Primary reading


Secondary reading

- “Valentine's Day”

Genres

- fiction
- news
- movie
- on-line information
- poetry
- art
- speech
- prose
- others

Learning focus

- listening
- speaking
- reading
- writing

Handouts by

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One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at $8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid $30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to $20, though, they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only $1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only $1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling--something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an $8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.
Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: "Mme. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie."

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame. "Take your hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."

Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practiced hand.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation—as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value—the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends—a mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

"If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do—oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

"The Gift of the Magi" 2
At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit for saying little silent prayer about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty."

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two--and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

"Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again--you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say 'Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice--what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental labor.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"

Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you--sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year--what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

"The Gift of the Magi"
For there lay The Combs—the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jewelled rims—just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

VI

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."

The magi, as you know, were wise men—wonderfully wise men—who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. O all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.

Author O. Henry (1862-1910)

Source: <http://www.lsjunction.com/people/porter.htm>, 2015/6/24

Born William Sidney Porter, this master of short stories is much better known under his pen name "O. Henry." He was born September 11, 1862 in North Carolina, where he spent his childhood. His only formal education was received at the school of his Aunt Lina, where he developed a lifelong love of books. In his uncle's pharmacy, he became a licensed pharmacist and was also known for his sketches and cartoons of the townspeople of Greensboro.

At the age of twenty, Porter came to Texas primarily for health reasons, and worked on a sheep ranch and lived with the family of Richard M. Hall, whose family had close ties with the Porter family back in North Carolina. It was here that Porter gained a knowledge for ranch life that he later described in many of his short stories.

In 1884, Porter moved to Austin. For the next three years, where he roomed in the home of the Joseph Harrell family and held several jobs. It was during this time that Porter first used his pen name, O. Henry, said to be derived from his frequent calling of "Oh, 'Henry" the family cat.
By 1887, Porter began working as a draftsman in the General Land Office, then headed by his old family friend, Richard Hall. In 1891 at the end of Hall’s term at the Land Office, Porter resigned and became a teller with the First National Bank in Austin. After a few years, however, he left the bank and founded the Rolling Stone, an unsuccessful humor weekly. Starting in 1895 he wrote a column for the Houston Daily Post.

Meanwhile, Porter was accused of embezzling funds dating back to his employment at the First National Bank. Leaving his wife and young daughter in Austin, Porter fled to New Orleans, then to Honduras, but soon returned due to his wife's deteriorating health. She died soon afterward, and in early 1898 Porter was found guilty of the banking charges and sentenced to five years in an Ohio prison.

From this low point in Porter's life, he began a remarkable comeback. Three years and about a dozen short stories later, he emerged from prison as "O. Henry" to help shield his true identity. He moved to New York City, where over the next ten years before his death in 1910, he published over 300 stories and gained worldwide acclaim as America's favorite short story writer.

O. Henry wrote with realistic detail based on his first hand experiences both in Texas and in New York City. In 1907, he published many of his Texas stories in The Heart of the West, a volume that includes "The Reformation of Calliope," "The Caballero's Way," and "The Hiding of Black Bill." Another highly acclaimed Texas writer, J. Frank Dobie, later referred to O. Henry's "Last of the Troubadours" as "the best range story in American fiction."

Porter died on June 5, 1910 in New York City at the age of forty seven. An alcoholic, he died virtually penniless.

Reference


Plot

Plot is artistic arrangement or a design of events in a story or plot could be interpreted the main events of a play, novel, movie, or similar work, devised and presented by the writer as an interrelated sequence. Plot can be found in the beginning of the story or in the end of the story. But usually plot can be found in the beginning of the story. In pursuance of Frey’s tag pyramid a plot of story consist of exposition, complication, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution or denouement. Exposition is introducing of character in the story. And it can be interpreted starting of the situation in the story and, beside of introducing of setting, background, etc. complication is introducing of conflict in the story. There are two kinds of conflict; first is external and the second is internal. External conflict happens between character, and the character and society. Internal conflict the inner conflict is within a character. Here, there is the situation/new character/changes of personality/changes from one of character in the story. Rising action is continuation from complication means that cause of what is causing those changes in the story. Climax is the peak of the story. It can be like take a decision/ action for conflict. Falling action is when the moment in the story is going to be cleared. The last are resolution when story has happy or good ending and denouement (when story has sad ending).

