ORIGINS OF VALENTINES DAY



1 Warm-up

Do you like Valentine's Day? Why/why not?

2 Key vocabulary

Match the underlined words to the correct definitions below.

1. The day has become very commercial. It's not about romance anymore.
2. The burial of the king took place privately.
3. There were many pagan festivals before Christianity.
4. Women wanted to improve their fertility so they took part in rituals.
5. He wants to stay a bachelor. He enjoys the lifestyle.
6. The engagement was very long, almost eight years.
7. Valentine cards are mass-produced in the 20th century.

a. agreement to get married to somebody
b. ceremony or act of putting a dead body in the ground
c. concerned with making money
d. made cheaply in a factory in large quantities
e. man who has never been married
f. quality of being able to have a child
g. relating to beliefs that are not from any main world religion

LIVEWORKSHEETS

3 Before you read

You are going to read a text about the origins of Valentine's Day. Put true (T) or false (F) next to each of the statements below. Then read the text to confirm or correct your answers.

1. Valentine's Day was for soldiers that weren't allowed to get married.
2. Valentine's Day was originally a Christian celebration.
3. A man called Valentine tried to help people in prison contact their lovers.
4. A pagan festival celebrating love had an influence on Valentine's Day.
5. Valentine's Day became associated with romance because of parties given by the king.
6. Saint Valentine Keys are given to people to keep their hearts safe.
7. Nearly 200 million valentine cards are sent every year in the US.
8. In Brazil, Valentine's Day is celebrated on a different day of the year.



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When did Valentine's Day start?

The origins of a romantic tradition

1. Valentine's Day is celebrated in many countries on the 14th of February. Around the world it is an important cultural and commercial day, where people send cards and give presents to their partners, or people they would like to date.

2. However, it was originally a Western Christian feast day that honoured several saints called Valentinus or 'Valentine'. One legend says that Valentine was a priest in Rome in the third century. The emperor at the time, Claudius II, decided that marriage should be banned for young soldiers as they fought better without wives and families. Valentine objected to this rule and continued to marry couples in secret. When his actions were discovered, the emperor ordered that Valentine be put to death.

3. Some stories suggest that Valentine was killed because he helped Christians to escape from Roman prisons. When in prison himself, he fell in love with a girl who may have been the jailer's daughter. He sent her a letter before his death, signing it "from your Valentine", an expression which people still use today.

4. While some people believe that the day is celebrated to mark Valentine's death or burial, others think that the Christian church placed it in the middle of February because of the pagan festival of Lupercalia, hoping to make it more Christian.

5. Celebrated on the 15th of February, Lupercalia was a fertility festival for the Roman god of Agriculture, Faunas. During the festival, a goat was sacrificed for fertility, and a dog for purification. The goat's skin was dipped in blood and both women and crop fields were hit gently with it. Women wanted to be touched by this, as it would make them more fertile in the coming year. All the young women in a city would also put their names in an urn*, and the city's bachelors chose a name. The matches often ended in marriage.

6. The day didn't become associated with romantic love until the 14th century, when Geoffrey Chaucer wrote a poem to celebrate the first anniversary of the engagement of Richard II. The poem mentions the time of year as one when birds choose mates. In France and England at this time people believed that the middle of February was the beginning of the mating season, so this added to the idea that romance should be celebrated at this time of year.

7. By the 18th century, it had grown into a day where lovers gave flowers, offered sweets and sent handwritten cards to show their love, much like today. In Europe, Saint Valentine's Keys are still also given as a symbol to unlock the giver's heart.

8. Since the 19th century, mass-produced greetings cards have replaced handwritten notes and poems. In the US, around 190 million valentine cards are sent each year. In 2015 in the UK, £1.9 billion was spent on valentine cards and gifts, with just under half the population buying something for Valentine's Day.

9. Valentine's Day traditions and dates vary around the world. In South Korea, women give chocolate to men on February the 14th, and men give non-chocolate sweets on March the 14th. In Finland, Valentine's is called "Friends Day", which is more about appreciating friends. In Brazil the day is known as "Boyfriends' and Girlfriends' day" and is celebrated on the 12th of June.

**An urn is similar to a large vase that is often decorated and put in the garden, with two handles at the top. It can also have a lid and be used to contain a person's ashes.*

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4 Checking understanding

Answer the questions below.

1. Why did the emperor decide to ban marriage for young soldiers?
2. What were the reasons for the sacrifice of certain animals during Lupercalia?
3. Why did Valentine's Day become associated with love?
4. What is unusual about Valentine's in Korea?

5 Verbs

Choose the correct verbs from the text to complete the sentences.

appreciate **associate** **honour** **object** **replace** **sacrifice**

1. Many people_____to the new runway at the airport, because it will cause a lot of pollution.
2. It was quite common for people to_____animals as a gift for the gods.
3. People now_____Valentine's Day with romance, but the original day had other connections.
4. There is a special day in some countries to_____friends, not just your partner.
5. To_____his bravery in the battle, the man was given a medal.
6. He wasn't able to_____the broken light bulb, as all the shops were closed.

6 Talking Point

How do people celebrate Valentine's Day in your country? If people don't celebrate it, is there a different special day at this time?

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2. Key vocabulary

Students can work alone and then check in pairs.
1. c 2. b 3. g 4. f 5. e 6. a 7. d

3. Before you read

For the reading, students can read alone read a paragraph each aloud to the class.
1. F - Valentine helped soldiers to get married in secret, but this is not the reason it started.
2. T
3. F - He helped people to escape from prison and wrote a letter to his own lover before he died.
4. F - The festival of Lupercalia was a fertility festival, to help things grow.
5. F - Chaucer wrote a poem about 'love birds' for the anniversary of Richard II's engagement.
6. F - They are given to unlock the giver's heart.
7. T
8. T

4. Checking understanding

1. Because they fought better without wives and families.
2. Fertility (sacrifice of a goat) and purification. (sacrifice of a dog)
3. Because of a poem written by Chaucer, talking about birds choosing mates. this may have lead to the day being also associated with human love.
4. Gifts are given on different days - women give chocolates to men on the 14th of February and men give non-chocolate sweets to women on the 14th of March.

5. Verbs

Students can work alone and then check in pairs.

1. object 2. sacrifice 3. associate 4. appreciate 5. honour 6. replace

LIVEWORKSHEETS