

*OUR FAVOURITE  
ROM-COMS!*

*An important  
advertisement  
from Threadly*

*WHAT  
LOVE IS  
ALL  
ABOUT*



*SPOTLIGHT:  
VALENTINES  
EDITION*

# *Introduction*

This month's edition of Spotlight is dedicated to all types of love and all things Valentine's day - including the origins of the day itself, a ranking of Rom-Coms and an article about what love actually is (plus so much more). These articles aim to give advice as well as develop your knowledge on love through the ages - plus an advertisement from Threadly! We hope you enjoy reading :)

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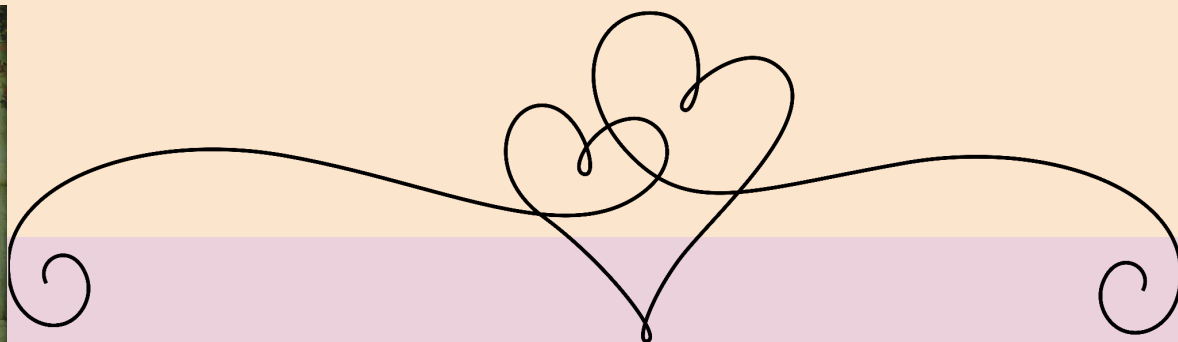
# *A Short History of Valentine's Day*

*By Eleanor*

Every year on the 14th February, people around the world celebrate St Valentine's Day. Gifts are given and dates are enjoyed, but who is St Valentine? Why did we start celebrating this day? I want to discover the meaning and history of this day and how it turned from an ancient Roman ritual to a modern day celebration of consumerism.

The history of St Valentine himself is rather a confusing one. The Catholic Church recognises at least three St Valentines (or similar spelling) each with different legends and mysteries surrounding them. One legend suggests that, after Emperor Claudius II outlawed young men marrying, a priest named Valentine continued to marry young couples in secret and was put to death. Another legend believes that Valentine's Day comes from St Valentine of Terni, a bishop who also ended up being beheaded by Claudius II for saving young men from going to war. The final St Valentine is one who reportedly aided in setting Christian captives free from harsh Roman prisons. The story goes that he then fell in love with one of the Christian girls who was trapped in the prison and sent her numerous love letters ending with "from your Valentine", a phrase that is now widely used today on 14th February. While all of these stories are somewhat different and include tales of different 'Valentines', they all commonly emphasise the romantic figure that we are supposed to celebrate through sharing our own love on Valentine's Day.

However, while St Valentine himself is where we get the traditions we see today from, the actual celebration occurring on 14th of February derives from Pagan traditions and not the Christian St Valentine. Lupercalia was originally celebrated by Romans each year around 13th - 15th February. It was celebrated to purify the city and promote fertility as well as being around the time that it was thought that the avian mating season began around this time, which is why it was, and still often is, associated with birds. Interestingly, the month 'February' is named after one of the purifying instruments from this time, a Februa. There is speculation that this festival was also either to honour Faunus (the God of agriculture) and Romulus and Remus (the founders of Rome) or to honour Lupercus (the God of fertility). During this festival, many feasts were held after the sacrifice of a goat (symbolising fertility) and a dog (symbolising purity). Later on in the day, the women of Rome would put their names into an urn and be called out by one of the single men of the city. The pair would then be together for a year afterwards, often resulting in marriage. However, we cannot truly understand Lupercalia as, despite surviving the initial rise of Christianity, it was outlawed in the 5th Century for being "un-Christian". Pope Galasius had then declared 14th February as St Valentine's Day. However, this day didn't become associated with the romance that we know of today until around the 14th or 15th century.

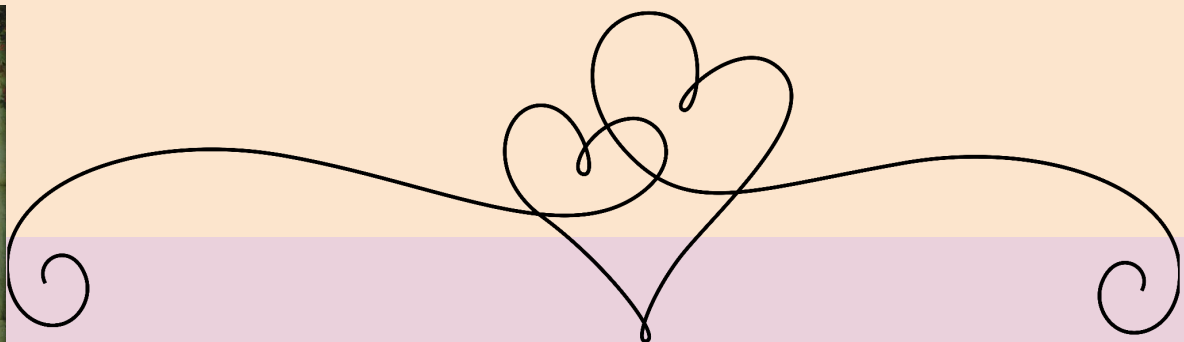
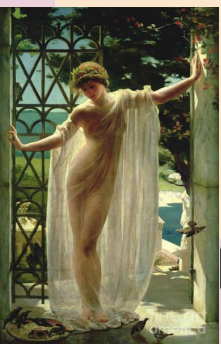


# *A Short History of Valentine's Day*

*By Eleanor*

It was in the Middle Ages that St Valentine's Day became more recognisable to our version today. In 1375, the English poet Geoffrey Chaucer was the first to record Valentine's Day as a romantic celebration in his poem "Parliament of Fowles", where he wrote: "For this was sent on Seynt Valentyne's day / Whan every foul cometh ther to choose his mate.". However, the oldest known Valentine to be sent was 40 years later, in 1415, by the Duke of Orleans to his wife after he was captured at the Battle of Agincourt and put in the Tower of London. It is believed that several years after this, Henry V did a similar thing and composed a love letter to Catherine of Valois for Valentine's Day. From there, more and more people began to do a similar thing.

