

EPISODE 104

LEVEL B2

READING COMPREHENSION



APRIL FOOLS' DAY

The origins of April Fools' Day seem **shrouded** (= to hide something by covering or surrounding it) in mystery. Some historians believe that April Fools' Day probably started life as a Roman or pagan **renewal** (= the beginning of sth) festival. Although we cannot be certain, it is thought that people would celebrate the return of spring, often by playing **pranks** (= a trick that is intended to be funny but not to cause harm or damage) or friends wearing **disguises** (= costumes) and other ritualized forms of **mayhem** (= a situation in which there is little or no order or control). However, we do not know that by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century April 1<sup>st</sup> was firmly established in Britain as a day for playing practical jokes. With the advent of mass media in the 1930s, newspaper editors also began to smuggle in "joke" articles or **hoaxes** (= tricks), although the custom didn't really **take off** (= start to be successful) until 1970s. For example, in 1990 the tabloid News of the World **notified** (= informed) shocked readers that The Chunnel Tunnel project, which was already over budget, would face another big additional expense caused by the colossal engineering **blunder** (= mistake). Apparently, the two halves of the tunnel, being built **simultaneously** (= at the same time) from the coasts of France and England would miss each other by 14 feet. The paper predicted that the mistake would cost \$14billion to fix.



### EXERCISE 1

Decide if the sentences below are true or false.

1. The origins of April Fools' Day are perfectly known.
2. It is thought that people celebrated the return of the winter.
3. Some historians claim that April Fools' Day was established at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### ENGLISH IN USE



Sometimes when you are reporting what people say or believe, you don't know, or you don't want to say, who exactly the 'people' are. So you use an impersonal construction:

*People believe that many journalists lied.*

The same idea can be expressed by using the passive in two different ways:

a) subject + passive of reporting verb + 'to' infinitive

*Hundreds of thousands of journalists are believed to have lied.*

b) It + passive of reporting verb + that + clause

*It is believed that hundreds of thousands of journalists lied.*

Look at the use of the structure he/ she / it is said....

When **the reporting verb** is in **present** tense:

| It <b>is</b> said that ...  | = He <b>is</b> said ...                             |
|---|---|
| ... he often <b>jokes</b> .   | ... <b>to joke</b> a lot.                           |
| ... he <b>is joking</b> at the moment.                              | ... <b>to be joking</b> at the moment.              |
| ... he <b>joked</b> a lot when he was younger.                      | ... <b>to have joked</b> a lot when he was younger. |
| ... he <b>was joking</b> around South America in January last year. | ... <b>to have been joking</b> ...                  |

When the reporting verb is in the past:

| It <u>was</u> said that ...       | = He <u>was</u> said ...           |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ... he only <b>joked</b>          | ... <b>to</b> only <b>joke</b>     |
| ... he <b>was joking</b>          | ... <b>to be joking</b> ...        |
| ... he <b>had joked</b>           | ... <b>to have joked</b> ...       |
| ... he <b>had been joking</b> ... | ... <b>to have been joking</b> ... |

We can use this kind of passive construction with other verbs like: **say, believe, claim, understand, consider, think and know.**

**EXERCISE 2**

Make the transformations of the following sentences:

- 1 People think that neither side wanted war.  
Neither side is .....
- 2 People say that fewer than 1,000 blue whales survive in the southern hemisphere.  
Fewer .....
- 3 Everyone knows that eating fruit is good for you.  
Eating fruit .....
- 4 People consider that one in three bathing beaches is unfit for swimming.  
One in three bathing beaches .....
- 5 At least 130,000 dolphins are reported to be caught in the nets of tuna fishers every year.  
It is .....

**IDIOM CLOSE-UP** 

**BE NO LAUGHING MATTER** = *sth which is too serious to make jokes about*  
**FALL FLAT** = *if a joke falls flat, no one laughs at it*

PHRASAL VERBS CLOSE-UP



**PULL SB'S LEG** = TELL STH WHICH IS NOT TRUE AS A JOKE

**LAUGH YOUR HEAD OFF** = LAUGH LOUDLY FOR A LONG TIME

EXERCISE 3



Rewrite the sentences with the idioms and phrasal verbs above:

1. You're having on me = .....you're pulling my leg.....
2. No one laughed at her jokes = .....her jokes fell flat .....
3. Having a broken leg is not funny = .....a broken leg is no laughing matter.....
4. I was laughing a lot at this = .....I was laughing my head off.....

NEWS



APRIL FOOLS'D



DAY

„April Fools' Day, sometimes called All Fools' Day, is one of the most **light-hearted** days of the year. Its origins are uncertain. Some see it as a celebration related to the turn of the seasons, while others believe it **stems from** the adoption of a new calendar.

Ancient cultures, including those of the Romans and Hindus, celebrated New Year's Day on or around April 1. It closely follows the **vernal equinox** (March 20th or March 21st.) In medieval times, much of Europe celebrated March 25, the Feast of **Annunciation**, as the beginning of the new year.

In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII ordered a new calendar (the Gregorian Calendar) to replace the old Julian Calendar. The new calendar called for New Year's Day to be celebrated Jan. 1. That year, France adopted the reformed calendar and **shifted** New Year's day to Jan. 1. According to a popular explanation, many people either refused to accept the new date, or did not

learn about it, and continued to celebrate New Year's Day on April 1. Other people began to make fun of these traditionalists, sending them on "fool's errands" or trying to trick them into believing something false. Eventually, the practice spread throughout Europe."

#### GLOSSARY:

**Light-hearted**= happy and not serious

**Stem from** = originate from

**Vernal equinox** = the time in the spring when the sun crosses the equator, and when night and day are of equal length

**Annunciation** = the beginning

**Shifted** = changed

|                         |
|-------------------------|
| <b>KEY TO EXERCISES</b> |
|-------------------------|

#### Ex. 1

1. False
2. False
3. False

#### Ex. 2

1 People think that neither side wanted war.

Neither side is **thought to have wanted war**.

2 People say that fewer than 1,000 blue whales survive in the southern hemisphere.

Fewer **than 1,000 blue whales are said to survive in the southern hemisphere**.

3 Everyone knows that eating fruit is good for you.

Eating fruit **is known to be good for you**.

4 People consider that one in three bathing beaches is unfit for swimming.

One in three bathing beaches **is considered unfit for swimming**.

5 At least 130,000 dolphins are reported to be caught in the nets of tuna fishers every year.

It is **reported that at least 130,000 dolphins are caught in the nets of tuna fishers every year**.

#### Ex. 3

1. You're having on me = .....you're pulling my leg.....

2. No one laughed at her jokes = .....her jokes fell flat .....

3. Having a broken leg is not funny = .....a broken leg is no laughing matter.....

4. I was laughing a lot at this = .....I was laughing my head off.....