In “The Gift of The Magi”, the exposition happens when the main character is introduced. There was a woman named Della. She was counting her money and realized that it was not enough to buy a present for Jim, her husband. She felt really sad that the next day would be Christmas and she still did not know what to do. She really wanted to buy Jim a present.

“*The Gift of the Magi*” 5
After exposition, the story goes on to rising action. It happens when Della was totally in deep confusion about what she could do. She only got $1.87 as the result after she had saved every pennies for months. She knew that $1.87 would never be enough for such a great present. She cried for a while but then she found out that she had to take a risk. It is told that Della had an extremely long brown hair. She immediately went out of her house and searched for any store that would buy her hair. While she was walking through the street, she suddenly stopped since she read a sign said “Mme. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds.” She rushed into the store, met a woman named Madame Sofronie, and asked her if she wanted to buy her hair. Madame Sofronie then examined her hair and quickly told Della that her hair was worth $20. After Della got the money, she went to a store where she finally found the right present for Jim. It was a simple platinum fob chain, and she thought it would be perfect for Jim’s watch. The chain reflects the simplicity and quietness of Jim. Della bought it for $21 and got back home with her 87 cents.

The rising action always lead the story to the climax. The climax in this story happens when Jim finally went home from work. Seeing his wife’s hair cut off, he suddenly just stand still at his place without being angry, surprised, or disapproval. He asked his wife to make sure that her hair had been really gone. Della cried and told him that she cut it off and sold it.

The climax goes down to the falling action. The falling action in this story is when Jim took out a package from his coat and spoke to Della. He seemed to feel alright. He did not mind about Della’s short hair. He asked Della to unwrap the package to make Della understand why Jim was like that at the first time he saw Della. She opened the package and cried hysterically. It was a set of comb made of pure tortoise shell with jewelled rims. It was all that she had dreamed for long time. After that, Della gave Jim the chain that she bought, and asked him to try it on his watch. However, Jim did not obey that. He threw himself on a couch and smiled.

The ending of the story can be considered as resolution since Jim and Della were happy in the end. Jim finally told his wife to put the presents away for a while and stated that they were too nice to be just a present. While sitting on the couch, he told Della that he had sold his watch to buy the comb set for Della. Now, Jim asked his wife to prepare the dinner for them both.

**Characters**

Character is personality or attitude for a person in story. The types of character are divided into two categories there are role and personality. From role are divided into two major and minor characters. Meanwhile from personality, there are flat, round, static, dynamic, stock, hero, anti-hero, and allusion.

There are major and minor characters in the story based on their roles. Della and Jim is the major characters. Della is considered to be the major character since she is the one who appears from the beginning until the end of the story. It seems that the beginning of the story is telling about Della’s confusion to buy present for Jim, her husband until she finally did a sacrifice in order to be able to buy a nice present. Meanwhile, Jim can be also said that he is major character as he is another person who has a relationship with Della, the first major character. Jim also has interactions with Della that create a good flow of the story. Besides, there is actually one minor character. She is Madame Sofronie who was the woman buying Della’s hair for $20. The reason why she is the minor character is that she only appeared in the middle of the story for a moment.

The next explanation is based the characters’ personality. There are only three kinds of characters, which are flat, dynamic, static, and stock characters. Della is dynamic character in the story since her physical appearance changed in the end of the story. In the beginning, it is described that she has a beautiful long brown hair. It looked like a brown waterfall. However, she cut off her hair in order to buy a present for her husband, so her hair became very short. Besides, Della is a flat character since her way to interact with other characters throughout the story tends to be the same from the beginning until the end.

