

April Fool's Day

Topic: April Fool's

Aims:

- To develop reading and speaking skills
- To introduce students to April Fool's Day in the UK

Level: Intermediate+

Introduction: This lesson gives students the opportunity to find out about what happens on April Fool's Day, April 1st, in the UK. It's the one day of the year when it's acceptable to play jokes on your friends and colleagues. Many countries have their own equivalent of April Fool's Day.

Procedure

Tip:

Show your students some of the websites about April Fool's day so they can find out

more and get some ideas for their own trick:

<http://www.museumofhoaxes.com/hoax/aprilfool/> – Top 100 April Fool's hoaxes.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/April_fool%27s_day – Information about April Fool's day from Wikipedia.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/spring/april/index.shtml> – more about the day.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_4390000/newsid_4397900/4397963.stm – last year's hoax by Newsround, the brain band.

- **April Fool!** How better to introduce the topic than by playing a mini April Fool joke on your students? Before the class, think of an April fool style trick you can play on them. This will vary depending on their age and level. To give a silly example, tell them that you've just read on the Internet that scientists have invented a new English dictionary on a microchip that can be implanted into people to equip them with all the vocabulary they need in a foreign language. If you're good at telling stories you could really go to town and elaborate by telling students you're worried that English teachers will all lose their jobs. When you've let the trick go on long enough tell your students, "*April Fool!*" and explain that it was a trick. Explain the basic idea of April Fool's day.
- **April Fool's Day.** This activity is to introduce the concept of April Fool's Day. Discuss the questions with your students and use them as a chance to explain the idea of the day and to find out as much as you can about their country's version of April Fool's Day if they have one. This would be a good time to pre-teach useful vocabulary for the class such as: Practical jokes, play a trick, to fool somebody, a hoax, joker etc.

If you have a very big group, put students into groups of four or five and give each group a copy of **worksheet A** then have time for each group to feedback their ideas to the whole class.

A. April Fool's Day

1. What do you know about April Fool's Day?
2. Do you have a similar day in your country?
3. Do you like practical jokes?
4. Have you played a trick on anyone recently?
5. Who's the joker in your class / family?

- **Just Fooling Around.**

Put students into pairs and give each pair a copy of **worksheet B**. Ask them to read the text and discuss the questions as they read through. The text is adapted from a Trend UK article. Note this is an old plan, so the webpage it links to is no longer available. You can print out the texts from the worksheets below though.

B. Just Fooling Around.

Read the text about April Fool's Day in the UK. When you reach a question discuss it with your partner.

Just Fooling Around

Alien invasion

Picture this - a UFO circling the skies over London watched by thousands of astonished citizens. The police arrive at the scene expecting an alien invasion and witness a silver suited person emerging from the craft!

1. How would you feel if you saw the UFO over London?

Did you know that British scientists can control the weather? The invention of a weather machine will enable the UK to have long hot summer days and ensure that rain only falls at night. Better still, snow at Christmas time will always be guaranteed!

2. Would you like the weather to be controlled?

Whistling carrots

Fancy something different for dinner? Have you ever tasted the genetically modified whistling carrot? Specially engineered to grow with air holes in their side, the carrots begin to whistle when they are fully cooked.

3. Would you believe this story if you heard it on the news?

April Fool's

Unfortunately none of these stories are true, they are part of the tradition of April Fool's Day. It is the custom in the UK to carry out a joke or trick upon someone during the morning of 1 April. If the person falls for the joke then they are named an April Fool.

It's an annual pastime of newspapers and television to take part in playing these jokes and even millionaire entrepreneurs do it too. The UFO was in fact a hot-air balloon in disguise flown by Richard Branson! April Fools Day will continue so be on the look out this year for any hoaxes, there are bound to be some. Maybe you could try some of your own?

Source of text: <http://www.britishcouncil.org/japan-trenduk-april04-fooling.htm>

Note this is an old plan, so the webpage it links to is no longer available.

- **Message board – April Fool's Day – Do you Love it or Hate it?**
Tell students that an Internet site asked viewers whether or not they liked April Fool's Day. The replies are on **worksheet C**. Use them to give students an idea of what some people think about the day and to ask students what they think about April Fool's Day or a similar day they may

have in their own country.

Students could write their own opinion as an extension activity. You could give students one comment each to read and explain to the group.

C. Message board – April Fool’s Day – Do you Love it or Hate it?

A website asked some British people the question “Do you love or hate April Fool’s Day?” Here’s what they said. Read the messages on the message board.

