April Fools Day and Primary Sources

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Mule Barometer

DIRECTIONS
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HANG OUTSIDE
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If tail is dry... FAIR
If tail is wet... RAIN
If tail is swinging... WINDY
If tail is wet and swinging... STORMY
If tail is frozen... COLD

FURTHER INFORMATION UPON REQUEST....

The weather is fine here as you will notice when you consult the barometer.

Mabel M.
New National Recording Registry Entries

Dr. Dre, Glen Campbell, Mr. Rogers, Selena and the Village People are featured in this year's class.
April Fool!

April Fool, commonly known as April Fool’s day, has long been an opportunity for children to tease their teachers. In an interview with a writer employed by the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression, Mrs. Sally Marlowe of Marion, South Carolina, recalled:

“We used to run off in the woods on April Fool’s Day and stay till twelve o’clock noon come — then we would all show up to the schoolhouse. What you reckon they done to us for? Kept us in school so late every evening that week till the moon would be shining bright enough to show us the road home.”

“The Skipper.” Sally Marlowe, interviewee; Annie Ruth Davie, interviewer; Marion, South Carolina, January 19, 1939. American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936 to 1940, Manuscripts Division

Old Heidelberg, c1905. Detroit Publishing Company. Prints & Photographs Division
April the 1st was dreaded by most rural school teachers. The pupils would get inside and bar the teacher out. The teacher, who didn’t act on the principle that discretion is the better part of valor, generally got the worst of it. Mr. Douglass soon learned this, and, on April Fool’s Day, he would walk to the school, perceive the situation, laughingly announce there would be no school until the morrow, and leave.

Dr. Samuel B. Latham. W.W. Dixon, interviewer; Winnsboro, South Carolina, June 28, 1938. American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936 to 1940. Manuscript Division

Learn More

- Search on April Fool in American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936 to 1940 to find more tales of pranks and shenanigans. If your taste runs to practical jokes, take a look at “How Snipe Hunting Was Invented,” in which pioneer Steve Robertson tells how one Brad Slocum, “one of these tender-actin’ persons that was always wantin’ somebody else to do it,” got his just desserts.

- Search on dog, humorous pictures, or animals in human situations to find more silly pictures in the Detroit Publishing Company digital collection.

- The online collection The American Variety Stage: Vaudeville and Popular Entertainment, 1870-1920 contains many examples of comedy routines performed by vaudeville entertainers, including ten audio recordings. For a good laugh, tune in to “Henry’s Music Lesson,” or appreciate a time-tested joke routine to the accompaniment of a fiddler playing “The Arkansas Traveler.” Or, listen to performers imitate various sounds such as a sawmill and a dog fight in “A Study in Mimicry.”

- Search on joke in the collection Music for the Nation: American Sheet Music, ca. 1870 to 1885 to find humorous songs such as “Too Thin; or, Darwin’s Little Joke” by O’Rangoutang.

- The digital collection Inventing Entertainment: The Early Motion Pictures and Sound Recordings of the Edison Companies includes many films in video format from the Library’s collection of early copyrighted paper print films. Many early films show comic routines. The Unappreciated Joke, filmed by Thomas Edison, Inc. in 1903, shows a man on a subway attempting to entertain a fellow passenger who is not amused.

- In another early film, An Animated Luncheon, filmed February 1900, Edison exploits the newly discovered possibilities of film-splicing to create a gag.
Topics in Chronicling America

Chronicling America provides free access to millions of historic American newspaper pages. Listed here are topics widely covered in the American press of the time. We will be adding more topics on a regular basis. To find out what's new, sign up for Chronicling America’s weekly notification service, that highlights interesting content on the site and lets you know when new newspapers and topics are added. Users can use the icons at the lower-left side of the Chronicling America Web page to subscribe. If you would like to suggest other topics, use the Ask a Librarian contact form available on the Newspaper and Current Periodical Reading Room site. Dates show the approximate range of sample articles.

- Alphabetical list of Topics Pages
- by subject category
- by date range
Topics in Chronicling America - April Fools' Day

"The first of April some do say, Was set apart for All Fools' Day: But why the people call it so, Nor I nor they themselves do know" begins the article in the San Francisco Call on April 1, 1900, which discusses the history and customs of "April Fool's Day," also known as "All Fools' Day." Read more about it!

The information and sample article links below provide access to a sampling of articles from historic newspapers that can be found in the Chronicling America: American Historic Newspapers digital collection (http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov). Use the Suggested Search Terms and Dates to explore this topic further in Chronicling America.

Jump to: Sample Articles

Important Dates:

- April 1. April Fools' Day celebrated by sending people on fruitless errands, giving inedible treats, and other pranks.

Suggested Search Strategies:

- [Try the following forms in combination, proximity, or as phrases using Search Pages in Chronicling America] April Fool, All Fools' Day; prank, April 1

It is important to use a specific date range if looking for articles for a particular event in order to narrow your results.

