

HOLIDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

Order the celebrations according to the time in the year they are celebrated:

Easter _____ New Year's Eve _____
 Halloween _____ St. Valentine's Day _____
 Christmas _____ May Day _____
 Victory Day _____ Independence Day _____

Match each celebration to the right description.

Easter
 New Year's Eve
 Halloween
 Christmas
 May Day

- I am writing cards, my husband is wrapping presents and my children are putting up decorations.
- My husband and I are having the day off work. He's watching TV and I am just relaxing.
- My children are making their special costumes for tonight. I'm helping them.
- My parents are coming over for a special meal. Afterwards we give each other chocolate eggs.
- My friends are staying out all night. They are dancing at a disco.

Match these US holidays with their descriptions and dates.

April Fool's Day Father's Day Flag Day Halloween Independence Day Labor Day Memorial Day Mother's Day Thanksgiving Day
April 1 3rd Sunday in June July 4 June 14 2nd Sunday in May October 31 4th Thursday in November last Monday in May 1st Monday in September

- a day on which people give cards and presents to their mothers
- a day when people remember those killed in wars
- a day on which people give cards and presents to their father
- the day on which the country celebrates its independence
- a public holiday when families have a large meal together to celebrate and be thankful for food, health, families etc.
- the night when children dress in costumes and go from house to house asking for sweets
- a day when people fly the US flag, remembering the day in 1777 when the Stars and Stripes (=US flag) was officially accepted and first used
- a day which is considered by most Americans to be the end of the summer, celebrated with parades and community picnics
- a day when people play tricks on each other

Read the story of the Jack o'Lantern (a symbol of Halloween) and put the verbs in brackets in the correct forms.

A stingy drunkard of an Irish blacksmith named Jack had the misfortune to run into the Devil in a pub, some say on Halloween night. Jack had too much to drink and was about to fall into the Devil's hands, but managed (to trick) _____ the Devil (to offer) _____ his soul in exchange for one last drink. The Devil (to turn) _____ himself into a sixpence to pay the bartender, but Jack quickly pocketed him in his purse. Because Jack had a silver cross in his purse, the Devil could not (to change) _____ himself back.

Jack would not let the Devil (to go) _____ until he promised not (to claim) _____ his soul for ten years. The Devil agreed and ten years later Jack (to come) _____ across the Devil while (to walk) _____ on a country road. The Devil wanted to take his soul, but Jack, (to think) _____ quickly, said "I'll go, but before I (to go) _____, will you get me an apple from that tree?" The Devil, thinking he had nothing (to lose) _____, jumped on Jack's shoulders to obtain the apple. Jack (to pull out) _____ his knife and carved a cross in the trunk of the tree. This left the Devil in the air, unable to obtain Jack or his soul. Jack made him (to promise) _____ to never again ask for his soul. (To see) _____ no way out, the Devil agreed. No one (to know) _____ how the Devil ever managed to get back down!

When Jack finally (to die) _____ years later, he was not admitted to Heaven, because of his life of drinking and being tightfisted and deceitful. When he (to go) _____ to apply for entrance to Hell, the Devil had to turn him away because he agreed never to take Jack's soul. "But where can I go?" (to ask) _____ Jack. "Back where you came from!" replied the Devil. The way back was windy and dark. Jack (to plead) _____ with the Devil to at least provide him a light (to find) _____ his way. The Devil, as a final gesture, (to throw) _____ a live coal at Jack straight from the fire of Hell. (To light) _____ his way and (to keep) _____ it from blowing out in the wind, Jack put it in a turnip he was eating.

Ever since, Jack (to doom) _____ to wander in darkness with his lantern until Judgment Day. Jack of the lantern (Jack o'Lantern) became known as the symbol of a damned soul.

(When the term jack-o'-lantern first appeared in print in 1750, it referred to a night watchman or a man carrying a lantern.)

