



URBAN LEGENDS



WHAT IS AN URBAN LEGEND?

An urban legend is a strange story or supernatural event that may have happened at some point in the past, told by groups of people.

The following stories are popular urban legends from across the world.

They may or may not be true.



Supernatural (形容): 超自然的な

BLOODY MARY

Have you ever wanted to know your future? Your future career or partner? Once a year, on the night of Halloween, when the border that separates our world from the next is at its weakest, you can contact a spirit named Bloody Mary. It is said that she will tell you your future.

Don't worry, I'll teach you how.

Contacting Bloody Mary is easy. You need just two things; candles, and a mirror. First, light the candles. Then, turn off all the lights in the house. Finally, place the mirror in front of your face, candle in hand. To summon her, you just need to close your eyes, concentrate, and whisper her name three times:

“Bloody Mary. Bloody Mary. Bloody Mary”

When you open your eyes, her face will have replaced yours in the mirror.



Spirit (名): 魂 Summon (動): 召喚する Whisper (動): 囁く

DROP BEARS

People in the Australian countryside, known as the outback, whisper stories of a vicious creature. It is like a koala, but more powerful and dangerous. Like a koala, it lives in the bush, Australia's forests. The creature hunts by waiting above, in the trees. When prey walk under its tree, the creature will drop (fall) down onto it, attacking with sharp claws and teeth. They sometimes drop onto unwary travelers' heads and, in a frenzy, bite and scratch their neck and face.

If you ever travel through the Australian bush, locals recommend that you put a fork in your hair, and Vegimite behind your ears, to deter these vicious creatures.



Vicious (形容): 悪質な Prey (名): 獲物 Unwary (形容): 不注意な
Frenzy (名): 狂乱 Scratch (動): 引っ掻く Deter (動): 抑止する
Vegimite (名): トーストに塗る濃厚なペースト。オーストラリアのソウルフード

THE LICKED HAND

A teenage girl is staying home alone for the night. To feel safe, she lets her dog sleep under her bed. It licks her hand occasionally, comforting her as she falls asleep. Later that night, she hears something scratching at her bedroom door. She is about to get up when her dog licks her hand again. Feeling safe, she goes back to sleep.

Again she is awoken by the noise, louder this time. She gets up to go and look, and finds her dog at the bedroom door, trying to get in.

She feels sick. Horrificed, she thinks:

“So what is under my bed...?”



Lick (動): なめる Comfort (動): 慰める
Scratch (動): 引っ掻く Horrified (形容): 恐ろしい

A WHISPER IN THE WOODS

In a certain forest in rural Tohoku, travelers sometimes hear a voice.
The voice whispers:

“Don’t turn around... Don’t turn around... Don’t turn around...”

The voice repeats, growing louder and closer. If the traveler obeys,
doesn’t turn around, and keeps walking, the voice fades, and they are safe.

However, if they do turn around, they are never seen again.



THE OLD WOMAN ON THE LAST TRAIN

Late at night, on the last train out of Saint Petersburg, Russia, on the Red Line. In the last carriage, in the last seat, there sometimes sits an old woman. She is wearing an old, dirty shawl, and sits silent, hunched over, unmoving. Local people say she was a woman travelling home during WW2, when the train was hit by a bomb, killing everyone onboard. Locals know not to talk to her. They don't look at her, and often avoid sitting in the same carriage altogether. The old woman remains on the train, even after the train reaches the final stop.

Sometimes travelers ride the last train. They have no knowledge of the old woman. Locals try to warn the travelers; don't look at her, and never try to talk to her. However, sometimes, rude (or drunk) passengers try to bother the old woman. She stays silent and unmoving. Locals, knowing what will happen next, either leave the train, or move to the front carriage.

The lights on the train flicker and turn off. The train shakes violently, the wheels screech, and some even say they can hear the sounds of whistling bombs and explosions. When the lights turn on again, the old woman, and any passengers who bothered her, are gone.



