

Did you know?

## DYK? April Fool's Day



**Despite its unclear origins, April 1<sup>st</sup> has become a global day for jokes and pranks. And at this current time, when our hearts are heavy a bit of comfort from some light relief is perhaps just what we need to keep the faith.**

The exact origins of April 1<sup>st</sup> as a day for pranks are unknown, some saying it was due to the celebration of the New Year moving in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century to January 1 rather than the end of March – thus leaving those still celebrating in the 'old' style being foolish. Others suggest there is some connection to Noah and the story of the flood. The spring equinox has also been cited as a possible cause – unpredictable weather requiring some unpredictable behaviour.

Whatever its origins, April 1<sup>st</sup> has established itself throughout large parts of the world as the day – or more accurately the morning – when tricks, pranks and practical jokes can be played on friends, family and even the wider public.

One of the first accounts of an April Fool's hoax was in 1698 when visitors could go to the Tower of London to see the annual ceremony of washing the lions. Many people came to see the non-existent spectacle. Later, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, 'hunting the gowk' (*gowk* is an old word for cuckoo) became popular: people were sent on foolish errands which were only revealed to them afterwards.

In many French-speaking countries, the tradition on April 1<sup>st</sup> is known as 'April fish'. One popular game is to try and pin a paper fish on someone else's back. Newspapers often publish a hoax story that has some reference to something fishy - indicating that it is a hoax story. While fish are not the subject of the reports, the USA and the United Kingdom now have a tradition of media involvement: radio stations, television broadcasters and newspapers often carry a hoax story. And some have been incredibly successful!

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## Did you know?

Perhaps the best known of all these stories is the one broadcast in 1957 on the BBC's Panorama about the record spaghetti harvest in Switzerland. The film purported to show Swiss spaghetti farmers picking their bumper harvest from the trees. What gave the report extra authority was the fact the Richard Dimbleby – one of the most respected television anchormen of the time – narrated. It resulted in many viewers phoning the BBC to find out where they could buy a spaghetti tree. Eight years later, the BBC tried to fool its viewers with an article about Smell-o-vision where smell was supposedly transmitted over the airwaves. This resulted in many viewers claiming they had successfully 'smelt' the smells.

Other notable hoaxes have been:

- The Guardian's joke from 1977, about a newly discovered tiny archipelago called San Serriffe, where everything was named after typefaces and printing terms.
- In 1992, Richard Nixon announced he would run for President (except it was actually comedian Rich Little imitating Nixon), but plenty of people responded.
- In 2017, The Daily Mail reported that Prince Harry and Meghan Markle had opted for a \$300 Las Vegas wedding.
- George Osborne, ex Chancellor of the Exchequer had become a fashion designer focussing on hi-vis jackets.
- A polar bear had made its home on the Scottish island of North Uist in the Hebrides after being driven from the melting polar ice-cap.

One thing to look out for on articles written on April 1<sup>st</sup> is the name of the journalist writing them – names like: *Polo Flair*, *Flora Poil*, *Rollo Piaf* – all anagrams of the words *April Fool!*

On Thursday April 1<sup>st</sup>, listen to the radio, watch the television and read the papers and see if you can spot the April Fool!

If you would like to watch the Spaghetti harvest then click here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tVo\\_wkxH9dU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tVo_wkxH9dU)

The Guardian's San Serriffe:

<https://www.theguardian.com/gnmeducationcentre/2018/apr/01/san-serriffe-april-fools-quiz>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-47769857>

If you would like to use the April Fool's Day in your lesson, we have provided you with an activity **April Fools - True or False?** (A2 level 10+ minutes)

# Did you know?

## Teacher's notes

### April Fools - True or False?

- Make a copy of **April Fools - True or False?**, one for each student.
- On the board, write *March 31<sup>st</sup>* and ask what date comes next (April 1<sup>st</sup>). Write *April Fool's Day*. Explain that *fool* means *Narr* in German.
- Explain that the media publish stories that are not true on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Students are going to read five stories and they have to decide whether they are true stories or April Fools.
- Hand out **April Fools - True or False?** and tell students to work in pairs (or if you are online, then use one breakout room for each pair of students). Help with any unknown vocabulary.
- Check answers together in class.
- **Key:** 1 April Fool, 2 True, 3 April Fool, 4 April Fool, 5 True.
- Ask students if they have heard of any other April Fool stories.

## April Fools - True or False?

Which of these stories are true and which are April Fools?

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**1** *A polar bear floated over two thousand miles from the Arctic Circle and made a new home on South Uist, an island on the west coast of Scotland.*

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**2** *Electronic music, especially dubstep by US artist Skrillex can help to stop mosquito bites. Mosquitos don't like the high and low frequencies.*

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**3** *Canada plans to introduce a new coin: a three-dollar coin. It will be called a threenie and will replace the five-dollar note.*

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**4** *In 2008, the BBC reported on a newly discovered colony of flying penguins. They spend the summer in Antartica and the winter in the Amazon forest.*

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**5** *It is possible to buy a burger in Japan for ¥100,000 (£670) – it is 15 cm tall, 25 cm wide and weighs around 3 kg.*

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