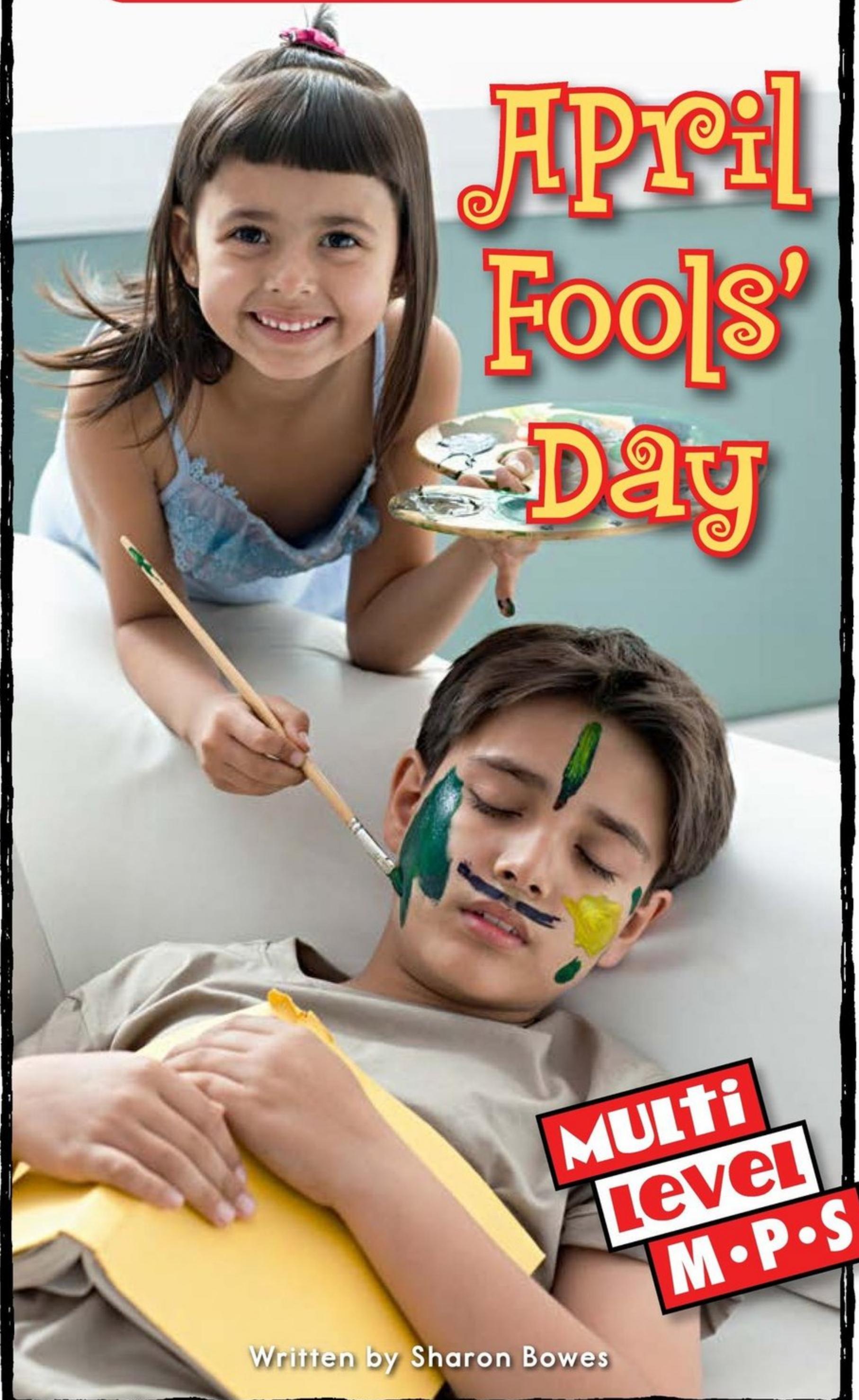


LEVELED BOOKS

April Fools' Day



MULTI
LEVEL
M·P·S

Written by Sharon Bowes

April Fools' Day



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Focus Question

How is April Fools' Day best celebrated?

