

“Knock on Wood”

Name _____ Date _____

Vocabulary

superstition	frown /	unhappy /	unlucky /
knock	smile	happy	lucky
wood	“knuckle	“blue”	nothing
trouble	down”	(slang)	

“Knock on Wood”

Say, who's got trouble?

We got trouble.

How much trouble?

Too much trouble!

Well now, don't you frown

Just knuckle down and

Knock on wood.

Who's unhappy?

We're unhappy.

How unhappy?

Too unhappy!

Uh-oh, that won't do

When you are blue just

Knock on wood.

Who's unlucky?

We're unlucky.

How unlucky?

Too unlucky!

But your luck'll change

If you'll arrange to

Knock on wood.

Who's got nothing?

We got nothing.

How much nothing?

Too much nothing!

Say, nothing's not an awful lot

But knock on wood.

Now! Now who's happy?

We're all happy!

Just how happy?

Very happy!

That's the way we're going to stay

So knock on wood!

Now who's lucky?

We're all lucky!

Just how lucky?

Very lucky!

Well smile up then and once again

Let's knock on wood!



Dooley Wilson as “Sam” in the 1942 Warner Brothers film “Casablanca.”

Music by M.J. Jerome, words by Jack Scholl, sung by Dooley Wilson.

“Knock on Wood”

Teaching notes and lesson plan



My students all speak Spanish as their first language. I use this listening, reading and discussion exercise with my E3-L1 readers here in the U.S. The call-and-response song “Knock on Wood” from “Casablanca” makes a great prompt for discussion of superstitions, opposites, emotions, and contracted words.

Lesson plan for discussion of opposites, emotions and superstition.

Song: “Knock on Wood” (Jerome & Scholl)

- Introduce this song as being from an old movie (what’s the opposite of old?) named “Casablanca.” It’s set during World War II in Morocco, where people trying to escape the war in Europe went on their way to the Americas.
- Preview vocabulary with students, asking for examples of superstitions in their home countries. Supply some examples in case they don’t wish to speak up in class. Talk about the superstition of knocking on wood for good luck. (*Editor’s note: in the UK this is known more commonly as “touch wood”.*)
- Talk about the idea of luck – good luck and bad luck. Discuss the slang terms “knuckle down” and “blue.” Discuss the opposites frown/smile, unhappy/happy, unlucky/lucky and tie them back in with other opposites studied in previous classes.
- Read over the lyrics with the students. Point out music usually uses less formal English. Explain this is a “call and response” song where the audience answers the singer (see the bold-typed words). Have students use highlighters to mark all the contracted words. Discuss what the long form of the words would be.
- First play the song from DVD or YouTube (e.g. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d79cxNkcYSE>) without showing the images. How does the song sound? Sad or happy? In getting ready to show the film clip, encourage the students to sing along with “Sam” or at least do the audience response when viewing it. Make sure to knock!
- Show the video (after the twelve-minute mark on the DVD). Ask afterwards why they think Rick (Humphrey Bogart) does not look happy even when the words indicate people should be happy. Explain his competitor has just come into the café. Someone else will be coming in later, and that’s what the movie’s about!
- Play the clip again and encourage more audience participation.
- Elicit verbal comments on how they themselves are feeling right now. They can use either the troubled/troubled, unhappy/happy, unlucky/lucky vocabulary or other adjectives from previous lessons. Have them write a sentence in their journal expressing this. Ask if anyone would like to share his or her sentence with the class.

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