Thousands of roses, sweets and letters have been sent and cherished by loved ones ever since, adding a kind of loss to the deep history that St Valentine's Day holds. We forget how the Pagan tradition was ripped away from them by Christians at the time, and how we have now forgotten the true meaning of "Valentine's" Day. Furthermore, through consumerism and how Valentine's Day has now become a day to spend money instead of celebrating love, we have lost the meaning of the day further and further. The history of this day is not straightforward or necessarily clear, but it holds so much significance to how we now see the day in our modern world. Maybe we should be celebrating through sending heartfelt letters instead of spending a fortune on overpriced chocolates catered for this day. Maybe we should not celebrate at all and, instead, honour the day that was supposed to be Lupercalia before the Christian rulers ruined it.



# *Cupid: Sweet Cherub, or Nymphomaniacal Monster*

Freddy Jones

Every holiday has its mascot; Christmas has Father Christmas, Easter - its eponymous bunny, even less celebrated times, such as St. Patrick's Day, feature some iconic characters that plaster the cards or merchandise of the season. However, many forget that these festive figures originate from a wide variety of historical, and mythological sources, with them featuring in strange stories, or having modernly dark origins. Over the centuries of these tales being passed down, the myths slowly became entwisted with the jolly holidays that these figures have come to represent, with their depictions - fuelled by the ever growing power of hungry corporations trying to sell more greeting cards - quickly becoming lighter, simpler, and more in line with what is marketable today. With examples of Santa hiring a cannibalistic butcher as his right hand man to follow him and whip all the naughty children, or the 'tooth fairy' being a way for parents to ensure baby teeth were protected from evil witches attempting to curse their babies, these figures have stories much darker than first meets the eyes.

Surely Cupid, the sweet little baby with wings that dances naked across cards throughout the romantic season of Valentine's, does not form a part of this pattern. Surely such a pure and innocent figure would not have such monstrous origins, as he symbolises a holiday focused entirely on love and joy. Impossible, right?

## **Cupid: God of Desire**

Cupid, or the Ancient Greek 'Eros', is depicted throughout Greek and Roman mythology, as the God of Desire, Erotic Love (Originating from the Greek name of Eros), Affection and Attraction, with 'Cupid' directly translating as 'Passionate Desire'. Already a far cry from the innocent little angel that we all know today.

However, it is not only his symbolism that has changed over time, but also his sheer power and respect. Some stories even describe Cupid as one of the oldest Gods in existence, a Primordial God who came to being alongside the world, with Hesiod (a Greek poet) claiming he was the third God to ever have come into being, only preceded by Chaos/Khaos (Space, Nothingness and Creation) and Gaia/Terra (The Earth herself.) Other myths present him as the child of Love and War, his mother, Aphrodite/Venus, the goddess of love, and his father, Ares/Mars, the god of war, leaving Eros/Cupid as the links between, the powerful desire you can feel towards lovers, or rivals. He is both extremes, passion to the point of danger; he was both the longing you feel towards the one you truly love, and the strange attraction towards what you hate. Tales were spun of a vengeful, and spiteful Cupid, who would punish those who antagonised him, making his enemies fall in love with hideous creatures, animals, inanimate objects, or worse, as well as the more common fun and kind God as he is presented today. If he reveres you, and you respect him, he will grant lovely boons to mortals, repairing unrequited love, giving confidence, and more. While seen as a beautiful, and youthful force of nature, this 'God of Love' was equally described as a monster, striking massive fear in all beings, great and small.

While his signature powers have largely been retained to this day, with his bow and arrow striking love into the heart of mortals, he regularly used this power for much more nefarious purposes than his contemporary counterpart appears to, sometimes under direct orders from his (sometimes) mother, Aphrodite.

## **The Spiteful Trickster**

There are many tales of the devious God of Love, where many tales describe mortals who dare to insult or question his power are cursed with unrequited love, hideous taboo relationships, and worse. However, it was not just mortals who Cupid inflicted the terrible curse of love on, with stories of disputes between Cupid and other Gods being surprisingly common within myth. The most famous of this being a discourse between Cupid, and Apollo, one of the most powerful gods in existence. Apollo, also famous for his use of the bow and arrow, had mocked and challenged Cupid, claiming that a puny Love God could never defeat such a skilled archer as Apollo in his own game. Cupid, taking that as a challenge, struck Apollo with a golden arrow, cursing him to fall in love with the first person he sees. This just so happened to fall on Daphne, a young naiad, or river spirit, who Cupid shot with an arrow of lead, cursing her to be impervious to love. When Apollo pursued the girl, she fled, fearful, begging for help from her father, who transformed her into a laurel tree to escape his pursuits. Broken-hearted, Apollo fastened her leaves into the first wreath, which he is commonly depicted wearing throughout time, proof of Cupid's victory over the God.

## **Even the God of Love, falls in love**

However, one cannot say Cupid was always cruel, despite the tales of his mischief. One tale focused on Cupid tells a different story, one of love and passion, where Cupid himself finds himself on the receiving end of the arrow. Psyche, blessed with beauty, was frequently compared to the goddess of love herself, Venus (or Aphrodite). Venus grew jealous of Psyche's beauty and devised a plan to stop her admiration. She called upon Cupid, to use his arrows to make Psyche fall in love with the most hideous creature he could find. Cupid agreed, but as he took aim with his arrows, he accidentally pricked himself, falling deeply in love with Psyche. Under Venus's orders, Psyche was left alone, and no suitor dared to approach her, leaving her to suffer in loneliness so Psyche sought the guidance of an oracle, who prophesied that she would be wed to a monstrous serpent.