Words to Know

consumer
disguises
hoax
media
naive

pranks
spoof
traditional
victim

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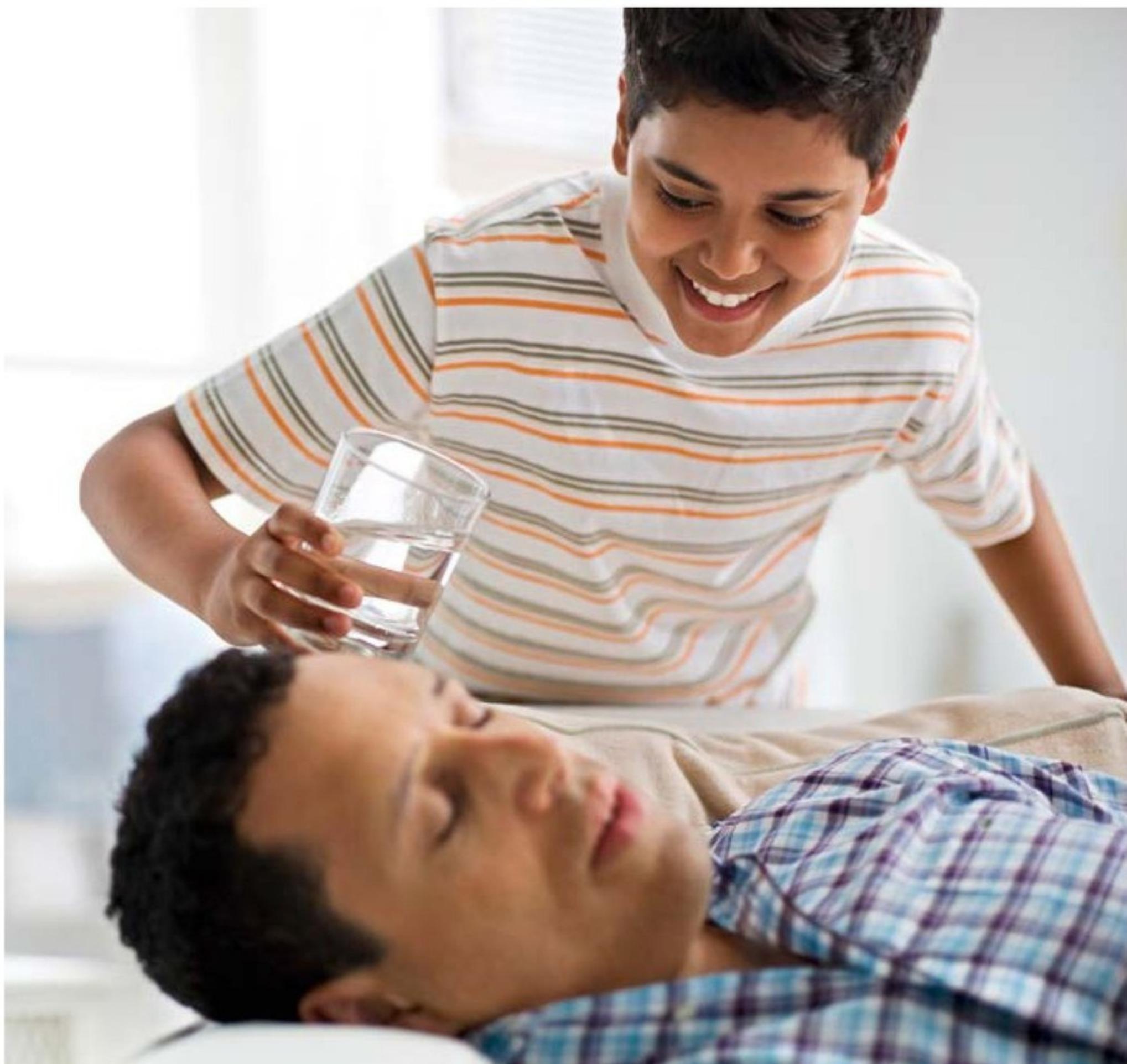
A common April Fools' joke is to loosen the top on a saltshaker.

