Valentine’s Day in the UK

Valentine’s Day is celebrated in the memory of Saint Valentine, the Christian martyr who gave his life in the honor of love. King Claudius decapitated Saint Valentine in 269 A.D. for performing illegal marriages of Roman soldiers, who were apparently barred from marrying. Almost two centuries later, in 496 A.D., Pope Gelasius resolved to honor this sacrifice by observing February 14 as a feast day, without little thought or idea on the kind of consequence it would have on the entire world 1,500 years later.

Today, Saint Valentine has come to be regarded as the patron of love, and Valentine’s Day, the ultimate jubilation for lovers. Valentine’s Day, the festival of love, is celebrated across the globe. Flowers, cards, gifts and celebrations are integral parts of this special occasion. Although the celebrations are more or less the same everywhere, some countries have exclusive V-day traditions unique to them. And, U.K is no exception!

In Britain, this wonderful day is not only celebrated by youngsters and lovers, but also by the kids. Children sing special songs and are generously rewarded for this. There is also a day to savor special Valentine buns baked with caraway seeds, plums or raisins. Read on to discover more about Valentine’s Day tradition in Britain.

Although cards, flowers and chocolates make an indispensable part of V-day celebrations, the British like to celebrate this day in their own unique way. It’s a V-day tradition in Britain to pen quixotic verses, lyrics and sonnets as a tribute to the icon of love, Saint Valentine.

On this day, all the wild-eyed lovers come together and scribble poetic lines to commemorate the occasion.

Songs are the fun part of all celebrations and a day as special as Valentine’s Day is no different. On this day, the English people, especially the kids dole out their favorite romantic tracks or love ballads and are generously rewarded with candies, toys and truffles, in return.

On this day, young girls wake up early in the morning, stand near the window, and keep an eye on the people passing by. There is a long-existing belief in Britain that the first man a girl sees on the morning of Valentine’s Day is the man meant for her.

There is this legendary belief among the people of U.K. that on 14th of February, i.e. on Valentine’s Day, birds come together to find their mates. Thanks to Geoffrey Chaucer, this belief has come to be an indispensable part of Valentine’s Day legend today. In certain parts of U.K., Valentine’s Day is commemorated as ‘Birds’ Wedding Day’. It is a custom to eat baked buns topped with caraway seeds, plums and raisins on this day.

In U.K., Valentine’s Day marks the end of winter and commencement of spring. Hence, this day is rejoiced with great jubilation. Apart from the customary tradition of penning verses, people exchange cozy moments, cute gifts and cards to bring in the day.

Valentine’s traditions in U.K. may vary from the rest of the world. However, that doesn’t take away from the people and the celebration its unique appeal and significance.

National African American History Month 2015 Theme:
“A Century of Black Life, History, and Culture”

Over the past century, African American life, history, and culture have become major forces in the United States and the world. In 1915, few could have imagined that African Americans in music, art, and literature would become appreciated by the global community. Fewer still could have predicted the prominence achieved by African Americans, as well as other people of African descent, in shaping world politics, war, and diplomacy. Indeed, it was nearly universally believed that Africans and people of African descent had played no role in the unfolding of history and were a threat to American civilization itself. A century later, few can deny the centrality of African Americans in the making of American history.

This transformation is the result of effort, not chance. Confident that their struggles mattered in human history, black scholars, artists, athletes, and leaders self-consciously used their talents to change how the world viewed African Americans.

The New Negro of the post-World War I era made modernity their own and gave the world a cornucopia of cultural gifts, including jazz, poetry based on the black vernacular, and an appreciation of African art. African American athletes dominated individual and team sports transforming baseball, track-and-field, football, boxing, and basketball. In a wave of social movements, African American activism transformed race relations, challenged American foreign policy, and became the American conscience on human rights.

While the spotlight often shines on individuals, this movement is the product of organization, of institutions and institution-builders who gave direction to effort. The National Urban League promoted the Harlem Renaissance. The preservation of the black past became the mission of Arturo Schomburg and Jesse Moorland, leading to the rise of the Schomburg Research Center in Black Culture and Howard University’s Moorland-Spingarn Research Center. The vision of Margaret Burroughs and others led to the African American museum movement, leading to the creation of black museums throughout the nation, culminating with the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture. Student activism of the 1960s resulted in the Black Studies Movement and the creation of black professional associations, including the National Council of Black Studies, and a host of doctoral programs at major American universities.

At the dawn of these strivings and at all points along the road, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) has played a vital role. When he founded the Association in 1915, Carter G. Woodson labored under the belief that historical truth would crush falsehoods and usher in a new era of equality, opportunity, and racial democracy, and it has been its charge for a century. In honor of this milestone, ASALH has selected “A Century of Black Life, History, and Culture” as the 2015 National Black History theme.

http://asalh100.org/black-history-themes/2015-theme/

---

Nirvana Day: Buddhist-Jain

Parinirvana — Nirvana Day — is observed primarily by Mahayana Buddhists, most commonly on February 15th. The day commemorates the death of the historical Buddha and his entry into Nirvana.

Nirvana Day is a time for contemplation of Buddha’s teachings. Some monasteries and temples hold meditation retreats. Others open their doors to lay people, who bring gifts of money and household goods to support monks and nuns.

About Nirvana

The word Nirvana means “to extinguish,” such as extinguishing the flame of a candle. Some schools of Buddhism explain Nirvana as a state of bliss or peace, and this state may be experienced in life, or it may be entered into at death. The Buddha taught that Nirvana was beyond human imagination, and so speculation about what Nirvana is like is foolish.

The Death of Buddha

Buddha died at the age of 80 in the company of his monks. As recorded in the Parinibbana Sutta, Buddha knew his life was at an end, and he assured his monks that he had withheld no spiritual teaching from them. He urged them to maintain the teachings, so that they would continue to help people through the ages to come.

Finally he said, “All conditioned things are subject to decay. Strive for your liberation with diligence.” Those were his last words.

http://buddhism.about.com/od/buddhistholidays/a/nirvanaday.htm