Heartbroken, Psyche's family left her atop a mountain, where the gentle breeze carried her to a grand palace.

In the palace, Psyche was treated like royalty, but her mysterious lover only visited her under the cloak of darkness, warning her never to gaze upon his face. Overwhelmed by curiosity, Psyche could no longer resist and lit a lamp one night to catch a glimpse of her lover. To her astonishment, she discovered the divine beauty of Cupid himself. Startled by Psyche's betrayal, Cupid fled, leaving Psyche alone once more.

Heartbroken and determined to win back her love, Psyche embarked on a perilous journey to prove her devotion where Venus set a series of seemingly impossible tasks for Psyche to complete. Through the help of various gods and creatures, including ants and a river god, Psyche overcame each trial, gathering golden fleece from sheep, collecting water from the river Styx, and journeying to the underworld itself to retrieve a box of beauty from Persephone. Trembling with fear, Psyche opened the box, worried her love will not see her beautiful after her hardships, only to be consumed by a deep slumber. However, Cupid, who had forgiven her, found her lying unconscious and awakened her with a gentle kiss. Moved by Psyche's unwavering love and bravery, Zeus, the king of the gods, granted her immortality, allowing her to live eternally with Cupid. Together, they ascended to Mount Olympus, where they were reunited for all eternity.

While Cupid was a trickster, the tale of Psyche and Cupid became a timeless legend of love, forgiveness, and devotion, one that I believe should be more significantly celebrated during the Valentine holiday. This story of devotion and hardships truthfully displays the truth of love, showing that love can be a struggle, yet it is the lows that lets you truthfully appreciate the highs. This complex and fascinating characterisation of Cupid is a much more culturally relevant, and relatable mascot for the holiday, certainly more intricate than a fat baby, flying around with a kids archery-set and a nappy.



# *Fourteen love stories through the ages*

*By Eleanor*

Over time, we as humans continue to have one common denominator: love. While arranged marriages and unhappy couples have existed for centuries, we will all continue to find our own kind of love. However, today I wish to draw your attention to some of the most passionate love stories through time, so let's dive into fourteen tales of adoration during this February fourteenth.

## *1) Orpheus and Eurydice - 530 BC*

Orpheus was a musician and a poet in Greek mythology who fell in love with the nymph, Eurydice. Shortly into their marriage, Eurydice gets bitten fatally by a viper. Stricken with terrible grief, Orpheus decides to go to the underworld to bring her back. He manages to charm the guardian to the underworld, Cerberus, through his musical abilities. Hades and Persephone decide that Orpheus can bring his love back to the world under one condition: she must follow behind him from the underworld but he must not turn to look at her. Orpheus is overjoyed at the simplicity of the task but, just as they are about to leave, Orpheus turns to look at Eurydice. Some theorise that he couldn't hear her footsteps and thought that Hades had tricked him, causing him to turn to look at Eurydice, but no one truly knows. Eurydice is trapped in the underworld forever and Orpheus never stopped grieving for her.

## *1) Markus and Cleopatra - 32 to 30 BC*

Markus was the Roman military leader who fell deeply in love with Cleopatra, the Queen of Egypt. The story goes that Markus neglects his duty to the Roman Empire for his love of Cleopatra and eventually stabs himself as the Roman Empire closes in on Egypt. Cleopatra eventually commits suicide through a venomous snake bite and, as her last wish, supposedly gets buried with Mark Anthony, her lover.

## *2) Paris and Helen - around the 11th century*

Another mythological Greek story begins with Paris being tasked to judge the most beautiful Goddess by Zeus. Aphrodite offers Paris the most beautiful woman in the world in order to win his favour. Paris chose Aphrodite, at the wrath of the other Goddesses, and went to Sparta to claim the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen (a Greek princess who was already married). He fell deeply in love with her and wanted to keep her from the Greeks. This then sparked the Trojan War as Menelaus of Sparta wanted to fight to get his wife back. When Paris was slain during the war, Helen ends up going back to Sparta with Menelaus, continuing her happy marital state.

#### *4) Henry II and Rosamund Clifford - 12th century*

Rosamund Clifford became known as “The Fair Rosamund” or “Rose of the World” in mediaeval England. Henry II supposedly fell deeply in love with Rosamund and had an affair with her during his wife Eleanor's last pregnancy. It is said that Henry II tried to keep Rosamund safe by installing a Labyrinth in her house but legend says that Queen Eleanor found her way in and poisoned Rosamund. Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine continued to plot against her husband, which we have evidence for as people believe that she incited her sons to overthrow their father and take control of the English throne.

#### *5) Lancelot and Guinevere - 12th century*

The story of Lancelot and Guinevere is part of Arthurian legend. As the legend goes, Lancelot was one of the greatest knights around King Arthur's roundtable. Fatally, Lancelot fell in love with King Arthur's wife, Queen Guinevere. The romance blossomed slowly, but eventually Lancelot and Guinevere became lovers. Another knight became suspicious of Lancelot and confronted him in front of the King and Queen which came to nothing after Lancelot won in a duel against the other knight. However, rumours continued to circulate about the two lovers and they were eventually caught. Guinevere was sentenced to burn for her infidelity, causing Lancelot to attempt to rescue her, killing many knights in the process. Lancelot and Guinevere were split up by Arthur, but neither were executed. Guinevere spent the rest of her life as a nun in Amesbury. Lancelot eventually found out and snuck into the nunnery in order to find his love. Once he found her, he realised he was too late as she had passed away.

#### *6) Tristan and Iseult - 12th century*

Legend says that Tristan was a Cornish knight and Iseult was an Irish princess. Tristan was supposed to escort Iseult to Cornwall to marry his Uncle, King Mark of Cornwall. Along the journey, both Tristan and Iseult ingest a love potion. It was given to Iseult by her mother who intended for her to give some to King Mark and ingest some herself so that Iseult and Mark would fall in love. However, after Tristan and Iseult drank the potion, they both fell madly in love with each other in a forbidden love affair. Both of the lovers end up running away after the King found out about their adultery. After a few years, the King found them but took pity on the lovers after being in exile for so long. They were able to go to Brittany and live peacefully together.