“The Gift of the Magi” 6
Next, Jim can be considered as a flat and static character. Jim’s way of talking remains the same since he only appeared almost in the end of the story. He is static character because his physical appearance did not change at all. The last kind is stock character, which is Madame Sofronie. She is considered as stock character since she tends to be the only complement character.

**Setting**

The definition of a setting in a story is where the story takes place and when the story happens. Every story has a setting. Moreover, setting it is not only about place. Year, day, month, in the morning, or even the story shows a time such as 00.00 these are include setting and the name of those are time setting.

In “The Gift of The Magi”, the story takes place at Della and Jim’s house, Madame Sofronie’s store, and the store where Della got the chain for the present. It took place at Della and Jim’s house when Della was counting her money to buy a perfect present for Jim, and when Della and Jim were finally meeting and talking about their presents in the end of the story. Next, it took place at Madame Sofronie’s store when Della finally decided to cut her hair off and sold it to Madame Sofronie for $20. Lastly, there was one store when Della finally found the platinum fob chain to be the right present for Jim.

The time setting of the story is considered to be in a Christmas Eve since it was explained that Della was confused about what she was going to buy Jim’s Christmas present on the following day. Specifically, it was in the afternoon when Della was counting money, going to Madame Sofronie’s store, and buying the fob chain for Jim’s watch. In the end, it seemed to be in the evening when Della and Jim finally met and talked about their presents.

**Point of view**

Definition of point of view is the position of the narrator which is relation to the story, as indicated by the narrator’s outlook from which the events are depicted and from the attitude towards the character. There are two types of narrator, which are participant and non-participant narrator. Participant narrator takes a role in the story. It tells the story from the first person point of view and uses the pronoun “I” while non-participant narrator does not take any role in the story. It only tells the story from the third person point of view and uses the pronoun “she”, “he”, “it”, and names as well. Non-participant narrator is also divided into three branch, which are omniscient or all-knowing, limited omniscience, and objective.

The narrator of “The Gift of The Magi” is non-participant. It uses the limited omniscience third person point of view. The narrator tells the story by using the pronoun “she”, “he”, “it”, and names to mention all the characters and other things. It is considered to be limited omniscience as the narrator only knows all about the major characters, which are Della and Jim. The narrator explains the physical appearance and all the feelings of Della and Jim.

**Theme**

As definition theme is the central idea or ideas explored by a literary work. Usually themes of the story have more one theme. Themes of the story could be themes of death, themes of revenge, themes of action and many more. It can be said “The Gift of The Magi” has the theme “Sacrifice sometimes can be pointless.” I could tell that since Della’s sacrifice to cut her hair off to buy the chain for Jim’s watch became pointless because in the end, Jim told Della that he had sold his valuable watch to buy her a set of comb. Unfortunately, Della’s hair was now very short. In conclusion, their sacrifice does not make any result.

**Multimedia resources:**

- 2013 movie of “The Gift of the Magi”
  — [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qk8mzFwcECY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qk8mzFwcECY) (6min, in Bulgarian)
**Discussion**

**Pre-reading discussion:**
1. List the factors that you will put into consideration while choosing a gift.
2. What is the best gift that you have ever received? What is the worst?
3. Check the love story of Queen of Sheba and King Solomon.

**Questions for the reading:**
4. Describe the personality of Jim. Refer to specific passages in the story to support your description.
5. Describe the personality of Della. Refer to specific passages in the story to support your description.
6. Analyze the symbolic meaning of the color gray in Paragraph 6. Describe Della’s mood at this time.
7. What is the significance of the story of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon in Paragraph 9?
8. Look for the magic number “3” in this story. Where can you find them and how are they important in the story?
9. Do you think Della and Jim are poor or rich? Why so?
10. Do you think the story has a happy ending or a sad ending? Why?

**Post-reading discussion:**
11. Do you agree with the narrator that "Life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles (Paragraph 2)? If, yes, why? If not, what could be life made up in your opinion?

