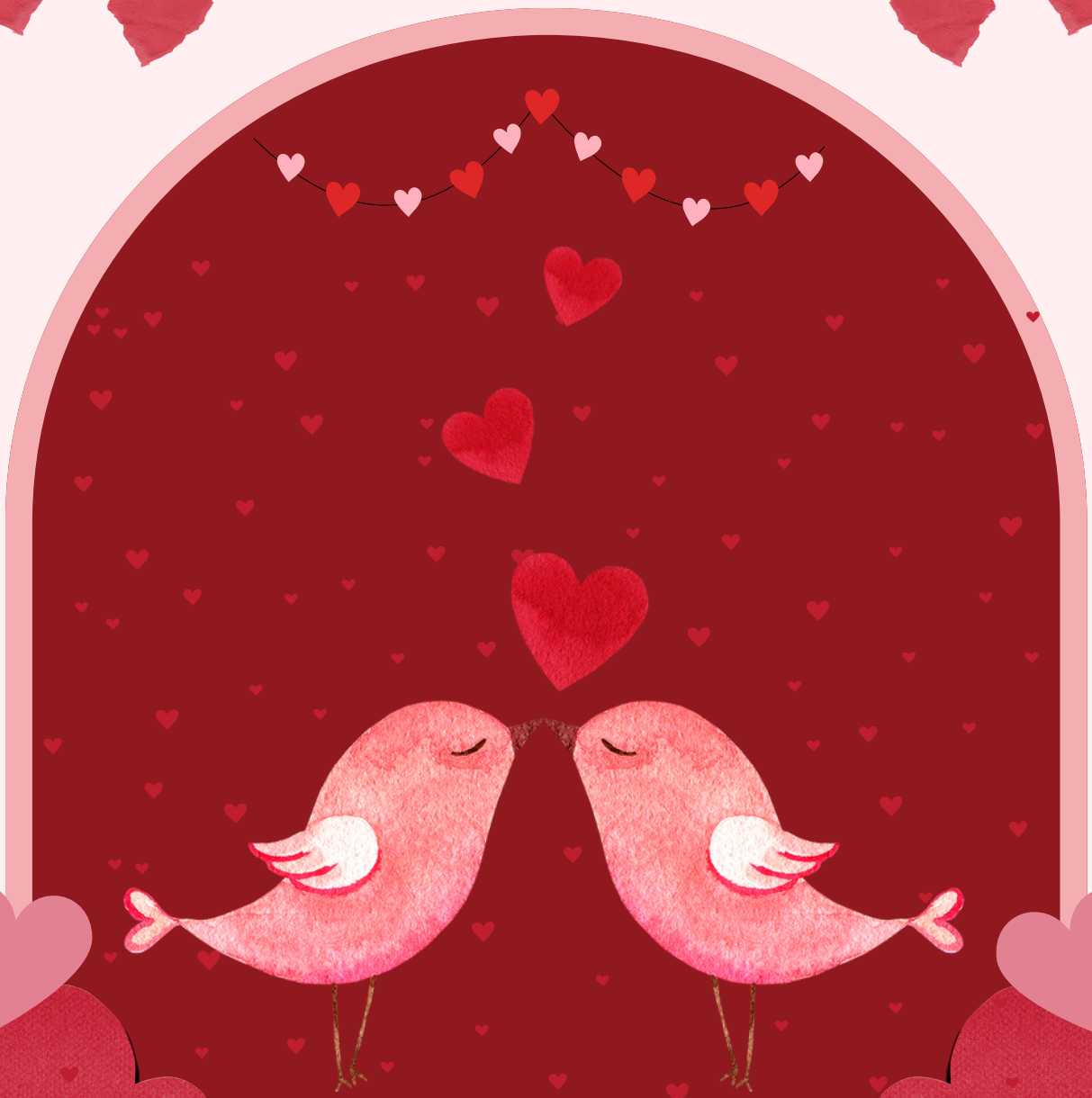


VALENTINE'S DAY ACTIVITIES



Valentine's Day

The most romantic moments in history

Marie Curie dedicates her life to the work she began with her husband

Perhaps science's greatest power couple, Pierre Curie and Marie Sklodowska met in 1894 at the Physics department of the Sorbonne University. Both idealists determined to dedicate their lives to science, they quickly discovered an intellectual like-mindedness. Pierre and Marie were married only a year later and together they embarked on groundbreaking work investigating radioactivity.



