

Speak now 2 a

1: April Fool's Day (speak now 2 a/ lecture and writing 1)

- **Read this text and prepare yourself for class lecture**
- **It is necessary to write a text possibly related to the present topic at the end of each lecture.**

April Fool's Day is a special day for jokes and tricks in many countries. Read this article to find out all about it.

April Fool's Day is celebrated on 1 April in many countries around the world. On this day, people traditionally play practical jokes on each other and have fun trying to make other people believe things that are not true.

April Fool's traditions

In the UK, jokes and tricks can be played up until noon on 1 April. After midday it's considered bad luck to play a trick. Anyone who forgets this and tries a joke in the afternoon becomes an 'April Fool' themselves.

So, what kind of jokes do people play? Well, a simple example would be telling your friend that their shoelaces are undone. Then, when they bend down to do them up, you shout, 'April Fool!', and they realize their shoelaces are fine. Maybe it's not your kind of humor, but watch out, there's always someone who will find it hilarious! In Ireland, a popular prank is to send someone on a 'fool's errand'. The victim is sent to deliver a letter, supposedly asking for help. When the person receives the letter, they open it, read it and tell the poor messenger that they will have to take the letter to another person. This continues and the victim ends up taking the message to several different people until someone feels sorry for them and shows them what the letter says: 'Send the fool to someone else.'

In France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and French-speaking areas of Canada and Switzerland, the 1 April tradition is known as the 'April Fish'. A common joke is to try to stick a paper fish onto a victim's back without being noticed.

April Fool's Day in the media

Some newspapers, TV channels and well-known companies publish false news stories to fool people on 1 April. One of the earliest examples of this was in 1957 when a program on the BBC, the UK's national TV channel, broadcast a report on how spaghetti grew on trees. The film showed a family in Switzerland collecting spaghetti from trees and many people were fooled into believing it, as in the 1950s British people didn't eat much pasta and many didn't know how it was made! Most British people wouldn't fall for the spaghetti trick today, but in 2008 the BBC

managed to fool their audience again with their *Miracles of Evolution* trailer, which appeared to show some special penguins that had regained the ability to fly. Two major UK newspapers, *The Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Mirror*, published the 'important story' on their front pages.

On April Fool's Day 1998, the American hamburger chain Burger King announced that it had created a left-handed hamburger. The advert for the 'new product' explained that all the ingredients had been rotated 180 degrees so that it was more comfortable for left-handed people to pick up and eat. The following day, Burger King admitted that this advertisement had been a hoax, but said that thousands of customers had gone to restaurants across the USA asking for a left-handed burger.

April Fool's Day controversy

April Fool's Day fans say it encourages fun and laughter, and one study found that it reduces stress and therefore could be good for your heart. Other people point out that it can have negative consequences, like confusion, worry or wasting time and resources. For example, a spokesperson for Dublin Zoo said staff had 'lost their sense of humour' after they received more than 100,000 calls asking for invented names such as Mr C Lyons, Anna Conda and G Raffe! The callers were victims of a phone hoax, who contacted the zoo after receiving a text message encouraging them to make the call.

In the era of 'fake news' it's often hard on a normal day of the year to work out when we're being tricked into believing something that isn't true, but on April Fool's Day you need to be even more alert. No one knows exactly how the tradition started, but there are plenty of people who enjoy this light-hearted day and are happy to keep the tradition alive.

2: Easter (speak now 2 a/ lecture and writing 2)

- **Read this text and prepare yourself for class lecture**
- **It is necessary to write a text possibly related to the present topic at the end of each lecture.**

Easter is the most important festival of the year for most Christians and a holiday for many others. Read on to find out more about it.

The meaning of Easter

Easter is a Christian festival which marks the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For many Christians, Easter is a celebration of the triumph of life over death, and a very important time of the year. Many non-Christians also have a holiday at this time, so it is a popular time to travel or spend with friends and family. We see lots of symbols of new life at Easter, especially eggs, chicks, flowers and rabbits. These symbols go back to ancient pagan traditions which celebrated fertility, rebirth and new growth after the long, winter months.

When it is celebrated

The dates of Easter change from year to year but it usually falls sometime between the end of March and the end of April. In Western Christianity, Easter Sunday is the first Sunday after the first full moon of spring, which starts on 21 March. The Eastern Orthodox churches, which use a different calendar, have a slightly different way of calculating Easter and usually celebrate Easter a little earlier or later.

