolving over time. But we still wish every bride and groom good luck!

## Glossary

- rite: an established ceremony or ritual
- fermented: a food like wine or cheese gets fermented by bacteria or yeasts to change its flavor
- canopy: a tent-like covering hung above the couple at a wedding

## Questions

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Old wedding traditions often involved which of these?  
a) Expensive gowns   b) Magic rituals   c) Royal guests   d) Fireworks
2. Loud noises like bells and gunshots at weddings were meant to:  
a) Celebrate   b) Scare away evil   c) Make the couple kiss   d) Be annoying
3. Why did Victorian brides carry special old, new, borrowed and blue items?  
a) As gifts for guests   b) For good luck   c) To show off wealth  
d) To follow royal rules
4. What does the mehndi tradition show about Indian weddings?  
a) They last a very long time.   b) Beauty is very important.  
c) Guests get henna tattoos too.   d) It is a sad occasion.
5. How does the article show wedding customs change over time?  
a) Traditions evolve but still wish the couple well.  
b) People today follow all the exact old traditions.  
c) Families pass down the same traditions forever.  
d) Modern weddings have no meaningful rituals.
6. What is the main purpose of this article?  
a) To explain how different weddings are around the world  
b) To show how wedding traditions connect us to history  
c) To complain about strange old wedding customs  
d) To compare Indian and Greek wedding clothes

## Answer Key

1. b
2. b
3. b
4. b
5. a
6. b