Sample Articles from Chronicling America:

- "Life in a Mining Company in Montana. All Fools' Day at Canyon Ferry," The Holt County Sentinel (Oregon, MO), April 21, 1871, Page 1, Image 1, col. 6.
- "April Fool," The Charleston Daily News (Charleston, SC), April 1, 1873, Page 2 Image 2, col. 2.
- "April Called Out All Its Army of Fools," The San Francisco Call (San Francisco, CA), April 2, 1899, Page 11, Image 11, col. 3-4.
- "Concerning the Origin of the Name and Custom of All Fools' Day," The San Francisco Call (San Francisco, CA), April 1, 1900, Page 4, Image 4, col. 2-5.
- "Lost in Antiquity of Ages, April Fool Kept by All People," Akron Daily Democrat (Akron, OH), April 1, 1902, Page 3, Image 3, col. 2.
- "The Day of All Fools—Were You One of Them?" The Tacoma Times (Tacoma, WA), April 1, 1909, Page 1, Image 1, col. 3-5.
LUNAR ANIMALS
AND THEIR
OBSTRACTIONS.

Dedicated to the Moon, Moonshiner in the Discovery of the Cape of Good Hope and explored from Forbes

For assistance, we extend thanks and the Sun God.
Primary Sources and April Fool's Day: The Great Moon Hoax of 1825

March 31, 2016 by Cheryl Golden

This post is by Rebecca Newland, the 2013-2015 Library of Congress Teacher in Residence.

April Fool’s Day pranks are usually funny, short term. An entire class simultaneously lets asleep a teacher assigns a fifty-page essay due the next day, and everyone laughs once the trick is revealed. However, on the other hand, here is different sort, as they are engineered to deceive over the long term, and often on a large scale. Invite your students to consider the difference as they analyze primary sources connected to the Great Moon Hoax of 1825.

In August of 1835, the New York newspaper The Sun published a six-part series about an object that it claimed had been discovered in the ocean. The “object” was described as a strange creature with horns and hooves, and a series of articles about its discovery and supposed scientific significance were published. The articles included statements from scientists and even a description of a meeting between the creature and a group of scientists.

The series was written by Richard A. van der Linde, who claimed to have been a member of the scientific community and to have access to the latest research. The articles generated a great deal of interest and excitement, and the creature became known as the “monstrous horned beast” or the “horned monster.”

Several attempts were made to locate the creature, but none were successful. The creature’s existence was never confirmed, and the series was eventually revealed as a hoax. In the end, the creature was never found, and the series was simply a clever marketing ploy to increase sales. The series, however, was not without its impact, as it led to the establishment of the field of paleontology and the study of prehistoric animals.

The series was eventually revealed as a hoax, and the creature was never found. The series was simply a clever marketing ploy to increase sales. The series, however, was not without its impact, as it led to the establishment of the field of paleontology and the study of prehistoric animals. Despite the eventual revelation of the hoax, the series remained popular for many years, and it continues to be studied by scholars today.
Belief, Legend, and the Great Moon Hoax
August 26, 2014 by Stephanie Hall

During the week of August 26, 1835, the world was treated to a fantastic story of scientific discoveries by the famous British astronomer, Sir John Herschel. He had realized the speculations of his father, astronomer Sir William Herschel, as he discovered life on the moon [1]. Or so the readers of The New York Sun were told, in a series of articles now known as the Great Moon Hoax.

When we think of stories about life on other worlds and visits to or from these worlds presented as truth rather than fiction, we usually think of legends, news reports, or hoaxes of the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. Similarly, the problem of sifting out fact from fiction in news items, especially those passed along through internet news sites and social media, seems quite modern. But speculation about life on the moon or planets in the solar system is older than the written word. News hoaxes also have a long history. Publisher Benjamin Franklin was a famous source of both legitimate news and hoaxes [2].

”Lunar animals and other objects discovered by Sir John Herschel in his observatory at the Cape of Good Hope and copied from sketches in the Edinburgh Journal of Science.” An illustration for The New York Sun, credited to Benjamin Day, 1835. Follow the link to the Prints and Photographs Catalog for more information.

Faithfulists have an interest in news hoaxes, alongside interest in legends of extraordinary events and the supernatural. News hoaxes succeed when they are written in the news style of the day and drawn from contemporary factual news, while legends are stories with origins in oral traditions. But the two often parallel each other and may even include versions of the same stories. Russell Franklin discussed modern “newstory” in his book talk at the Library of Congress, “Newstory: Contemporary Folklore on the Internet.”

Leading up to the Great Moon Hoax was another story published in June, 1835, Edgar Allen Poe wrote a story in the Southern Literary Messenger. As told to us true, “Hans Pfaall, a Tale of the Moon.” It described the return of an explorer to his native Holland with stories of life and adventures on the moon. In his day, a satire was counted as successful if a good portion of its readers thought it to be true. But in this case Poe’s sense of humor betrayed him and his article was quickly recognized as fiction by many of his readers. The Southern Literary Messenger was a periodical of fact and fiction that was only ten years old when Poe wrote this story, so it did not have a wide circulation at that time.