Holy Week

The week before Easter is called Holy Week. The first day of Holy Week is Palm Sunday, which is the Sunday before Easter. Many Christians celebrate this as the day that Jesus entered Jerusalem and people threw down branches from palm trees on the road to welcome him. Four days later is Maundy Thursday, which marks the Last Supper, when Jesus ate bread and drank wine with his twelve disciples. The following day is Good Friday, which is significant for Christians as the day that Jesus was put to death on the cross. Many Christians believe that Jesus was killed and buried in a tomb on the Friday and that God raised him from the dead on the Sunday. So Easter Sunday is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus.

How Easter is celebrated

In many countries there are religious processions during Holy Week, and practising Christians attend special church services. On Palm Sunday, many churches bless palm branches and people put them on the ground during processions to mark the day that Jesus arrived in Jerusalem. The

Last Supper on Maundy Thursday is celebrated in many Christian traditions in the form of the Communion, when believers share bread and wine. Good Friday is traditionally a day of fasting, reflection and sadness. A lot of church services start at midnight the night before Easter Sunday with the lighting of candles or, in Greece, fireworks. This represents the triumph of light over darkness. On Easter Sunday, churches are filled with flowers representing new life, and at home chocolate Easter eggs are given as presents.

Other Easter traditions

There are many different Easter traditions around the world. In some places, people eat lamb on Easter Sunday, but there are many other foods, such as hot cross buns – spiced, sweet bread buns made with raisins – that are traditional in the UK.

In some places in Eastern Europe, boys and girls throw water at each other, while in Corfu, Greece, there is a tradition of throwing pots and pans out of windows and from balconies, breaking them on the street. In the United States, a tradition of wearing new clothes at Easter has evolved into making Easter bonnets – fancy hats decorated with flowers, rabbits and other symbols of spring. For fans of crime fiction, Norway is the place to be at Easter, when it has become traditional to read crime novels and solve mysteries.

Eggs are a popular part of Easter celebrations. Traditionally, people paint chicken eggs and decorate them with bright colors to give as presents. Nowadays, chocolate eggs are more popular than the traditional kind, especially with children. They are often hidden around the house and garden so that children can find them in an Easter egg hunt.

3: Earth Hour (speak now 2 a/ lecture and writing 3)

- **Read this text and prepare yourself for class lecture**
- **It is necessary to write a text possibly related to the present topic at the end of each lecture.**

What is Earth Hour?

Every year, in late March, people and institutions come together to switch off all non-essential lights for sixty minutes at 8.30 p.m. local time. They do this to show their support for the fight against the climate crisis and loss of biodiversity. Millions of people all around the world join in, as do governments, businesses and institutions. By switching off their lights and measuring the reduction in the amount of energy that is being used, people are showing that it is possible to make a difference.

But Earth Hour is more than one hour without lights, once a year. It's part of a movement of people who are working together all year round to protect the environment.

How did it start?

The World Wide Fund for Nature in Australia introduced the idea in 2007. They wanted to find a way to raise awareness about climate change. And they wanted to show that when millions of individuals work together, they can make a difference.

The first Earth Hour was held on 31 March 2007 at 7.30 p.m. in Sydney. More than two million residents and 2,000 businesses turned their lights out for one hour. The lights also went out on the famous Sydney Opera House. The people of the city of San Francisco were so inspired by the event in Sydney that they held their own 'Lights Out' event in October of the same year. This was the beginning of the Earth Hour movement.

How many cities take part?

The event has grown over the years, with more and more people, businesses, organisations and governments taking part every year.

In 2008, a year after the first Earth Hour event, 35 countries and more than 400 cities joined in. Websites also took part, turning their homepages black in support of the initiative. By 2012, 152 countries and more than 7,000 cities and towns were taking part. In recent years, the numbers have kept increasing, with more than 188 countries and territories worldwide taking part each year. In 2019, more than two billion photos were shared on social media platforms.

Famous people and famous places

A number of celebrities have put their names to the cause, including singer Ellie Goulding, tennis star Andy Murray, TV host Ellen de Generes, actor Leonardo di Caprio and ex-Beatle Paul McCartney. Politicians and world leaders have also given their support, and thousands of famous landmarks have turned off their lights, including the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the Empire State Building in New York and the Pyramids in Egypt.

What has the movement achieved?

The Earth Hour movement has achieved much more than getting people to turn off their lights. Since 2007, among other actions, they have planted trees in various countries around the world, including a 2,700 hectare forest in Uganda and 17 million trees in Kazakhstan. They worked together to ban the use of plastics on the islands of the Galapagos, one of the most important nature reserves on the planet. And they have sponsored solar power projects in India and the Philippines.

