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BY LEIGH DE ARMAS



Could the mysterious glowing ball of "green cheese" suspended in our night sky be a catalyst for chaos here on earth? Is it merely coincidence that the word "lunatic" derives from the Latin word meaning "moon"?

For centuries, the superstitious and the scholarly have toyed with the notion that a full moon unleashes aggression in people and animals. Numerous studies have been conducted on what is called the "Transylvania effect," but the results are about as unified as America after the presidential election – for every study supporting the idea that a full moon turns us into animals, another posits just the opposite.



The British Medical Journal published two separate studies in December of 2000 that directly contradicted each other on the question of whether animals bite people more during a full moon.

One study, conducted by the Bradford Royal Infirmary in Bradford, England, examined more than 1,600 emergency room patients between 1997 and 1999. Researchers concluded that a person's chance of being bitten by an animal nearly doubles on or around a full moon.



But a similar study conducted approximately 11,000 miles and nine time zones to the west, at the University of Sydney in Australia, found no positive relation between a full moon and dog bites. In fact, says the study, dog bites were slightly lower on full-moon nights.

According to a recent University of Washington report, "Moonstruck! Does the Full Moon Influence Behavior?", there are slightly higher instances of aggravated assault, crime and animal bites during a full moon. However, says the study, the full moon has no notable effect on arrests, suicides, traffic accidents, drug overdoses, emergency room visits or depression.



Ah, but what of lunar effects here in Central Florida, a region already famous for being full of people close to the edge?

Allen Moore, spokesperson for the Orange County Corrections department, says, "I wouldn't be surprised if [the legend] turned out to be true. I worked in law enforcement for many years, and it always seems to us that there was more aggression on full moon nights, especially if you include dog bites."



In an attempt to set the record straight, *Orlando Weekly* grabbed the paperwork for all arrests that took place in the Orlando area Oct. 28 – a full moon that coincidentally rode the heels of the rare lunar eclipse the night before. Double freaky.

Patrick M. Jablonski, Ph.D., a research statistician for the Orange County Corrections Department, compared bookings from Jan. 1, 1998, to Sept. 26, 2004, to analyze whether a full moon had any impact on arrests. His findings seemed to support the theory that a full moon makes people act meshuggeneh. The average arrest rate on full moon nights in Orlando over the last six years has been 153.5, compared to 150.8 arrests on new moon nights, 145.5 arrests on first quarter moon nights and 153.1 on last quarter moon nights.



But Jablonski insists the numbers don't prove a thing. "The differences in the data are due to chance."

During the Oct. 28 full moon, there were 137 bookings in Orlando for drunk driving, domestic assault, theft, possession of cocaine, even one aggravated battery on a pregnant woman. Is there more aggression during a full moon? Hard to say. But there was a lot going on that night.





# One October Day Worksheet

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

First read the article, and then answer the questions below in **complete sentences**.

1. In your own words, using three or more sentences, please summarize the article.

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2. What is the question they are trying to find out?

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3. Using the question as a guide, form a hypothesis.

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4. Please use data from the article to support your hypothesis.

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5. Please use data from the article to refute your hypothesis.

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6. Please give your opinion about the question and state why you believe this way (you can use a personal experience or observation to support your opinion).

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