

April Fool's Day

What is April Fool's Day and what are its origins? It is commonly believed that in medieval France, New Year was celebrated on 1 April. Then in 1562, Pope Gregory introduced a new calendar for the Christian world, changing New Year to 1 January. With no modern communications, news travelled slowly and new ideas were often questioned. Many people did not hear of the change, others chose to ignore it, while some merely forgot. These people were called fools. Invitations to non-existent 'New Year' parties were sent and other practical jokes were played. This jesting evolved over time into a tradition of playing pranks on 1 April. The custom eventually spread to England and Scotland, and it was later transported across the Atlantic to the American colonies of the English and the French. April Fool's Day has now developed into an international festival of fun, with different nationalities celebrating the day in special ways.

In France and Italy, if someone plays a trick on you, you are the 'fish of April'. By the month of April, fish have only just hatched and are therefore easy to catch. Children stick paper fish to their friends' backs and chocolate fish are found in the shops.

In Scotland, April Fool's Day lasts for two days! The second day is called 'Taily Day' and tricks on this day involve the bottom (or the 'tail' in informal speech). Often a sign saying 'kick me' is stuck onto someone's back without them knowing.

In Spain and Mexico, similar celebrations take place on 28 December. The day is the Feast of the Holy Innocents. Originally, the day was a sad remembrance of the slaughter of the innocent children by Herod in his search for the baby Jesus. It eventually changed to a lighter commemoration of innocence involving pranks and trickery.

Today, Americans and the British play small tricks on friends and strangers alike on 1 April. A common trick is to point to a friend's shoe and say 'Your shoelace is untied.' When they look down, they are laughed at. Schoolchildren might tell a friend that school has been cancelled. A bag of flour might be balanced on the top of a door so that when the 'victim' opens the door, the flour empties over their head. Sometimes the media get involved. Once, a British short film was shown on April Fool's Day about spaghetti farmers and how they harvest their crop from spaghetti trees!

Most April Fool jokes are in good fun and not meant to harm anyone. The best trick is the one where everyone laughs, especially the person upon whom the joke has been played.

By Claire Powell and Dave Collett

I. COMPREHENSION (12 points)

A. Are the following statements true or false ? Justify your answers by quoting from the text. (1 point per question)

1. At the time of Pope Gregory, new ideas were easily accepted.
2. Today, April's Fool Day is celebrated by different countries.
3. People who celebrated April's Fool Day were called fools.
4. 'Taily Day' is the second day of April's Fool Day in Scotland.
5. The Feast of the Holy Innocents has always been a day of trickery.

B. Answer the following questions. (1 point per question)

1. When was New Year celebrated on 1 April ?
2. Who changed New Year to 1 April, and when ?
3. Where did the custom of playing tricks on 1 April first spread to ?
4. When can you be called the « fish of April » ?
5. Give two examples of tricks played by the Americans and British.

C. Find synonyms for the following words in the indicated paragraphs. (0.5 point per word)

1. Tradition : (paragraph 1).
2. Massacre : (paragraph 4).
3. Made fun of : (paragraph 5).
4. Injury : (paragraph 6).

II. LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE (8 points)

Some words or grammar parts are missing from the text below. Choose the most appropriate ones from the list (A-J) for each gap (01-08) in the text. There is one extra word, which you do not need to use. Draw the table below into your answer sheet and write your answers in the right boxes. There is an example at the beginning (0).

Valentine's Day is named in honour of Saint Valentine, the patron saint of lovers who, it is believed, (0) _____ on Feb. 14 AD 270. (1) _____ that time, the Roman emperor Claudius II cancelled all marriages and engagements in Rome, as he was having a hard time getting men join the military, and he believed (2) _____ men, being emotionally attached to their wives and families, (3) _____ good soldiers.

However, Valentine secretly married couples until he was caught, then, refusing to (4) _____ his Christian beliefs, was sentenced to be beaten to death with clubs and have his head cut off.

Today, (5) _____ cards are sent on Valentine's Day. But while the day is about love, it is (6) _____ differently around the world.

For example, in Spain books are often given on Feb. 14, while in Finland the day (7) _____ the honouring of friends, not lovers. In South Korea and Japan, women are to give chocolate to men on Valentine's Day, (8) _____ men are to give sweets to women on White Day one month later.

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| a) was murdered | f) During |
| b) marks | g) many |
| c) while | h) did not make |
| d) married | i) renounce to |
| e) celebrated | j) as soon as |

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
was murdered								

III. WRITING (10 points pour les séries ES/S/SG. 18 points pour la série L)

Seuls les candidats de la série L traiteront les deux sujets. Les candidats des séries ES, S et SG, traiteront l'un des 2 sujets. Le nombre de mots exigés est de 150 à 200 (ES, S, SG). Pour la série L, le nombre de mots exigés pour chaque sujet est de 150 à 200.

Topic one : Every year on 1st April, April's Fool's Day is celebrated by some students. Do you agree or disagree with this kind of celebrations ? Give your reasons.

Topic two : In Djibouti, some events like Eid and the New Year's Eve are commonly celebrated:

- Choose one event and write how you celebrate it.
- Who do you celebrate it with?
- Why, do you think, is it important to celebrate it?