Carriage (名): 電車の客車 Hunch over (句動): 前かがみになる
Altogether (副): 全部 Flicker (動): ちらつく Violently (副): 激しく
Screech (動): どなりつける Whistle (動): 口笛を吹く, 笛を鳴らす

BUG BITE

A girl and her family travel to Africa, for a camping and safari holiday. One morning, the girl wakes up with a red mark on her face. She shows it to her parents, who say it must be an insect bite. A mosquito probably bit her when she was asleep. It will go away in time. So she ignores it, and enjoys her trip.

When she returns home, the red mark on her face has gotten bigger. It hurts a little, and itches. Days pass; the itching gets worse, and the red mark grows bigger and bigger. One day, she looks at herself in the mirror. She scratches at her red, swollen face.

Suddenly, the red spot on her skin bursts open, and hundreds of tiny baby spiders come out, crawling across her face. An insect had not bit her; a spider had laid its eggs in her skin!



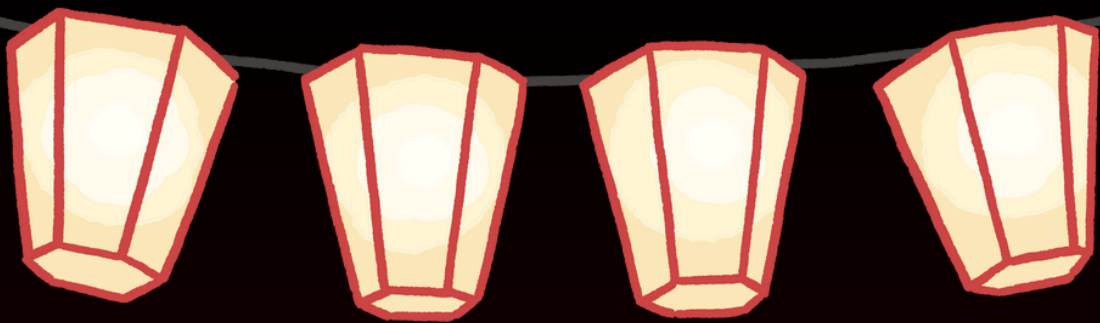


What do you think?

Do you believe these
urban legends are true?

Have you heard people in your
community tell a story like these?



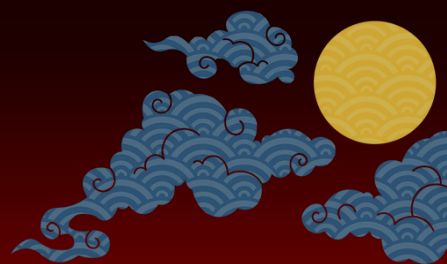


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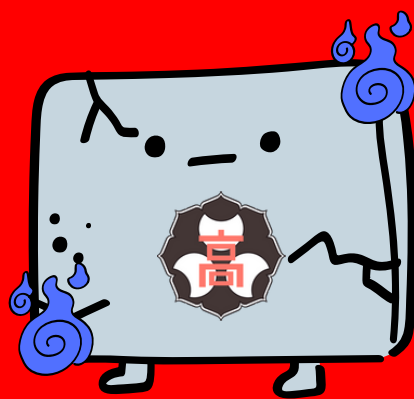
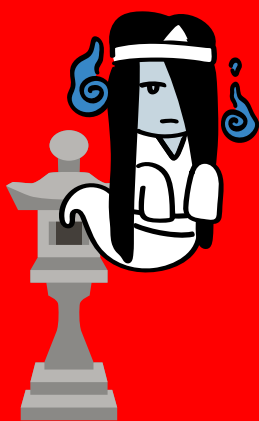
都市伝説



妖怪



What are some popular urban legends and supernatural creatures in Japan?