Do this quiz on British customs and traditions. If you don't know the answer, consult a dictionary or encyclopedia.

British Customs and Traditions

1. What is morris dancing?
2. What is a "bank holiday"?
3. When is Guy Fawkes Night celebrated?
4. What is the name for New Year's Eve in Scotland?
5. What song do many people traditionally sing at midnight on 31st December throughout Great Britain?
6. How is 'dd' pronounced in the word Eisteddfod?
7. What traditions are connected with Christmas in Britain?
8. What is the name for a traditional Scottish pattern of coloured squares and crossed lines, or cloth, especially wool cloth, with this pattern?
9. Who are Beefeaters?
10. Why do ravens live in the Tower of London?
11. In what cathedral have most of the British monarchs been crowned since William the Conqueror?
12. Where does the ceremony of the Changing of the Guard take place in London?
13. What does English breakfast consist of?
14. What can people do in the Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park?

St. Valentine's Day

St. Valentine's Day has roots in several different legends that have found their way to us through the ages. One of the earliest popular symbols of the day is Cupid, the Roman god of Love, who is represented by the image of a young boy with bow and arrow.

Three hundred years after the death of Jesus Christ, the Roman emperors still demanded that everyone believe in the Roman gods. Valentine, Christian priest, had been thrown in prison for his teachings. On February 14, Valentine was beheaded, not only because he was a Christian, but also because he had performed a miracle. He supposedly cured the jailer's daughter of her blindness. The night before he was executed, he wrote the jailer's daughter a farewell letter, signing it "From Your Valentine." Another legend tells us that this same Valentine, well-loved by all, wrote notes from his jail cell to children and friends who missed him.

Another Valentine was an Italian bishop who lived at about the same time. He was imprisoned because he secretly married couples, contrary to the laws of the Roman emperor. Some legends say he was burned at the stake.

February 14 was also a Roman holiday, held in honor of a goddess. Young men randomly chose the name of a young girl to escort to the festivities. The custom of choosing a sweetheart on this date spread through Europe in the Middle Ages, and then to the early American colonies. Throughout the ages, people also believed that birds picked their mates on February 14!

Whatever the odd mixture of origins, St. Valentine's Day is now a day for sweethearts. It is the day that you show your friend or loved one that you care. You can send candy to someone you think is special. Or you can send roses, the flower of love. Most people send "valentines", a greeting card named after the notes that St. Valentine wrote from jail. Valentines can be sentimental, romantic, and heartfelt. They can be funny and friendly. If the sender is shy, valentines can be anonymous.

Americans of all ages love to send and receive valentines. Handmade valentines, created by cutting hearts out of colored paper, show that a lot of thought was put into making them personal. Valentines can be heart-shaped, or have hearts, the symbol of love, on them. In elementary schools, children make valentines for their classmates and put them in a large decorated box, similar to a mailbox. On February 14, the teacher opens the box and distributes the valentines to each student. After the students read their valentines, they have a small party with refreshments.

You can write a short rhyme inside the heart, or you can buy valentines with messages in them. If you are shy, you can sign it, "Your Secret Admirer."

1. Which words in the text mean the following?

- a) the origin of something such as a custom, law, activity etc.
- b) someone or something that represents a particular idea or event
- c) to cut off someone's head as a punishment
- d) an action or event believed to be caused by God, which is impossible according to the ordinary laws of nature
- e) to kill someone, especially legally as a punishment
- f) a post to which a person was tied in former times before being killed by burning
- g) (old-fashioned) the person that you love
- h) without any definite plan, aim, or pattern
- i) the sexual partner of an animal
- j) (AmE) a sweet food made from sugar or chocolate
- k) sent, or given by someone who does not want their name to be known
- l) having the shape of a heart
- m) small amounts of food and drink that are provided at a meeting, etc.

