



### All About Love

Now that the December holiday season has passed, stores have stocked their shelves with heart-shaped trinkets, chocolate candy, and other Valentine's Day gifts. This issue of Multicultural Moments highlights Valentine's Day and representations of love through gifts, food, and art.

**History and Economics of Valentine's Day.** The origin of Valentine's Day is not always clear; however, there is no confusion about the economic impact of the holiday.

- Although we associate Valentine's Day with love and romance, there are several explanations that point to a violent and misogynistic origin. You can read several common theories of the origin of Valentine's Day in this National Public Radio (NPR) piece, [Valentine's Day has dark origins. Here's how it started.](#)
- The History Channel presents theories of how the heart shape originated and gives examples of the early practice of sending Valentine cards (some examples resembling trolling we see today on the internet). Read more about these practices in [7 Things You Didn't Know about Valentine's Day.](#)
- Sharing gifts of sweets, flowers, and jewelry is a popular Valentine's Day tradition. This practice is not only a way to express love but also a strategy to boost economies. For example, to encourage domestic consumption of chocolate in Ghana, the Tourism ministry declared February 14 as Chocolate Day in 2005. In South Korea, the 14<sup>th</sup> of every month marks a special love-themed event. February 14 is a day for women to give gifts to men, a gesture that is reciprocated one month later with gifts that are said to be more expensive. The 14<sup>th</sup> of April is a day for single friends to celebrate. For more examples, watch the video, [9 Valentines Celebrations Around the World.](#)
- If you are curious about the economics of Valentine's Day, including how much people spend on gifts by age group and gender and how, check out this infographic, "[The Cost of Love on Valentine's Day.](#)"

**Food-Love Connection.** People have always used food to connect with others. According to the late Cesar Chavez, "If you really want to make a friend, go to someone's house and eat with him...the people who give you their food give you their heart." Why is food such an important part of affection?

- The NPR story, [How Did Our Brains Evolve To Equate Food With Love?](#) reports that in 25% of families, food is used to demonstrate affection and food sharing can be traced back millions of years and is documented in animal behavior. Others have described the food as a [Universal Love Language](#) that brings people together during challenging times, even if they cannot offer words of support.
- According to the 2017 *Psychology Today* article, [52 Ways: Cultural Variations in Offering Food to Show Love](#), what and how we feed each other demonstrates love by providing nourishment, respect, support, and pleasure.

- While chocolate is one of the most familiar foods associated with love, basil, lemon, pomegranate, nuts, and honey also made the list of [6 Foods That Symbolize Love](#), which explains the love connection for each food and offers a few recipes using them.

**Artistic Representations of Love.** Valentine's Day and love are major inspirations for artistic expression, including stories, poetry, songs, and visual art.

- The heart is a ubiquitous symbol of love, but it is not the only love symbol. [Love symbols and their deep meanings \(symbolikon.com\)](#) offer descriptions of more than 20 symbols of love. For example, Kokopelli, the hunchbacked flute player in North Hopi culture, is said to promote fertility. Another example is the West African Adinkra symbol, Eban, which is said to represent love and protection.
- Explore the Smithsonian Institute's [Be My Valentine](#) collection for vintage and modern stamps, postcards, posters, etc. In addition, you can listen to a playlist of love-themed [folk songs](#) from the U.S., Mexico, and Europe.
- Many cultures have traditional dances that are said to promote love, fertility, and protection. For example, [Mbende](#), a traditional dance performed in Eastern Zimbabwe, is said to promote fertility, sexuality, and family. Watch a full performance of the love dance in this video: <https://youtu.be/8G4IEccpM2Q>.
- No list of love-themed art would be complete without the famous love poem. Pablo Neruda's "One Hundred Love Sonnets," Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "How Do I Love Thee?" and Paul Laurence Dunbar's "Invitation to Love" all made this list of [23 Beautiful Famous Love Poems to Share With The One You Love \(familyfriendpoems.com\)](#).

*May we avoid blaming or bias based on our circumstance and continue to be grateful for the gifts of the global community.*

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