



## Celebrating April

*April Fools' Day &  
Fun at Work Day  
(April 1)*

*Humor Month*

*Daffynitions Month*

*Pecan Month*

*Poetry Month*

*Southern Belles Month*

*World's Largest Trivia Contest  
April 11 – 13*

*Library Week  
April 13 – 19*

*U.S. Income Tax Day  
April 15*

*Take a Wild Guess Day  
April 15*

*Passover Begins  
Sundown, April 19*

*Boston Marathon  
April 21*

*Volunteer Week  
April 27 – May 3*

## A Spring Miracle

“At a plain, black well-pump in the small southern town of Tuscumbia, Alabama, one of the world’s great miracles took place. Standing beside the totally blind and deaf 7-year-old Helen Keller was Anne Sullivan, steadily pumping cool water into one of the girl’s hands while repeatedly tapping out an alphabet code of five letters in the other – first slowly, then rapidly. Suddenly meaning dawned. She knew that ‘w-a-t-e-r’ meant the cool something flowing over her hand. Darkness began to melt from her mind like ice on a sunny day. By nightfall, Helen had learned 30 words.”

That’s how the website for Ivy Green, Helen Keller’s birthplace, describes the events of April 5, 1887, when the real “Miracle Worker” began. The play is still performed each summer at the original well.

Helen Keller was an intelligent child who grew to be a remarkable woman, but the “miracle worker” was her partially blind tutor, Anne Sullivan. Anne had been born into poverty on April 14, 1866. Blinded by a childhood infection that was later partially corrected by a series of operations, she spent years of her childhood in an almshouse for orphans. Like Helen, she was bright and strong-willed, and eventually graduated as valedictorian from the Perkins Institute for the Blind. Soon after, she was employed by the Kellers. That position led to a nearly four decades-long symbiotic relationship.

In time, under Anne’s devoted tutelage, Helen learned to read Braille, to speak, and use a typewriter. In 1904, with Anne’s help interpreting lectures and discussions, Helen graduated “cum laude” from Radcliffe College. Over the decades that followed, they would travel to dozens of countries on five continents. Among Helen’s admirers were numerous U.S. presidents, movie stars (Charlie Chaplin), and authors (Mark Twain), but for Helen, the woman to admire was Anne.

Resources: [www.helenkellerbirthplace.org](http://www.helenkellerbirthplace.org)

## Love in the Ruins



In the pre-dawn of April 18, 1906, a devastating earthquake struck San Francisco and shook the land for hundreds of miles around. Most of us have heard of the terrible destruction,

including the loss of lives and property in the initial tremor and the days of fire that followed. But most of us have not heard the “up side” – how the earthquake moved hearts.

“Marriage License Business Shatters All Records,” the *San Francisco Bulletin* reported two weeks after the earthquake. Alex Johnson noted in a 2006 story for MSNBC that “People from all walks of life lost their homes . . . They were thrown together in refugee camps, on volunteer crews, and in soup lines. It was spring. Cupid went to work.” Cupid was also helped by sympathetic city clerks who did not charge the \$2 marriage license fee to those who couldn’t afford it, resulting in nearly double the usual permits.

One story related the experiences of Giuseppe Alioto, who jumped onto a stranger’s boat at Fisherman’s Wharf. The boat belonged to Lorenzo Lazio, who ran a prosperous fish company. Lazio had a young daughter, Domenica Mae. “One day I shall marry her,” Alioto said. In his case, it took him 8 years. Joe Alioto, one of the offspring of that marriage, grew up to become mayor in 1968.

Perhaps some couples were moved by Enrico Caruso’s performance at the Tivoli Opera House the night before the earthquake. Caruso himself was so moved by the earthquake that he vowed never to return to the city – a promise he kept.

The phenomenon of love following disaster is common. Cynics might say, “misery loves company,” but sociologists say people seek family stability during times of stress. Marriage and baby booms have also been documented after other U.S. disasters. However, in 1906, there were also huge earthquakes in Ecuador, Columbia, Taiwan, and Chili, and Mt. Vesuvius erupted. Did love blossom globally in the aftermath?

## Richter Scale Day

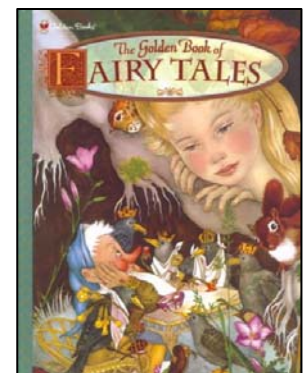
Charles Richter was a seismologist who invented a scale for measuring the strength of earthquakes in 1935. His birthday, April 26 (1900), is celebrated as Richter Scale Day in order to recognize his achievements.

The Richter Scale uses a seismograph to measure the height of seismic surface waves, or essentially how much the ground shakes and how far it moves at 100 kilometers (60 miles) from the epicenter. Each whole number increase represents a 10-fold increase in strength, meaning that a 7.0 magnitude earthquake is 10 times more powerful than a 6.0 earthquake, and 100 times more powerful than a 5.0 quake. An earthquake isn’t considered moderate until it reaches 5.0 and isn’t severe until it reaches 7.0.

