

April Fools' Day

A Reading A-Z Level P Leveled Book
Word Count: 790

Connections

Writing

Write a letter to a friend describing an April Fools' joke not included in the book. Be sure your joke follows the rules described in the book.

Social Studies

Research another country that celebrates April Fools' Day. Write a paragraph explaining how that country celebrates the holiday.

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**April
Fools'
Day**



**Multi
level
M•P•S**

Written by Sharon Bowes

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Focus Question

How is April Fools' Day best celebrated?

Words to Know

cultures
disguise
media

pranks
traditional
victim

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Correlation

LEVEL P

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Reading Recovery	28
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A common April Fools' joke is to loosen the top on a saltshaker.

Pranking Fun

It's early spring. Your chili ends up buried under a pile of salt. You've been the **victim** of an April Fools' joke.

April Fools' Day is celebrated on or around the first day of April every year. It's one day of the year when it's okay to play jokes, or **pranks**, on people.

Popular pranks might be to put grease on a doorknob or swap the sugar for salt. You might get friends to do something silly, like try to buy plaid paint. When they realize it's a joke, it's **traditional** to shout "April Fools'!"



On April 1, you may need to plan for a rude awakening.

Why April First?

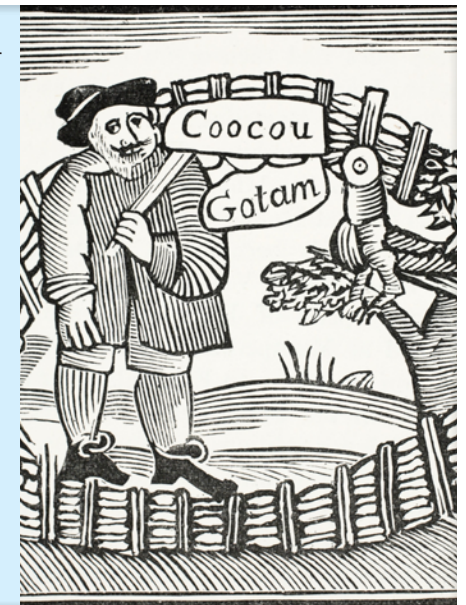
No one knows why April Fools' Day is on April 1. The holiday may have originally had to do with welcoming spring. Many were often "fooled" by the changing weather at this time of the year.

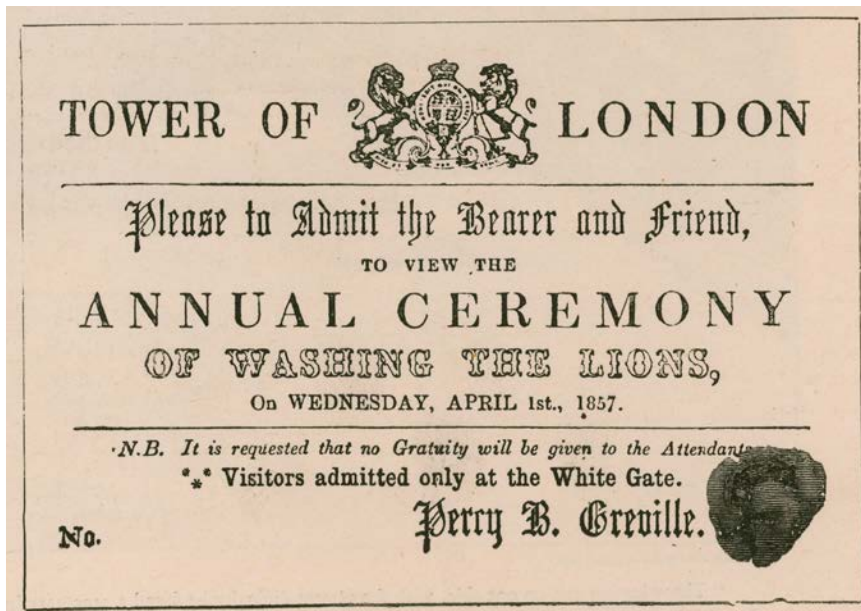
Another idea is that April Fools' Day began in the 1500s when the calendar we use today was introduced. The start of the new year was moved from the beginning of April to January 1. People who still celebrated New Year's Day on the first of April were called "April fools."

Gotham Goes Mad

One story tells how April Fools' may have started in the English town of Gotham. King John planned to take villagers' land and property.

The villagers acted as though they suffered from insanity to scare King John away. In those days, insanity was thought to be contagious. One of the villagers' tricks was to tie a "sick" wheelbarrow to a tree to stop it from biting anyone!





"Washing the Lions" was a fake event staged at the Tower of London in England. No actual lions were present.

Many **cultures** in the past held celebrations near April 1. The ancient Romans celebrated the longer days of spring. They dressed in costumes and played games and jokes.

