



A ÉCOUTER SUR LE COMPLÉMENT SONORE-SEQUENCE CONVERSATION

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THE NEW YORK TIMES LIAM STACK

The origins of Valentine's Day

Saint Valentine's Day: how, where and when did it start?

Aujourd'hui, fêter l'amour le 14 février, jour de la Saint-Valentin, semble aller de soi. Mais d'où vient cette tradition ? Plusieurs théories s'entrecroisent et se complètent, d'une célébration datant de la Rome Antique en passant par les écrits de Geoffrey Chaucer.

Valentine's Day is upon us again. It's a time of candlelit dinners, heart-shaped candy boxes from the drugstore and (depending on your relationship status) watching old romantic comedies while you drink wine by yourself. It's a great celebration. But where did it come from? And why do we care about it so much?

2. People have been trying to answer those questions for a long time. The New York Times pondered the day's origin in 1853 but called it "one of those mysterious historical or antiquarian problems which are doomed never to be solved." Well, it's 2024 so we're going to try again. Here is a brief guide to some of the

1. **to be upon sb** to be here and necessary for sb to do sth about / **candlelit** with candles creating a romantic atmosphere / **heart-shaped** in the form of a heart / **candy** sweets, chocolate / **drugstore** pharmacy and shop which sells medicines, make-up, cleaning products, chocolate etc. / **to care about** to be interested in, to be concerned about.

2. **to ponder** to consider, to think about / **antiquarian** ancient, very old / **to be doomed** to be destined / **to solve** to explain, to clarify.



SUR LE BOUT DE LA LANGUE

Ne pas confondre (même prononciation) :

a **fertility rite** (§ 3) rite de fécondité
that's **right** c'est ça
to **write a poem** écrire un poème
a **playwright** un dramaturge, auteur dramatique
a **wheelwright** un charron

major Valentine's Day theories, from ancient Rome to the present.

It could have been a Roman Bacchanal.

3. The most common explanation for how Valentine's Day came to be is the ancient festival of Lupercalia, a raucous, wine-fueled fertility rite in which Roman men and women paired off. This theory has appeared in news articles for decades.

4. Lupercalia was celebrated for centuries in the middle of February and eventually, as the Roman Empire became less pagan and more Christian, was transformed into a celebration honoring St. Valentine.

5. Noel Lenski, a Yale historian, told National Public Radio in 2011 that the festival was known for its debauchery and nudity until Pope Gelasius I made it a Christian holiday in the fifth century. "It was a little more of a drunken revel, but the Christians put clothes back on it," Lenski said. "That didn't stop it from being a day of fertility and love."

6. There is little reliable information about the life of St. Valentine. The Times reported in 1923

3. **to come to be** to begin to exist / **raucous** noisy / **wine-fueled** stimulated by the copious consumption of wine / **to pair off** to form a couple / **decade** period of ten years.

4. **century** period of 100 years / **eventually** finally, later / **pagan** polytheistic religion in antiquity.

5. **drunken** intoxicated with alcohol / **revel** party.

6. **reliable** dependable, trustworthy / **to report** to publish /



that the day may in fact celebrate two different saints named Valentine who were made into a composite character. (Neither one of them sounded particularly romantic.)

7. According to one popular tale, printed in The Boston Globe in 1965, St. Valentine was arrested after he defied an order by Emperor Claudius that forbade Roman soldiers from getting married. St. Valentine was later beheaded for his religious zeal, a death that Roman men decided to celebrate by pulling the names of eligible young ladies out of an urn. "This custom persisted for many years and eventually found its way into Germany and England," The Globe reported.

Or a chance to celebrate spring in February.

8. Not everyone is convinced of that version of events. Jack B. Oruch, an English professor at the University of Kansas who died in 2013, studied Valentine's Day as part of his research into poet Geoffrey Chaucer. He was convinced

character person / **neither** not one nor the other / **to sound** to seem.

7. **according to...** based on... / **tale** story / **to print** to publish / **to defy** to oppose, to resist / **to forbid**, **forbade**, **forbidden** to prohibit / **to behead** to decapitate / **to pull a name out of sth** to choose sb's name randomly / **to find one's way** to arrive.

8. **spring** season between winter and summer / **to convince** to persuade, to satisfy.



A Valentine's postcard from 1912 untitled "To my matchless Valentine". (MARY EVANS/SIPA)

that Chaucer was the source of our modern ideas about St. Valentine.