Pranking Fun

It's early spring. You're getting ready to enjoy a delicious bowl of chili, but it needs a pinch of salt. Little do you realize that the shaker's top is unscrewed. Your chili ends up buried under a pile of salt. You've been the **victim** of an April Fools' joke.

April Fools' Day is celebrated in many countries on or around the first day of April every year. It's the one day of the year when it's okay to play practical jokes, or **pranks**, on people.

Popular pranks to play include putting grease on a doorknob or swapping the sugar for salt. You might persuade your friends to do silly things, like try to buy plaid paint or a left-handed screwdriver. Thinking of fresh ways to fool your friends is a big part of the fun. When the victim of one of your pranks realizes that he or she has been tricked, it is **traditional** to shout “April Fools’!”



On April 1, you may need to plan for a rude awakening.

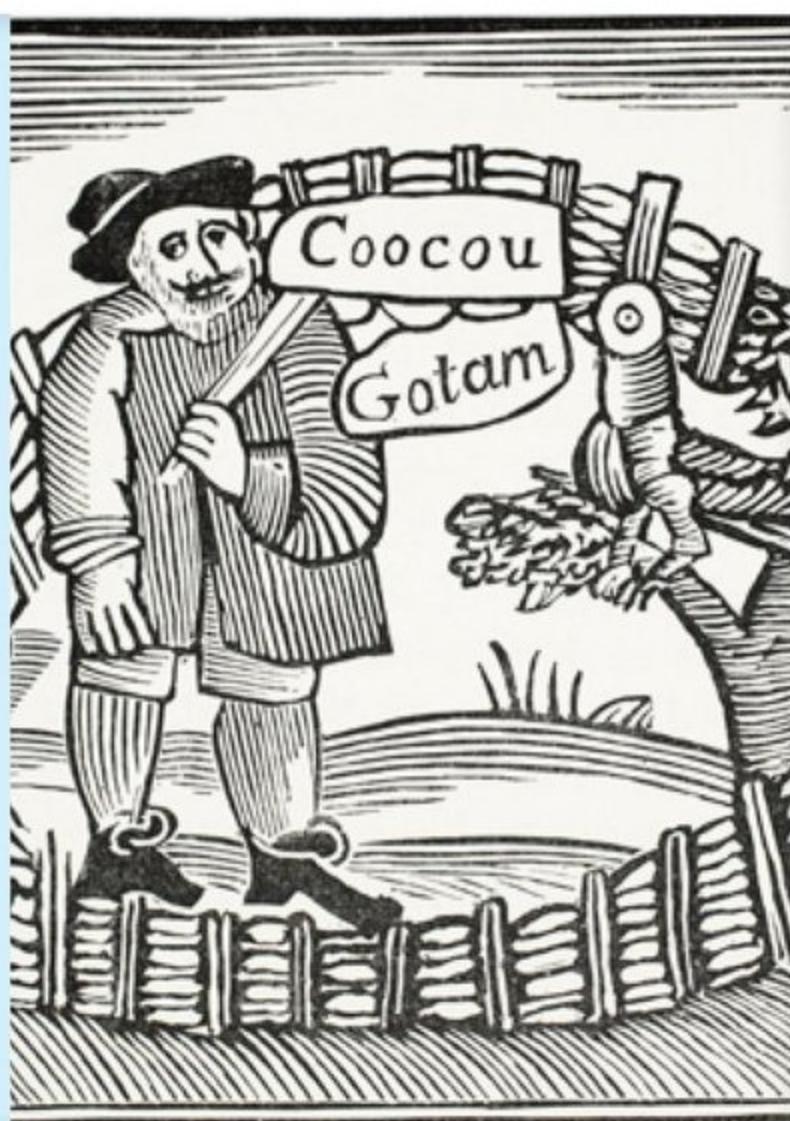
Why April First?