#### *7) Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal - early 16th century*

Mumtaz Mahal and Shah Jahan were betrothed from a very young age. On the day of their wedding, they were said to have been deeply in love with one another. After their wedding, Shah Jahan was supposed to have given her the title Mumtaz Mahal, meaning ‘the exalted one of the Palace’. Jahan had married two other women, who were said to have been married for political reasons. However, Shah supposedly never showed a great interest in his two other wives as he was so enamoured with Mumtaz. Mumtaz Mahal died in childbirth 19 years into their marriage, hurting Shah deeply. He ended up building the Taj Mahal as a mausoleum for Mumtaz as an embodiment of his undying love and devotion for her.

#### *8) Napoleon and Josephine - late 18th century*

Napoleon became smitten with Josephine and continually wrote love letters to her from the battlefield. She was more reserved but loved him deeply while his letters showed a deep infatuation with her. However, shortly after they married Napoleon went straight back to war and Josephine consoled herself with her secret lover. They both continued to have different affairs while still seemingly in love until they decided to divorce later on.

### *9) Alexander I of Serbia and Draga Masin - early 19th to early 20th century*

As soon as Alexander saw Draga, he immediately fell in love. The King's government wanted to find Alexander a suitable princess to marry, but he was still secretly seeing Draga. Alexander decided to get his father, the King, out of the country on the pretense that he was negotiating his marriage to a German princess. Whilst his father was away, Alexander announced his engagement to Draga. His popularity declined after this as it was unusual for a King to marry a commoner and not another member of nobility but he did it because they loved one another greatly. The wedding took place in 1900 despite the government's fierce opposition and threat to resign. Alexander and Draga decided to fake Draga being pregnant (she was unable to get pregnant due to an accident she had) and secretly adopt a young child to become the new heir to Serbia. Tragically, all of this was discovered and plots to assassinate Draga and Alexander began to circulate. In 1903, the two lovers were assassinated by some of the highest military officers and senior officials at the time.

### *10) Greta Garbo and Mercedes de Acosta - early 20th century*

Mercedes de Acosta was said to have had many great love affairs with many actresses but the person who she is said to have loved most of all is Greta Garbo. After meeting in 1931, Mercedes became obsessed with Greta and their love letters still exist today. They would go on long vacations together under the pretence of being 'friends' but the poems that the two wrote to one another would suggest otherwise. Their long love affair ended in 1944 as Greta seemed to lose interest, but Mercedes remained in love with Greta for the rest of her life.

### *11) Oscar Wilde and Alfred Douglas - late 19th to early 20th century*

Oscar Wilde was a famous poet and playwright who fell in love with Lord Alfred Douglas. The two met through a friend and bonded over their shared love for the book 'The Picture of Dorian Grey'. Oscar was married and had two children, but was falling deeply in love with Alfred. The two had to remain cautious as homosexual men would be punished severely at the time. It was only a year after they first met that the real love affair began. Alfred found himself being blackmailed and enlisted Oscar's help, drawing the two further together and igniting the start of their story. The two would share highly sentimental letters until Oscar was involved in a court case which ended up revealing those letters, sentencing him to prison for a short period of time. When Oscar was released, he lived with Alfred in Naples and the two could seemingly find some peace together. However, when Oscar died in 1900, the two were apparently separated. We will never truly know what occurred between the pair and whether they were still in some kind of relationship when Oscar died.

### *12) Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West - 1922 to 1941*

Virginia Woolf met Vita Sackville in 1922 and the pair seemed to keep close contact until around 1941. The lovers weren't very secretive about their relationship. They shared passionate letters, which have been published and can still be read today. Both women were married but seemed to have open relationships and devoted husbands. They would yearn for one another when they were apart, which is evident in their desperate love letters. The authors would help each other with their writing and their love remained strong as the two sapphists were devoted to each other, as reported at the time.

### *13) Bonnie and Clyde - 1932 to 1934*

These notorious lovers were reportedly inseparable after their first meeting, until Clyde was arrested. Bonnie began aiding him with his crimes however, Clyde was persistently in and out of prison. Latterly, the pair were on the run as members of the Barrow Gang and they murdered at least 12 people along with committing robberies. Bonnie and Clyde were eventually caught by a law enforcement team and shot multiple times. They had wished to be buried together, but Bonnie's family refused. Their story is romanticised due to the pair's undying love for each other, despite the horrific crimes they committed.

### *14) Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok - late 19th to mid 20th century*

Eleanor Roosevelt is remembered as an activist, diplomat and First Lady. She was married to President Franklin D Roosevelt and no one suspected her of having romantic feelings for anyone else. However, many love letters have been discovered between Eleanor and Lorena Hickock. These letters began in 1932, continuing for 3 decades with over 3000 being sent between the pair. Lorena had grown up in poverty but managed to escape her lowly beginnings and ended up gaining a job in the Whitehouse. It is speculated that both Eleanor and her husband had had affairs, so it is not surprising to learn from the 3000 intimate letters that Lorena and Eleanor were lovers. While the affair is said to have waned by 1940, the pair continued a close relationship up until Eleanor's death in 1962.

# ROMANTIC RECIPES

*Spaghetti Carbonara*

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/next-level-spaghetti-carbonara>

*Steak Diane*

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/next-level-steak-diane>

*Chocolate hazelnut sandwiches*

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/sweetheart-choc-hazelnut-sandwiches>

*Halloumi Pasta*

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/halloumi-pasta>

*Hunters Chicken*

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/hunters-chicken-0>

*Toad in the hole*

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/sams-toad-hol>

*Red Velvet cookies*

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/red-velvet-cookies>

# Love letters.

Once, a handwritten letter was the chivalrous way of professing one's undying love. Delivered by cupid on February 14th with crumpled corners and a few ink blotches that appeared when it seems the lover was lost for words.

There was no side swiping a message or emojis to react - just simply words, in their truest form.

Napoleon Bonaparte and Josephine de Beauharnais, a love so robust it was only disunionated by the sweeping distance of a world-changing war.

Just 2 days after their marriage Napoleon fell to his duties, leaving the intimacy of his new wife. Such a perilous position was a wife's worst fear but the letters they exchanged gushed with their declarations of adoration to one another in a desperate attempt to keep their love alive in the face of battle...