9. In a 1981 academic article, "St. Valentine, Chaucer, and Spring in February," Oruch argued there was no documented evidence of a romantic tradition linked to St. Valentine before Chaucer wrote the poems "Parlement of Foules" and "The Complaint of Mars" in the late 14th century.

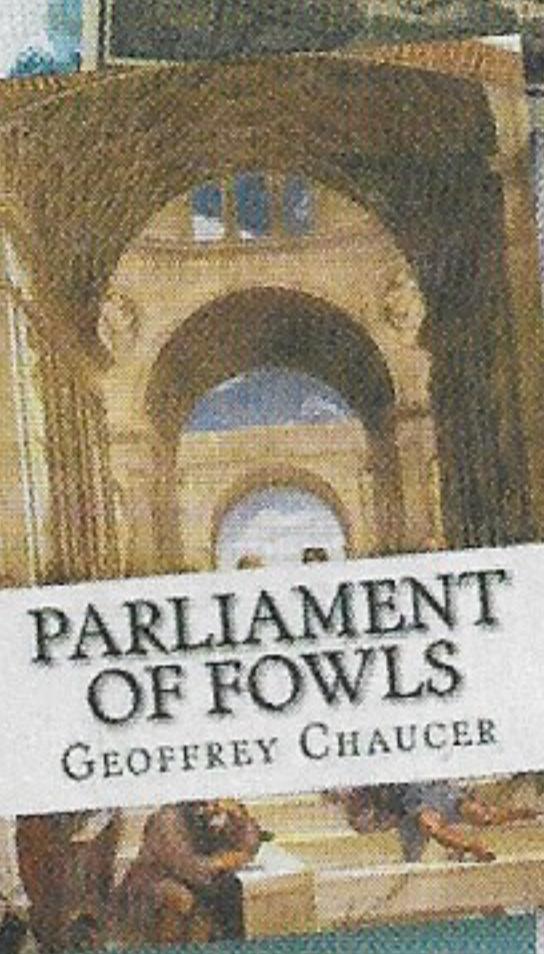
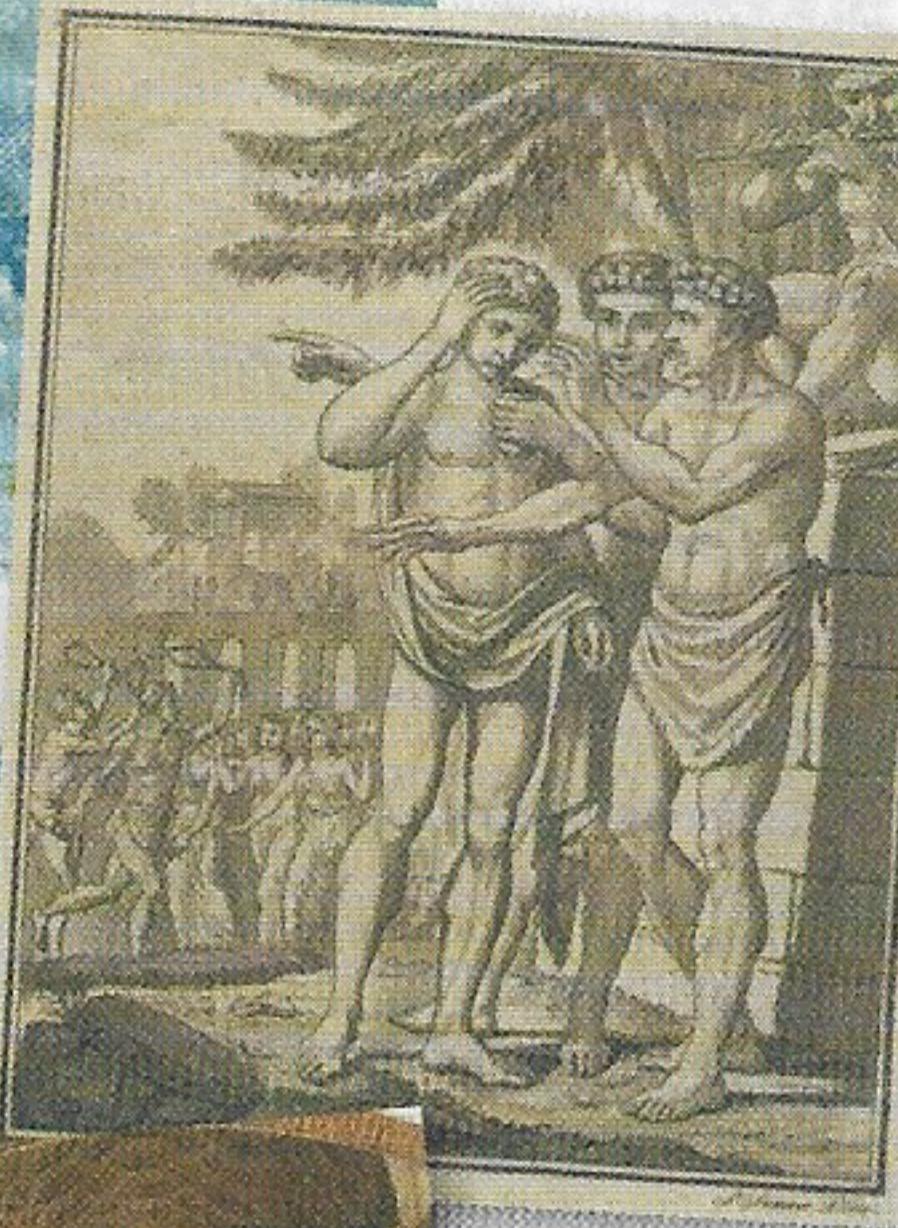
10. Chaucer may have connected St. Valentine to romance because it was convenient: His saint's day, on Feb. 14, took place at a time when Britons in the 14th century thought spring began, with birds starting to mate and plants beginning to bloom, Oruch wrote.

