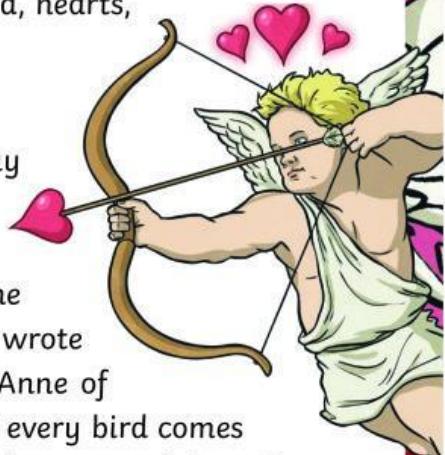


The Origins of Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is a day of celebrating love and is enjoyed by people around the world on February 14th. But how did this day become a day of Cupid, hearts, greeting cards, and red roses, and who was Valentine?

Valentine's Day Origins

Ideas about who Valentine was and how Valentine's Day began differ. Many people believe Valentine's Day started from the Roman festival of Lupercalia, a celebration of love. The first recorded use of the name Valentine's Day is from the 14th century. Geoffrey Chaucer, a renowned English writer, wrote a poem to celebrate the engagement of King Richard II to Anne of Bohemia. He wrote: "For this was on Valentine's Day / When every bird comes there to choose his mate." This idea of a day dedicated to love appealed to the medieval ideals of chivalry at this time.

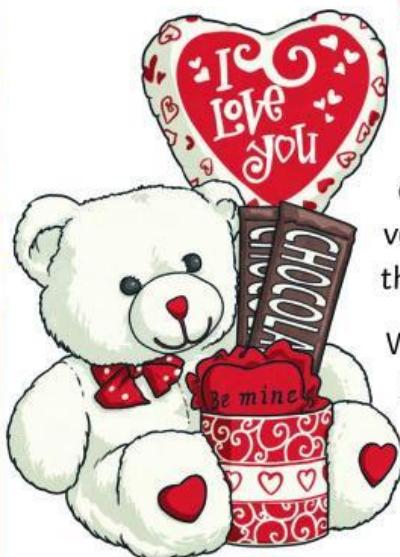


Who Was Valentine?

Valentine may have been an early Christian saint. During his time, it was a crime to be Christian. The most popular legend says he was a priest. He was arrested and imprisoned by the Roman emperor, Claudius II, for hiding other Christians. The legend says that Claudius asked Valentine to convert from Christianity to Paganism. When he refused, Claudius had Valentine executed. Before his execution, it is believed Valentine sent a letter to the jail keeper's daughter signed, "Your Valentine," a greeting we still use today.

Valentine's Day Celebrations

Valentine's Day is known particularly for the giving of cards and gifts. In the 18th century, this practice became a business. In 1797, a publisher in England wrote a collection of poetry called "The Young Man's Valentine Writer." This volume contained verses for people who were unable to write their own romantic poetry.



While Valentine's cards were originally handmade, factories began to mass produce them in the mid-19th century. The cards were often very fancy, with elaborate lace and ribbon attached. In 1835, it is estimated that 60,000 Valentine's cards were mailed out in Britain!

The Origins of Valentine's Day

In 1847, a woman named Esther Howland made and sold the first Valentine's Day cards in the United States. She received a Valentine's card from Britain and wanted to recreate the style of cards for the U.S. She began producing the cards on an assembly line in Worcester, Massachusetts. The cards soon became popular across the country.

Now around 190 million Valentine's Day cards are sent in the United States each year! This includes cards for spouses, children, grandparents, and friends. Many children also give gifts to their classmates and teachers.



Questions

1. Valentine's Day may have started with this festival:
 - Easter
 - Lupercalia
 - Advent
 - Christmas
2. The person who may have started Valentine's Day.
 - Saint Valentine
 - Cupid
 - Chaucer
 - Claudius II
3. Approximately how many Valentine's cards are sent each year in the United States?
 - 290 million
 - 190 trillion
 - 190 million
 - 2 billion
4. In what century did factories began mass producing Valentine's Day cards?
 - mid-twentieth century
 - mid-nineteenth century
 - eighteenth century
 - fourteenth century
5. How did Valentine's Day cards become popular in the United States?

6. Compare and contrast ways you celebrate Valentine's Day and ways people celebrated in the mid-nineteenth century?