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**The Valentine Controversy**

Source: Religion Fact <http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/holidays/valentines_day.htm>, 2015/06/02

**“Valentine's Day”**

1 Valentine's Day is a celebration of romantic love occurring annually on February 14.

2 Although it is associated by legend with a Catholic saint named Valentine, Valentine's Day is not a religious holiday and never really has been. Valentine's Day has historical roots mainly in Greco-Roman pagan fertility festivals and the medieval notion that birds pair off to mate on February 14.
The custom of exchanging cards and other tokens of love on February 14 began to develop in England and France in the 14th and 15th centuries and became especially popular in the United States in the 19th and 20th centuries. Over the last decade or so, Valentine's Day observance has even spread to the Far East, India, and the Middle East.

**History of Valentine's Day**

The association of the middle of February with love and fertility dates to ancient times. In ancient Athens, the period between mid-January and mid-February was the month of Gamelion, which was dedicated to the sacred marriage of Zeus and Hera.

In ancient Rome, February 15 was Lupercalia, the festival of Lupercus (or Faunus), the god of fertility. As part of the purification ritual, the priests of Lupercus would sacrifice goats and a dog to the god, and after drinking wine, they would run through the streets of Rome striking anyone they met with pieces of the goat skin. Young women would come forth voluntarily for the occasion, believing that being touched by the goat skin would render them fertile. Young men would also draw names from an urn, choosing their "blind date" for the coming year. In 494 AD the Christian church under Pope Gelasius I appropriated the some aspects of the rite as the Feast of the Purification.

In Christianity, at least three different saints named Valentine or Valentinus, all of them martyrs, are mentioned in the early lives of the saints under the date of February 14. Two of the Valentines lived in Italy in the third century: one as a priest at Rome, the other as bishop of Terni. They are both said to have been martyred in Rome and buried on the Flaminian Way. A third St. Valentine was martyred in North Africa and very little else is known of him.

Several legends have developed around one or more of these Valentines, two of which are especially popular. According to one account, Emperor Claudius II outlawed marriage for all young men because he believed unmarried men made better soldiers. Valentine defied Claudius and continued to perform marriages for young couples and was put to death by the emperor for it. A related legend has Valentine writing letters from prison to his beloved, signing them "From your Valentine."

However, the connection between St. Valentine and romantic love is not mentioned in any early histories and is regarded by historians as purely a matter of legend. The feast of St. Valentine was first declared to be on February 14 by Pope Gelasius I around 498. It is said the pope created the day to counter the practice held on Lupercalia, but this is not attested in any sources from that era.

The first recorded association of St. Valentine's Day with romantic love was in the 14th century in England and France, where it was believed that February 14 was the day on which birds paired off to mate. Thus we read in Geoffrey Chaucer's (c. 1343-1400) *Parliament of Fowls*, believed to be the first Valentine's Day poem:

> or this was on saint Valentine's day,  
> When every fowl comes there to choose his mate.

It became common during that era for lovers to exchange notes on Valentine's Day and to call each other their "Valentines." The first Valentine card was sent by Charles, duke of Orleans, to his wife in 1415 when he was a prisoner in the Tower of London. Valentine's Day love notes were often given anonymously. It is probable that many of the legends about St. Valentine developed during this period (see above). By the 1700s, verses like "Roses are red, violets are blue" became popular. By the 1850s, romantics in France began embellishing their valentine cards with gilt paper, ribbons and lace.

Valentine's Day was probably imported into North America in the 19th century with settlers from

"The Gift of the Magi" 9
Britain. In the United States, the first mass-produced valentines of embossed paper lace were produced and sold shortly after 1847 by Esther A. Howland (1828 - 1904) of Worcester, Massachusetts. Her father operated a large book and stationery store, and she took her inspiration from an English valentine she had received.

In the 19th century, relics of St. Valentine were donated by Pope Gregory XVI to the Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church in Dublin, Ireland, which has become a popular place of pilgrimage on February 14.

But in 1969, as part of a larger effort to pare down the number of saint days of legendary origin, the Church removed St. Valentine's Day as an official holiday from its calendar.