11. From Chaucer's perspective, an added perk was that Europeans at the time thought "Valentine" was a nice-sounding name. Other saints who were celebrated in mid-February had names with less poetic appeal: St. Scholastica, St. Austrebertha, St. Eulalia and St. Eormenild.

9. **to argue** to assert, to say / **evidence** proof / **to link** to connect / **foule** medieval word for **fowl** collective word for birds / **late** end (of the).

10. **convenient** practical, ideal / **to take place** to happen, to occur / **briton** British person / **to mate** to produce young / **to bloom** to flourish.

11. **added** additional, supplementary / **perk** advantage, benefit / **at the time** during that period / **appeal** power of attraction, charm.



because "it's a night with very profound extra meaning that hits primitive parts of the brain linked with wanting," said Helen Fisher, a Rutgers University physical anthropologist who studies the evolution of human sexuality.

14. She said the need for love was "a basic brain system that evolved millions of years ago," long before Lupercalia. "It's a time of self-appraisal and appraisal of your situation," she said, especially if you're single. "This is a day when one reflects on what you've got and what you don't have."

15. It's also a day to spend money. Americans have spent \$26 billion on Valentine's Day in 2023, according to the National Retail Federation. More than half of consumers celebrated and spent an average of \$192.80, the group said.

16. Most of that will go toward romantic partners, but a sizable chunk will be spent on friends, co-workers, classmates and even pets. That reflects a change in the holiday from a celebration of romantic partners to "an everybody-is-included romp" that celebrates different kinds of affection and attachment, Fisher said. ●

meaning significance, importance / **to hit** to affect / **brain** encephalon organ in the head.

14. long a long time / **self-appraisal** self-evaluation / especially particularly / **single** without a partner / **to reflect on** to think about.

15. billion = thousand million / **average** standard amount (of).

16. to go toward to be destined for buying sth for / sizable considerable / **chunk** part, proportion / **co-worker** colleague / **classmate** friend from school/university / **pet** domestic animal / **romp** orgy.

Testez-vous

Avez-vous bien compris l'article ? Cochez la bonne réponse.

- 1. Who celebrated Lupercalia?**
 - a. The Greeks
 - b. The Romans
 - c. The Turks
- 2. True or False?**
 - a. Valentine was the Roman god of love.
 - b. Saint Valentine's Day was originally celebrated in June.
 - c. There were 2 different Saint Valentines.
- 3. How much did Americans spend for Saint Valentine's in 2023?**
 - a. \$26 thousand
 - b. \$26 million
 - c. \$26 billion
- 4. Who is NOT included in the list of people Americans spend money on on Saint Valentine's Day?**
 - a. colleagues
 - b. parents
 - c. pets

SOLUTIONS : 1. b ; 2. a.F - b.F - c.T ; 3. c ; 4. b