Origins of April Fools' Day

No one really knows how April Fools' Day came to be. There are many theories; and some of those theories are even April Fools' jokes themselves! Here are some of the most popular theories of why April Fools' Day is celebrated…

In the 1500s, most European countries made a calendar change to the more modern Gregorian calendar, which identified January 1st as the new year, instead of in early April as the old Julian calendar did. But not everyone heard about the change or observed it. France was especially known for being a little late on the switch. The country dwellers who were slow to hear the news were known as "April fools", so they say. In France, April Fools' Day is called poisson d'avril, which translates to "April's fish". It is said that French pranksters would pin fish on the backs of people who still celebrated the old April new year.

April Fools' Day may have originated from one of many different "joke days" that have been celebrated around the world for ages. There was the Roman festival Hilaria, which was held in late March. There was the Medieval Feast of Fools that was celebrated in late December. One of the oldest known prank days was celebrated on the 13th day of the Persian new year, which typically falls on April 1st.

Other historians think that the holiday just evolved from centuries of spring festivals held by Romans, Pagans and other old European societies, where merriment and joke-making were common practices.

Writing Prompt

What is the funniest or most wacky April Fools' Day prank that you've experienced?

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