

HEY...WHAT'S A HOAX?

Not all creepy creatures are real! Many of the most famous monsters in American history have been proven to be **hoaxes** (*hokes-es*), or big practical jokes.



People have been inventing hoaxes for hundreds of years, usually to make money. Some of the most famous pranksters were the Fox Sisters, who convinced neighbors that they could speak to ghosts. They began charging people money to come see them communicate with spirits, and became famous across the country for their “talents.” Later in life, they admitted to making it all up. P.T. Barnum was a master hoaxster, creating the Fiji Mermaid: a stuffed monkey sewn onto the tail of a fish, which he claimed was a newly-discovered creature. In 1869, a huge mummified “giant” was dug up on a farm—people were sure it was real, until it was revealed to be a fake, staged to make the farm’s owner money.

Of course, some people do it for fun—in 1917, two cousins took photos of themselves playing with fairies in their backyard. When one of their mothers showed the photos to a researcher, they became famous. Many people believed the photographs of “The Cottingley Fairies” to be real, and the girls played along. It wasn’t until they



were very old that the girls admitted that they had made the fairies out of cardboard and pins.

What is a hoax?

What was the Fiji Mermaid really made out of?

How were the Cottingley Fairies made?