Malisa “I love April Fool’s Day. It can be really good fun. I love playing tricks on people and I don’t mind if people play tricks on me. It’s one day of the year you can be really silly and have a laugh and it’s okay. You have to be quite sensible for the other 364 days of the year, so I look forward to April 1st. “

Johnny “I don’t like April Fool’s Day. It makes me a bit nervous. I keep thinking someone is about to play a trick on me. When twelve o’clock passes I feel quite relieved that it’s finished for another year!”

Phil “When I was at school April Fool’s Day was always good fun. We played tricks on each other and sometimes on the teacher. In fact, one year one of the boys at school put a bucket of water on top of the door and when the chemistry teacher came in he got very wet! It was funny, but the boy got in big trouble!”

Louise “April Fool’s Day is a great idea. It’s easy to forget the actual date and I always believe everything I read in the newspapers or watch on the TV news. I usually believe the big national hoaxes and it always makes me laugh afterwards. It’s good to remind us that maybe we shouldn’t always believe everything we hear in the news.”

Clare “April Fool’s Day is fun when you’re young. I remember putting a plastic fried egg on my Dad’s plate for breakfast as a trick. He decided to cut it up and pretend to eat it! Now I think some of the tricks are a bit silly and people can be a bit cruel playing tricks on their ‘friends!’”

Mark “I hate April Fool’s Day. Last year people at work changed the sugar for salt so we all put salt in our coffee! Then some joker in the office decided he wanted a day off and he did something to the computers so they wouldn’t work. It just wasn’t funny! I had lots to do and we all had to stop working and solve the problem.”

1. What would you say if you were asked the same question?
2. Who do you think loves April Fool’s Day most?
3. Who do you think hates April Fool’s Day most?
4. Do you think any of the tricks the people mentioned are funny?

- **Top Ten Tricks**

This activity is based on real April Fool’s tricks from around the world. Make a copy of **worksheet D** and cut up the ten cards and give them out to your students. Each student (or pair) should read the trick and then explain it, in their own words, to the class. Then hold a class

vote to rank the tricks from the best to the worst – 1st to 10th.

D. Top Ten Tricks

Read an April Fool's trick and then explain it to your classmates.

- In 1998 Burger King published an advert in the magazine USA Today offering new 'Left-handed Whoppas' for the 32 million left-handed Americans! Thousands of customers ordered the new burger in the restaurants!
- A zoo in Japan said that they had a giant penguin that was 165cm tall and weighed 80 kilograms! In fact it was a man dressed up in a penguin suit.
- A British newspaper printed an article saying that the European Union had decided to ban April Fool's Day! It was only a hoax.
- In the night of March 31st 1989 hundreds of Londoners phoned the police to report an alien spacecraft they had seen in the sky. In fact it was a hoax and it was a hot air balloon that looked like a spacecraft.
- Last year in the UK a children's news programme said that scientists had invented a 'Brain Band'. It was a coloured head band that you put on your head and it helped to make you more intelligent! On an on-line poll, 47% of the children who heard the news wanted to buy a 'brain band'!
- In 1949 a radio presenter in New Zealand told listeners that there were millions of wasps coming to invade. He told viewers to wear their socks over their trousers and to put honey on their doors. Millions of listeners believed him!
- In 1957 a very serious documentary programme on the BBC reported on the spaghetti trees in Switzerland. They said it was an excellent place to grow spaghetti! Hundreds of viewers phoned the BBC to ask where they could buy spaghetti trees.
- In 1999 a music website claimed that Britney Spears had lied about her age. They said she was 28, not 17. Hundreds of people phoned her music label to ask how old Britney really was.
- In Sweden in 1962 they have one television channel and all TV was in black and white. A scientist told viewers that they would see the TV in colour is they put a nylon stocking over the screen.
- In 1976 a very famous British astronomer told radio listeners that at 9.47am the earth was going to experience a feeling of less gravity. He said that Jupiter and Pluto would cross and if listeners jumped in the air at exactly 9.47am they would feel the sensation of having no gravity! Hundreds of listeners phoned the radio to say they had jumped and floated in the air!

- **Make up your own April Fool's trick.**

This is an activity to finish the class with. Ask students to think of their own idea for an April Fool's trick. They can be as elaborate as they like. If you have looked at worksheet 4 they should have got lots of ideas already. If you want, hold a class vote to decide on the best trick.

There isn't a worksheet for this activity, but if you feel your students need a structure, give them some headings as guidelines on the board. For example, My April Fool's Trick. I think it would fool people because...