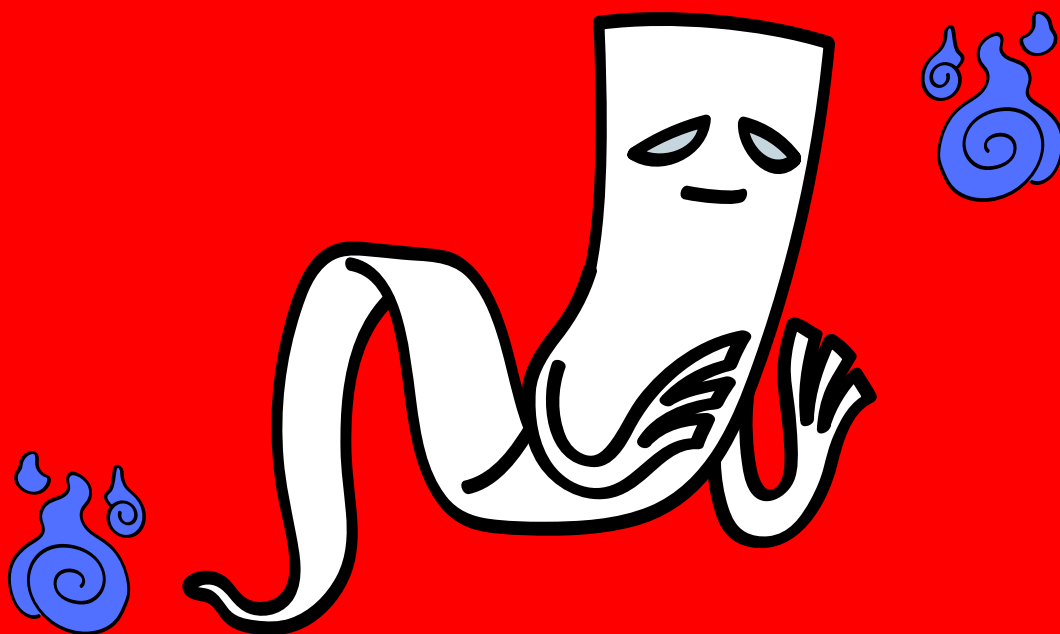
Ittan-momen

一反木綿

Ittan-momen is a youkai from Takayama Town, in Kagoshima Prefecture. It looks like a bolt of cloth and is very long - about ten meters. It flies in the sky and attacks people. According to one story, Ittan-momen wraps itself around peoples' necks, or covers their faces so they cannot breathe, choking them to death.

In areas where it is said to appear, adults tell their children not to stay out playing too late into the evening, or Ittan-momen will appear!

By Ayumi





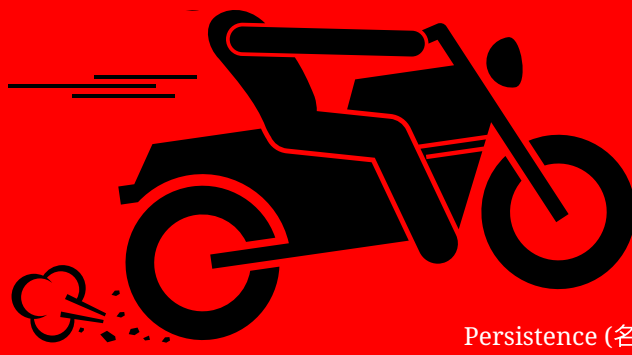
Headless Rider

首なしライダー

My favorite urban legend is the Headless Rider. It is a ghost of a motorbike rider who lost their head in an accident. It looks for it's lost head and it's killer. It is not only a fictional ghost story, but has also appeared in various media, including anime and video games.

I like his persistence!

By Mito



Persistence (名): 持続性



Slit-Mouthed Woman

口裂け女

The Slit-mouthed Woman is a famous figure from Japanese folklore. She appears as a woman wearing a face mask. She approaches children walking alone and asks them, “Am I pretty?” If the child answers “yes”, she takes off her mask, revealing her mouth, which has been slit into a large smile.

She asks again, “Am I still pretty?” If the child says “no”, she kills them using scissors. If they say “yes”, she cuts the child’s face, to look like her own. It’s a very scary story for children!

By Takumi





Kesaran-pasaran

ケサランパサラン

Do you know “Kesaran-pasaran”? It is a kind of youkai which is said to bring happiness to you. It looks like a dandelion, some fluff, or a rabbit's tail. It's fluffy and white.

Surprisingly, this legend has been told since the Edo period. Some say the Kesaran-pasaran should be kept in a small box containing white powder. But be careful! It is also said that it should only be looked at just at once a year. If you see Kesaran-pasaran more than once per year, it could bring you bad luck...