**Valentine's Day Customs and Traditions**

The primary custom associated with St. Valentine's Day is the mutual exchange of love notes called valentines. Common symbols on valentines are hearts, the colors red and pink, and the figure of the winged Cupid.

Starting in the 19th century, the practice of hand writing notes began to give way to the exchange of mass-produced greeting cards. These cards are no longer given just to lovers, but also to friends, family, classmates and coworkers. Valentine cards are often accompanied by tiny candy hearts with affectionate messages printed on them.

The Greeting Card Association estimates that approximately one billion valentine cards are sent worldwide each year, making Valentine's Day the second largest card-sending holiday of the year, behind Christmas. The association also estimates that women purchase approximately 85 percent of all valentines.

In the last 50 years or so, especially in the United States, the practice of exchanging cards has been extended to include the giving of gifts, usually from a man to his girlfriend or wife. The most popular Valentine's Day gifts are roses and chocolate. Starting in the 1980s, the diamond industry began to promote Valentine's Day as an occasion for the giving of fine jewelry. Many couples also schedule a romantic dinner date on Valentine's Day.

**Valentine's Day in China and Japan**

Thanks to a concentrated marketing effort, Valentine's Day has emerged in Japan as a day on which women give chocolates to men they like.

This has become for many women – especially those who work in offices – an obligation, and they give chocolates to all their male co-workers (especially the boss), sometimes at significant personal expense. This chocolate is known as giri-choco, which translates as "chocolate of obligation."

By a further marketing effort, a reciprocal day called White Day has emerged in Japan. On this day (March 14), men are supposed to return the favor by giving something to those who gave them chocolates on Valentine's Day. Many men, however, give only to their girlfriends. The gift should be white (hence the name) and is often lingerie.

Valentine's Day is also celebrated in China, as is the related Daughter's Festival. It is held on the 7th month and 7th day of the lunar calendar and celebrates a love story between the seventh daughter of the Emperor of Heaven and an orphaned cowherd, who were sent to separate stars and only allowed to see each other on this one day each year. The next Daughter's Festival will be on August 11, 2005.

**Valentine's Day Controversy in India and the Middle East**

"The Gift of the Magi" 10
Valentine's Day only arrived in India a few years ago, but it has quickly gained popularity among young urban people along with a great deal of controversy among conservative Hindus. Traditional Hindu culture discourages public displays of affection between the sexes, including hand-holding, which Valentine's Day encourages, and Valentine's Day is also resented by some as a Christian and western influence.

In 2004, militant Hindu nationalists threatened to beat the faces and shave the heads of those who participated in Valentine's Day customs. "We will not allow westernization of Indian culture as St. Valentine was a Christian and celebrating Valentine's Day would be a violation of Indian culture," said Ved Prakash Sachchan, of the militant Hindu organization Bajrang Dal, in Uttar Pradesh. Similarly, a leader of the radical Hindu group Shiv Sena has condemned the holiday as "nothing but a Western onslaught on India's culture to attract youth for commercial purposes." Members of the group have stolen Valentine's Day greeting cards from a store and ceremonially burned them.

Similar Valentine's Day backlash has occurred in many Muslim countries. In Pakistan in 2004, the Jamaat-e-Islami party, an Islamist organization, called for a ban on Valentine's Day. One of its leaders dismissed it as "a shameful day" when Westerners "are just fulfilling and satisfying their sex thirst." Also in 2004, the government of Saudi Arabia issued an edict declaring that "there are only two holidays in Islam - Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha - and any other holidays ... are inventions which Muslims are banned from." Police closely monitored stores selling roses and some women were arrested for wearing red.

Despite this official opposition from authorities, many people in Middle Eastern countries seem to be enjoying the new holiday. One shopper, buying a red heart-and-rose card for her son-in-law, is reported as having dismissed the backlash as "only rigidity and cultural backwardness. Through the crackdown, they only buy people's greater hatred and enmity."

Sources


Celebrating Valentine’s Day is relatively a recent phenomenon in Cambodia. It was only in the past decade when Valentine's Day was celebrated in the country. Though Valentine's Day has gained much popularity among the younger generation, its definition and practice remain controversial. They spark an alarming attention especially on the wrong practice associated with this global occasion.

