

In one
day

What are the biggest April Fools jokes of all time?

Overview

Students work in triads discussing and debating the best and biggest, historical April Fools jokes of all time.

Preview In a preview, students are given background on a fictional (unbeknownst to them) robot named “Boilerplate.” The story appears real and is complete with websites, images, and even a YouTube video.

Activity During a Response Group activity, students are assigned one of the biggest April Fools jokes in history. They learn a little about the background and then must quickly present their findings to the class. The class will debate where to rank that prank against all the others presented.

Processing Students will be challenged to take the subject that they are currently working on and come up with a historical hoax of their own.

Objectives

In the course of this lesson and participating in the classroom activity, students will

- study primary sources related to a historical hoax.
- discuss how people were fooled into believing these jokes.
- create their own historical prank by using fact and fiction together.

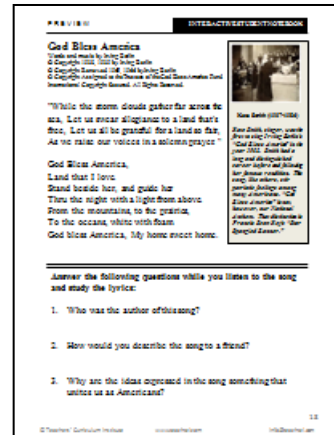
Materials

- Have this link already opened OR ready for students to open on their devices for the following preview activities
<http://www.bigredhair.com/boilerplate/> (website for Boilerplate)
- Interactive Student Notebook (1 per student)
- Share when appropriate the following link:
<http://www.museumofhoaxes.com/hoax/aprilfool/index> (assign one of the hoaxes per group)
- Placard 1-10 (1 of each cut along dotted line on cardstock)
- Students will need access to the internet via a device per group of three.

Preview

Suggested time: 10 minutes

- 1. Distribute Interactive Student Notebook.** As students enter the class, make sure each student gets a copy of the *Interactive Student Notebook*. Tell students to open to the preview. (**Consider printing the preview separate from the rest of the interactive student notebook so they don't see the word hoax or joke anywhere.**)
- 2. Open up the Boilerplate website.** Follow the link to <http://www.bigredhair.com/boilerplate/>. Either have the link open and projected to the class or have students go to that site on their own devices.
- 3. Have students answer Preview questions.** Tell students that you'd like them to examine the differences between primary and secondary sources of information. As an example, you'd like them to explore the world's first known robot, "Boilerplate."
- 4. Debrief student responses.** Select a few students to share their answers before revealing that "Boilerplate" in fact is a historical hoax and that it's April Fools Day. Ask the students the following question before moving to the lesson activity:
 - **Were you fooled by this story?**
 - **What made this story believable?**
 - **How are people fooled into believing stories like this?**
 - **Do you know of any other hoaxes like this?**



Interactive Student Notebook - Preview

Response Group

Suggested time: 40 minutes

- 1. Divide the class into triads.** Break the students into heterogeneous groups of three. Have the students arrange their desks so that they can easily see each other and the front of the class.



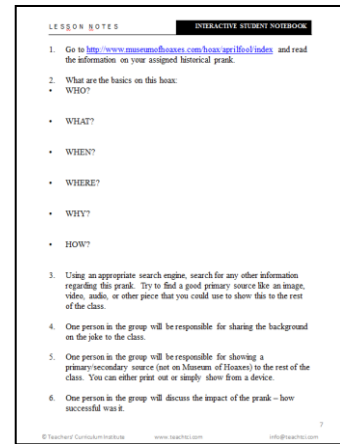
3. Introduce the activity. Explain to the students that hoaxes like “Boilerplate” have been played by people throughout time...and usually around April Fools Day. As such, you are going to assign each group a fantastic prank that has been pulled on people at various times in history. Groups will study the event, summarize it for the class, and then the class will decide where that event would rank on an all-time list.