What can I do?

Join the movement. Find out the date and time for this year. Visit the Earth Hour website and find out what's going on. Then get ready to turn off your lights and join the millions of other people around the world who are fighting to save our planet!

4: Holi (speak now 2 a/ lecture and writing 4)

- **Read this text and prepare yourself for class lecture**
- **It is necessary to write a text possibly related to the present topic at the end of each lecture.**

What is Holi and why is it celebrated?

Holi is an ancient Hindu festival that originated in India and Nepal and is now celebrated in many places around the world. The date changes each year depending on the full moon, but it is held sometime between the end of February and the middle of March, and lasts a night and a day. It also represents the arrival of spring and the victory of good over evil. An important part of the celebration is forgiving anyone who has upset you and repairing any broken relationships. Holi is sometimes called the festival of colours.

What happens on Holika Dahan?

The festivities start the night before Holi, which is called Holika Dahan. People build bonfires which represent good winning over evil and the end of winter. They perform rituals around the fire. In ancient stories, Holika was a devil whom the God Vishnu destroyed through fire. People start collecting wood for the bonfires several days before so that they can build really big fires.

What happens on Rangwali Holi?

The next day is called Rangwali Holi. In the morning everyone goes into the streets and people throw coloured powders and water at each other. Some people use water guns and water balloons. After a few hours everyone is soaking wet and covered in a rainbow of different colors. Many people prepare themselves by putting oil on their skin and hair to make it easier to remove the color afterwards. In the evening people put on clean clothes, go and visit their friends and family and exchange sweets and other delicious food.

Why do people throw colors?

Some people say that the colors are a way of celebrating the many colors of the flowers in springtime. But in the area around Mathura and Vrindavan the people also tell a story about the god Krishna. Krishna was passionately in love with a girl called Radha but he was worried that she would not love him because their skins were different colors. He didn't need to worry because Radha let him paint her face the same color as his to show that she loved him. It is said that lovers nowadays often paint their faces the same color during Holi to remember this story.

There is a spirit of togetherness and equality during the Holi festival as people from all backgrounds and walks of life celebrate and have fun together.

Speak now 2b

1: World Water Day (speak now 2 b/ lecture and writing 1)

- **Read this text and prepare yourself for class lecture**
- **It is necessary to write a text possibly related to the present topic at the end of each lecture.**

World Water Day, 22 March, draws attention to the essential role of water in our lives, the difficulties people face in getting it and solutions to these problems.

Water is vital. Between 55 and 60 per cent of the adult body is made of it and every living cell needs it to keep functioning. In normal conditions, the human body can only survive three or four days without water. We need water to stay alive, yet there are billions of people all over the world who do not have access to safe drinking water.

World Water Day

The first World Water Day was celebrated in 1993. It was first proposed at the United Nations (UN) conference on environment and development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and has been celebrated annually on 22 March since then. Every year the UN releases its World Water Development Report on or around this date. Each year has a different theme, looking at things like the role of clean water in the world of work, ways to stop wasting water, finding ways to supply water to underprivileged groups and so on.

Safe water is a human right

Clean drinking water is fundamental. But it is also vital for sanitation and hygiene. It is estimated that more than 700 children under the age of seven die every day from illnesses linked to unsafe water and poor sanitation. The right to water and sanitation was recognized as a human right by the UN General Assembly in 2010. However, there are still at least 2.1 billion people around the world who live without safe water in their homes. These include rural communities, people who have been displaced due to war and local conflicts and areas where climate change is making water more and more scarce.

The problems facing communities without water

Apart from the obvious health issues, a lack of accessible clean water means that people – often women and children – spend hours every day walking to and from distant water supplies. This means they don't have time to dedicate to work, studies and other domestic duties. The search for water becomes their main occupation. And people who are not able to walk to get their own water are particularly vulnerable.

For many people, access to water has become increasingly difficult due to increased demand for a finite resource. According to figures released by the UN, around 4 billion people – nearly two-thirds of the world's population – experience severe water scarcity during at least one month of the year. It is believed that by 2030 as many as 700 million people worldwide could be displaced by intense water scarcity.

What are the solutions?

There are many charities working on creating sustainable supplies of clean water at a grass-roots level for different communities around the world, and this important work needs to continue and to expand. But the fundamental problem of increasing demand for a limited resource can only be addressed by more efficient use of water, especially in industry and agriculture. Waste-water recycling, capturing rainwater, more efficient irrigation techniques and reforestation are all examples of how water can be used more efficiently.

