

What's the Big Deal About Valentine's Day?

BY MALIA BRAIEDY

ORIGINALLY, VALENTINE'S DAY was a holiday that commemorated the anniversary of the death of Roman Saint Valentine, who was put to death for secretly performing marriages for young lovers in an age where marriage was outlawed for the sake of a young man's strength and status as a soldier. It's also theorized that this holiday was created to overshadow the Pagan Holiday of Lupercalia, a fertility festival used to honor the Roman god of agriculture, Faunus, and the founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus. Among other ritualistic practices, this event included the drawing of the names of the young women of the city in order to partner them with the city's eligible bachelors. Often times, these pairings would even end in marriage, whether it was through a learned love or other things.

So how did this holiday turn into one of romance and expensive gift giving? Pure confusion.

At the same time, this holiday-fusion was happening, the Normans, those descended from Norse Vikings and indigenous West Franks and Gallo-Romans, celebrated Galatin's Day, which literally translates to "lover of women." It's thought that the two holidays were confused at some point, leading to our modern-day interpretation of the once controversial holiday. According to NPR, there were also other factors that helped to romanticize this beloved day, such as writings of Shakespeare and Chaucer, and the overcommercialization that's taken place

over the last few decades. I mean, just think how much less money chocolate companies would make if it weren't for the idea of Valentine's Day.

Now, Valentine's Day still can have a complicated meaning. For some, it's purely a day to celebrate relationships, which can feel lonely when you're single, but what's often forgotten about is that this holiday is centered around love. Love for your relationships, whether they're romantic or platonic, but more importantly— love for yourself. Celebrating being with others really comes down to one thing— that you're happy around them, and that you love yourself and life more when you're around them. It's not about the expensive gifts or fancy dinners, although those are never not nice to have, is about celebrating your connection and how much love there is around you. Even for you skeptics out there, you're so surrounded by love, whether it's your relationships or the love you have for your favorite takeout meal, love is so much more undefined than it's often made out to be.

Whether you're celebrating with a partner, friends, your cat, or even just yourself, make sure you take some time to reflect on the things that make you love life just a little bit more. Valentine's Day isn't about the heart-shaped chocolate boxes, or endless bouquets of flowers, or even the small themed cards that we handed out in elementary school, it's all about celebrating all kinds of love, and that's what makes this holiday so special.

The Bird's the Word(le)

BY MALIA BRAIEDY

CHANCES ARE IF YOU'RE on TikTok or Snapchat, you've likely seen at least one person post what looks like a sporadically colored 5x5 grid, some more green or yellow than others. If you're as confused as I was when I first saw it, let me help you out. The posting of this "grid" happens to be people sharing their results for their "Wordle" of the day, an online game that has taken our generation by storm.

The game itself is simple— in six chances, you have to guess five-letter words until you guess the "secret" word of the day. However, according to Free Dictionary, there are approximately 158,390 words that are only composed of five letters, so the game helps you out by marking correct letters with wrong placement in a yellow box, and correct letters with the correct placement in a green box. Not to toot my own horn, but I've included a visual example of what this game looks like and what it looks like to win. Notice the different colored squares and their relationship to the final word.

In my opinion, this game is a twist on the classic game Mastermind, a two-player game in which one player must create a secret color combination and the opposing player must guess this "code." The "code-maker" may provide hints on the composition of the code by marking correct placement and color choices, just like Wordle. It's also been compared to Wheel of Fortune, which is a classic gameshow centered around this word-guessing skill, but for much higher stakes.

This trend has even gotten so popular that various strategies have been accumulated and shared, creating large followings. Some magazines, like

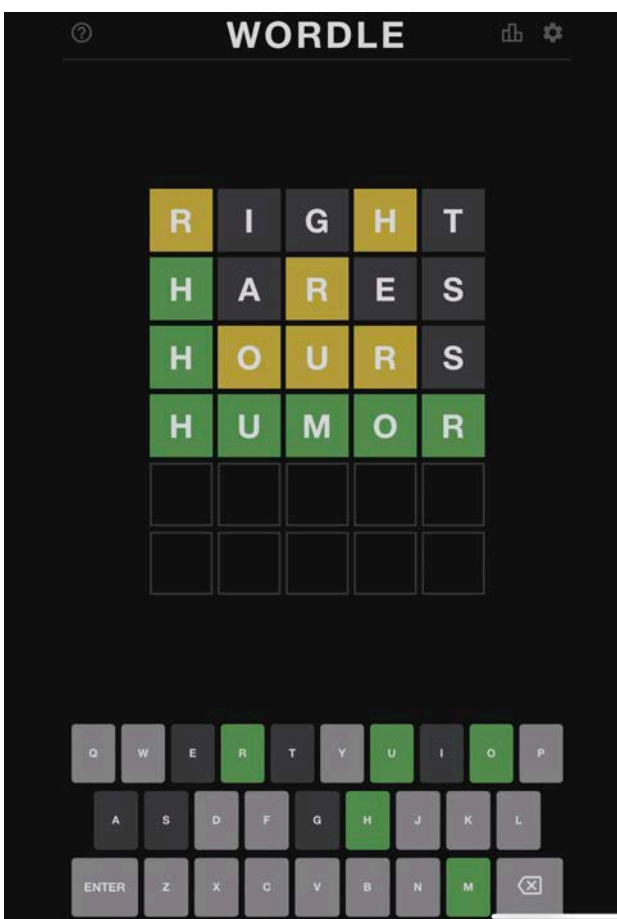
Woman's Day, have even gone as far as to write articles about the most strategic start words to use (spoiler alert: all of them involve the most popular

deciding what word to start with. I'll let you imagine those for yourself.

As for why this game is so popular, psychologists are accrediting the gratification associated with the "Aha!" moment of the game. Finally figuring out the mystery word after however many guesses and various clues activates the reward center of our brains, causing a dopamine rush and feelings of accomplishment and bliss. It's also been noted that the social aspect of this trend has contributed to its popularity. As humans, we desire connectedness and belonging, but this has proven to be a challenge in recent years. Joining an online community can help to alleviate the obstacles that this pandemic has created, allowing us to connect over our accomplishments and the difficulty that this game provides.

Games like Wordle and Mastermind aren't only just a fun craze, though. According to Psychology Today, games like these may seem stressful at first, but they're recognized by experts as "healthy stress." The challenge of using the hints given to progress through the grid engages your "episodic buffer," a portion of your working memory that's used to coordinate information learned in the past with new information. These games also require and develop your vocabulary and problem-solving skills, and they can help to improve your memory and spatial skills. Think of it as a workout, but for your brain.

If you're looking for a chance to improve your brain's functioning, to prove your intelligence to your friends, or even a chance to join in on a global community, go to powerlanguage.co.uk/wordle to access these daily word puzzles. And if you're feeling up to it, join in on the trend and brag about your accomplishments! Happy Wordle-ing!



letters in the English language— A, E, and R). However, some players, including a good portion of TikTok-ers, have a more unorthodox approach to