

Idiomes

Saint Valentine's Day



It is celebrated every year on 14 February. It's the day when people show their affection for another person or people by sending cards, flowers or chocolates with messages of love.

Who was St Valentine?

The day gets its name from a famous saint, but there are several stories of who he was. The popular belief about St Valentine is that he was a priest from Rome in the third century AD. Emperor Claudius II had banned marriage because he thought married men were bad soldiers. Valentine felt this was unfair, so he broke the rules and arranged marriages in secret. When Claudius found out, Valentine was thrown in jail and sentenced to death. There, he fell in love with the jailer's daughter and when he was taken to be killed on 14 February he sent her a love letter signed "from your Valentine"

The first Valentine's Day was in the year 496!

Another story says that the celebration originated from a Roman festival. The Romans had a festival called Lupercalia in the middle of February - officially the start of their springtime.

It's thought that as part of the celebrations, boys drew names of girls from a box. They'd be boyfriend and girlfriend during the festival and sometimes they'd get married. Later on, the church wanted to turn this festival into a Christian celebration and decided to use it to remember St Valentine too.

Gradually, St Valentine's name started to be used by people to express their feelings to those they loved.

It's believed that poets like Chaucer and Shakespeare may have given some of the traditions, such as the act of card-writing on Valentine's Day, a popularity boost.

February 14 St. Valentine's Day. It was not until much later, however, that the day became definitively associated with love. During the Middle Ages, it was commonly believed in France and England that February 14 was the beginning of birds' mating season, which added to the idea that the middle of Valentine's Day should be a day for romance.

Valentine greetings were popular as far back as the Middle Ages, though written Valentine's didn't begin to appear until after 1400. The oldest known valentine still in existence today was a poem written in 1415 by Charles, Duke of Orleans, to his wife while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London following his capture at the Battle of Agincourt. (The greeting is now part of the manuscript collection of the British Library in London, England.) Several years later, it is believed that King Henry V hired a writer named John Lydgate to compose a valentine note to Catherine of Valois.

Typical Valentine's Day Greetings

In addition to the United States, Valentine's Day is celebrated in Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom, France and Australia. In Great Britain, Valentine's Day began to be popularly celebrated around the 17th century. By the middle of the 18th, it was common for friends and lovers of all social classes to exchange small tokens of affection or handwritten notes, and by 1900 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. Cheaper postage rates also contributed to an increase in the popularity of sending Valentine's Day greetings.

Americans probably began exchanging hand-made valentines in the early 1700s. In the 1840s, Esther A. Howland began selling the first mass-produced valentines in America. Howland, known as the "Mother of the Valentine," made elaborate creations with real lace, ribbons and colorful pictures known as "scrap." Today, according to the Greeting Card Association, an estimated 145 million Valentine's Day cards are sent each year, making Valentine's Day the second largest card-sending holiday of the year all valentines, being Christmas the first.