

Webquest: Valentine's Day

by Luke Vyner

Warmer

What do you know about the history of Valentine's Day? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

Activity 1: The history of Valentine's Day

Work in pairs to discover more about the history of Valentine's Day. Student 1 reads sections 1 and 2. Student 2 reads sections 3 and 4. Visit <http://www.history.com/topics/valentines-day/history-of-valentines-day/> and answer the questions related to your sections.

Section 1: The legend of St Valentine

1. How many saints named Valentine and Valentinus are recognized by the Catholic Church?
2. What did Emperor Claudius II ban?
3. How did Valentine supposedly respond to this ban?
4. Who did Valentine supposedly write a letter to, signed 'From your Valentine'?
5. How well known was Saint Valentine by the Middle Ages?

Section 2: Origins of Valentine's Day: a pagan festival in February

1. What do some argue that the church was trying to 'Christianize'?
2. What did the festival of Lupercalia celebrate?
3. Where would members of the Luperci meet at the start of the festival?
4. What did priests sacrifice?
5. According to legend, why did women leave their names in a big urn?

Section 3: Valentine's Day: a day of romance

1. Who officially chose 14th February for Saint Valentine's Day?
2. Why did 14th February become associated with love during the Middle Ages?
3. Where is the oldest valentine greeting kept?
4. Who, according to myth, was hired by King Henry V to write a valentine greeting to Catherine of Valois?

Section 4: Typical Valentine's Day greetings

1. When did Valentine's Day begin to gain popularity in Great Britain?
2. What was normal practice by the middle of the 18th century?
3. What replaced written letters in 1900?
4. According to the Greeting Card Association, how many Valentine's Day cards are sent out each year?

Share your answers with your partner.

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Activity 2: Celebrating love around the world

Although Valentine's Day is recognized around the world, there are a number of different ways in which it is celebrated and there are unique celebrations of love on other days during the year.

Before we visit the website to find out more, does your country have its own unique day to celebrate love?

Take a look at the facts below. Read the sentences in pairs and try to guess which country they relate to, writing your answers after each sentence.

1. In this country, Valentine's Day is more commonly referred to as 'Lover's Day'.

2. In this country, Valentine's Day is often called 'Boyfriends'/Girlfriends' Day'. It is celebrated on 12th June, possibly because the following day is Saint Anthony's day. Saint Anthony is known as the marriage saint. _____
3. In this country, they celebrate 'Friend's Day', a day which is about remembering all of your friends. _____
4. As in Japan, in this country, women give chocolate to men on 14th February, and men give non-chocolate sweets to women on 14th March. _____
5. In this country, they celebrate 'All Hearts' Day', which is a celebration started in the 1960s by the flower industry. _____
6. In this country, they have their own equivalent of Valentine's Day and it's celebrated on the 15th day of the month of Av (which is usually in late August). _____
7. In this country, they refer to Valentine's Day as 'Hearts Day' and flowers become very expensive. _____
8. In this country, Valentine's Day is known as 'Affection Day'. _____

Now, visit http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valentine%27s_Day#Similar_days_celebrating_love and check your answers.

Note: You don't need to read the whole article as it's very long. The idea is to skim-read it and try and match the traditions to each country as quickly as you can.

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Activity 3: Valentine facts

Visit <http://www.history.com/topics/valentines-day-facts> and decide whether the following facts are true (T) or false (F). Correct those that are false.

1. There are 34 single men aged 65 or older for every 100 single women of the same age.
2. In the US, there are 2.2 million marriages every year, which is more than 600 a day.
3. More than 50% of all Valentine's Day cards are bought in the six days before the celebration.
4. In 2004, there were 21,667 florists across the US and between all these businesses 109,915 people were employed.
5. 70%: the percentage of men and women aged 30 to 34 who had been married at some point in their lives in 2006.
6. Valentine's Day is the most popular time to send greetings cards with 141 million cards sent every year.
7. In 2008, 112,185 marriages were performed in Nevada. So many couples 'tie the knot' there that it is the fifth most popular US state in which to marry even though it only ranks 35th in terms of population.
8. 904: the number of dating service companies in America in 2002.
9. More than 50% of the US population celebrate Valentine's Day by purchasing a greetings card.
10. There are 100 single women in their 20s for every 119 single men of the same age.

Activity 4: Quotations about love

Do you have any quotations about love or lyrics from songs that you would like to share with the class? Why do you think love remains such an important subject in poems, books, plays, films and songs?

Go to <http://www.history.com/topics/valentines-day-quotations>. Read through the quotations and decide which one you like the best. In pairs, discuss why you like it.

Using the quotes as inspiration, can you write a poem about love? Perhaps you could send it to someone special for Valentine's Day!