

Valentine's Day

Topic

Valentine's Day; love, dating and romance

Aims

- To learn and develop vocabulary related to love and romance
- To practise speaking and reading skills
- To practise giving opinions

Age / level

secondary and adult / B1 or B2

Time

60 minutes

Materials

1. Valentine's Day worksheet
2. Internet links
BBC resource with a quiz and a page with how to say 'I love you' in 55 languages:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_1770000/newsid_1779400/1779489.stm
LearnEnglish Teens reading activities on Valentine's Day:
<https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/uk-now/read-uk/valentines-day>
Webpage on UK Valentine's Day traditions:
<http://resources.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/questions/valentine.htm>

Introduction

Did you know that in the UK we spend about £503m on cards, flowers, chocolates and other gifts for Valentine's Day? Valentine's Day is big business! This lesson is designed to be used near the date of Valentine's Day (14 February) to talk about the topic of love and romance. If you are teaching teenagers you can expect this topic to cause a bit of excitement and silliness but usually it's a topic that teens want to talk about so can be a great opportunity to extend their vocabulary in an area they are interested in.

Task 1 is a brainstorm of vocabulary for you to find out how much vocabulary your students have and to introduce some new words. Task 2 is a selection of well-known quotes about love for students to discuss. Task 3 gets students to think about how people usually meet each other in their country. Task 4 is a reading text from the British Council's Trend UK website which should introduce some ideas for students to discuss using the post reading activity. Task 5 is a role play based on speed dating and can be adapted for most levels. Task 6 is a ranking activity to decide how important love is in our lives.

Procedure

Task 1 - Valentine's vocabulary	<p>To get students thinking about the topic of Valentine's Day draw a big heart on the board and see if your students can fill it with words to do with love. Depending on the level make sure you try to stretch their vocabulary so everyone takes away a few useful words they didn't know before.</p>
Task 2 - Love quotes	<p>Pick and choose the quotes you use depending on the level of your students. If you have to spend ages trying to explain each one the activity will lose its fun. You could cut up the quotes and give them to pairs or small groups to decipher (translate into their own language if you feel it's appropriate and useful) and comment on, or get students to discuss the quotes in small groups and then share their ideas with the whole class.</p>
Task 3 - Looking for love	<p>UK info – Over 50% of British people are unmarried. You could use this statistic as an introduction to this discussion</p>
Task 4 - I sent a letter to my love... Reading task	<p>This is a reading task from the Trend UK website and should be suitable for intermediate levels and above. It should give you the basis for talking about Valentine's Day in the UK. The post reading questions can be used as a starting point for further discussion.</p> <p>Answers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What is different about Valentine's cards to cards for other occasions? <i>They're usually anonymous.</i> 2) Which is more popular in the UK? Sending cards by 'snail mail' or sending texts? <i>Text messaging (six times more texts than cards are sent in the UK).</i> 3) Do you think sending a text or instant message is a good way to declare your love? Why (not)? <i>Students' opinions.</i> 4) What are the most common gifts to give on Valentine's Day? <i>Flowers and chocolates.</i> 5) Name two of the more interesting Valentine's Day gifts mentioned in the article. <i>Any two from helicopter ride, balloon flight, Ferrari test drive or visit to a health club.</i>
Task 5 - Speed dating game	<p>Speed dating is a popular way to meet people in the UK. It was designed in LA in the 90s for singles who don't have time to go out much to look for love! Speed dates are organised all over the UK and in many other countries too. The idea is people pay to attend (usually £15+) and all the participants meet in a bar or a club. An equal number of men and women attend. The men rotate and have three minutes (in some cases seven minutes) to speak to each woman. At the end all participants decide if they would like to meet anyone again and give the numbers of the people they were interested in to the organisers. If both the man and the woman decided they would like to see each other again the phone numbers or e-mails are exchanged and it's up to the two people to follow it up. There are also gay speed dating events in the UK.</p> <p>This is a role play activity based on the idea of speed dating. It is suitable for a range of levels from pre-intermediate upwards. Questions can be very simple or more complex depending on the level of the students.</p>

Before you start do a quick brainstorm of possible jobs, hobbies, interests and personality types and make sure there are a few unusual ones to make for some comical encounters. If you think your class need to, you could also brainstorm some possible questions for them to ask each other on their 'speed dates' so they don't get stuck once the three minutes begin. You could reduce the time to one minute for lower levels.

If your students have never heard of speed dating, explain the idea to them and get their opinions.

Warning: I would probably only do this role play with a reasonably mature group of students!

Task 6 - How important is love anyway?

This is a simple ranking activity. Put students into small groups to talk together and put the following in order of importance for them. Encourage them to justify their rankings. Then ask two groups to compare their answers.

Contributed by

Jo Budden