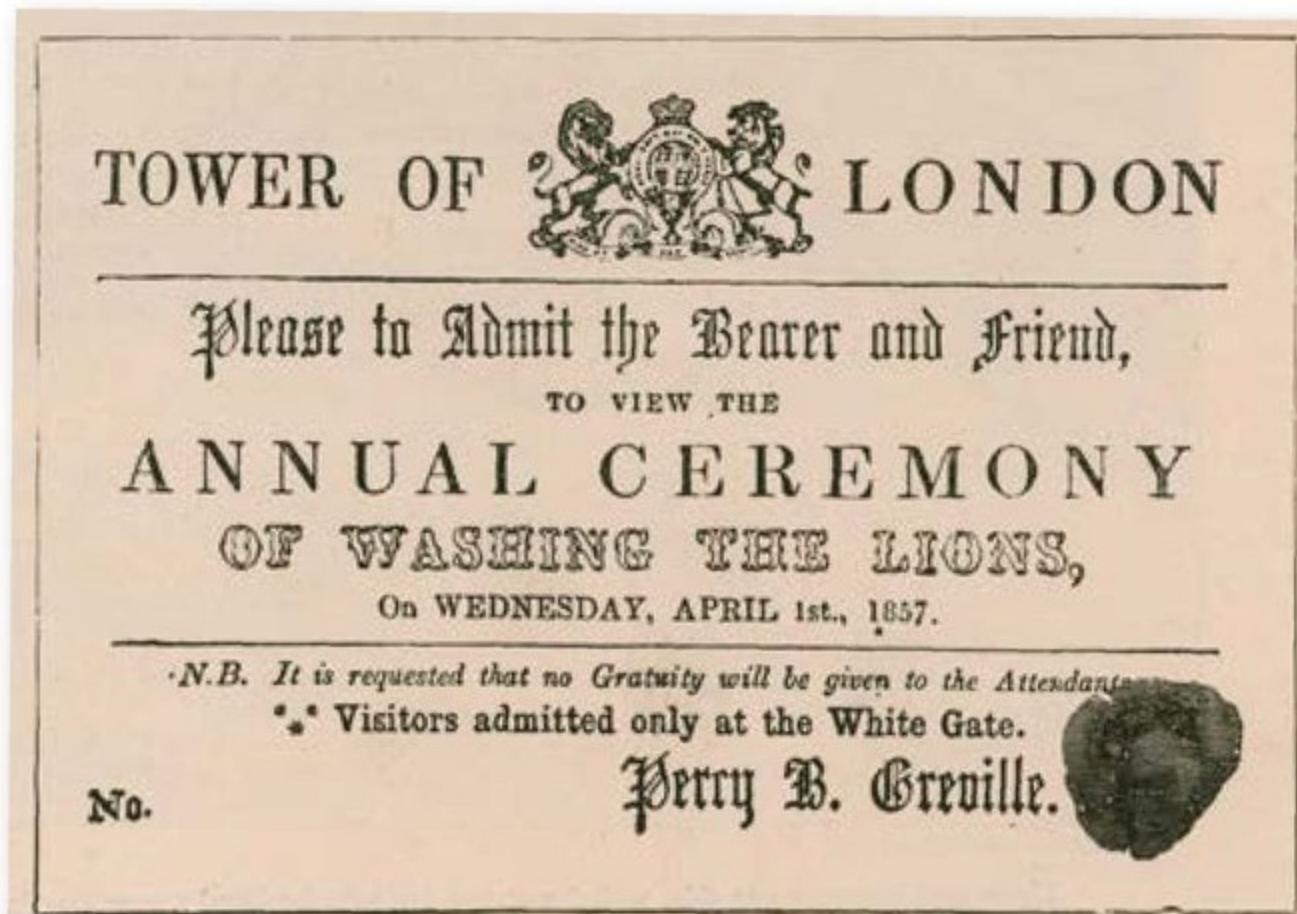
No one really knows for sure why April Fools' Day is on the first day of April. Historians believe that April Fools' originally celebrated the welcoming of spring. Many people were often "fooled" by the unpredictability of the weather during this time of the year.