Earthquakes release tremendous energy. The energy released by an earthquake increases 32-fold for each increase of 1 on the Richter Scale. Thus, an earthquake registering 7 on the Richter Scale releases 32 times as much energy as an earthquake registering 6, even though the earth moves only 10 times as far. Even an earthquake with a 4.3 magnitude releases as much energy as the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima.

## Buy a Child a Book

April 2 is International Children’s Book Day in honor of fairy tale author Hans Christian Andersen’s birthday (1805). Some of his stories include “The Snow Queen,” “The Little Mermaid,” “The Emperor’s New Clothes,” and “The Ugly Duckling.” Buy or borrow a children’s book and read it aloud together with someone who needs to hear a good story!





## Southern Blessings

April is both Southern Belles Month and Humor Month, which seems a good time to combine the two with a sampling of the expression “bless her heart.” This Southern expression is meant to soften an insult, at least

sometimes, with genuine concern. Although Celia Rivenbark of Wilmington, N.C., wrote a book of Southernisms titled *Bless Your Heart, Tramp*, samples of these expressions can be found on dozens of Internet sites. Many of the expressions have to do with (the lack of) intelligence, as in:

- If brains were dynamite, he wouldn't have enough to ruffle his hair, bless his heart.
- Betty Sue, bless her heart, got left behind the door when they were passing out common sense.
- Bless his heart, if they put his brain on the head of a pin, it'd roll around like a BB on a six-lane highway.

Some apply to everyday observations: (Shoulder pads went out with Joan Collins. She looks like a DC-10, bless her heart.) So, the next time someone tries your patience, say, “bless his heart,” tap into your sense of humor, and create your own colorful allusion.

## Pecan Pie

April is Pecan Month, so here's a simple recipe for a southern favorite.

- 3 eggs slightly beaten
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- 2 Tbsp. butter, melted
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 cup fresh pecans
- 1 nine-inch pie crust



Preheat oven to 350° F. Combine first five ingredients until blended. Pour into piecrust and top with fresh pecans. Bake 50 - 55 minutes.

## Take a Wild Guess

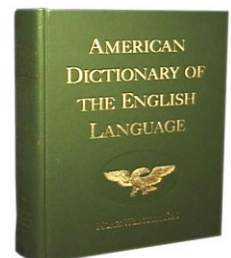
The World's Largest Trivia Contest convenes each April (this year April 11 – 13 in Steven's Point, WI) with more than 500 teams and 12,000 players. A few days later, on April 15, is Take a Wild Guess Day to honor our intuition. Therefore, here's a trivia quiz of famous firsts that happened in April. Can you match the year to the event?

1. First movie theater opens in U.S., 4/23
  2. First public school in North America (Canada), 4/23
  3. First auto license plates issued, 4/23
  4. Baseball season first opened by a presidential pitch, 4/14
  5. First McDonald's opens, 4/15
  6. First White House egg roll, 4/2
  7. Ponce de Leon first discovers Florida, 4/2
  8. Handel's "Messiah" first performed, 4/13
  9. Bugs Bunny's first cartoon, 4/30
  10. North Pole first discovered, 4/6
- a. 1513                      f. 1901  
 b. 1635                      g. 1909  
 c. 1742                      h. 1910  
 d. 1877                      i. 1938  
 e. 1896                      j. 1955

Answers: 1.e; 2. b; 3. f; 4. h; 5. j; 6. d; 7. a; 8. c; 9. i; 10. g

## Spelling Simplified?

Noah Webster was famous for publishing three books on “American English” grammar and spelling. He was determined to rescue “our native tongue” from “the clamor of pedantry” inherited from the British. His



*American Dictionary of the English Language*, first published on April 14, 1828, was initially unpopular, but you can credit Noah for the fact that Americans spell words like color and favor without their British “u”s (colour and favour)



## The World's Largest Library

April 13 - 19 is Library Week. The world's largest library, the Library

of Congress in Washington, D.C., got its start on April 24, 1800, when President John Adams approved legislation that appropriated \$5,000 to purchase "such books as may be necessary for the use of Congress." The initial collection, imported from London, consisted of 740 volumes and three maps. It's grown a bit since then. As of 2006, the library had 134,517,714 items in its collection, among which were:

- Over 20 million cataloged books in its regular collection
- Nearly 5 million maps
- 12.5 million photographs
- Half a million prints and drawings

Also, the library has 11 million digital files online. Wow!

## April Birthdays

Because April includes Library Week, it is a good time to feature the birthdays of a few authors who live up to April's reputation for fostering creativity, a pioneering spirit, and a love of adventure. Do you share a birthday with any of them?

Emile Zola . . . . .	April 2, 1840
William Wordsworth . . . . .	April 7, 1770
Paul Theroux . . . . .	April 10, 1941
Beverly Cleary . . . . .	April 12, 1916
Arnold Toynbee . . . . .	April 14, 1889
Henry James . . . . .	April 15, 1843
Thornton Wilder . . . . .	April 17, 1897
Charlotte Bronte . . . . .	April 21, 1816
William Shakespeare . . . . .	April 23, 1564
Robert Penn Warren . . . . .	April 24, 1905
Harper Lee . . . . .	April 28, 1926

HAPPY APRIL BIRTHDAY!



### Special Events for April:

- April 1 - Make your own Pizza
- April 8 - Root Beer Float Social
- April 11 - Herb Tea Party
- April 17 - American Legion Bingo
- April 30 - Planting Seeds

