

# April Fool!

A popular day, but really only half-day, for traditionally, jokes have to be played before noon, after which the victim was entitled to turn the tables by shouting,

*April Fool's gone past,*

*And you're the biggest fool at last.*

The custom of playing practical jokes on April 1st and sending naive souls on a 'fool's errand' has been around since medieval times. There is much speculation about the reasons for the custom.

One story involves the Gregorian calendar. Until the mid-16th century, the European new year was celebrated on March 25th. Celebrations and gift-giving lasted 8 days, ending on April 1st. Then in 1564, King Charles IX of France declared the adoption of a more accurate calendar. The new calendar, the Gregorian calendar, is the one we use today with New Year's Day on January 1st. Whether it was because news travelled slowly in those days or simply that people did not want to accept the change, many people continued celebrating in April. Eventually, these people became the targets of practical jokes such as foolish gifts or invitations to non-existent parties. As time went on and the Gregorian calendar was accepted, people continued to enjoy April fooling.

Another story from France says the young fish that were spawned each April were easily caught. Soon any person who was easily fooled was called a poisson d'Avril, which means April fish.

April fooling became popular in England and Scotland during the 1700s. Scottish people enjoyed sending people on foolish errands, like looking for hen's teeth or pigeon's milk. Eventually the idea of April fooling came to our country with the early English settlers.

## Learn about medieval times!

Envision a time of kings, queens, lord and ladies, an age of castles with knights in shining armour. Imagine a day when jesters entertained royalty with jokes and juggling and you've got the makings of a unique April Fool's Day! Share information about the role jesters played in the Middle Ages. A man selected as the court jester entertained the king and queen - it was the jester's job to tell jokes, juggle, do acrobatics, and generally act silly to entertain the royal court. Turn your students into jesters with a special cap and collar. (Be sure to take pictures.) Make a jester puppet. Sing silly songs. Tell funny jokes. Have a jolly good time. Be a fool for a day!

## Classroom Foolery

Deck the classroom out with lots of April foolery. Enlarge a jester's hat on kraft paper, making it as wide as the door opening. Add colourful polka dots, stripes, anything crazy. Attach it above the doorway and hang colourful strips of crepe paper. Continue the foolishness inside the room by rearranging the desks, hanging pictures upside down, or changing the date to another holiday or a year in the future. Think of subtle changes that will challenge the students' observational skills



and ask them to note all the changes that were made in the room. Write the day's assignment upside down or backwards. Scramble the week's spelling words. Create math problems with the wrong answers and have students compute to determine the right ones.

Your children may construct foolish rhymes, and the school may hold a foolish rhyming contest. You may select books on humour to read.

Share jokes and riddles.

'What I usually do is give my kids a 'following directions' test.

#1 - read everything before you begin.

#2 - would be write your first and last name at the top

Other things could be count to 5 out loud.... say yes 3 times to your neighbour...circle all of the vowels you see in this line, and on and on... and then the very last one would be just do number 2.... it's fun and teaches a good lesson to always read first!"

"At my school, all staff members from teachers to cooks to principal to janitors have drawn the name of a fellow staff member. Each of us will become the person (whose name we drew) for one hour at the beginning of the day. We did this a few years ago, but only teachers participated. It should be fun with every person joining in on the fun."

The first of April, some do say,  
Is set apart for All Fools' Day  
But why the people call it so  
Nor I, not they themselves do know.  
But on this day are people sent  
On purpose for pure merriment.

*Poor Robin's Almanac 1790*

Small April sobbed, "I'm going to cry  
Please give me a cloud to wipe my eye."  
Then, April Fool! She laughed instead  
And smiled a rainbow overhead.

### **April Fool**

Oh, did you hear?

The principal has measles,

Our teacher is standing on her head,

Your hair is filled with jam and purple weasels,

April Fool!