Another popular theory is that it started in the 1500s. The version of the yearly calendar we use today was introduced back then. The new year moved from the beginning of April to January 1. This theory states that people who still celebrated New Year's Day on the first of April were called "April fools."

Gotham Goes Mad

One legend explains how April Fools' may have started in the English town of Gotham when King John planned to take villagers' land and property. The villagers pretended they suffered from insanity to scare King John away because at that time, madness was thought to be contagious. One of the villagers' tricks was to tie a "rabid" wheelbarrow to a tree to stop it from biting anyone!





During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a popular prank announcing the ceremony of "Washing the Lions" was staged at the Tower of London in England. Luckily no actual lions were present.

Many cultures in the past have celebrated days of foolishness around the beginning of April. Until about AD 476, ancient Romans celebrated Hilaria. This seasonal holiday honored the return to the longer days of spring after a dark winter. Romans rejoiced by dressing up in **disguises** and playing games and pranks.

At the end of the twelfth century, people celebrated the Feast of Fools in parts of medieval Europe. The revelers chose a "Lord of Misrule," or false ruler, to lead the celebration. The followers joined in the fun by dressing in disguise. This chance to poke fun at leaders continued until the sixteenth century, though there were repeated attempts to ban it.

Around the World

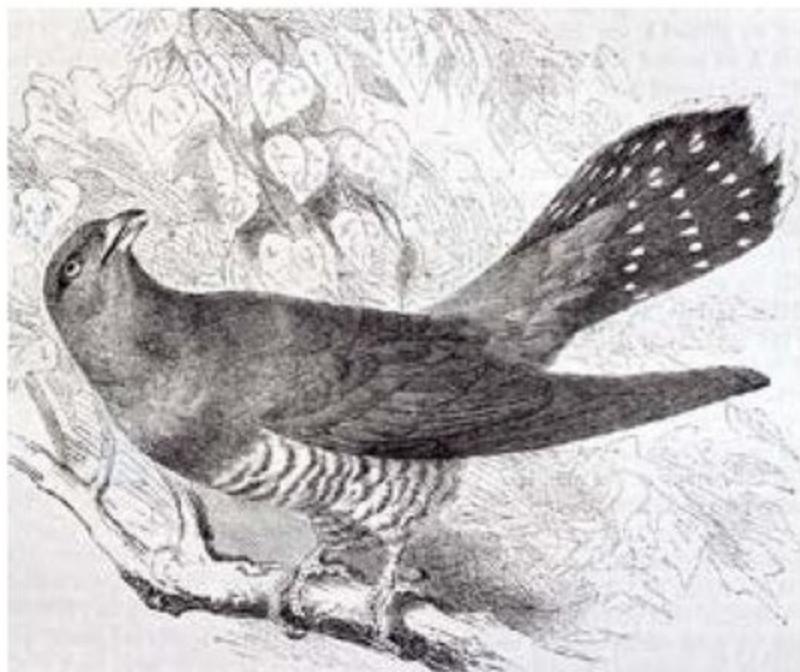
Today, people celebrate April Fools' Day differently around the world. The following are just some of the many celebrations.

