

Classroom Resources

Valentine's Day Task Lesson



*Roses are Red, Violets are Blue
Sugar is Sweet and so are You*



'Roses are Red, Violets are Blue...' is a popular poem associated with Valentine's Day. The most common version of the poem is the one above, but there are many other versions, some romantic and some funny.

1 Find the last line to these poems in the list on the right.

a	Roses are red, violets are blue. You've made all...	until I found you.
b	Roses are red, violets are blue. You know I've got my eyes...	but not with you.
c	Roses are red, violets are blue. These lips can't wait to...	and so are you.
d	Roses are red, violets are blue. I never knew love...	be kissing you.
e	Roses are red, violets are blue. I'm in love...	what happened to you?
f	Roses are red, violets are blue. Some poems rhyme...	my dreams come true.
g	The roses are wilting. The violets are dead. The sugar bowl's empty...	on you.
h	Roses are red, violets are blue, Dustbins are smelly	and so is your head.
i	Roses are red, violets are red...	I killed the gardener.
j	Violets are blue, roses are pink, Put on your shoes,...	your feet really stink.
k	Blood is red, veins are blue, I'm a vampire, ...	but not this one.
l	Roses are red, violets are blue. God made me beautiful, ...	and now you are too.

2 Write your own 'Roses are red...' poems. Try these ideas:

- Fill in the gap. Roses are red, violets are blue, and so are you.
- Look at these words that rhyme with 'blue'. Make funny or serious poems using some of these words.
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- Think of words that rhyme with 'red'. Write one or more poems starting:
Violets are blue, Roses are red...
- Think of other colours and write similar poems.
For example: *Roses are red, lilies are white...*; *Roses are red, grass is green...*

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TASK

- 1 *Discuss the following questions in pairs or small groups.*
 True or False?
 a Valentine's Day was once a religious festival.
 b Nowadays, more Valentine's e-cards are sent than greetings cards.
 c Valentine's Day originated less than 100 years ago.
 d Valentine's Day became popular as a result of cheaper postage.
 e Valentine's Day is illegal in some countries.
 f In some countries, people send cards to friends on Valentine's Day; in others they send cards to their lovers.
 g Valentine's Day originated in the United States.
 h In Japan, the custom is for women to give men gifts on Valentine's Day.
 i People used to send 'hate' mail on Valentine's Day.
- 2 *In groups of 3:*
Student A, read text A; Student B, read text B; Student C, read text C.
Skim read your text. Choose the best title for your text from the list below.
 Types of Valentine's Day Greetings
 The History of Valentine's Day
 The Best and Worst Valentine's Day gifts
 Valentine's Day around the World
 Valentine's Day as a Commercial Festival
- 3 *Which questions from part 1 do you think your text will answer?*
- 4 *Find the answers to three questions from part 1 in your text. Share this information in groups.*
- 5 *Make notes on the following questions.*

Student A How did Valentine's Day get its name? When and why did it become associated with love and romance? What are the earliest records of Valentine's greetings?	Student B How many Valentine's day cards are sent each year? How have Valentine's greetings changed over time? What is a vinegar valentine?	Student C How is Valentine's Day celebrated in Brazil? How is it celebrated in Japan, and what is White Day? Why is Valentine's Day unpopular in some countries?
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- 6 *In groups of 3, relate your answers to the questions in 5.*

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Discussion and Task

- 1 *Answer the following questions in groups.*
 - a How do people celebrate Valentine's Day in your country? Do you celebrate it yourself?
 - b What are the best gifts to give men and women on Valentine's Day? What are the worst?
 - c In your opinion, what is the most romantic way to spend the evening of Valentine's Day?

- 2 *Read the following sentences. Do you agree or disagree with them? Write short notes about your ideas.*
 - a Valentine's Day causes more unhappiness than happiness.
 - b The only people to benefit from Valentine's Day are commercial companies.
 - c Valentine's Day is better celebrated as a day of friendship, not a day of romance.
 - d The global spread of Western festivals such as Valentine's Day should be prevented.

- 3 *In groups of 3–5 people, compare your ideas to the questions above. Use language like:*

That's a good point.
I see what you mean, (but...)
I'm not sure I agree with you.
Nonsense!

- 4 *Choose one of the sentences in part 2 and write a short discursive essay on this topic. Your essay should include:*
 - an introduction
 - one paragraph supporting the opinion in the title
 - one paragraph opposing the opinion in the title
 - a conclusion

Tips:

In your introduction, give background information to the topic and state how you intend to organise your essay

In your conclusion, summarise all the ideas in the body of the essay and put forward your own opinion)

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Text A

Valentine's Day began as a celebration of a number of early Christian saints all with the name Valentinus. Among the Valentines honoured on 14 February are Valentine of Rome and Valentine of Terni. The former was said to be a priest near Rome at around 270 AD. At this time, the Christian church was under attack from the Romans. Valentine is said to have performed weddings for Christians and soldiers who, under Roman law, were allegedly not allowed to marry. It is also said that Valentine cut out paper hearts and gave them to people to remind them of God's love. Valentine of Terni lived around 197 AD. Both were executed for their Christian beliefs. A third Valentine is said to have been martyred in Africa on 14 February. Since then, several churches have commemorated these saints, on various days of the year.