In 1898 they announced their discovery of two new elements, radium and polonium, and went on to win a joint Nobel Prize for Physics in 1903.

The Curie's married life was dominated by their scientific study and laboratory work, which was often physically as well as mentally exhausting. Their constant exposure to radiation also saw them suffer significant health problems, from fatigue to skin scarring. Outside work, Marie and Pierre enjoyed long, adventurous cycling trips and had two daughters, Irene and Eve.

The relationship was brought to a shocking and tragic end in 1906 when Pierre was killed unexpectedly, falling under a heavy horse-drawn cart after slipping in the street. After a period of intense mourning, Marie dedicated her life to pursuing the work they had begun together. She took over Pierre's position at the Sorbonne, becoming the first woman ever to teach there, and went on to win a second Nobel Prize, for chemistry, in 1911.

Through the First World War Marie continued to develop the work she had begun with her husband, as head of the International Red Cross radiology service. She worked tirelessly training medical orderlies and even driving ambulances with X-ray equipment to the front lines.

After Marie's death from aplastic anaemia [deficiency of blood cells caused by failure of bone marrow development] in 1934, brought on by the years of exposure to radioactive substances, she was buried alongside Pierre. Their remains were later moved to Paris's Pantheon, in recognition of the groundbreaking discoveries they made together.

Queen Victoria mourns Prince Albert

One of history's most popular royal partnerships, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert reigned together for 21 years. Married in 1840, the couple had nine children together and shared the daily duties of royal life. However, the family's domestic and political stability was shattered on 14 December 1861 when Albert died unexpectedly.

A generally healthy man of 42, the prince's sudden death from typhoid caught both the queen and the nation off-guard. Historian Helen Rappaport suggests that Albert's death was "nothing less than a national calamity". Over the years Albert had assumed many of the functions of a reigning monarch, sharing Victoria's mountain of royal duties and masterminding popular projects such the 1851 Great Exhibition and South Kensington museums complex.

Victoria quickly descended into what Rappaport calls a "crippling state of unrelenting grief". She had not only been reliant on Albert's help dealing with royal and business affairs, but was intensely dependent on him emotionally. According to Rappaport, "Albert had been all in all to Victoria: husband, friend, confidant, wise counsel, unofficial secretary and government minister. There was not a single aspect of her life on which she had not deferred to his advice and greater wisdom". She suggests that "Albert had been her one great, abiding obsession in life. Without him Victoria felt rudderless". This intense grieving quickly created serious problems. Victoria began to take up rigorous and ritualistic observances of bereavement, which lasted far longer than the two-year mourning period conventional at the time.

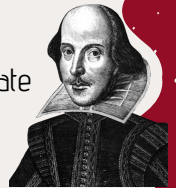


Her reluctance to appear in public and decision to wear black for the rest of her life earned her the nickname the 'Widow of Windsor'. Helen Rappaport suggests that through these actions, Victoria was "turning her grieving into performance art, retreating into a state of pathological grief which nobody could penetrate and few understood". Over time, the queen's sombre retreat from public life significantly impacted on her popularity, with growing complaints that she did nothing to justify her income.

Victoria never fully recovered from Albert's death. She commissioned several monuments in his honour, including the Royal Albert Memorial in Kensington Gardens, which was completed in 1876. She remained in mourning for 40 years, until her own death aged 81.

Shakespeare writes sonnets to the Dark Lady

Some of the most acclaimed romantic poetry of all time, Shakespeare's sonnets 127–154 celebrate the beauty of a Dark Lady. These sonnets have gone down in history as some of the Bard's most romantic and erotic, with oft-quoted lines such as "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun/Coral is far more red, than her lips red... And yet by heaven I think my love as rare/As any she belied with false compare". However, the identity of the Dark Lady addressed in the poems remains unknown, and has proved to be one of literature's greatest mysteries.



What does Shakespeare reveal to readers about his mysterious mistress? He portrays her as an erotic temptress: sonnet 144 addresses her as "my female evil" and "my bad angel". Other sonnets tell us of her black hair and "raven black" eyes, and celebrate her dark complexion: "Thy black is fairest in my judgement's place", "beauty herself is black".