Scottish Scramble

Some people in parts of the United Kingdom believe that the fun must stop by midday. In Scotland, however, April Fools' can go on for two days. On April 1, some people send a friend on a foolish errand. The victim is tricked into delivering a sealed letter, thinking he or she is asking for help. The letter actually reads, "Dinna laugh, dinna smile. Hunt the

gowk (cuckoo bird) another mile." (Do not laugh, do not smile. Send this **naive** person on another mile.) The messenger is then sent on to another person. This continues until the victim

catches on. The second day is for playing more practical jokes on innocent victims.



a cuckoo bird, or gowk



"April Fish" is also celebrated in other parts of Europe and Canada.



French Foolishness

In France, the April 1 tradition is often known as "April Fish." The fish represents a person who is easily caught, or easy to fool. The prank involves taping a paper fish to the victim's back without being noticed. Some French newspapers also publish a false story on April Fools' Day. They provide clues to make sure the story sounds a bit "fishy."

American Tricksters

In the United States, the tricks can last all day. Telling a friend that class is canceled and punching holes in someone's water bottle are examples of classic pranks. If a victim misses class or gets a surprise shower, he or she is called an "April fool."



Other popular tricks include putting oil on a doorknob and adding food coloring to the milk in the refrigerator. One trick that never grows old? Plastic bugs! Add them to food, beds, ice cube trays, chairs . . . wherever a reaction awaits!

Brazil's Day of the Lie

In Brazil, April 1 is *Dia da mentira* (Lie Day). People enjoy playing practical jokes, or *brincadeiras* (breen-kah-DAY-rahs), on each other and tell mischievous lies all day.

A Brazilian newspaper is said to have started this popular ritual in 1828. It printed a fake headline announcing the death of the emperor of Brazil.



Jordanian Jokesters

On April 1, 2010, a major newspaper in Jordan featured an interesting front-page story. It reported that three spaceships had landed in the desert outside a town in eastern Jordan. Some people in the town were not used to April Fools' pranks and were truly scared. The mayor considered evacuating the thirteen thousand people who lived there.



The newspaper's editor issued an apology.



Sizdah Bedar

The Iranian (Persian) calendar is ancient and is only used in Iran and Afghanistan. The thirteenth day of the Iranian new year is called *Sizdah Bedar* (seez-DAH be-DAR), or “getting rid of thirteen.” It falls around April 1. This tradition has been around since 536 BC. On Sizdah Bedar, families and friends share picnics, pranks, and fun. It might just be the oldest-known joke day in history.



BBC TV's show *Panorama* showed a Swiss family during its annual "spaghetti harvest."

Famous Foolery

Some April Fools' celebrations have also made their mark on history.

Spaghetti Trees?

In 1957 in the United Kingdom, a BBC TV documentary program informed viewers about the Swiss spaghetti tree. Normally the show was a serious program about important world issues. This time, however, viewers were shown images of people pulling spaghetti down from trees. After the program was broadcast, hundreds of viewers called the BBC asking how to grow their own spaghetti trees. They were told to "place a sprig of spaghetti in a tin of tomato sauce and hope for the best."

Corporate Chaos



Liberty Bell

Big companies and the **media** publish **hoax** stories to trick the public, too. On April 1, 1996, Taco Bell announced that they had bought the Liberty Bell, the famous American treasure. The company planned to rename it the “Taco Liberty Bell.” Many people believed the story.

The company then had to state “The Liberty Bell is safe. It’s not for sale.”

In 1998, Burger King published a full-page ad for a new left-handed burger. They claimed it was specially designed with the contents balanced properly in the bun to make left-handed eating easier. Some customers ordered the new burger, while others insisted on the standard right-handed burger.