Dear Josephine...

'Since I left you, I have been constantly depressed. My happiness is to be near you. Incessantly I live over in my memory your caresses, your tears, your affectionate solicitude. The charms of the incomparable Josephine kindle continually a burning and a glowing flame in my heart.

In the early 1850's, Emily Dickinson and Susan (Susie) Gilbert met and grew attached as Susan gradually became Emily's poetic muse. Emily Dickinson composed some of the most passionate poems that we treasure today. All through her life Emily carried a deep devotion to the love they shared despite the prejudice of the time against homosexuality. To hide their love, Susan married Emily's brother and the pair lived as neighbours. They loved through the windows that gazed upon each others garden, professing it in letters that were neatly placed in their mailboxes.

Dear Susie...

Susie, forgive me Darling, for every word I say — my heart is full of you, none other than you in my thoughts, yet when I seek to say to you something not for the world, words fail me.

Despite the controversy that surrounds John F Kennedy's life and assassination, it is not only his political life that is open to scrutiny. Kennedy was a natural flirt and had countless affairs that still cause interest today.

Particularly the 3 year relationship between him and the Swedish aristocrat Gunilla Von Post in which they spent a mysterious week together in a lavish and luxurious Swedish castle, documented as a "bright memory" of Kennedy's life.

Dear Gunilla,

"If you don't marry come over as I should like to see you. I had a wonderful time last summer with you. It is a bright memory of my life, I am anxious to see you. Is it not strange after all these months? Perhaps at first it shall be a little difficult as we shall be strangers - but not strangers - and I am sure it will all work and I shall think that though it is a long way to Gunilla - it is worth it."

Perhaps a slightly more up-to-date pair, whose love letter has floated around the internet for years now - accompanied by "WISH IT WAS ME!!!!!" and "I WANT WHAT THEY HAD" comments - is Alex Turner and Alexa Chang.

The love story that occurred between the musician and his muse was celebrated by over enthusiastic fans, posting online and inspiring all art forms of indie love. The media was desperate to get a glimpse of the relationship and creativity flourished because of it; songs, pictures, and most notably the raw passion sewn into Alex's letter, that would soon be recognised as the most sincere declaration of love in the indie world.

Alexa,

"My mouth hasn't shut up about you since you kissed it. The idea that you may kiss it again is stuck in my brain, which hasn't stopped thinking about you since, well, before any kiss. And now the prospect of those kisses seems to wind me like when you slip on the stairs and one of the steps hits you in the middle of the back. The notion of them continuing for what is traditionally terrifying forever excites me to an unfamiliar degree."

Whenever finding yourself with an empty heart, relaying the beauty of these love letters of the past, I prompt you to play Beethoven's piano "sonata opus 111".

His symphonies always manage to dance in perfect sync to our heart beating and we get the chance to truly indulge in the melody of love. Not only was Beethoven arguably the greatest composer in history, but also the author of love letters that will now inspire anyone that writes a confession letter of their own.

However, what makes him different from the rest is the lack of identifiable salutation. His "immortal beloved" is perhaps the most melancholic term of endearment anyone could be named, particularly when followed with the beautiful words that trail it.

Despite this - with Beethoven as the lover and our anonymous as the loved - such words have never been claimed and the composer was left unmarried with his letters hidden within his personal belongings.

It is tragic, of course, but the knowledge that such passion was ignited in his heart and poured onto paper is slightly reassuring that if you look for it, I've got a sneaky feeling that love actually is all around.

*My Immortal Beloved,*

*Be calm; for only by calmly considering our lives can we achieve our purpose to live together — be calm — love me — Today — yesterday — what tearful longing for you — for you — you — my life — my all — all good wishes to you — Oh, do continue to love me — never misjudge your lover's most faithful heart.*

*Every yours*

*Every mine*

*Ever ours*



# *The Most Loving Songs on 'Lover', by Taylor Swift: A Ranking*

## **Charlotte's Ranking**

- 1) Daylight
- 2) Paper Rings
- 3) Cornelia Street
- 4) Lover
- 5) Soon You'll Get Better
- 6) London Boy
- 7) False God
- 8) I Think He Knows
- 9) All of the Girls You've Loved Before
- 10) Miss Americana & the Heartbreak Prince
- 11) It's Nice to Have a Friend
- 12) Afterglow
- 13) Me!
- 14) The Archer
- 15) Cruel Summer
- 16) I Forgot That You Existed
- 17) Death By a Thousand Cuts
- 18) You Need to Calm Down
- 19) The Man

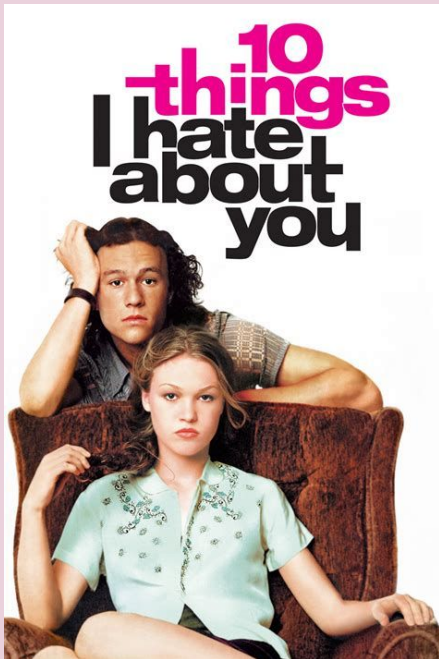
## **Eleanor's Ranking**

- 1) Cornelia Street
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- 14) The Archer
- 15) I Forgot That You Existed
- 16) The Man
- 17) You Need To Calm Down
- 18) Cruel Summer
- 19) Death By A Thousand Cuts

# Rom-Coms: A Recommendation

*By Charlotte*

'Tis the season to binge romantic comedies in bed procrastinating, but that also means it's the season to hear, probably men, whinge about how they're just stupid and so unrealistic. Whether for you it's idealism or relatability, the love found in Rom-Coms is most certainly possible, even if some unaffectionate can't-be-asked guy doesn't think so (sometimes Galentines is better than Valentines). So, whether you love them or hate them, in no specific order, here's a list of the best rom-coms to watch this Valentines.