Many writers regret that the meaning of Valentine's Day has been misinterpreted. Chhay Sophal, in his article on "ប្រយ័ត្នទិវា៉ាឡិនថាញដេក្លាយជាដទិវាដននហ៍កម្មជាទិវា​ននកតីប្នឡាញ់" [Be Warned of Valentine's Day to Become a Regrettable Eve], emphasized that the youth have confusingly transformed the meaning of Valentine's Day:

Valentine's Day has become popular among young generations in Cambodia since 2000. Strikingly, some young people have wrongly defined this Valentine's Day as the “Eve for Lovers” instead of “Eve for Love” with the latter referring to love for parents, relatives and friends in general.

Sophal also highlighted the negative impact resulting from the misinterpretation of Valentine's Day. This includes sexual misconduct among young lovers, which is a violation of Cambodian culture, especially for unmarried couples. Another impact is the possible harm on the reproductive health of young women.

Though we do not mind about the youth's love affairs, we are much concerned about young women whose dignity will be damaged given the fact of their lost virginity. Even worse is that they may be pregnant and it may lead to abortion. This will be harmful to women reproductive health.

Sophal further emphasized that young women are more prone to HIV/AIDS if their sexual partners do not use condoms. They can also be victimized by pornography scandals that may jeopardize their future and the reputation of their family. Thus Sophal warns young women to be careful not to fall into the love trap during this Valentine's Day. He advised that the youth will be in a better position to celebrate this occasion with their beloved parents, relatives or friends in a proper manner.

These observations have been shared by Vutha Morn who questioned the link of culture identity and cultural preservation while Sidaroth Kong wrote in her Facebook status that “Valentine's Day and Controversy Khmer Culture: Is sleeping with your partner the only way to show that you love him?”

According to a cross-sectional research on “Love and Sexual Relationship: Experiences and Plans of Middle Class Young People Regarding the Upcoming Valentine's Day In Phnom Penh in 2009” done by Soprach Tong, who surveyed 458 youths aging from 15 to 24, majority of them do not understand the background of Valentine’s Day. Asked if the middle class young people in Phnom Penh plan to be sexually active on the upcoming Valentine’s Day, Soprach found that:

“In the results, 12.4 percent of all respondents answered that they expect to be able to have sex on the upcoming Valentine’s Day, and more than 14.3 percent of young people in a couple answered that they expect to be able to have sex with their sweethearts on that day too, and a few couples plan not to use a condom. Meanwhile, more than a third (39.5%) of the young people in a couple surveyed (n=38) stated that it will be the first time for them to have sexual intercourse. And the other two thirds (66.6%) of young males in couple (n=25) will pressure or force their girlfriend on having sex using many devices, if they do not agree. And at least seven percent of young males who answered that they expect to be able to have sex are open to being involved in Bauk [Gang rape, a slang term occurs after one (or two) youth(s) negotiate a price with a sex worker, or solicit a woman’s affection and arrange a proposed destination for sexual intercourse. Then the woman is taken to a hotel or guest-house, where numerous other young men are

“The Gift of the Magi” 12
waiting, or will soon arrive on the upcoming Valentine’s Day.”

From this result, the author urged for attention on sexual consent, sexual reproductive health and HIV/AIDS programs which target young people in the urban areas of Cambodia.

Given these alarming facts and concerns, the Cambodian Ministry of Women’s Affairs, initiated five-minute spots educating the teenagers about the “meaning of the Valentine's day” in order that the young will be encouraged to express their love to family first, followed by teachers and then friends. This educational spot which aims to warn Cambodian teenagers against engaging in promiscuous sex has been welcomed by majority of students, teachers, and bloggers.