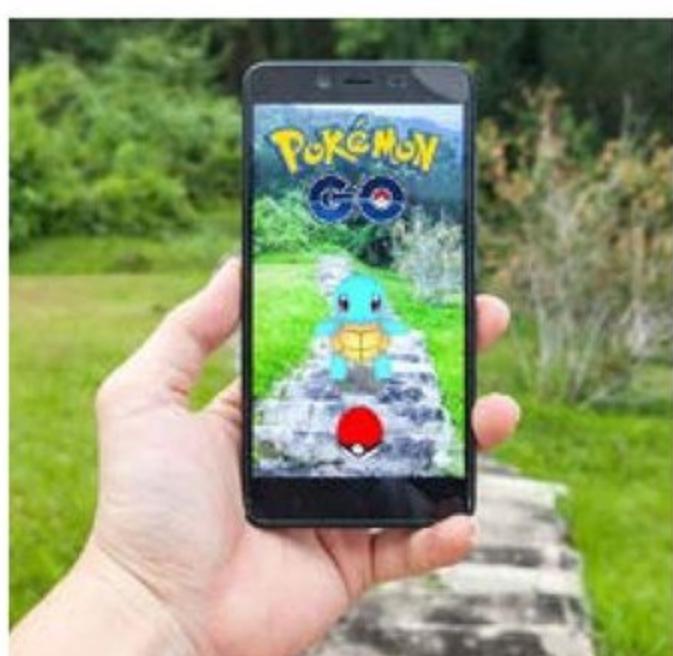


Can you tell the difference between a left-handed and right-handed burger?

Online Pranks

Online April Fools' jokes spread quickly. Google is well known for its April Fools' jokes. One of its most famous hoaxes announced the Google Gulp in 2005. The Google Gulp was a drink that was said to make the **consumer** smarter.

Social media giant Twitter announced in 2013 that it would start charging users more if they used vowels in their tweets. It offered to include the vowels for an additional monthly fee. Twitter even posted on its blog that it was offering this to encourage more efficient communication.



There was no interaction between the user and character in the original April Fools' version of Pokémon Go. To catch a creature, you just tapped on the screen.

Even the idea for Pokémon Go began as an Internet hoax in 2014. Google Maps advertised a **spoof** tool that would find the world's best Pokémon Master. They specifically requested one who can “navigate through tall grass to capture wild creatures.”



The best April Fools' pranks are fun but harmless!

Conclusion

It's important to follow certain safety rules when celebrating April Fools'. Never be cruel to people. April Fools' jokes are supposed to be fun and lighthearted. When you are asked if something is an April Fools' joke, confess immediately.

Finally, remember that what goes around comes around . . . worse. If you're going to pull a prank, make sure you're ready to get pranked in return!

On April Fools' Day every year, pranksters all around the world use their creativity to fool unsuspecting people. It is one special day out of 365 to share a joke and celebrate the funny side of life. Do keep it safe and simple and most of all, fun.



On April Fools' Day, expect the unexpected.

Glossary

consumer (<i>n.</i>)	a person who buys or rents goods or services and uses them (p. 14)
disguises (<i>n.</i>)	clothes or other things people wear to keep from being recognized (p. 7)
hoax (<i>n.</i>)	something meant to mislead or trick (p. 13)
media (<i>n.</i>)	mass communication, such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet, through which information is given to the public (p. 13)
naïve (<i>adj.</i>)	having or showing a lack of experience or judgment; innocent (p. 8)
pranks (<i>n.</i>)	tricks or practical jokes (p. 4)
spoof (<i>n.</i>)	a hoax or a joke played on someone (p. 14)
traditional (<i>adj.</i>)	of or relating to a long-established custom (p. 5)
victim (<i>n.</i>)	a person or other animal harmed by an act or condition; someone who is fooled or tricked (p. 4)

April Fools' Day

A Reading A-Z Level S Leveled Book

Word Count: 1,165

Connections

Writing

Write a letter to a friend describing an April Fools' joke not included in the book. Be sure your joke follows the rules described in the book.

Social Studies

Research another country that celebrates April Fools' Day. Write a paragraph explaining how that country celebrates the holiday.

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