Quite how the veneration of early saints came to be a celebration of love is unknown. Some people say that the Saints' day merged with the Roman festival of fertility Lupercalia, which was celebrated between 13th and 15th of February, but there is no evidence for this. The first written record of Valentine's Day being associated with romantic love is in 1382, when the English writer Chaucer wrote:

*For this was on seynt Volantynys day
Whan euery bryd comyth there to chese his make.*

["For this was on Saint Valentine's Day, when every bird comes there to choose his mate."]

The earliest known Valentine's greeting was a poem written by Charles, Duke of Orléans to his wife in 1415. At the time, Charles was being held in the Tower of London following the Battle of Agincourt. The poem begins:

*Je suis déjà d'amour tanné
Ma tres doulce Valentinée...*

(I am already sick with love, my very sweet Valentine).

Text B

Valentine's Greetings were already popular by the 1700s. In 1797, a British publisher created a book entitled the Young man's Valentine Writer, which included many heartfelt and sentimental verses for young lovers unable to write their own greetings. With cheaper postal rates, it became possible to send cards anonymously, and this increased the popularity of the tradition further. The first cards were handwritten, but by the mid 1800s, cards were mass produced in factories. Now, just under half the population of Britain spend money on some form of Valentine's gift. It is estimated that 25 million cards are sent in Britain and in USA, where Valentine's cards are typically sent to friends as well as lovers, the figure stands at around 190 million. When including handmade cards created by children in the classroom, the figure is as high as 1 billion. Nowadays, internet e-cards are increasingly popular, and it is estimated that 15 million e-valentines were sent in 2010.

Interestingly, Valentine's Day has a darker side, and not just for those who do not receive a card from the person they desire. At the turn of the twentieth century, it was popular to send 'vinegar valentines'. These are printed cards depicting a caricature and an insulting poem which criticizes a person's nature. One card, for example, features a woman with a huge smile and long eyelashes. The poem beneath it reads:

*The smile that on your face appears
Stretching your mouth to meet your ears
You think, no doubt, as sweet as honey
Whereas, dear girl, it's only funny.*

Other mean-spirited cards accused people of being ugly, mean or stupid. The vinegar valentines, which were printed on a single sheet of cheap paper, unsurprisingly provoked arguments and fights. However, they decreased in popularity after the 1950s and nowadays few people realise they ever existed.

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Text C

Nowadays, Valentine's Day is celebrated throughout the West, Asia and South America, although in some countries, the national day of Love is held on a different day and known by a different name. In Brazil, for example, *Dia dos Namorados* ("Lovers' Day") is celebrated on June 12. On this day, single women traditionally perform rituals to find a husband or boyfriend. In most countries, the national day of love involves sending gifts of chocolate, jewellery or flowers to a loved one, either openly or in secret, and spending time together.

In Japan, the Valentine tradition is slightly different. Here, the custom is for women to give chocolates to men, in particular their co-workers. This custom may well have originated from a chocolate-company executive's translation error during one of the early campaigns in the 1930s. Since the 1980s, 'White Day' has also been celebrated in Japan on March 14th. On White Day, men present confectionary to those women from whom they received chocolates the previous month. These gifts are supposed to be worth three times the value of the initial gift, otherwise it means that the man wishes to cut the relationship. Failure to reciprocate at all implies the man's superiority.

In some countries, Valentine's day is condemned as encouraging loose morals. In India, for example, it is feared that Valentine's day will destroy societal traditions such as arranged marriages and joint families. In some Muslim countries, the sale of Valentine's products is forbidden. In Malaysia, leaflets are distributed to university students warning them against celebrating the day, and police conduct raids on hotels to stop young unmarried couples from being intimate. Despite this, the celebration of Valentine's Day is increasingly popular, particularly among young people, and has led to a black market in roses, cards and wrapping paper.

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Valentine's Day Task Lesson

Learning Objectives: A little activity for Valentine's Day and writing a discursive essay.	Preparation Time: 5 minutes
	Completion Time: 15 minutes
Skill/Grammar: Reading, writing, pronunciation grammar	Age/Level: Intermediate–Upper Intermediate
Resources: Valentine's Day Task Lesson	

You will need:

- 1 copy of Valentine's Day Warmer per student (1 page)

Instructions

- Hand out the Valentine's Day Warmer to each student in the class.
- Ask a student to read the poem 'Roses are Red...'
- Ask students if they have heard this poem before. Ask if they know any other versions of this poem.
- Tell the students that there are many versions of this mini love poem. Some are funny and some are romantic. Draw students' attention to the versions on the page. Students must find the last line to the poem and complete it. Do the first one in class. Ask students if the poem is romantic or funny.
- Ask students to find the ends to the other poems.
- Students can check their answers in pairs before you feed back as a class.

