

## Why Do We Play Tricks on April Fool's Day?

Every year on April Fool's Day, people all over the world have fun playing lighthearted tricks on one another. April Fool's Day is celebrated every year on the first day of April. The history of April fool's Day is hard to find: there are many different explanations and theories about why we celebrate this day.

The most popular explanation is that in the year 1564, the country of France formally changed their calendar to the modern Gregorian date system that we still used

today. This change was brought on under the ruling of Charles IX. This meant that the celebration of the New Year was moved from the last week of March to January 1<sup>st</sup>. New Years was originally celebrated for eight days, beginning on March 25<sup>th</sup>. It is thought that those people who continued celebrating the New Year in March (ending on April 1<sup>st</sup>) were teased and called fools – April Fools, that is. At the time, it was difficult to communicate over long distances, so people in certain



areas likely did not know about the calendar change for some period of time. Others were stubborn and did not want to make the change. These people were often ridiculed and practical jokes were played at their expense.

Over the years, many cultures have had festivals that are considered "renewal festivals." For example, Ancient Rome had a festival called Hilaria, which involved the donning of disguises. In medieval times, there was a celebration called "Feast of Fools," which involved parodies of Christian rituals.

Some people believe that this cheerful, amusing day is based on a celebration of the coming months of spring. Winter, which always involved lots of hard work and difficult times, was coming to an end and the promise of a fresh start was in the air.

April Fool's Day tricks are a fun way of celebrating spring and being a little bit silly. Tricks can range from simple to elaborate.

Traditionally, April Fool's Day is over at noon – and anyone who plays a trick after that time is called a fool themselves!

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

### Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. When is April Fool's Day celebrated?
  - a. April 10<sup>th</sup>
  - b. April 1<sup>st</sup>
  - c. The first Monday of every April
  - d. April 30<sup>th</sup>
  
2. One popular explanation for the origins of April Fool's Day comes from the celebration of another popular holiday, which is:
  - a. Easter
  - b. New Years
  - c. Christmas
  - d. Passover
  
3. What type of festival is associated April Fool's Day?
  - a. Music Festivals
  - b. Political Festivals
  - c. Renewal Festivals
  - d. Winter Festivals
  
4. The festival entitled "Hilaria" took place in what region?
  - a. France
  - b. Canada
  - c. Ancient Greece
  - d. Ancient Rome
  
5. Which celebration involved parodies of Christian rituals?
  - a. Feast of Fools
  - b. Oktoberfest
  - c. Christmas
  - d. Hilaria
  
6. Many believe that April Fool's is celebrated to mark the beginning of:
  - a. Spring
  - b. The next Moon phase
  - c. Christianity
  - d. The new Gregorian year

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

### **Short Answer Questions**

1. Explain the date and time that we celebrate April Fool's Day.
2. When was New Year's originally celebrated, and for how many days?
3. Have you ever played an April Fool's trick on someone, or had someone play one on you? Explain.
4. In regards to the calendar change in the late 1500s, briefly explain why we people began to call others "fools" on April 1.
5. Can you imagine if we had to change our calendar? Do you think it would be more difficult for today's society to adapt to this change? Why or why not?
6. What did the Ancient Romans used to wear during their festival Hilaria?
7. Who was ruling when the Gregorian calendar was introduced?

ANSWER KEY:

Multiple Choice:

1. b
2. b
3. c
4. d
5. a
6. b

Short Answer:

1. April Fool's Day is celebrated on April 1<sup>st</sup> and is over at noon.
2. New Years was originally celebrated for eight days, beginning on March 25<sup>th</sup>.
3. Individual Response.
4. New Year's was moved to January 1<sup>st</sup>, so anyone who still celebrated it in April was deemed a fool.
5. Individual Response. Example: It would be more difficult for us to adapt because we have more technology and education.
6. They wore costumes.
7. Charles IX.