Source: Jihad Watch

“A ‘moderate’ Indonesian examines the Valentine Day controversy among Muslims” Posted by Raymond on February 14, 2009 11:07 AM

And reveals he's not that moderate after all. For instance, after pointing out that the main problem the ulama have with Valentine's Day is its Christian origins, he does not suggest that Muslims should cease being so hostile to everything Christian, but rather attempts to extrapolate Valentine's Day from its Christian roots, thereby making it less offensive to Muslims. And this is the moderate approach...

“Should we ban teens from celebrating Valentine's Day?” by Tasa Nugraza Barley for the Jakarta Post, February 14:

Today is Feb. 14 and it's Saturday - a perfect day for Valentine's Day celebrations.

Young Indonesians out there who live in big cities like Jakarta and Bandung know exactly what this means: It's love time! I bet many of them are busy choosing the right flowers and chocolate for their girlfriends or boyfriends.

If you visit any mall in Jakarta at the moment you will know they are covered with red and pink love-shaped accessories. It seems that everyone wants to be part of this special celebration.

But that is not the case.

In reality, not everyone in Indonesia is a big fan of Valentine's Day. Indonesian Islamic clerics have long condemned Valentine's Day, claiming that this celebration comes from Christian culture and therefore should not be celebrated. And that's not completely wrong; Valentine's Day does come from a Christian-dominated society, the West.

I remember when I was in high school, my friends would be divided into two groups. One group would talk about Valentine's Day weeks before. They would trade information on where the best florist was or what kind of chocolate they could get.

The other group would distribute brochures giving information to others on how Valentine's Day was not Islamic and therefore should not be followed.[...]

There are several versions of the story of Valentine's Day. According to one person, a priest named St. Valentine was killed by a king after helping couples to get married. For some reasons which I don't quite know for sure, this king didn't want people to get married.

So what?

What if that guy named Valentine had been a Muslim? I'm sure we wouldn't have any problem with Valentine's Day celebrations.
But he wasn't; he was a Christian -- hence why Valentine's Day is anathema to Islam.

But why should we make things so complicated?

I just think Valentine's Day has nothing to do with Christianity - it's simply a celebration of love and every religion in this world believes in the power of love.

The fact that its history involves a priest is not a big deal. The fact that this celebration comes from a non-Muslim culture, I think, shouldn't be exploited too negatively.

But it should still be a deal -- not necessarily a "big" one -- and exploited negatively, just not "too" negatively? This sentence alone shows how sympathetic this supposedly "moderate" Indonesian is to Islam's xenophobia.

So what if Valentine's Day comes from a non-Muslim culture? Don't we use the internet and learn about computers when we all know they were all invented by non-Muslims? Before you judge that as a wrong analogy, please remember that I already told you how sometimes I simplify things too much.

I completely agree with parents' concerns over how Valentine's Day celebrations might have a negative affect on their teenagers. Many people have shown their frustration regarding the behavior of Indonesian teenagers, they complain that Indonesian teenagers are becoming far too Western. [...] All I want to say is that we shouldn't be too paranoid about this. Not everything from the West is bad for all of us. There are things that we could learn. But, there are also things that we shouldn't follow.

Things Muslims are interested in learning from the West: making weapons and bombs, and all the necessary technology to facilitate their use. Things Muslims don't want to learn from the West: an open society that led to the development of such technologically sophisticated weapons -- not to mention general equality, prosperity, and freedoms, or even the responsibility associated with using such weapons.

Discussion

1. Do you celebrate Valentine’s Day, why or why not?
2. What are the reasons that people celebrate Valentine’s Day?
3. What are the common ways that people celebrate Valentine’s Day in Taiwan?
4. What are the reasons that people oppose to the celebration of Valentine’s Day?
5. Propose a creative way to show good will to your Valentine.
6. Give an example of a festival/holiday that is originated from a foreign culture or religion but is now celebrated/observed by people in Taiwan. Do you support this kind of cross-cultural exchange, why or why not?

Class activities

😊 (in-class sharing in groups) Describe a gift that you most desire to receive and explain why.
😊 (individual writing assignment) Create a Valentine card for someone that you care.
😊 (group discussion) Plan on an ideal way to spend the Valentine’s Day.

“The Gift of the Magi” 14