



# WATCH & LEARN: ARTS & LIFESTYLE: HOW WE LIVE: CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS THE ORIGIN OF APRIL FOOLS DAY (2:33 min) VIDEO Script & Vocabulary (page 1 of 1/V.908)

## INTERMEDIATE (B1 - B2) AND ABOVE

- ◊ Read the script and note new vocabulary
- ◊ Write three sentences using new vocabulary
- ◊ Prepare for the discussion questions

### Starting Off

*April Fools Day is a light-hearted tradition celebrated all around the western world, but where and when did the "holiday" first get started?*

- 1 Read the **Video Script** below. The words in **bold** are defined in the **Vocabulary** section. Look up any new words in a dictionary.
- 2 Go to the **Your Turn** section at the end of this document. Practice using new words and expressions from the video script to prepare for your next class.
- 3 Look at the **Discussion Questions** and prepare your responses for the next class.

### Video Script:

**Narrator:** It's not an official holiday, but April Fools Day is still a much-loved tradition among **pranksters** throughout the world. For all its popularity, it might come as a surprise that no one really knows when, where, or how April Fools Day got started. So is there a real reason why April 1st has become an international obsession? According to one common theory the tradition dates all the way back to 16th Century France when **Pope Gregory XIII** issued a **papal bull** mandating a new calendar system for Europe. The Gregorian Calendar, as it became known, set the start of the year on January 1st **instead of** the beginning of Spring in late March or early April. **Word of** the change travelled slowly in France and many people in **rural** areas continued to celebrate the new year in the Spring. These slow adapters became known as April Fools and were **singled out** for pranks and jokes by their **countrymen** who had held their celebrations months earlier. But there are a couple of problems with the "Calendar Change Theory". For one thing, many people in France had already started celebrating the New Year on January 1st, long before 1582. The **switch** occurred gradually all over France not suddenly after the papal bull and, even before the change, the New Year hadn't been connected specifically to April 1st, but with the Easter holiday. Some theories date the origins of April Fools Day centuries earlier to ancient Roman festivals celebrated in the Spring such as **Hilaria**. And eastern cultures have their own versions of a light-hearted tradition including Holi in India a festival of colors during which people throw colored water or paint on each other. While it seems unclear how it started, by the 1700s English pranksters were celebrating April 1st by playing **tricks** such as **pinning** false tails on unsuspecting people or sending them on fake **errands**. As the holiday became more popular, newspapers, radio and TV stations and businesses **got into the act** with false headlines, news stories or promotional campaigns. One of history's most famous **hoaxes** took place in 1957 when the British Broadcasting Corporation fooled many people into believing that people in Switzerland grew spaghetti on trees. And in the United States in 1998 **gullible** fast food customers got caught asking for the "Left-handed Burger", a sandwich supposedly engineered for **south-paws** that a national chain advertised in the paper. Despite its long and interesting history, April Fools Day may soon be **a thing of the past**. Recently, governments across the globe began moving to officially **outlaw** the holiday citing lost worker productivity on the prank-filled day. APRIL FOOLS!!!!!!!!!!



### Discussion Questions:

- ◊ What do you know about the origin of April Fools Day? What do you think is the most likely country of its origin?
- ◊ Do you think it's funny to play practical jokes and pranks on people? Why or why not?
- ◊ What is the most memorable practical joke or prank anyone ever played on you? Conversely, give an example of a joke you've played on someone else and describe whether it was successful, a dud, or a total backfire!

### Vocabulary:

- **pranksters** - people who play jokes on other people
- **papal bull** - a type of public decree, letters patent, or charter issued by a pope of the Roman Catholic Church. It is named after the leaden seal (bulla) that was traditionally appended to the end in order to authenticate it
- **instead of** - in place of; in exchange for
- **word of** - news of
- **rural** - countryside; less developed
- **singled out** - targeted
- **countrymen** - fellow citizens
- **switch** - change; exchange
- **Hilaria** - (Latin "the cheerful ones", a term derived from the borrowed adjective Ancient Greek: ἡλῆρός "cheerful, merry") were ancient Roman religious festivals *celebrated* on the March equinox to honor Cybele
- **tricks** - practical jokes
- **pinning** - attaching with a pin
- **errand** - a short journey undertaken in order to deliver or collect something, especially on someone else's behalf
- **get into the act** - participate
- **hoax** - a humorous or malicious deception
- **south-paws** - left-handed people especially a left-handed baseball player or boxer
- **a thing of the past** - something that no longer exists
- **outlaw** - ban; prohibit; make illegal

# APRIL FOOL!