What we can do to help

As individuals, what we can do to help is support charities, raise awareness, take part in the World Water Day events that are happening all around the world and, of course, be careful with how we use water in our own lives. Visit the UN World Water Day website to find out about an event near you. Follow #worldwaterday on social media and help spread the word about this incredibly important issue.

Writing 1

- Write about how to preserve water sources around the world.

Dotted lines for writing.

Teachers' notes and assessments:

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Approximate score out of 10:

The most repeated errors

Blank space for recording errors.

2: World Rewilding Day (speak now 2 b/ lecture and writing 2)

- **Read this text and prepare yourself for class lecture**
- **It is necessary to write a text possibly related to the present topic at the end of each lecture.**

March 20 is World Rewilding Day. But what is rewilding? And how is wilder nature better for animals, people and the planet? Read the article to find out more.

What is rewilding?

'To rewild', or 're-wild', means 'to make something wild again'. The idea is to restore natural environments to their original state, back to how they were before human activity damaged them. Rewilding aims to put nature, not humans, in control. By bringing back the wild animals and plant life that naturally existed there before, we can help ecosystems like rivers, oceans, forests, mountains and grasslands to recover. Rewilding does not generally involve direct actions such as humans planting trees. Instead, we must step back and allow nature to take care of the process.

Why do we need rewilding?

Our planet, and our life support system, is in serious trouble. Rivers are polluted, oceans are full of plastic and forests are dying. Many plants and animals have become extinct, and many more are in danger. We have taken much of their wild habitat and changed it into land for farming and building. Climate chaos is another terrible example of the result of human actions over centuries. The aim of rewilding is to allow some of this damage to heal by helping environments become more natural again.

What are the results of a successful rewilding project?

In 1995, an inspiring rewilding project took place in Yellowstone National Park, USA. For almost 70 years, there hadn't been any wolves in the park. As a result, there were too many deer and they were eating all the trees and plants. This reduced the numbers of many animals, such as birds, beavers and cold-water fish, and even changed the rivers, when their banks started to erode.

So, to control the number of deer, wolves were reintroduced to the park. The result was amazing. The behavior of the deer changed. They now stayed away from the rivers, where the wolves often would go. This meant small trees now had a chance to grow tall. Some grew five times

their height in just six years. With healthier forests, birds and other wildlife came back. Even bears reappeared because now there were plants to eat. The riverbanks became stronger again – thanks to all the new trees – and river animals returned. Reintroducing the top predator allowed nature to find its balance.

Can rewilding happen in oceans?

Rewilding can also happen in oceans. Healthier oceans create a healthier planet. The Earth's temperature is rising because greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide (CO₂) trap heat in the atmosphere. You probably know that trees absorb carbon from the atmosphere. But did you know that whales also do the same thing? During its lifetime, one large whale can absorb around 33,000 kilograms of carbon, while a tree absorbs 22 kilograms a year.

Where there are whales, there are also tiny living creatures that live on the surface of the sea, called phytoplankton. They also absorb carbon dioxide. In fact, phytoplankton absorbs an estimated 40 per cent of the CO₂ in our atmosphere. That makes phytoplankton really important in the fight against climate change. And it makes whales especially important, because whale excrement feeds phytoplankton.

Sadly, the whale population is just a quarter of what it was centuries ago. Rewilding would mean not only stopping whale hunting but also creating protected areas where fishing and shipping are banned. Rewilding the ocean by banning human activity in certain areas would increase the whale population and fuel phytoplankton, restoring the marine ecosystems that absorb CO₂.

What is World Rewilding Day?

On 20 March 2021, people across the planet celebrated the first ever World Rewilding Day. The day continues to be held every year, and is organized by the Global Rewilding Alliance.

The aim of the day is to raise awareness of rewilding and inspire people to get involved in projects that help nature to recover. The message is that together we can change and rewild the world! You can find out more, join an event or organise your own using the links below. You can also help spread the word about rewilding and share the hope it offers for wildlife, nature and the people on our planet.

3: World Wildlife Day (speak now 2 b/ lecture and writing 3)

- **Read this text and prepare yourself for class lecture**
- **It is necessary to write a text possibly related to the present topic at the end of each lecture.**

On World Wildlife Day, 3 March, people all around the world hold events to celebrate the natural world and to raise awareness of the importance of protecting wildlife. Read the article to find out more.

