



Intercultural Activity: **Valentine's Day Around the World**

Estimated Time: 20 minutes for the scavenger hunt activity; 15 minutes for discussion

This lesson is designed to help students learn about Valentine's Day traditions from around the world to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of interculturality among students and their communities.

Student Can-Do Statements: By the end of this lesson, I can...

- identify Valentine's Day customs from around the world.
- compare and contrast these Valentine's Day traditions to my own traditions.
- make inferences as to why countries have these traditions based on their values.

Materials: Scissors, construction paper hearts cut in halves, country tradition descriptions cut into strips

Instructions:

1. **Hook/Pre-assessment:** Begin the lesson by asking students if they think Valentine's Day is celebrated all around the world, or if they know of any other Valentine's Day traditions from other countries.
2. Provide each student with half of a construction paper heart, cut with unique zigzag/puzzle-piece formations. Ask students to walk around the room to find those with matching halves. This is one fun idea for how to assign partners for the Valentine's Day-themed activity.
3. Next, provide each pair with one of the country tradition descriptions (cut into strips) provided below.
4. Explain to students that each pair will represent the country they received and they must teach their classmates about "their country's" Valentine traditions as they walk around the room exchanging information.
5. Explain to students that the first "pair" to have all answers filled in correctly will receive a prize. (optional such as a special Valentine treat)
6. Before they begin the scavenger hunt, give students 2-3 minutes to discuss with their partner how they would like to present the information on their country to their peers during the activity. Encourage creativity so that students do not read the information directly from their papers. Tell students you will award a prize to the pair who best explains their country's traditions to others.
7. Provide each pair of students with one copy of the "Valentine's Day Around the World" scavenger hunt handout with the missing information.
8. Allow students to begin walking around the room interacting with peers to exchange information. Monitor students by walking around the room as they complete the activity.
9. When all students have finished the activity, review the answers with students. Ask students which traditions surprised them? Which traditions do they like/dislike?
10. Ask students to think about the three discussion questions provided at the bottom of their scavenger hunt handout. Have students think-pair-share with their partner, and then share out ideas and responses as a class discussion.

Adaptations/Modifications:

- If students are present in the class who are from/know about another country's Valentine's Day traditions, allow them to represent their own country during the activity or ask them to share information about their country's traditions during the discussion, if they are comfortable doing so.

Valentine's Day Traditions Around the World:

Provide one of the following country descriptions to each pair of students. Each pair will represent their country as they walk around the room exchanging information with other pairs.

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England: In some regions, Valentine buns baked with raisins, plums, and seeds are eaten. In Norfolk, the legendary Jack Valentine (Old Father Valentine/Old Mother Valentine) knocks at the doors and drops off gifts for children, disappearing before they have a chance to spot him on their doorsteps.

✂-----

Finland: Friend's Day, known as *Ystävänpäivä*, is celebrated on Valentine's Day. Friends, family, neighbors, colleagues and significant others all receive cards, chocolates and flowers.

✂-----

Ghana: February 14th is known as "National Chocolate Day" because this nation is one of the world's largest exporters of cocoa. Chocolate museum exhibits and chocolate-themed restaurant menus are common on this day.

✂-----

Philippines: Mass wedding ceremonies take place in public places on February 14th. It is a day for many couples to get married or renew their vows.

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Denmark: Pressed white flowers called "snowdrops" are sent to friends. Men may send a *gaekkebrev* ("joking letter") to their sweethearts. A *gaekkebrev* is a rhyming poem or letter in which the sender does not sign his name, but instead signs with a dot for each letter in his name. If the woman guesses the sender correctly, she will then receive an Easter egg later in the year.

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Italy: Centuries ago, people would gather in beautiful gardens for Spring Festival, during which Valentine's Day was celebrated, to listen to music and romantic poetry readings.

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South Africa: Many people put the name of their sweetheart on their sleeve in a tradition known as *Lupercalia*, named after the ancient Roman fertility festival, which preceded Western traditions on Valentine’s Day.



Slovenia: Valentine’s Day is associated with agriculture because of the connection between agriculture and love in terms of fertility. The celebration originally had its roots in a pagan festival. Nowadays, Valentine’s Day is often the first day workers head back to their fields, with many marriage proposals also occurring on this day.



Japan: On Valentine’s Day (February 14th), the female gives a gift to the male, and on March 14th (known as “White Day”-- popularized by a marshmallow company in the 1960’s), the male has to return the gift he received from the female. In essence, the female gets to choose her Valentine’s gift. This is a major time of year for chocolate companies; some people even go to chocolate spas on Valentine’s Day. However, many women make their own chocolate because they believe store-bought chocolates are not a sign of true love.



Taiwan: Valentine’s Day is celebrated on February 14th, and also the Seventh Night Festival, rooted in an ancient Chinese folktale, is celebrated on July 7th (seventh day of the seventh month) of the lunar calendar. In this country, the color and number of roses hold significance: one red rose means “one true love”, 11 roses means “a favorite”, 99 roses means “forever” and 108 roses means “marry me”.



Argentina: “Sweetness Week” and “Friendship Day” are celebrated during the week of July 13-20th. It is a time for candy and kisses amongst lovers, friends, and family.



Paraguay celebrates *Día de la Amistad* (“Friendship Day”). It is a fun tradition for classmates and co-workers to play a game called *Amigo invisible* (“Invisible Friend”), in which those who participate draw the name of another, send secret notes to this person throughout the week, and finally reveal their identity and present their friend with a gift on Friendship Day.



Korea: On February 14th, females give gifts, usually candy, to males. On March 14th, “White Day” is celebrated. On this day, males give gifts to females, and many young men confess their love for the first time to their sweethearts. On April 14th, “Black Day” is celebrated, and on this day, those who are single gather together to eat black noodles with friends.



