

Why do we celebrate Valentine's Day?

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Consumers in the United States are expected to spend \$19.6 billion on Valentine's Day this year, according to the National Retail Federation.

Marketers use this day to sell more items like Valentine cards, chocolates, flowers and jewelry; but this wasn't always the custom in today's society.

Valentine's Day originated from a Roman festival called Lupercalia in the middle of February. It was a ritual, but it celebrated fertility and coincided with spring coming.

It's called Saint Valentine's Day because during the Roman empire, Romans executed a Christian martyr of the same name. There are various legends, but one is that Emperor Claudius II made it illegal for Roman soldiers to get married because he believed that if they remained single men, they would be better soldiers. However, Saint Valentine, a Christian clergyman, was still conducting marriages for the soldiers, so he was executed for breaking the law.

Now, this holiday is concentrated in the United States, but in some places, it has spread internationally.

Dr. Ivan Mancinelli-Franconi is a psychology instructor at Clackamas Community College, and he said he remembers sending Valentine gifts to his family, but since he's from Chile, he doesn't really celebrate it because it's not a part of his culture.

"In Latin cultures, we have a lot of extended families; we have village parties, a bunch of collective activities, a lot of holidays where people get to

interact and meet other people," Dr. Mancinelli-Franconi said. "In this culture, we're very isolated, and it's only when these holidays come up that we get to come together."

point during the year, have some kind of a celebration or festival that celebrates love," Keeler said. "In many cases, it celebrates both romantic love but also celebrates friendship."

graphic by Sam Weston

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— Alexa Short

In other countries and cultures, Valentine's Day is not celebrated at all.

Robert Keeler, an anthropology instructor, has read a lot about different cultures. He said that in some places, this day is seen as an explicitly Christian holiday and in places like India, conservative Hindus or Muslims don't celebrate it because it's not part of their tradition.

"Even in places that don't celebrate Valentine's Day in the middle of February, they almost all, at some

Even though it allows people to openly express feelings of love, it can also trigger feelings of loneliness in people who don't have a significant other, Dr. Mancinelli-Franconi said.

To combat those feelings, some people give a gift or words of positive affirmation to a friend, mother, father or sibling because it's a way of demonstrating that people care about each other.

In elementary school, many students craft cards and candy to exchange with

their classmates and teacher, and it is based on friendship.

Many places hold events that people can participate in on Valentine's Day.

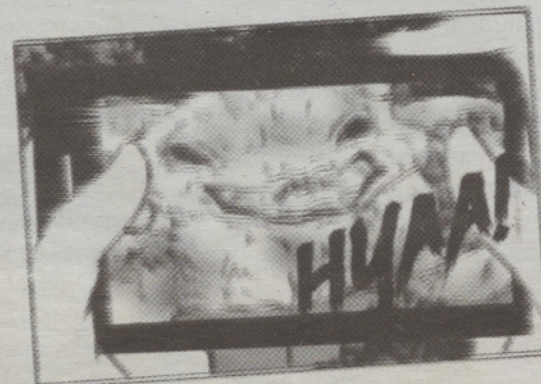
One way to get involved is at the college. CCC's Associated Student Government organized an event called Heart for a Kiss which runs from Feb. 12-14. It's an event where someone can find a heart on campus and turn in the heart to ASG for a bag of kisses. Once having the chocolate, there is the option of keeping it for yourself or sharing it with someone you care about.

Many students on campus have their own opinion on the holiday.

Alexa Short, a student at Clackamas, said, "There's nothing wrong with the holiday that you want to have a special day with your special someone; but, if you don't want to celebrate it, there's no problem with it either. A lot of it is just consumerism, but if you are thoroughly sentimental about it and like to go out of your way for special people in your life, I think that's great."

In the end, even if it is considered a holiday on the calendar, students don't get time off from school and most companies don't give a day off to their workers.

Just like other holidays, companies can take advantage of the amount of profit they can make, but Valentine's Day creates an incentive for people to get together and express their feelings.



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