

The legend of la Befana- La Leggenda de La Befana



Like children everywhere, Italian kids look forward to the arrival of the red-suited Babbo Natale (Santa Claus) on Christmas Eve. But they are waiting also for the arrival of an old woman called La Befana in early January. On Epiphany Eve, the old, tattered and soot-covered Befana flies around the world on a broomstick and comes down chimneys to deliver candy and presents to children who have been good during the year. For those who have fallen a bit short of model behavior, la Befana will leave lumps of coal, which today are really “candy coal”.

The story is that la Befana was approached by the Three Wise Men who asked her to lead them to the stable where the baby Jesus lay in a manger. La Befana was too busy cleaning her house at the time, so she declined the offer to go with them. Very soon she realized that she had made a huge mistake, so she gathered up a bag full of gifts and set off alone in search of the baby Jesus. Though she followed the same star as the Magi, she was unable to find the stable. La Befana continues to travel the world over to this day searching every house for the Christ child. On January 6, the day of Epiphany, Italian children hold their breaths as they search their stockings for a sign that they have been good that year.

Vocabolario:

children – bambini

Christmas – Natale

are waiting – aspettano

old woman- vecchia donna
(pronounce vekia)

January – gennaio

broomstick-scopa

chimneys-camino

presents – regali

year – anno

story – storia

stable-stalla

house – casa

with – con

gifts - doni

star – stella

day - giorno

stockings-calze

good - buono

Grammar

The words ending with an “O” in Italian are masculine. They form their plural (more than one) by changing the “O” with an “I”.



Example: bambino – bambini



regalo – regali

Your turn from singular to plural:

anno - _____

giorno - _____

and plural to singular

camini - _____

regali - _____

The words ending with an A in Italian are feminine. They form their plural by changing the A with an E



Example: scopa-scope



vecchia donna- vecchie donne

Your turn from singular to plural:

stella - _____

casa - _____

and plural to singular:

calze - _____

storie - _____

Translate in English

In gennaio, i bambini aspettano la Befana con i regali.

Una breve poesia su La Befana - A short poem on La Befana

<i>La Befana vien di notte</i>	<i>The Befana comes by night</i>
<i>Con le scarpe tutte rotte</i>	<i>With her shoes all tattered and torn</i>
<i>Col vestito alla romana</i>	<i>She comes dressed in the Roman way</i>
<i>Viva, Viva La Befana!</i>	<i>Long life to the Befana!</i>

And now listen to the song La Befana Trullallà sang by Gianni Morandi

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSj0fUlla64>

and two more songs on you tube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8UPbA8bNCz4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFi1kbyQGKA>

Finally, read and try to understand the story in Italian

La Befana, una parola che deriva da Epifania, è una vecchia donna che porta doni ai bambini italiani durante la notte tra il 5 e il 6 gennaio. La Befana porta i doni ai bambini per ricordare quelli offerti a Gesù Bambino dai Re Magi.

La Befana ha una gonna larga e scura, uno scialle nero, un fazzoletto, o un cappello a cono in testa, un paio di scarpe vecchie e un grande sacco(bag) con regali, giocattoli(toys), cioccolatini e dolci(sweets), ma anche(also) un poco di carbone(charcoal). Lei viaggia su una vecchia scopa ma è più veloce di un aereo jet. Lei passa sopra i tetti(flies over the roofs), scende per(goes down) i camini e riempie(fills) le calze dei bambini.

I bambini preparano per la buona vecchia, in un piatto(in a dish), un mandarino o un'arancia e un piccolo bicchiere di vino.

Turismo:

Piazza Navona in central Rome is the site of a popular market each year between Christmas and the Epiphany, where toys, sugar charcoal and other candies are on sale. The feast of the Befana in Rome was immortalized in four famous sonnets in the Roman dialect by the 19th century Roman poet Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli.

In Ottorino Respighi's 1928 Feste Romane ("Roman Festivals"), the fourth movement, titled *La Befana*, is an orchestral portrayal of this Piazza Navona festival. Romans believe that at the midnight January 6 the Befana shows herself from a window of Piazza Navona, and they always go there to watch her (it's a joke everybody tells while going to the feast to buy candies, toys and sweets).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Omh1XGCW_PE

ARRIVEDERCI A FEBBRAIO!!!

Please write to us if you have any question.