Shakespeare's relationship with the Dark Lady has intrigued scholars for centuries, and there are a multitude of theories about her identity. Dr Aubrey Burl has recently argued that the Dark Lady is Aline Florio, the wife of an Italian translator. Meanwhile, Dr Duncan Salkeld has identified her as Lucy Morgan, a Clerkenwell prostitute also known as 'Black Luce'. Other possible candidates for the Dark Lady have included a courtesan, a landlady, a wigmaker's wife and even a lady-in-waiting of Queen Elizabeth I, Mary Fitton. However, it's unlikely that we will ever know for certain the identity of the alluring lady who inspired such remarkable poetry, or the extent of his relationship with her.

Shah Jahan builds the Taj Mahal

Constructed between 1632 and 1653, the Taj Mahal in India is recognised across the world. However, as well as being an architectural marvel, it is also one of history's greatest romantic gestures, from India's Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan.



In 1612 Shah Jahan married the Persian princess Arjumand Banu Begum. Mughal court poets claimed Arjumand's beauty was so great that the moon hid its face in shame before her, and she reportedly enthralled the future emperor at first sight. Despite the fact that Shah Jahan had two other wives, Arjumand is generally acknowledged as being the love of his life. He even gave her the name "Mumtaz Mahal", meaning 'jewel of the palace'. A loyal and devoted wife, Begum accompanied her husband on various military campaigns, and the couple rarely spent time apart.

In 1631, after 19 years of marriage, Mumtaz Mahal died giving birth to her 14th child. According to legend, distraught at his powerlessness to help her, Shah Jahan made a deathbed promise to build his wife the greatest tomb the world had ever seen. After a period of intense grieving, as promised he began work on an extraordinarily elaborate mausoleum to honour Mumtaz Mahal – the Taj Mahal.

The Shah threw himself into the project, summoning the best dome-builders, masons, painters, calligraphers and other artisans from as far as Turkey and Iraq to work on it. No expense or



painstaking detail was spared. Overall it took 22,000 labourers more than 21 years to complete the epic monument. Mumtaz Mahal's cenotaph stands at the perfect centre of the symmetrical Taj, and upon his death Shah Jahan was placed alongside her. The Shah's memorial to his beloved wife is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, attracting millions of visitors every year.

Edward VIII abdicates the throne in the name of love



Sparking a crisis that rocked the British monarchy, Edward VIII's decision in 1936 to give up the throne for a woman he loved undoubtedly deserves a place among history's most romantic moments.

Edward met Wallis Simpson, a chic, charismatic American socialite, in 1931 at a party hosted by his then-mistress, Thelma Furness. Despite Wallis being a married woman, by 1934 she and Edward had become lovers, to the immense disapproval of Edward's family. The prince was no angel – he had a playboy reputation and had had several affairs. However, while his family tolerated a casual affair with Wallis, any suggestion of marriage was categorically ruled out. As a married woman seeking a second divorce, Wallis was an impossible consort for a future king and head of the Church of England. The couple came under intense pressure from all sides to end the affair. The king's ministers, the Church of England and the royal family pleaded with Edward to terminate the relationship. Meanwhile, Wallis received death threats and was forced to retreat to France to escape her vilification in the British press as a "Yankee harlot". Princess Elizabeth, the future Queen Mother, famously refused to acknowledge Wallis, referring to her only as "a certain person" or "that woman".

Despite all this, on 10 December 1936 Edward abdicated after only 325 days as king. His unexpected and unprecedented decision left his shy, stammering younger brother George VI to reluctantly assume the throne. Edward made his motives perfectly clear, declaring to the public "I have found it impossible to carry the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge my duties as king as I would wish to do without the help and support of the woman I love."

Following Edward's abdication and Wallis's divorce, the couple married in a private ceremony in France. They embarked on a jet-setting lifestyle, living abroad together until Edward's death in Paris in 1972.

Heloise and Abelard exchange love letters

Immortalised through a series of intimate love letters, the doomed affair of Abelard and Heloise is one of the medieval period's most compelling love stories.



The tale began in 12th-century Paris, where Peter Abelard, a notable philosopher, was employed as a tutor. His pupil was Heloise d'Argenteuil, a brilliant student and the niece of a Parisian canon named Fulbert. Teacher and pupil became lovers and the unmarried Heloise found herself pregnant. Heloise's age at the time is unclear, but some academics such as Constant Mews suggest she may have been as old as 27, with a significant scholarly reputation.

