

The Origins of Valentine's Day

By Alex Taft

Can you feel it? The birds are chirping, love is in the air, and I am once again downing a box of heart chocolates in my bedroom at 3am. It's Valentine's Day! (Or sometime after Valentine's Day depending on whenever this gets pumped out, you get the idea). Like every February 14th, couples across the globe celebrate a great day of pure love. However, if you were to go out into the halls of Oak Hills and start asking people if they know where Valentine's Day came from, you would get a lot of blank stares. The most you could get is that it has to do with some Roman saint known as St. Valentine and how he created a day of love, which would become known as Valentine's day, but it would be shocking if you got much more information than that. That is why today, ladies and gentlemen of OHHS, we will be taking an in-depth look at the origins of Valentine's Day, and all of you will wish we hadn't.

Before we start taking a surprisingly dark turn, I'll start by saying that it does have to do with a Roman saint known as St. Valentine. St. Valentine wasn't really anyone of significance, and in fact, he wasn't really any "one" at all. St. Valentine originated from two separate people named Valentine, who were both executed by the Roman emperor Cladius II on the date February 14th in two back to back years. But hold up. Why were these two random guys named Valentine executed on February 14th? Well, here's where it starts getting real messed up real quick. Historian and political editor Arnie Seipel states that they were executed for not taking part in the Roman pagan ritual known as Lupercalia, which took place yearly on February 14th. On this day, according to historian Noel Lenski explains, Roman men would draw the names of women from a jar, and be, y'know, "paired" with them. Prior to this, the men would sacrifice a goat and a dog, so they could whip the women they were "pairing" with using the hides of the goat and dog. The women agreed to this practice because it was said to bring them fertility.

According to the Smithsonian, the two people named Valentine refused to participate in Lupercalia, and were executed for said refusal. Many many years later in the 1400s, records of this surfaced in Europe, and these Valentines were declared holy martyrs for refusing to partake in the pagan ritual. From there, the ritual evolved in a not-so-messed-up way. English nobles began to notice that many species of bird would mate in February, and as an act of love relating to both this and the day of "St. Valentine", would send nice letters and gifts to significant others on February 14th, usually relating to the beauty of the birds.

Well, there's the history of Valentine's day! Hope y'all learned something. I'm going to go bleach my eyes now.