Museum of Hoaxes Website

4. Assign each group a hoax. Using the website <http://www.museumofhoaxes.com/hoax/aprilfool/index>, assign each group one of the hoaxes. (Note: Museum of Hoaxes ranked these themselves but the students will be coming up with their own rankings.) Go over the steps in the procedure with them:

1. Read the background of the hoax using this website and record the basics (who, what, when, where, why, and how).
2. Using an appropriate search engine, search for any other information regarding this prank. Try to find a good primary source like an image, video, audio, or other piece that you could use to show this to the rest of the class.
3. One person in the group will be responsible for sharing the background on the joke to the class..
4. One person in the group will be responsible for showing a primary/secondary source (not on Museum of Hoaxes) to the rest of the class.
5. One person in the group will discuss the impact of the prank – how successful was it.
6. Groups will have 10 minutes to prepare for the presentation.
7. Groups will have 2 minutes to present to the class.



Interactive Student Notebook
Hoax Prep Sheet

5. Present Hoaxes. Following the previous procedures, give each group 2 minutes (tops) to showcase their assigned historical hijinks.



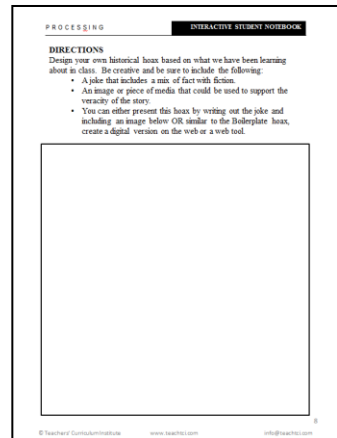
- 6. Have the class debate which prank was best.**
Place a placard of each hoax in front of the class. Tell each group that they will have 5 minutes to pick the best hoax; with one caveat. They may NOT pick their own hoax. They must vote for one of the others presented to the class. After five minutes, have one person from each group come and stand in front of the hoax their group picked. Allow groups to discuss their reasons for picking the prank they voted for.



Processing (Optional)

To be completed outside class

- 1. Students design their own historical hoax.** Direct students to the process directions in their Interactive Student Notebook. Students will design their own historical hoax based on what they are learning right now. Tell students they should be creative and be sure to include the following:
 - A joke that includes fact with fiction.
 - An image or piece of media that could be used to support the veracity of the story.



Processing

Professional Enrichment

Want to know more about Response Group Lessons?

To learn more about this lesson strategy and how to get the most out of it, visit TeacherGenius and view submissions: <http://vimeo.com/51100499/>



Boilerplate

The World's First Robot

Go to the website, <http://www.bigredhair.com/boilerplate/>.

"A masterpiece"
The Telegraph UK

"A delight"
Los Angeles Times

"A tour de force"
Publishers Weekly

THE BOILERPLATE BOOK TRAILER

"Brilliant!"
Dave Gibbons, co-creator of *Watchmen*

"Truly brilliant."
Mike Mignola, creator of *Hellboy*

SOON TO BE A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE FROM
J.J. ABRAMS

BOILERPLATE
HISTORY'S MECHANICAL MARVEL

PAUL GUINAN
ANINA BENNETT

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BP INTRO BP INVENTOR BP UNVEILED BP SOLDIER BP GIFTS

FRANK READE
THE HISTORY OF WEBSITE

Answer the following questions regarding this historical event and the difference between primary and secondary sources of information on the site:

1. What was Boilerplate?
2. What are one to two examples of primary sources regarding Boilerplate on this website?
3. What is one to two examples of secondary sources regarding Boilerplate?

1. Go to <http://www.museumofhoaxes.com/hoax/aprilfool/index> and read the information on your assigned historical prank.
2. What are the basics on this hoax:
 - WHO?

 - WHAT?

 - WHEN?

 - WHERE?