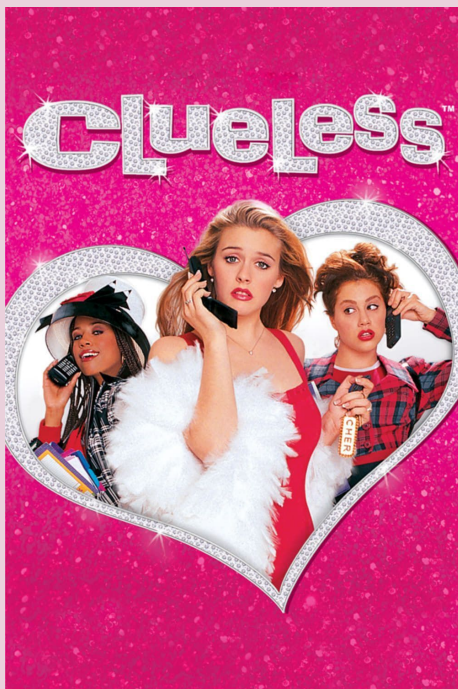
'10 things I hate about you' is my personal favourite; it follows the iconic Kat Stratford and her beautifully popular sister, Bianca, who is being pursued by a boy. This boy plays the quintessential 'bad boy', named Patrick, to go out with Kat because their Dad won't let Bianca date until Kat does. This is actually a retelling of Shakespeare's 'The Taming of the Shrew' through a modern lens. Just as the original text, Kat and Patrick don't start off as lovers but soon fall in love through the film's chaotic, emotional, and tragic events. From Patrick's performance of 'Can't take my eyes off of you', to the '10 things I hate about you' poem itself, the film knows how to break your heart and then put it back together again.



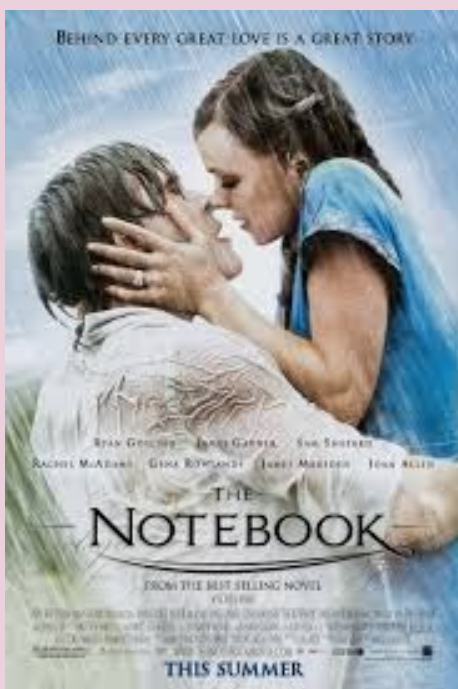
'13 going on 30' is Isabelle's favourite Rom-Com. It depicts Jenna Rink's journey to her childhood sweetheart as she (a 13 year old girl) wakes up as her 30 year old self, removed from her best friend, Matty. The film follows her rejection of her adulthood greed, as she and Matty rekindle their relationship and gradually fall in love. Jenna learns that popularity and success aren't everything, and chooses to rewrite her life the right way. The mix between light hearted comedy and emotional analogy creates a depiction of love and womanhood that is childishly refreshing.



'Notting Hill' is both Emma and Sasha's favourite Rom-Com. With a very strong cast of Julia Roberts and Hugh Grant, the film follows the story of Anna, a famous actress, and William, a bookshop owner. Unsurprisingly, the love story begins when Anna buys a book from William's shop, and follows their unlikely romance. An uncomplicated plot but popular with the masses.



'Clueless' is one of my favourite 'It Girl', coming of age 90's films, but it doesn't jump to mind when I think of Rom-Coms. The love story between ex Step-Siblings is a little unconventional. The movie is most renowned for its iconic fashion, girlhood relationships, and teenage comedy. You don't get more iconic than Cher Horowitz, the blonde Beverly Hills protagonist, and her unique fashion sense. The movie is loosely based on Jane Austen's Emma with a clear classic romantic plot. It is secondary however to the beauty and kindness of female friendships.



Although slightly depressing, 'The Notebook' has to be included in the top Rom-Coms as it follows the doomed story of Allie and Noah. The narration of the story is through an elderly man reading the notebook. The couple are torn apart by class and war, but write letters to each other, which we all know never ends well. The beautiful cinematography and bittersweet tale proves that love does indeed exist even in the toughest of circumstances.



500 Days of Summer follows Tom's memories of his failed relationship with Summer. They entered into a casual relationship but he pursued her for something more serious, thinking he can convince her. 500 days is the story of his failure, and a reminder that women don't owe themselves to a man (or vice versa!). Popular for its soundtrack (including The Smiths) and its quirky structure. Even though love may not be forever, it doesn't make it any less formative.



'Love, Rosie' tells the tragic miscommunication of protagonists Alex and Rosie, who were childhood best friends who should've been childhood sweethearts. It's a tragic case of wrong time, wrong person and both parties end up with different, but equally toxic, partner. The film is frustrating, emotional, and promiscuously funny. But mostly, 'Love, Rosie' is the story that true love overcomes struggle, and sometimes, you just have to say how you feel.



Is Love Actually too festive to be a Rom-Com, is it too Rom-Com to be a Christmas film? Either way, Love Actually is perfectly funny in every way; filled with loveable and detestable characters that depict love as multi-faceted and without boundaries. The intertwined characters find 'love is all around', and some of them discover love where they didn't expect to.

# Is marriage just an expensive party?

The concept of marriage varies within countries, religions and individuals themselves. Marriage should be the beginning of a wholesome journey in which partners come together, uniting their families and proclaiming their love for one another to the world. This is what society has shaped us to believe. Are the traditions, customs and fairytales distorting our vision as to what the true commitment of marriage is?

