

Owl superstition



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

I chose to interview a family friend about the belief that owls are a symbol of wisdom because I noticed a statue of an owl in her garden and wondered why she would have a symbol of death there or anywhere. My belief of what an owl represented before this assignment was based on what I had seen in a movie, *The 4th Kind*, a horror movie that used owls as a connection to the spirit world. I learned from browsing the internet that owls are symbols of death in many cultures.

During the interview I asked her how her culture viewed owls, and learned that they saw owls as wise. She grew up with parents from Greece, and visited the country several times. It is a popular superstition of the modern west. She told me that in ancient Greece, Athena the goddess of wisdom had the symbol of an owl. Her symbol was used on Greek coins and became associated with wealth. Her superstition taught her to respect owls and the habitat that they lived in.

She also told me that they are guardians of the night, which is her reason for having the statue in her garden. Upon further research I learned that most cultures see owls as evil or a bad omen and represent bad luck and death. These views are important superstitions in many cultures history. In Kenya owls were signs of death. Seeing or hearing one made people believe that someone was going to die. The Hopi Indians saw owls as a symbol of sorcery and evil as well as the Aztecs and the Maya, a symbol of destruction.

The Aztec god of death, Mictlantecuhtli, was depicted with an owl. In some middle and far eastern cultures, the owl was a sacred guardian of the afterlife and moved souls from one plane of existence to another. The

ancient Romans thought that they were a symbol of death and had similar beliefs as Kenya and in England it was believed that if a person looked into an owl's nest, depression would fall upon him. Another belief was that an owl was the wisest of birds. They were written about by many important people.

Shakespeare made many references in his plays to owls as magic beings, and Aesop told the story of an owl who knew more than he was given credit for. The Greeks considered them a good omen. If one were to fly over their army it insured victory. In general, owls are viewed as harbingers of bad luck, ill health, or death. But both beliefs are common. Either way if an owl is seen as a bad omen or a symbol of wisdom I think that both are beneficial. It is these superstitions that make each culture unique.

Even though each culture has different views of what an owl symbolizes, they are both interesting to learn about. The superstition of owls being some extraordinary animal doesn't have to be believed in for it to be beneficial. I think it an owl symbol can be beneficial if it is seen for its wisdom and knowledge because people have something to look up to. Either way it is an interesting superstition because it has a part in history of many ancient and present cultures.