Oh no!

By Melissa



Fluff (名): 綿毛
Dandelion (名): タンポポ

Fluffy (形容): ふわふわ



Zashiki-warashi

座敷童子

My favorite youkai is the Zashiki-warashi, 'The Parlor Child'. They are spirits which appear as children, with a bob haircut, dressed in traditional kimono. They do not misbehave like other youkai. They appear in the living rooms of people's homes. They usually just stand in the shadows, smiling. Sometimes they leave footprints on the wooden floors.

They are believed to bring good luck to those who see them, and wealth to the household. This story comes from Iwate Prefecture, in northern Honshu.

By Anri





Nopperabou

のっぺらぼう

My favorite urban legend is Nopperabou. The Nopperabou, or 'Faceless Ghost', appears as a human, but has no features on its face - no nose, eyes, mouth, etc. The Nopperabou is mostly harmless, but likes to frighten people. It transforms into someone's friend or family member with their back turned, to eventually reveal a featureless face, scaring the person. This story comes from the Kansai region of Japan.

I have two reasons why I really like Nopperabou in particular. First, I'm jealous that they don't need to spend time washing their face. Second, they can easily find work as a mannequin in a clothing store, and other similar jobs.

By Sota





Mary-san

メリーさんの電話

Do you know Mary-san? Its an urban legend which I think many people have heard of. Mary-san is an old American-made doll which was thrown away by her owner when her family moved homes. In the new house, one night, the girl gets a phone call;

“Hello. This is Mary-san. I’m in a garbage dump. Why did you abandon me?”
The girl was confused, and hung up the phone. The next day the girl answered the phone again. This time she heard;

“Hello. This is Mary-san. I’m at Sumiyoshi Station”.
The girl was scared, Sumiyoshi was the closest train station to her house. The girl hung up the phone. The next day came, and again the girl answered the phone;

“Hello. This is Mary-san. I’m outside your house. Open the door”.
The girl screamed. The pulled the phone line out of the wall and ran around the house, locking all the doors and windows. The phone, despite being without power, rang again. Her hand shaking, the girl answered the phone;

“Hello. This is Mary-san. I’m standing right behind you”.

By Haruto





The Disappearing Passenger

消えたタクシーの乗客

In Miyagi Prefecture, following the devastating 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, taxi drivers reported ghost passengers. These passengers would hail a taxi, and ask to go to a specific destination, as usual. During the trip, they would stay silent. When the taxi approached their destination, the driver would turn to talk to the passenger, only to find they are gone.

When the driver stops the taxi to investigate, he discovers nothing except for a puddle of water on the seat.

By Krit



Devastating (形容): 壊滅的な Hail a taxi (動): タクシーを呼ぶ
Destination (名): 行き先 Investigate (動): 調査する Discover (動): 発見する

Gashadokuro

がしゃどくろ

I love the youkai gashadokuro - the giant rattling skeleton. The gashadokuro takes the form of a huge skeleton over 10 meters tall, made from the bones of people killed in famine and war. It wanders around at 2:00 am, searching for people to eat. It makes a rattling sound when it moves around.



I really like this youkai because it is so absurd - a giant skeleton walking around at night, eating people. The fact it is said to be stealthy is also very funny to me. Also, I think gashadokuro looks very cool, especially as seen in art. I really like Utagawa Kuniyoshi's Souma no furu-dairi (相馬の古内裏, see below). It is a very intense image.

By James



Rattle (名): がたがた Famine (名): 飢饉 Wander (動): 放浪する
Absurd (形容): 不条理な Stealthy (形容): こっそり Intense (形容): 強烈な



The Snow Woman

雪女

I don't believe in ghosts, psychics, or fortune telling. The most fascinating mystery to me is quantum entanglement. But I love stories of "Yuki-onna."

Yuki-onna is portrayed as a dangerous spirit who freezes travelers with her icy breath. Yuki-onna remains a symbol of the beauty and cruelty of winter.

By Mr Okajima





Recently youkai, and Japanese ghost stories and urban legends, have become popular all around the world.



Do you have a favorite?