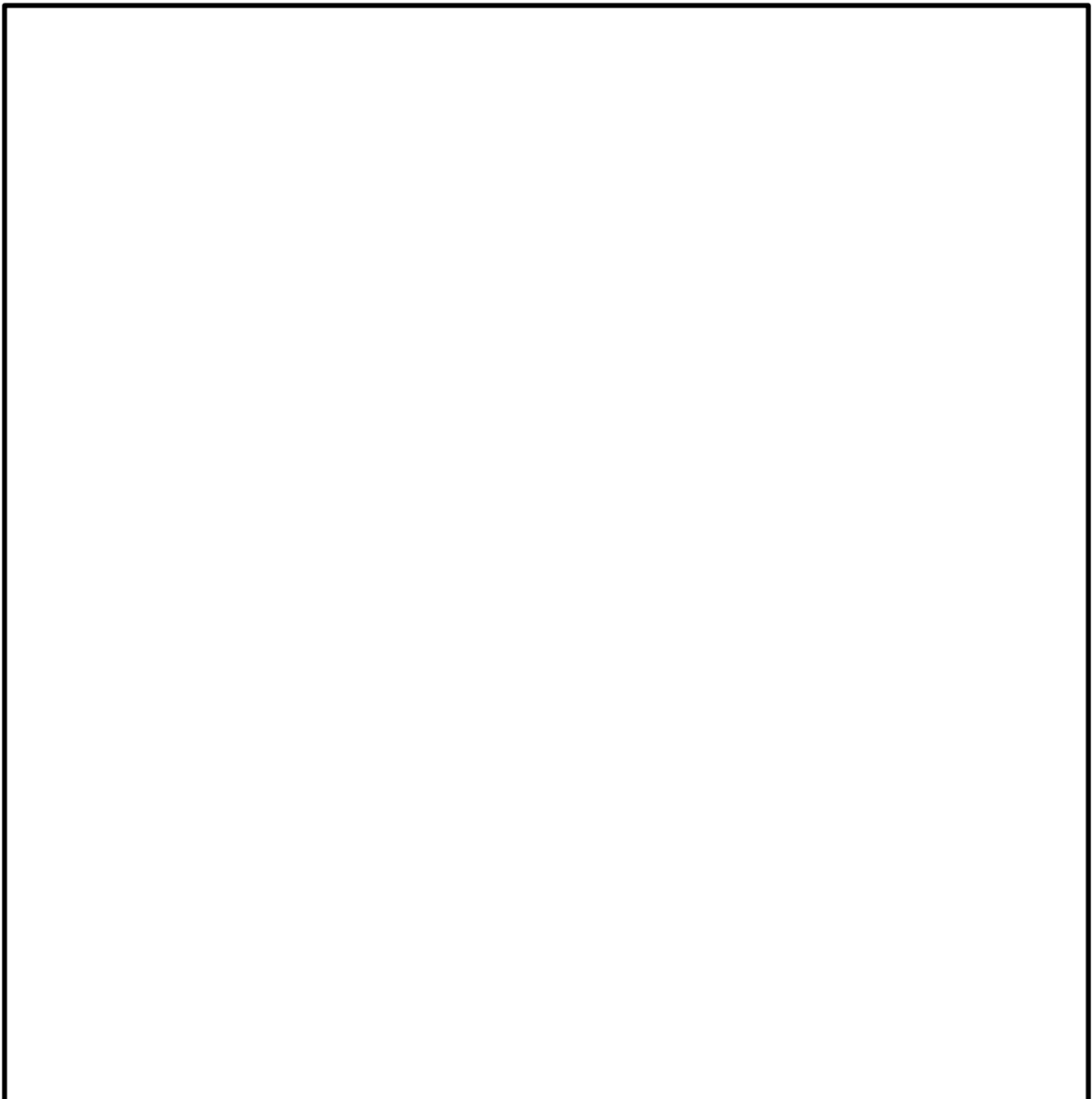
 - WHY?

 - HOW?
3. Using an appropriate search engine, search for any other information regarding this prank. Try to find a good primary source like an image, video, audio, or other piece that you could use to show this to the rest of the class.
4. One person in the group will be responsible for sharing the background on the joke to the class.
5. One person in the group will be responsible for showing a primary/secondary source (not on Museum of Hoaxes) to the rest of the class. You can either print out or simply show from a device.
6. One person in the group will discuss the impact of the prank – how successful was it.

DIRECTIONS

Design your own historical hoax based on what we have been learning about in class. Be creative and be sure to include the following:

- A joke that includes a mix of fact with fiction.
- An image or piece of media that could be used to support the veracity of the story.
- You can either present this hoax by writing out the joke and including an image below OR similar to the Boilerplate hoax, create a digital version on the web or a web tool.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for students to write their historical hoax and include an image or digital version as instructed in the directions.

SWISS SPAGHETTI HARVEST

SIDD FINCH

INSTANT COLOR TV

THE TACO LIBERTY BELL

SAN SERRIFFE

THE BODY OF NESSIE FOUND

ALABAMA CHANGES THE VALUE OF PI

THE LEFT-HANDED WHOPPER

PLANETARY
ALIGNMENT
DECREASES GRAVITY

FLYING PENGUINS