But someone, likely a writer on the staff of The New York Sun, either read Poe’s story or was thinking along the same lines. There was excitement about the return of Comet Halley expected in the fall and a predicted transit of Mercury, as well as astronomer John Herschel’s expedition to catalog the stars of the southern hemisphere. In the world of philosophy, the Scottish minister, amateur astronomer, and popular author, Rev. Thomas Dick, was making imaginative claims about intelligent life on other worlds. For example, he calculated the population of the solar system at one twenty-one trillion. This was a time of exciting events, theses, and claims. Stories playing on curiosity about astronomy could sell newspapers.
Peoples & Creatures of the Moon

Humans have long imagined the kinds of creatures or peoples that might live on Earth's moon. This section briefly describes ideas about lunar life in the 17th, 19th and 20th centuries through a series of items from the Library of Congress' collections. By examining ideas about life on the moon, insights emerge about the interplay between imagination and rigorous thought in our developing understanding of the universe.

The Peoples of the Moon in 1638

Publication of Galileo's telescopic observations of the moon had an important effect on ideas about life on other worlds. The idea that the moon was a physical place, a world like the Earth, suggested that the moon could be inhabited by beings much like us. In this vein, in *The Discovery of a World in the Moone* (1638), English bishop John Wilkins, suggested it "is probable there may be inhabitants in this other World." In 1638 another Englishman offered a fictional account of a visit to just such an inhabited moon.

Francis Godwin's *The Man in the Moone*, published in 1638, follows the exploits of Domingo Gonzales, a Spanish nobleman who after a series of adventures on Earth makes a voyage to the moon. After exploits in the East Indies, Gonzales finds himself on the island St. Helena where he discovers a species of swan-like birds. Realizing
Is Seeing Always Believing

- San Francisco Earthquake and Fire
- San Francisco Disaster
Primary Sources: Is Seeing Always Believing?
April 4, 2013 by Danna Bell

This post includes contributions from the Library's Cheryl Lederle and Stephen Wesson.

Is a primary source always the genuine article?

Primary sources are original documents and objects which were created at the time under study. We know that primary sources can show a certain point of view or a certain perception about an event. But students may not think about the reasons why a particular primary source was created, or what the audience at the time expected of it. For some primary sources, it’s worth asking whether their creators ever intended them to be taken as the literal truth.

Show your students these two films on the San Francisco earthquake: San Francisco Earthquake and Fire April 18, 1906 and San Francisco Disaster May 19, 1906.

Encourage them to use the Primary Source Analysis Tool to keep track of their observations, reflections, and questions. You may select questions from the Teacher’s Guide: Analyzing Motion Pictures to focus and deepen their analysis.

What differences and similarities do they see with the films? Ask them which film they think provides a more accurate depiction of what was happening after the San Francisco earthquake. What helped them to decide which film is more accurate?
The execution of Mary, Queen of Scots
Title
The execution of Mary, Queen of Scots

Other Title
Execution

Summary
From Maguire & Baucus catalogue: Representing the beheading of Mary, Queen of Scots. A realistic reproduction of an historic scene.

Contributor Names
Clark, Alfred, -1950, production.
Thomae, Robert, cast.
Heise, William, camera.
Thomas A. Edison, Inc.
Hendricks (Gordon) Collection (Library of Congress)

Created / Published
United States : Edison Manufacturing Co. [1895]

Subject Headings
- Mary.--Queen of Scots.--1542-1587--Death and burial--Drama
- Executions and executioners--Drama
- Beheading--Drama
- Historical reenactments

Genre
Trick films

Notes
- Copyright: no repo.
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

My old customers, and others, are no doubt aware of the terrible time I have had in crossing the stream, and will be glad to know that I will be back, on the same side from which I started, on or before the Fourth of March next, when I will be ready to swap horses, dispense law, make jokes, split rails, and perform other matters in a small way.
Free to Use and Reuse: Cherry Blossoms

Each spring, beautiful cherry blossoms bloom in Japan and in Washington, D.C. The Library has published a book about this annual tradition with original art works from our collections, "Cherry Blossoms: Sakura Collections from the Library of Congress." Browse more content that is free to use and reuse.
Have a question? Need assistance?
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Ask a Librarian

Have a question? Ask us now! Librarians are available to answer your questions and help with your research. We are happy to help you, but ask for your patience, as many of us are working remotely, and this may impact our access to some Library of Congress materials and our ability to fully respond to your question at this time (but we will do our best!). For more information about the Library's current operating status, see: www.loc.gov/coronavirus

For more specific questions, you may also use one of the forms below. Some areas offer online chat during limited hours, indicated by the 🔄 icon.

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