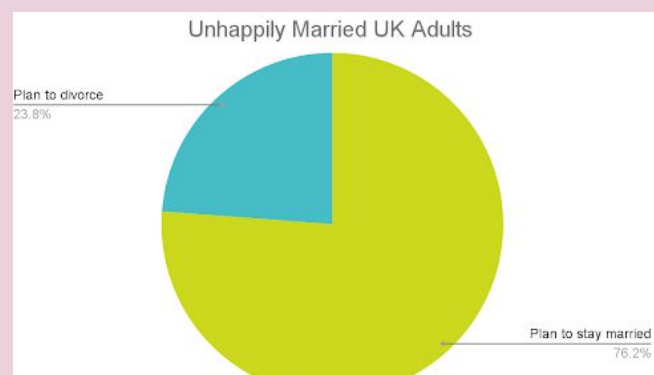
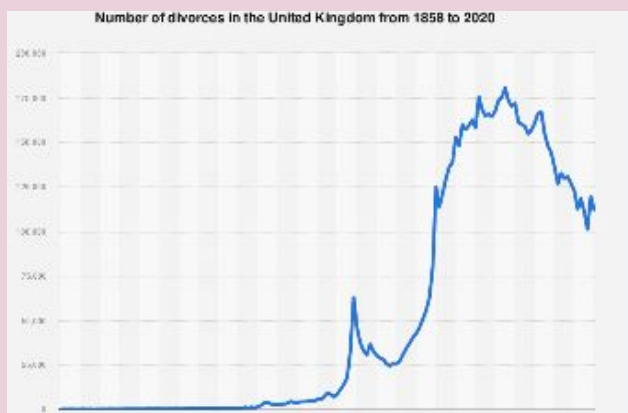
In Medieval Europe, marriage originated as a political or economic arrangement. It was not until the 18th century that marriage became based on romantic attachments, as marriage previously did not consider the feelings of Brides and Grooms. This shift meant that parents no longer held the decision for their offspring to marry, it was up to freedom and choice of mutual attraction. Society conditioned men to establish a career to support their family and for women to strive to be mothers and wives. As society has evolved, we see more mutual power in a marriage, the union being an equal contract between both partners.

While romance continues to be the predominant factor of today's society, we see less and less people deciding to 'tie the knot'! Nearly 40% of the UK population never get married, this having heavily increased in comparison to 100 years ago. This can lead us into questioning: is love enough? Many people continue to cohabit and be in a loving relationship but not commit to marriage. This is seemingly a stable alternative to marriage, reducing pressures of divorce and freedom in how your relationship takes its course. Romantic love has a different feel when women no longer view it as an end goal but rather an enticing partnership between two equals.

One in five marriages nowadays begin with signing a 'prenup'. Prenuptial agreements are legal documents that initially decide on how assets will be divided in the case that a marriage fails. Many people see this as planning for failure- in a similar way that men often state their Stag parties as their 'last day freedom'. This depicts marriage as a situation where the couple is 'trapped', doomed for failure and inevitably will end in a fragmented relationship. These common ideals and phrases completely dispute the idea that a marriage can survive on love alone. However, divorce is completely understandable in many cases (no one deserves to be in a relationship where they no longer feel love), anticipating a potential end to the relationship could be described as expecting a marriage to fail. If people feel the need to protect their assets from someone they love, why get married in the first place?

Traditional Christian values dictate that sexual relationships should only belong within a marriage. This idea can influence Christians into getting married hastily in order to fulfil human sexual desires. This can take away the purpose of marriage as it is no longer to celebrate love but instead to avert sin.

As marriage has evolved from a financial decision into a decision based on love, we wonder where the meaning of marriage lies now? As women were once transferred from man to man as if like property, do these views still lie within our society as if marriage is dictated by dominance.



# *Slay the gifts this Valentine's Day!*

Want to treat your significant other this Valentine's Day? With the cost of living crisis it can be difficult looking at the abundance of presents on the shelves knowing you are unable to gift them to your other half. This problem has now been easily solved with these cost-effective, thoughtful things to give to someone to show how much you care for them, that anyone would love! Remember, you don't have to spend a huge amount to show someone that you care.

## *Bae Baskets:*

A positive twist on the TikTok viral Halloween Boo baskets and Christmas Jingle baskets is Bae baskets. These heartfelt hampers are a brilliant way to treat your loved one on this special day. Just simply start by finding yourself something to put these delightful treats in, for example this could be a wooden box, or a basket resembling a chest, it's up to you! Now it's time to decide what to fill it with...

**Chocolates, because who doesn't love chocolate right?** A stress-free gift to help fill your basket up is chocolates. Walk into any shop and you can find them, ranging from simple chocolate bars to fancy gift boxes. In supermarkets, for example Tesco, chocolate can range from 75p-£12. This means you can get your loved one numerous mini chocolate bars that cost less than £1 each, or you could splash the cash and get a box of their favourite chocolates. Either way they will adore it (and you).

**Matching Pyjamas.** This Bae basket filler will always go down well with your partner and there's plenty of reasons why: cute pictures, new clothes - everyone always wants new clothes, comfy and cosy, feel put together and solidifies your relationship. There are so many cute options for matching pyjamas you will be able to find something for anyone.

**Blankets.** With it being cold this time of year, this basket filler is a must. For most people, the perfect evening after a long day is to snuggle up, watch tv with a cup of tea and chocolates, and warm up under a blanket. Gifting somebody a blanket can give them comfort and most importantly show them how much you care for them.



**Candles.** Why not cosy up under your new blanket with the addition of a candle. Candles create the perfect atmosphere for romance and tranquillity and they symbolise passion and love, what more could you want? There's a plethora of scents and designs fit for any month or season of the year.

**Teddy.** The last idea that you can add to your bae basket is a teddy, they will always be a winner when it comes to giving gifts. The variety of teddy's is immense: animals, food, bears, plants. The most important reason why you should get your love a teddy bear is because it will create a bond and hold memories that will last a lifetime.



**An A-Z of Why I love you:** Another gift idea for your partner is a book/ a jar of reasons why you love them. Simply start with something that begins with A, then B and so on, you can write the word and then give a little explanation - your choice!. Here are some examples: loyal, honest, pretty, adventurous. In my opinion, this is the best gift - after the Bae Basket - that you could receive from your significant other.

