

DISCUSS

Discuss the following question with a partner.

What do you know about the customs and history of Valentine's Day? Discuss the holiday for five minutes.

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Listen to the article, which is about five and a half minutes long. Listen only, and don't worry about understanding everything.

Step 2: Listen once more, and try to understand the general information of each paragraph. In your head, explain a paragraph's main idea in one or two sentences. Write your paragraph summaries after you have listened to the whole article. Listen again, check your answers, and compare your answers with a partner.

Step 3: Look at the article, which has missing vocabulary words. Try to write any words that you remember from the listening. Listen once more, and write the missing words.

Step 4: Read the article, and look up any unknown words. Now listen again. Can you understand more?

Step 5: Listen! Listen! Listen! Listen to the article on the train or in your free time. Each time you listen, you will slowly improve!

SUMMARIZATION

Listen to the article. Write in one or two sentences the key idea about the paragraph to check comprehension. If you don't know, don't worry. Skip it. Then listen again.

ex. paragraph 1: *valentine's Day is a hallmark holiday. Hallmark holidays have both positive and negative points, and the paragraph gives some examples.*

1. paragraph 2:

2. paragraph 3:

3. paragraph 4:

4. paragraph 5:

5. paragraph 6:

6. paragraph 7:

the ARTICLE

Listen again to the article. Write in the missing words.



(a. _____) Holidays: Although many people view these celebrations negatively, an equal number of people have positive opinions. On the negative side, hallmark holidays don't really celebrate an important event, and only exist for companies to make a lot of money. On the positive side, the term describes the perfect holiday in which family, friends, and fun come first. Everyday problems, worries, and stress can be put aside. Valentine's Day usually gets labeled a hallmark holiday, but both positive and negative arguments have equal (b. _____).

More than one billion cards get sent each Valentine's Day. Then there are chocolates, flowers, (c. _____) rings, romantic dinners, and so on. Much of the commercialization can be traced back to the 19th century when printing technology improved to cheaply mass-produce greeting cards. Yet even before that, the holiday with cards and gifts had begun to grow quite popular in the 1700s. People of all social classes regularly exchanged handwritten notes and tokens of (d. _____) on the day. Yet even in the 1700s, Valentine's Day was considered an old holiday. Two hundred years earlier, Shakespeare mentioned it in *Hamlet*, and the first Valentine's Day card still in existence was written around in 1415. But we can follow the holiday much further back to the Roman Empire!

Valentine's Day originated from a Roman festival called "Lupercalia," which was held in mid-February every year. The celebration purified new life in the spring. Around the third century A.D., the holiday became associated with Saint Valentine, (e. _____) it isn't exactly clear how. There are three possible stories about the priest Valentine who later became a saint, but no one knows which story gave rise to the holiday.

One theory states that Emperor Claudius II executed Valentine. The Emperor had proclaimed marriage (g. _____) for young men, because he realized that (f. _____) soldiers fought better. Married men worried about their wives and children, of course! With the decree, the Emperor hoped to increase the size and effectiveness of his army. The law was unjust, though, and Valentine continued to marry couples in secret -- until Claudius found out, and put the priest to death.

In another theory, the Emperor executed Valentine, too. But the priest had helped prisoners escape the horrible (h. _____) of Roman prisons, where torture and beatings were common.

An imprisoned Valentine fell in love with the jailor's daughter in the final theory. He wrote a letter to her, the very first Valentine's Day message, which he signed as we do today: "From your Valentine."

Whichever theory is correct, each story has (i. _____) and romantic connotations. As a result, the holiday has grown increasingly popular through the centuries. It's also more meaningful than the (j. _____) believe. And although Valentine's Day has become quite commercial, it still contains an important aspect shared by all of the best holidays: time spent thinking of and being with the one you love.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES (optional)

1. Which paragraph was the easiest to listen to? Which paragraph was the most difficult? Look at the vocabulary and sentence structure, then think why one paragraph was easy and another difficult.

2. Listen and write the sentences:

Valentine's Day usually gets label a hallmark holiday... (paragraph 1)

Two hundred years earlier, Shakespeare mentioned it in Hamlet, and... (paragraph 2)

The Emperor had proclaimed marriage illegal for young men, because... (paragraph 4)

And although Valentine's Day has become quite commercial, it still contains... (paragraph 7)

3. Do you think hallmark holidays are good or bad? How about Saint Valentine's Day? Why do you think so?

ANSWERS

SUMMARIZATION - Listen and write the key idea of the paragraph.				
1. Paragraph two looks at some of the commercial aspects of Valentine's Day. It also introduces the history of the holiday.				
2. Paragraph three explains the holiday's beginnings in the Roman Empire with a festival called "Lupercalia."				
3. The first theory about Valentine is presented here. He disagreed with the Emperor, and continued to marry young couples.				
4. Paragraph five presents a second theory. Valentine was executed because he helped prisoners escape Roman jails.				
5. This paragraph says that Valentine fell in love with the jailor's daughter, and wrote the first Valentine's Day message.				
6. No one knows which theory is correct. But it shows that the holiday has more meaning than some people realize.				
VOCABULARY - Fill in the missing words.				
a. Hallmark	b. merit	c. engagement	d. affection	e. although
f. illegal	g. unmarried	h. conditions	i. heroic	j. naysayers
EXTENSION ACTIVITIES - Listen and match the parts of the sentences.				
1. ...but both positive and negative arguments have equal merit.				
2. ...the first Valentine's Day card still in existence was written in 1415.				
3. ...he realized that unmarried soldiers fought better.				
4. ...an important aspect shared by all of the best holidays: time spent thinking of and being with the one you love.				