France: A custom known as *une loterie d’amour* (“drawing for”) took place on Valentine’s Day in the past. In this tradition, unmarried men and women of all ages gathered into houses facing each other, and they would call out the windows to each other until they all had paired off with their chosen partners.



Peru: On February 14th, orchids are traditionally exchanged, instead of roses. Group weddings are also common on this day because there are not enough venues to accommodate all the couples that wish to get married on this special holiday.



Brazil: This country does not celebrate Valentine’s Day on February 14th because it is too close to their celebration of *Carnival*. Instead, *Dia dos Namorados* is celebrated on June 12th, honoring the feast day of St. Anthony, patron saint of matchmaking and marriage. On this day, single women perform rituals known as “simpatias” with the hopes that St. Anthony will bring them a husband.



China: Although Western Valentine’s Day traditions on February 14th are gaining popularity in this country, the traditional day is celebrated on July 7th, known as *Qixi* or the Seventh Night Festival. On this festival day, girls prepare melons and fruit, and then engage in worship and prayer for a good marriage.



Guatemala: *El Día de Cariño*, celebrated on February 14th, is celebrated with colorful parades of people wearing feathered masks and Mayan-inspired clothing. Flowers, chocolates, and cards are exchanged among friends, family, coworkers and romantic partners.



Scotland: On Valentine's Day, a festival takes place in which an equal number of unmarried males and females gather together, and each person writes his or her name on a slip of paper, which is then placed into a hat (one for females, one for males). Names are drawn from the hats and men and women pair off. Gifts are given to the women, and women pin their partner's name over their hearts or on their sleeves. Finally, there is a dance, and many couples often marry at the end of the celebration. Another tradition is that the first man or woman you encounter on the street on Valentine's Day becomes your valentine.

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Bolivia: Bolivians do not celebrate Valentine's Day on February 14th. Instead, *Día del amor y la amistad* (Day of Love and Friendship) is celebrated on September 21st. It is a day of celebration of students, youth, friendship, Spring, and love.

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Valentine's Day Around the World

Exchange information with your classmates and work with your partner to fill in the missing information about Valentine's Day traditions around the world.

1. In Denmark, pressed white flowers called _____ are sent to friends. Men may send a *gaekkebreve* ("joking letter") to their sweethearts, which is signed with a series of _____ representing the number of letters in the man's name.
2. February 14th is known as "National Chocolate Day in _____ because this country is one of the world's largest exporters of cocoa.
3. People from _____ celebrate *Semana de la Dulzura* ("Sweetness Week") and *Día de la Amistad* ("Friendship Day") in July, exchanging candies for kisses.
4. In Taiwan, giving someone 108 roses on Valentine's Day means _____.
5. In _____, Valentine's Day is associated with agriculture because of the connection between agriculture and love to fertility.
6. In Korea, "White Day" is celebrated on March 14th, with men giving gifts to their sweethearts. On April 14th, those who are single celebrate "Black Day" by eating _____ with friends.
7. In Peru, _____ are traditionally given on Valentine's Day instead of roses.
8. _____ celebrates *Día dos Namorados* ("Lover's Day") on June 12th, honoring Saint _____, patron saint of matchmaking and marriage.
9. In Italy, Valentine's Day occurred during _____ centuries ago, and people would gather in beautiful gardens to listen to music and poetry.
10. Mass wedding ceremonies for couples to marry or renew their wedding vows take place in the _____ on February 14th.
11. Finland celebrates Friend's Day on February 14th, known as _____.
12. In France, *une loterie d'amour* ("drawing for") took place in past centuries on Valentine's Day. Men and women would gather in _____ facing each other and shout out the windows until they paired off with their chosen partners.
13. In _____, many women make their own _____, believing that store-bought chocolates are not a sign of true love.

14. In Bolivia, El Día del Amor y la Amistad (“Day of Love and Friendship”) takes place on _____.
15. In _____, El Dia de Cariño is celebrated on February 14th with colorful parades, feathered masks, and _____-inspired clothing.
16. In Paraguay, a game called _____ (Spanish name) is played by classmates and coworkers, in which friends leave notes and small gifts for a secret friend, finally revealing their identities on *Dia de la Amistad* (“Day of Friendship”).
17. In South Africa, people place the name of their sweetheart on their sleeve, a tradition known as _____, named after the ancient Roman fertility festival.
18. In China, _____, or the Seventh Night Festival is celebrated on July 7th and based in an ancient Chinese folktale. On this day, girls prepare _____ for the festival.
19. In _____, unmarried men and women gather for a festival, where they are paired off to exchange gifts. It is not uncommon for couples to marry at the end of the festival.
20. In some regions of England, the legendary _____ knocks on the doors to bring gifts to children on Valentine’s Day, disappearing before they are able to catch a glimpse of him.

****Extra Credit:** From which Spanish-speaking country does the United States import most of its roses for Valentine’s Day?

Hint: It is not one of the countries already mentioned in this activity.

Intercultural Reflection Questions: Think about the following questions and write down some ideas to share in a group discussion to follow at the end of this activity.

1. What do these traditions tell you about the importance of family, friends, and relationships in their cultures?
2. Why do you think Valentine’s Day is celebrated differently around the world?
3. What does interculturality mean to you?

Answer Key:

1. snowdrops; dots
2. Ghana
3. Argentina
4. Marry me
5. Slovenia
6. black noodles
7. orchids
8. Brazil; Anthony
9. Spring Festival
10. Philippines
11. *Ystävänpäivä*
12. houses
13. Japan; chocolate
14. July 23rd
15. Guatemala; Mayan
16. *amigo invisible*
17. *Lupercalia*
18. *Qixi*; fruits
19. Scotland
20. Jack Valentine

Extra Credit: Colombia