**Cook breakfast in bed:** This one's for those who live with their valentine, give them breakfast in bed. Imagine waking up with the smell of your favourite food next to you with a cup of tea and your favourite person, that's everyone's dream. There's a multitude of things that you can make for your partner: waffles with chocolate and strawberries, scrambled eggs, smashed avocado on toast, a salmon and cream cheese bagel, pancakes and more!

**Gonks:** I believe that these soft, precious, cute gifts are always a winner. They come in all different shapes, sizes and designs, perfect for any time of year. You can get ones which are solely for special occasions e.g Christmas or Valentines, or you can find ones with pretty designs that can be kept out all year round. They can be you and your significant other's 'child' (just like the teddy you may put in their Bae Basket). They could also be gifted for a practical use, for example some gonks are door stops. Whatever you choose your valentine will adore it.

**Threadly:** Don't walk, run to grab yourself some of these sustainable crochet gifts. This company supports the environment, creating items by reusing locally sourced materials from charity shops and local businesses. They sell things like jewellery, coasters and decorations all crocheted by a team of students at The King Alfred School An Academy. If you care for the environment this company is perfect for you. They use locally sourced yarn from charity shops, the packaging is all paper, the items are ethically handmade and they promote and encourage reusing plastic. They have a range of Valentines gifts for anyone and everyone.





# Is Valentine's Day just another Capitalist scheme?

You walk into your local supermarket at the beginning of the year and suddenly you are overwhelmed with the flood of red roses and teddy bears. What a great way to show someone you love them! Just when the big chocolate companies need more money flowing in, right between Christmas and Easter! Surely genuine expressions of love go beyond material gifts? Pressure from societal expectations and commercial influences may be presenting us as victims of consumerism.

Valentine's Day is ideal to announce your love for someone special in your life, originating from the Catholic church to have a day of feasts to celebrate the martyred Saint Valentine. This is a perfect opportunity to make someone feel great about themselves, encouraging big romantic gestures and maybe even battling past the nerves to announce your love for someone extra special. This day could be spent with an intimate dinner with the two of you, baking exciting sweet treats or even just celebrating platonically with the friends you ultimately adore. I am sure your significant others will be in anticipation to receive a gift from you on February 14th; the shops are stocked ready for you to make a grand purchase.

I am sure those in relationships are extremely excited for the dreaded day in February to arrive. Why wouldn't they be, they are the ones receiving mountains of delightful expressions of love? However, others are a completely different story. Valentine's Day can be a tragic disaster for those who are alone, feeling as though they are not worthy or constricted to the societal expectations that you must be in a relationship and never alone. Being alone must mean you are miserable? The pressures that Valentines dictate are placing those who don't have a significant other in an impossible position of inevitable misery.


Valentine's Day doesn't always have to equal a relationship. You can spend this special day celebrating with your friends, reminding them that they are a part of what makes you happy. This day can also be a day about self-love and appreciation- reminding yourself that you are also worthy in bringing yourself happiness. Love doesn't have to be assigned to one day, the 14th of February can serve as a reminder to make sure others and yourself feel loved.

Valentine's has indeed been criticised as a Capitalist scheme by many: the day promoting consumerism and pressure to splurge on extravagant dinners and flowers. The day can perpetuate feelings of inadequacy in those who cannot afford gifts to live up to societal expectations. There are alternative ways of celebrating that emphasise genuine expressions of love in contradiction to lavish unnecessary spending. I find that what the supermarkets portray can also form a facade of belief that your adoration should be shown through what they display on their shelves. Perhaps you could make something, bake something or just make someone feel special. I know I personally will be shopping at the Threadly Valentine's sale (That is taking place on the 10th February at Burnham Methodist Church from 9-1!!!)



# *So what is Love all about?*

Sasha



The dictionary definition of love is an intense feeling of deep affection. It is a concept that encompasses a range of strong and positive emotional and mental states. But as with everything, the true meaning varies depending on the person and their beliefs. Therefore, the feeling of love cannot easily be defined. Love is a complex matter - it is something that doesn't focus on one particular thing.

You can love your family, your friends and different aspects of your life, so why is something so common so special? The love you feel for each factor is never the same experience and changes depending on who or what you love; that is what makes it unique. If we look at art forms, such as poetry or novels, love is an emotion that we have been experiencing for a long time. Throughout history and even in today's world love brings happiness, warmth and passion - so surely something as delightful as this should be the focus of society and should be the most prominent thing in our lives?

So why has it changed? Why have we gone from spending February 14th celebrating love to celebrating the amount of money we have spent on our partner? Why isn't love at the centre of society?

We know from Eleanor's article that Valentine's day originated from the Pagan tradition of Lupercalia; a festival in which cities were purified and fertility was promoted. It was a time when love and only love was celebrated. Love really was at the centre of society. Nowadays, this day has become one where expectations to spend money on gifts for loved ones takes priority - thus creating a huge market for companies taking advantage of this. According to finder.com, their estimations revealed that in the UK £1.37 billion was spent on Valentine's day in 2022. Whilst it is widely agreed that giving a gift to your partner is a gesture of love, this statistic is rather extreme.

As time continues and the years go by it feels as if love is becoming increasingly rare. Perhaps we are too scared? Or too anxious? Or perhaps confused by it? Love was once an emotion that was natural and for many it still is. For many, love flows through us like blood in our body. It is the reasoning behind every choice we make and action we take. But for some, love is lost. For most of us, love can be the shining light in our darkest moments, whilst others shield the light and suffocate in the darkness. Some have been hurt by love and no longer want to suffer because of it. So when and why did love become pain? When was it decided that an emotion as strong and as fierce as love would hurt us instead of heal us? Is it because, like with everything in this life, we must know what the bad is to be able to recognise the good? Do we have to suffer the pain to be able to find true love?.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that love should always be in our hearts and it shouldn't be limited to one specific day. It should be the foundation of every choice we make every day of the year. The lives we lead are dependent on others and love influences every action. The world would indeed be a better place if it was based on love. So why don't we let it in more often? Valentine's day reminds us of what life should be about, so let it inspire you. Spend your day letting your loved ones know that you love them. Reflect on the memories you have created with them. Let love lead your life because that is what it is all about.