

# Valentines Day Assembly

Good morning and happy Valentine's Day!

Today as I am sure you will know is Valentines Day – a day of romance and courtship.

Maybe you received a card from a mystery someone?

Or you may even have a valentine yourself.

OR wait for it - the big one - you might have received a message in the Valentines Magazine (On sale today for £1.50)!

Now I've got a question for you...

**Q:** How many valentines' cards are sent worldwide on Valentines Day?

**A:** 1 Billion, making it the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest card selling day of the year, behind Christmas.

So we all know what Valentines Day is – but do we know where it has come from?

Every February, across the country, chocolate, flowers, and gifts are exchanged between loved ones, all in the name of St. Valentine. But who is this mysterious saint and why do we celebrate this saint day? The history of Valentine's Day -- and its patron saint -- is shrouded in mystery. But we do know that February has long been a month of romance. St. Valentine's Day, as we know it today, contains vestiges of both Christian and ancient Roman tradition. So, who was Saint Valentine and how did he become associated with this ancient rite? Today, the Catholic Church recognizes at least three different saints named Valentine or Valentinus, all of whom were martyred.

One legend contends that Valentine was a priest who served during the third century in Rome. When Emperor Claudius II decided that single men made better soldiers than those with wives and families, he outlawed marriage for young men -- his crop of potential soldiers. Valentine, realizing the injustice of the decree, defied Claudius and continued to perform marriages for young lovers in secret. When Valentine's actions were discovered, Claudius ordered that he be put to death.

Other stories suggest that Valentine may have been killed for attempting to help Christians escape harsh Roman prisons where they were often beaten and tortured.

According to one legend, Valentine actually sent the first 'valentine' greeting himself. While in prison, it is believed

that Valentine fell in love with a young girl -- who may have been his jailor's daughter -- who visited him during his confinement. Before his death, it is alleged that he wrote her a letter, which he signed 'From your Valentine,' an expression that is still in use today. Although the truth behind the Valentine legends is murky, the stories certainly emphasize his appeal as a sympathetic, heroic, and, most importantly, romantic figure. It's no surprise that by the Middle Ages, Valentine was one of the most popular saints in England and France.

While some believe that Valentine's Day is celebrated in the middle of February to commemorate the anniversary of Valentine's death or burial -- which probably occurred around 270 A.D -- others claim that the Christian church may have decided to celebrate Valentine's feast day in the middle of February in an effort to 'christianise' celebrations of the pagan Lupercalia (**LUPER K LI**) festival. In ancient Rome, February was the official beginning of spring and was considered a time for purification. Houses were ritually cleansed by sweeping them out and then sprinkling salt and a type of wheat called spelt throughout their interiors. Lupercalia (**LUPER K LI**), which began at the ides of February, February 15, was a fertility festival dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture, as well as to the Roman founders Romulus and Remus.

In Great Britain, Valentine's Day began to be popularly celebrated around the seventeenth century. By the middle of the eighteenth century, it was common for friends and lovers in all social classes to exchange small tokens of affection or handwritten notes. By the end of the century, printed cards began to replace written letters due to improvements in printing technology. Ready-made cards were an easy way for people to express their emotions in a time when direct expression of one's feelings was discouraged. And in the 1840's the first commercial Valentine's Cards were produced.

Valentine's Day also has regional traditions in the UK. In Norfolk a character called 'Jack' Valentine knocks on the rear door of houses leaving sweets and presents for children. Although he was leaving treats, many children were scared of this mystical person.

In Wales many people celebrate Dydd Santes Dwynwen (**DYDD SANTES DWIN WHEN**) (*St Dwynwen's Day*) on 25 January instead of or as well as St Valentine's Day. The day commemorates St Dwynwen (**DWIN WHEN**), the patron saint of Welsh lovers.

We all know how Valentines Day is celebrated in the UK, but what about other countries.

In France, a traditionally Catholic country, Valentine's Day is known simply as "Saint Valentin", and is celebrated in much the same way as other western countries.

In Denmark & Norway Valentine's Day (14 Feb) is known as *Valentinsdag* (**VALEBN TINS DAG**). It is not celebrated to a large extent, but a lot people take time to eat a romantic dinner with their partner, to send a card to a secret love or give a red rose to their loved one.

In Sweden it is called *Alla hjärtans dag* (**ALLA HARG TANS DAG**) ("All Hearts' Day") and was launched in the 1960s by the flower industry's commercial interests, and due to influence of American culture. It is not an official festival, but its celebration is recognized and sales of cosmetics and flowers for this holiday are only bettered by those for Mother's Day.

In Brazil, the *Dia dos Namorados* (**DE A DOS NA MORE A DOS**) (lit. "Day of the enamored", or "Boyfriend's/Girlfriend's Day") is celebrated on June 12, when couples exchange gifts, chocolates, cards and flower bouquets. This day was chosen probably because it is the day before the Saint Anthony's day, known there as the *marriage saint*, when many single women perform popular rituals, called *simpatias* (**SIM PAT E AS**), in order to find a good husband or a boyfriend.

Thanks to a concentrated marketing effort, Valentine's Day has emerged in Japan and Korea as a day on which women, and less commonly men, give sweets, chocolate or flowers. It has become an obligation for many women to give chocolates to all male co-workers. In Japan this is known as

*giri-choko* (**GER E CHOKO**) (義理チョコ), from the words *giri* (**GIRI**) ("obligation") and *choko*, (**CHOKO**) ("chocolate").

And finally, in Chinese culture, there is a counterpart to Valentine's Day, called "The Night of Sevens" (七夕); according to legend the Cowherd and the Weaver Maid meet in Heaven on the 7th day of the 7th month of the lunar calendar. A slightly different version of this day is celebrated in Japan as Tanabata (**TAN A BAT A**), on July 7th of the solar calendar.

So hopefully you know a little bit more about Valentines Day and its history, and how it's celebrated in other cultures around the world.

Thanks for listening and have a good day!