2. Mark these sentences as true or false.

- a) The celebration of St. Valentine's day was officially introduced in Rome in the fourth century.
- b) Cupid is traditionally pictured as a handsome young man with a bow and arrows.
- c) According to a legend, Valentine was executed because he was a Christian and he secretly married young couples.
- d) February 14 was never celebrated as a special day in ancient Rome.
- e) Throughout the ages, people believed that birds built their nests on February 14.
- f) Anonymous valentines are considered rude and out of place.
- g) Americans of all ages like to send and receive valentines.
- h) Schools in the USA organize Valentine parties on February 14.
- i) Hand-made valentines are usually sent by people from low-income families.

3. Is February 14 a special day for you? If yes, how do you celebrate it? If no, what do you think are the reasons why this holiday has been gaining popularity in Ukraine? Write a paragraph of 8-10 sentences.

The History of the Kiss

This painting, called "Kiss," was painted by Francesco Hayez in the 19th century. Before the 19th century, kisses did not appear frequently in Western artwork.



Historians really don't know much about the early history of kissing. Four Vedic Sanskrit texts, written in India around 1500 B.C., appear to describe people kissing. This doesn't mean that nobody kissed before then, and it doesn't mean that Indians were the first to kiss. Artists and writers may have just considered kissing too private to depict in art or literature.

After its first mention in writing, kissing didn't appear much in art or literature for a few hundred years. The Indian epic poem "Mahabharata" describes kissing on the lips as a sign of affection. The "Mahabharata" was passed down orally for several hundred years before being written down and standardized around 350 A.D. The Indian religious text "Vatsyayana Kamasutram," or the "Kama Sutra," also describes a variety of kisses. It was written in the 6th century A.D. Anthropologists who believe that kissing is a learned behavior theorize that the Greeks learned about it when Alexander the

Great invaded India in 326 B.C.

There aren't many records of kissing in the Western world until the days of the Roman Empire. Romans used kisses to greet friends and family members. Citizens kissed their rulers' hands. And, naturally, people kissed their romantic partners. The Romans even came up with three different categories for kissing:

Osculum was a kiss on the cheek

Basium was a kiss on the lips

Savolium was a deep kiss

Kissing under the Mistletoe

Today, some people seem to spend the holiday season waiting under the mistletoe in the hopes of kissing whoever passes by. But until the 1400s, kissing under mistletoe was a big commitment. Such kisses often meant that a couple was engaged.

The Romans also started several kissing traditions that have lasted to the present day. In ancient Rome, couples became betrothed by kissing passionately in front of a group of people. This is probably one reason why modern couples kiss at the end of wedding ceremonies. Additionally, although most people today think of love letters as "sealed with a kiss," kisses were used to seal legal and business agreements. Ancient Romans also used kissing as part of political campaigns. However, several "kisses for votes" scandals in 18th century England led - in theory - to candidates kissing only the very young and very old.

Kissing played a role in the early Christian Church. Christians often greeted one another with an *osculum pacis*, or holy kiss. According to this tradition, the holy kiss caused a transfer of spirit between the two people kissing. Most researchers believe the purpose of this kiss was to establish familial bonds between the members of the church and to strengthen the community.

Until 1528, the holy kiss was part of Catholic mass. In the 13th century, the Catholic Church substituted a pax board, which the congregation kissed instead of kissing one another. The Protestant Reformation in the 1500s removed the kiss from Protestant services entirely. The holy kiss doesn't typically play a role in modern Christian religious services, although some Christians do kiss religious symbols, including the Pope's ring.

But not all kisses have been happy events. Works of literature like "Romeo and Juliet" have portrayed kisses as dangerous or deadly when shared between the wrong people. Some folklorists and literary critics view vampirism as symbolic of the physical and emotional dangers that can come from kissing the wrong person.

Most cultures around the world kiss today, but many have different views about when and where kissing is appropriate. In the 1990s, several news articles reported a trend of young people kissing in public in Japan, where kissing had traditionally been viewed as a private activity.