Preparation

Every year, people all over the world hold all kinds of events to celebrate World Wildlife Day. Their aim is to raise awareness of the beauty and the importance of our natural world and to look for ways to protect and conserve it.

How it first started

In December 1973, 40 years after it had signed the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the United Nations General Assembly decided to create a day to raise awareness of the world's wild animals and plants and the importance of protecting them. They decided to call it World Wildlife Day and chose 3 March as the date to celebrate it.

Why is it so important?

Earth is home to many, many different species of plants and animals, more than we can possibly count. It is this rich diversity, and the delicate balance between all the different forms of life, that makes life possible on our planet. We depend on all the elements of the biosphere for all our basic needs: the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat and the energy and materials we use to make the things we need to live our lives. Each and every species is equally important. One of the aims of World Wildlife Day is to raise awareness of these facts.

What are the problems facing wildlife today?

Sadly, many human activities such as mining, farming and construction are constantly putting wildlife in danger. We are cutting down too many trees, clearing too much ground and building so many roads that we are destroying the natural habitats of millions of species and putting the world's biodiversity at risk. Nearly a quarter of all species are at risk of becoming extinct in the next 50 years, and their disappearance is putting us, humans, in danger as well.

What are the solutions?

We need to live more sustainable lives and to learn to respect nature and defend its diversity. We need to push our governments to conserve and protect the natural habitats of all the species that are in danger of becoming extinct. We all need to work together to protect our planet – and ourselves.

What can you do to help on World Wildlife Day?

You can join local events and find out more about wildlife in your local area. You can donate time or money to organisations that are protecting wildlife locally or internationally. You can sign petitions and write to your government. You can share films, photos and articles with friends and your family. Post them on your social media channel and spread the message wherever you can. You can use the hashtags #WorldWildlifeDay and #DoOneThingToday to join in with the global conversation. Whatever you do, you won't be alone. Millions of people all around the world will be joining the celebrations and fighting for a better future for our planet.

Writing 3

- Write about endanger species of animals.

Teachers' notes and assessments:

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Approximate score out of 10:

The most repeated errors

4: International Mother Language Day (speak now 2 b/ lecture and writing 4)

- **Read this text and prepare yourself for class lecture**
- **It is necessary to write a text possibly related to the present topic at the end of each lecture.**

There are about 6,500 languages in the world, but did you know that a language disappears and dies every two weeks? International Mother Language Day, on 21 February, is a day to celebrate and protect all the languages of the world.

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises.

Preparation

A language is much more than just a way of communicating. Language, and particularly our mother tongue, is an important part of our culture. Some people even think that our language can change how we see the world.

A special day

In 1999, a special day to promote mother languages was created: International Mother Language Day. The day was also intended to raise awareness of just how many languages we have on this planet (around 6,500) and to protect them. The idea for this special day came from the country of Bangladesh, and 21 February is also the day when Bangladeshis mark the day that the Bangla language was officially accepted. Bangladeshis celebrate both days by holding literary competitions and singing songs.

Different themes each year

Every year, UNESCO chooses a different theme and holds different events at its headquarters in Paris, France. For example, in 2005, there was a focus on Braille and sign languages, and in 2017, a focus on how multilingual education could help the world to have a better future.

Other countries have also set up special projects to mark this day. For example, in 2014, the Indian government released digital learning materials for schools and colleges in the 22 most widely spoken Indian languages. It is estimated that there are around 750 languages or dialects in India, and, sadly, that around 250 more languages have been lost in the last 50 years.

The importance of the mother tongue in education

The Director General of UNESCO, Audrey Azouley, pointed out in a recent speech on International Mother Language Day that mother languages 'shape millions of developing young minds'. She believes that children learn best in their mother tongue, and that it is important that children should have this opportunity. Around the world, 40 per cent of the population does not have access to education in a language they can understand or speak. Using certain languages can make it easier, or much harder, to do well in life.

Language goes to the heart

Nelson Mandela once said, 'If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.' At least 43 per cent of all languages are endangered, and fewer than 100 of the world's languages are used in the digital world. Most internet communication is in one of the following languages: English, Chinese Mandarin, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, Indonesian, Malayan, Japanese, Russian and German. But everyone has the right to use their own mother language, and to keep the memories, traditions and ways of thinking that their language represents. And this is what International Mother Language Day is all about.

Writing 4

- Write about the hardest and the easiest language in the world based on your opinion.

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Approximate score out of 10:

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