

Party Time! The Origins of Birthday Celebrations

Do you love celebrating your birthday? You're not alone! Birthday celebrations have been around for centuries, and they've evolved over time in all sorts of interesting ways. In this article, we'll take a look at the origins of birthday celebrations, and we'll learn about some of the fun traditions that have come along the way.

The First Birthday Celebrations

The first birthday celebrations were probably held by the ancient Egyptians. The Egyptians believed that the day you were born was the day your soul entered your body, so it was a very important day. They would celebrate by giving the birthday person gifts, and they would also have a big feast.

The ancient Greeks also celebrated birthdays, but they did it a little differently. They believed that on your birthday, you were more vulnerable to evil spirits. So, to protect the birthday person, they would light candles on a cake. The candles were supposed to ward off the evil spirits.

Birthday Celebrations in Rome

The Romans were the first people to celebrate birthdays for everyone, not just for important people. They would have big parties with food, drinks, and games. They would also give the birthday person gifts, and they would sing songs in their honor.

One of the most interesting Roman birthday traditions was the custom of giving people a birthday cake. The cake was made with wheat flour, olive oil, grated cheese, and honey. It was shaped like a wreath, and it was decorated with candles. The candles were supposed to represent the birthday person's life, and they were supposed to help them live a long and happy life.

Birthday Celebrations in the Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages, birthday celebrations were still important, but they were a lot simpler than they are today. People would usually just have a small feast with their family and friends. They would also give the birthday person gifts, but the gifts were usually simple things like food, clothing, or jewelry.

One of the most interesting Middle Ages birthday traditions was the custom of blowing out candles. This tradition came from the Roman custom of lighting

candles on a cake. In the Middle Ages, people believed that if you blew out all the candles on your birthday cake in one breath, you would have a year of good luck.

Birthday Celebrations Today

Today, birthday celebrations are more elaborate than ever before. People have birthday parties with cake, ice cream, presents, and games. They also have birthday parties at school, at work, and with their friends.

One of the most popular birthday traditions today is the custom of singing "Happy Birthday." This tradition started in the late 19th century, and it quickly became a popular way to celebrate birthdays all over the world.

Another popular birthday tradition is the custom of giving people birthday cards. Birthday cards first became popular in the early 20th century, and they're now a staple of birthday celebrations around the world.

So there you have it! A brief history of birthday celebrations. From the simple feasts of the ancient Egyptians to the elaborate parties of today, birthday celebrations have come a long way.

Fun Facts About Birthdays

- The oldest known birthday cake was found in the tomb of Queen Hatshepsut in Egypt. The cake was made of honey, figs, and dates, and it was decorated with lotus flowers.
- The first birthday card was created in 1842 by a man named John Pounds. He was a social reformer who wanted to create a way to celebrate the birthdays of poor children.
- The world's oldest birthday party was held in 1989. It was for a woman named Margaret Jones, who was 115 years old at the time. The party was attended by over 1,000 people.
- The most popular birthday cake flavor in the United States is chocolate.

Glossary

- elaborate - detailed and complicated in design and planning
- staple - something that is basic, standard, or commonplace
- wreath - an arrangement of flowers, leaves, or stems fastened in a ring
- vulnerable - easily hurt physically or emotionally
- ward off - to prevent or protect against something unpleasant

Questions

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What did the ancient Greeks believe about birthdays?
 - a) That they were a time for big celebrations
 - b) That you were vulnerable to evil spirits
 - c) That they should only be celebrated by royalty
 - d) That they represented the day your soul entered your body
2. Where did the tradition of birthday cakes originate?
 - a) Egypt b) Greece c) Rome d) The Middle Ages
3. What was a common birthday gift during the Middle Ages?
 - a) Money b) Clothing c) Cards d) Cake
4. When did the tradition of singing "Happy Birthday" begin?
 - a) Middle Ages b) 19th century c) Early 20th century d) Ancient Rome
5. What was the main ingredient in early Roman birthday cakes?
 - a) Flour b) Honey c) Fruit d) Olive oil
6. How did the way people celebrated birthdays change from ancient times to today?
 - a) Celebrations became simpler over time.
 - b) Celebrations stayed small events with family.
 - c) Celebrations became more elaborate over time.
 - d) There was no change over time.

Answer Key

1. b
2. c
3. b
4. b
5. d
6. c