mystery science

Grades K-5
Mini-Lesson: “Why do we celebrate April Fools’ Day?”

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

VIDEO 1

Hi, it's Dog! Today, we have a question about April Fools’ Day from someone named Mira. Let's give her a call now.

[Video Call]
- Hi, Dog!
- Hi, Mira!
- I have a question for you. Why do we celebrate April Fools’ Day?
- That's a great question.

April Fools’ Day is always a day of the year you have to be a little careful. You never know, you might walk into a room and find out it's been filled with balloons. Or maybe you find your classroom has been covered in newspaper. April Fools’ Day might be one of the strangest holidays there is. A holiday where people play pranks on each other—little things that might annoy someone or make them laugh. Or sometimes just confuse people.

Here's one of my favorite pranks. This teacher played a prank on his students by giving them the hardest spelling quiz ever.

[Video Clip]

- All right, going through the list with the spelling. You're checking your own lists, here we go. The first word is blorskee. I lost my blorskee at a carnival. B-L-O-R-S-K-E-E. The next word is speekuzslmn, look there's a speekuzsmlmn. S-P-E-E-K-U-Z-S-L-M-N. There are silent letters at the end of that one.

But then he told them the truth.

- This is an April Fool's joke!
- Close enough, April Fools.

No one knows exactly why or when April Fools' Day started. But it's been going on for a while. Every year, for a long time now, newspapers tend to print at least one fake story or picture. Most people have fun trying to spot the one story or photo that's fake. But always, every April Fools' Day, there's someone who forgets what day of the year it is, and they wind up getting tricked. Like maybe someone offers you a cookie, only for you to find out it's been filled with toothpaste—yuck! Have you ever had someone play an April Fools' prank on you?

VIDEO 2

Since lots of April Fools' pranks are about confusing or annoying people—not everyone loves getting pranks played on them. Like, imagine you found your car covered in Post-it notes. You might find the prank funny, but other people might be upset. It can really depend on how far the prank goes.

For example, one year on April Fools' Day, a television station in Boston, USA—a place that has no volcanoes—aired a fake news story claiming that a nearby hill had started to erupt lava. It

was meant as a joke. But a lot of people took it seriously. They panicked, and they packed their cars up and left their homes. When they later found out that it wasn't true, the news station got in big trouble.

Modern technology makes it harder and harder to know what's fake. Like, take these two photographs. You've got a photo of a lion and a photo of a child. But using a computer, it's actually fairly easy to take the child out of the photo and make it look—see, there's a child reaching out and giving a lion a hug.

And it's not just photos that someone can fake using modern technology. One year, the British television channel, BBC, aired this video. Can you spot what's wrong with it? It shows penguins flying. But this video is not real. Animators used computer software to draw penguins, then used special effects to make it seem like a real video. They did such a good job that some people saw this video and were actually fooled. They thought someone found penguins that could fly.

Will you remember not to get fooled on April Fools' Day? Here's a tip: just always remember what day it is. If it's the beginning of April and you hear or see something that seems a little unbelievable, maybe think twice.

That's all for this week's question. Thanks, Mira, for asking it!