Caitlin double-checked her calendar. When she was sure it was April first, she rubbed her hands together and chuckled to herself. April Fools’ Day was her favorite holiday.

Caitlin had a list of tricks to play, and she was eager to get started. Early morning was the best time to trick people, before they were completely awake. Caitlin sprang out of bed and went to her brother’s room. “Good morning, Brian,” she said. “I told Mom and Dad that you mowed the lawn yesterday and they want to thank you.”

Then, as Brian got dressed, she hurried to her parents’ room. “Mom, Dad? Brian is afraid to tell you that he scratched the new car last night when he took it out for a drive.”

Then she waited. A minute later, Brian went to their parents’ room. “Mom? Dad?”

“Young man, is what Caitlin told us true?” his father asked. Brian nodded, smiling.

His father was incredulous. “Look, he even has the nerve to smile! You should be apologizing! You’re grounded for a week. For two weeks!” he shouted.

Brian looked shocked. He couldn’t understand what was happening. He should be rewarded. Then he saw Caitlin laughing in the hallway. “Um, hang on a minute,” Brian said. “I think this might be another one of Caitlin’s April Fools’ Day jokes. What did she tell you I did? Because all I did was mow the lawn.”

The two adults heaved sighs of relief. “Then the car isn’t scratched?” Brian’s mother asked. Brian assured her the car was fine.

Luckily for Caitlin, her family had a good sense of humor and enjoyed jokes as much as she did. Her parents were still chuckling at breakfast, and discussing the jokes they would play on other people that day. “Where does the tradition of fooling people on April first come from, anyway?” Caitlin asked.

“No one knows for sure,” her mother said, “but it is an old tradition. The oldest known prank tradition is an Iranian holiday called Sizdah Bedar, the thirteenth day of the Persian new year, which falls on the first or second of April. It dates back to earlier than 500 BC. In France an April fool is called a “poisson d’avril”, which literally means “April fish,” and part of the tradition is sticking paper fish to people’s backs without them noticing. In Scotland, April Fools’ Day is called “Hunt the Gowk Day.” Gowk means cuckoo or fool. The tradition there is to send someone on a wild goose chase.”

“Wow, fooling people seems to be a basic human instinct,” Caitlin said. Then she stood up. She was eager to get to school and play jokes on her friends and teachers.

“I never thought of it that way, but you might be right,” her father said. “Oh, before you go… you have egg on your face there.” When Caitlin wiped at her face with a napkin, he laughed and said, “April Fool!”

Caitlin rolled her eyes and smiled. She would get even before the day was over.
APRIL FOOLS’ DAY

Choose the best answer for each question.

1. What is Caitlin’s favorite holiday?
   a. Sizdah Bedar
   b. April Fools’ Day
   c. New Year’s Day
   d. her birthday

2. Who are the first people she plays a joke on this year?
   a. her friends
   b. her teachers
   c. her family
   d. all of the above

3. Who falls for Caitlin’s first joke?
   a. Brian
   b. her father
   c. her mother
   d. all of them

4. Who is the first to figure out it is an April Fools’ Day joke?
   a. Brian
   b. her father
   c. her mother
   d. all of them

5. What is the oldest April prank tradition?
   a. Hunt the Gowk Day
   b. Sizdah Bedar
   c. Poisson d’avril
   d. No one knows.

6. What does “poisson d’avril” mean, literally?
   a. April fish
   b. cuckoo
   c. a foolish person
   d. April fool

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Answer these questions in complete sentences.

1. How does Caitlin trick her family?

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

2. How does the father react when he thinks Brian is smiling about scratching the car?

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

3. According to Caitlin, when is the best time to trick people, and why?

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

4. The story mentions April Fools’ traditions from which countries?

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

5. How does Caitlin’s father trick her?

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
April Fools’ Day and other similar prank traditions are celebrated in countries around the world, either on April first or on other dates. Why do you think traditions like this are so widespread and popular? Do you like April Fools’ Day? Why or why not?

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APRIL FOOLS’ DAY

ANSWERS
MULTIPLE CHOICE
1. b
2. c
3. d
4. a
5. b
6. a

SHORT ANSWER
(answers will vary; accept reasonable responses that include the following ideas)
1. She causes a misunderstanding – Brian thinks their parents want to thank him for mowing the lawn, and their parents think he is admitting to scratching the car.
2. He reacts incredulously – he expresses disbelief.
3. In the early morning, because they aren’t completely awake yet (and, being a little confused, are easier to fool).
4. Iran, France and Scotland.
5. He tells her she has egg on her face.

ESSAY
Answers will vary.