Answers:

- a Roses are red, violets are blue. You've made all my dreams come true. (Romantic)
- b Roses are red, violets are blue. You know I've got my eyes on you. (Romantic)
- c Roses are red, violets are blue. These lips can't wait to be kissing you. (Romantic)
- d Roses are red, violets are blue. I never knew love until I found you. (Romantic)
- e Roses are red, violets are blue. I'm in love, but not with you. (Funny)
- f Roses are red, violets are blue. Some poems rhyme but not this one. (Funny)
- g The roses are wilting. The violets are dead. The sugar bowl's empty and so is your head. (Funny)
- h Roses are red, violets are blue, Dustbins are smelly and so are you. (Funny)
- i Roses are red, violets are red. I killed the gardener. (Funny)
- j Violets are blue, roses are pink. Put on your shoes, your feet really stink. (Funny)
- k Blood is red, veins are blue, I'm a vampire, and now you are too. (Funny)
- l Roses are red, violets are blue. God made me beautiful, what happened to you? (Funny)

- Tell students that they will now write their own 'Roses are red...' poems. Show them the ideas in part 2. They should work through these questions, writing 1–3 poems for each question.
- Put students in small groups (3–5 students) and allow them to share their poems. Each group should choose the three best poems from their group to read to the class.

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TASK

Preparation

- The jigsaw reading task requires students to work in groups of three. Each student will read ONE text, A, B or C. Divide your class and arrange photocopies accordingly. If your class is not divisible by 3, one or two groups of 2 students will be more effective than a group of 4 or 5 students.

Instructions

Pre-reading Task

- Put the students in groups of 3 students. Any leftover students should be put in pairs.
- Hand out page one of the Valentine's Day Lesson to each student. Ask students to discuss the answers to the questions in part 1. It doesn't matter if they do not know the answers. They can give their opinions.
- Briefly feed back their ideas, but do not spend much time on this.

Reading

- Give each student in a group a letter, A, B or C.
- Tell the students that each person in the group will read a different text on the subject of Valentine's Day. Tell them to read the titles in question 2.
- Hand out Text A to A Students, Text B to B Students and Text C to C Students. Hold back other copies until the end of the lesson.
- Give students one minute to skim read their text and decide which title fits their text.
- After one minute, feedback their answers. Write the answers on the board as this will aid students in doing the next part.

Answers

- 2
- | | |
|---------|------------------------------------|
| Text A: | The History of Valentine's Day |
| Text B: | Types of Valentine's Day Greetings |
| Text C: | Valentine's Day around the World |

- Make sure students turn over their texts so that they are not distracted by them. Tell students to look again at the questions in part 1. Give students 2 minutes to re-read the questions in part 1 and decide whether or not their text is likely to answer the question.
- Feedback as a class.

Answers

- 3
- a) Valentine's Day was once a religious festival. TEXT A
 - b) Nowadays, more Valentines e-cards are sent than greetings cards. TEXT B
 - c) Valentine's Day originated less than 100 years ago. TEXT A
 - d) Valentine's Day became popular as a result of cheaper postage. TEXT B
 - e) Valentine's Day is illegal in some countries. TEXT C
 - f) In some countries, people send cards to friends on Valentine's Day; in others they send cards to their lovers. TEXT C
 - g) Valentine's Day originated in the United States. TEXT A
 - h) In Japan, the custom is for women to give men gifts on Valentine's Day. TEXT C
 - i) People used to send 'hate' mail on Valentine's Day. TEXT B

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Student A

How did Valentine's Day get its name? From early Roman saints.

When and why did it become associated with love and romance? Unsure, but by 1382 it was associated with romance. May be due to association with Roman festival Lupercalia.

What are the earliest records of Valentine's greetings? It was mentioned by Chaucer in 1382. The earliest record of a greeting was sent in 1425.

Student B

How many Valentine's day cards are sent each year? 190 million in USA, up to 1 billion including handmade cards

How have Valentine's greetings changed over time? They were once handmade, now most are mass produced

What is a vinegar valentine? An insulting, cheap card depicting a rhyme and caricature, sent on Valentine's day

Student C

How is Valentine's Day celebrated in Brazil? Celebrated on June 12; called Lover's day, Women perform rituals to get husbands and boyfriends.

How is it celebrated in Japan, and what is White Day? Women give chocolates to men, especially colleagues. On White Day, held in March, men respond by giving white confectionary to women.

Why is Valentine's Day unpopular in some countries? Spread of Westernisation, loss of traditions, spread of loose morals.

- Hand out the remaining texts so that each student has a copy of all three.

Discussion

- Tell students to discuss the questions in part 1 in groups. Groups of 3–5 students will work better than pairs. Aim for mixed nationalities / ages / sexes if possible. Allow them 5–7 minutes for this.
- Briefly feedback their answers.
- Tell students to look at the following questions alone and think about their answers. Suggest that they make notes. Give them 3 minutes to do so.
- Put students in groups and tell them to compare and discuss their opinions to the questions in part 2. Allow them 6–10 minutes to share their ideas.

Writing Task

- Present the students with the task in part 4. This task is ideal as homework. If done in class, allow students 30 minutes to complete this.
- Before doing the task, you may want to introduce or review how discursive essays are organised. Elicit the purpose and structure of a discursive essay and its main features. Talk about the content of introductions and conclusions and whereabouts in the essay the writer's own opinion should be presented, if at all.