Upon discovering the pregnancy Abelard proposed marriage, but Heloise was reluctant, in the knowledge that having a wife and family would jeopardise Abelard's scholarship. According to her letters, she "never sought anything in you except yourself... looked for no marriage bond." Despite this reluctance, a wedding went ahead in secret, to avoid any damage to Abelard's career. Heloise reportedly gave birth to a son, Astrolabe, but is not known what happened to him in later life.

Things quickly fell disastrously apart. Angered by the affair's damage to his reputation, Heloise's uncle Fulbert spread news of the secret wedding and Abelard consequently placed Heloise in the convent of Argenteuil. Fulbert was so enraged by this that he had Abelard castrated in vengeance for his actions.



Following the shame and trauma of his castration, Abelard became a monk at Paris's Abbey of St Denis. Following his insistence that she do the same, Heloise too took holy orders and the couple retreated to a lifetime of celibacy in separate monasteries. However, they continued to correspond with each other through a series of letters, which document their earlier affair. The intimate and erotic content of these taboo-busting letters have for years intrigued academics. Heloise's letters suggest that despite everything she did not regret the affair, reflecting "I should be groaning over the sins I have committed, but I can only sigh for what I have lost".

Henry VIII gets excommunicated in order to re-marry

Henry VIII's tempestuous relationship with Anne Boleyn is infamous for both its dramatic political consequences and its horrifying, bloody end. However, when Anne first joined the royal court in 1522, few could have anticipated the turbulence that would follow. Henry was not only married at the time, but also having an affair with Anne's sister, Mary. What's more, Historian Suzannah Lipscomb suggests that Anne was not an obvious choice for Henry's future wife or even mistress, as he "wouldn't have been bowled over by her good looks. The surprising thing about Anne is that she wasn't considered to be a great beauty."

Instead, it was Anne's wit, charm and continental sophistication that apparently infatuated the king, who became ardent in his pursuit of her. In a 1527 letter to Anne, Henry declared himself "struck by the dart of love" and asked her to "give herself body and heart to him".

The consequences of Henry's infatuation were huge. As the Pope refused to annul his existing marriage to Catherine of Aragon, Henry broke with the Catholic Church and was subsequently excommunicated. He went on to form the Church of England, irrevocably changing the entire religious landscape of the nation. Following Henry's break with Rome, he and Anne were married in January 1533. Anne was already pregnant at the time, with the future Queen Elizabeth I. Anne was crowned queen of England in an extravagant coronation ceremony later that year.

The royal couple's happiness was short-lived. Anne's inability to produce a male heir, along with Henry's growing infatuation with Jane Seymour, meant that the king was soon looking for a way out of the marriage for which he had sacrificed so much. Trumped-up adultery charges against Anne, her brother and three other men provided Henry with a way to be rid of his wife. After one of the men, Mark Smeaton, confessed under torture, the marriage was annulled and Anne's fate sealed. The relationship reached its bitter and bloody end on 19 May 1536, with Anne's execution on her husband's orders.



Answer the questions about the article:

- 1. What is remarkable about Marie Curie?**
- 2. Why was the death of Prince Albert considered a national calamity?**
- 3. Who is the dark lady?**
- 4. What does "Mumtaz Mahal" mean?**
- 5. When did Edward abdicate the throne and what happened afterwards?**
- 6. What happened to Abelard when the secret marriage was revealed?**
- 7. What were the qualities of Anne Boleyn that seemed appealing to the King?**



The most romantic moments in history

Teacher's C1-C2

1.What is remarkable about Marie Curie?

She won 2 Nobel prizes, one for Physics in 1903 with her husband, and one for Chemistry in 1911

2.Why was the death of Prince Albert considered a national calamity?

Because he had assumed many of the functions of a reigning monarch

3.Who is the dark lady?

She is the woman whose beauty Shakespeare's sonnets celebrate but her identity remains unknown.

4.What does "Mumtaz Mahal" mean?

The jewel of the palace

5.When did Edward abdicate the throne and what happened afterwards?

10 December 1936. Then his stammering, shy, younger brother, George VI, assumed the throne

6.What happened to Abelard when the secret marriage was revealed?

Heloise's uncle castrated him and he became a monk

7.What were the qualities of Anne Boleyn that seemed appealing to the King?

Her wit, charm and continental sophistication

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