At the end of the twelfth century, people celebrated the Feast of Fools in parts of Europe. People chose a false ruler to lead the celebrations. The followers joined in the fun by dressing in **disguise**. People celebrated in this way until the sixteenth century.

Around the World

Today, people celebrate April Fools' Day differently around the world.



Scottish Scramble

Some people in parts of the United Kingdom believe that the fun must stop by noon. In Scotland, however, April Fools' can go on for two days. On April 1, some people send friends on foolish errands. The second day is for playing more jokes.

Tips to Avoid Being the April Fool!

- Have you read it carefully? Do you *really* believe there is a cross between a sheep and a pig called a "shig?"
- Do you get the feeling you're being watched? Be on your guard!
- Careful! That present may not be what you think.





"April Fish" is also celebrated in other parts of Europe and Canada.

French Foolishness

In France, April 1 is often known as "April Fish." The fish is a person who is easily caught, or easily fooled. A paper fish is taped to the victim's back.



American Tricksters

In the United States, the fun lasts all day. Telling a friend that class is canceled and



punching holes in his or her water bottle are examples of common pranks. Other pranks are putting oil on a doorknob and adding food coloring to someone's milk. Another trick is putting plastic bugs on food, beds, or chairs!

Brazil's Day of the Lie

In Brazil, April 1 is *Dia da mentira* (Lie Day). People enjoy playing practical jokes, or *brincadeiras* (breen-kah-DAY-rah), on each other and tell silly lies all day.



Jordanian Jokesters

On April 1, 2010, a newspaper in Jordan had an interesting front-page story. It reported that three spaceships had landed in the desert outside a town in eastern Jordan. Some people in the town were not used to April Fools' pranks and were really scared. The mayor



considered evacuating the thirteen thousand people who lived there.

The newspaper's editor apologized for the story.



Sizdah Bedar

The Iranian (Persian) calendar is very old and is only used in Iran and Afghanistan. The thirteenth day of the Iranian new year is called *Sizdah Bedar* (seez-DAH be-DAR). It falls around April 1 and has been practiced since 536 BC. On *Sizdah Bedar*, families and friends share picnics, pranks, and fun. It might just be the oldest-known joke day in history.



BBC TV's show *Panorama* showed a family from Switzerland during its annual "spaghetti harvest."

Famous Foolery

Famous April Fools' celebrations have also made their mark on history.

Spaghetti Trees?

In 1957, a British TV program told viewers about a spaghetti tree. Viewers were shown people pulling spaghetti from trees. After the program, hundreds of viewers called the station asking how to grow their own spaghetti trees!

Corporate Chaos



Liberty Bell

Companies and the **media** release fake stories, too. On April 1, 1996, Taco Bell announced that it had bought the Liberty Bell, the famous American treasure. The company said it was going to call it the “Taco Liberty Bell.” Many people believed

the story. The company then had to state that it was a joke.

In 1998, Burger King published an ad for a left-handed burger. The company claimed it was created to make left-handed eating easier.

Can you tell the difference between a left-handed and right-handed burger?



Online Pranks

Online April Fools' jokes spread quickly. Google is well known for its April Fools' jokes. One of its most famous jokes was the Google Gulp in 2005. The Google Gulp was a drink that was said to make the person who drank it smarter.

In 2012, a radio station announced that Twitter was changing to 133 characters per tweet. This would save the company \$1.4 billion. It wasn't true, of course.

On April 1, 2013, Twitter said it would start charging more to people if they used vowels in their tweets.

If people wanted to use vowels, they could pay extra every month.



To catch a creature in the April Fools' version of Pokémon Go, just tap the screen.

Even the idea for Pokémon Go began as an Internet joke in 2014. Google Maps advertised a tool that would find the world's best Pokémon Master.



The best April Fools' pranks are fun but harmless!

Conclusion

Follow certain safety rules when celebrating April Fools' Day. Don't be mean. April Fools' jokes are supposed to be fun. Finally, remember that if you're going to make a joke, make sure you can take a joke in return.

On April Fools' Day in many countries around the world, jokers try to fool the unsuspecting. It is one special day to celebrate the funny side of life. Keep it safe and simple and, most of all, fun.

Glossary

- cultures** (*n.*) particular societies with their own ideas and customs (p. 7)
- disguise** (*n.*) something a person wears to keep from being recognized (p. 7)
- media** (*n.*) mass communication, such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet, through which information is given to the public (p. 13)
- pranks** (*n.*) tricks or practical jokes (p. 4)
- traditional** (*adj.*) of or relating to a long-established custom (p. 5)
- victim** (*n.*) a person or other animal harmed by an act or condition; someone who is fooled or tricked (p. 4)