



VALENTINE'S DAY

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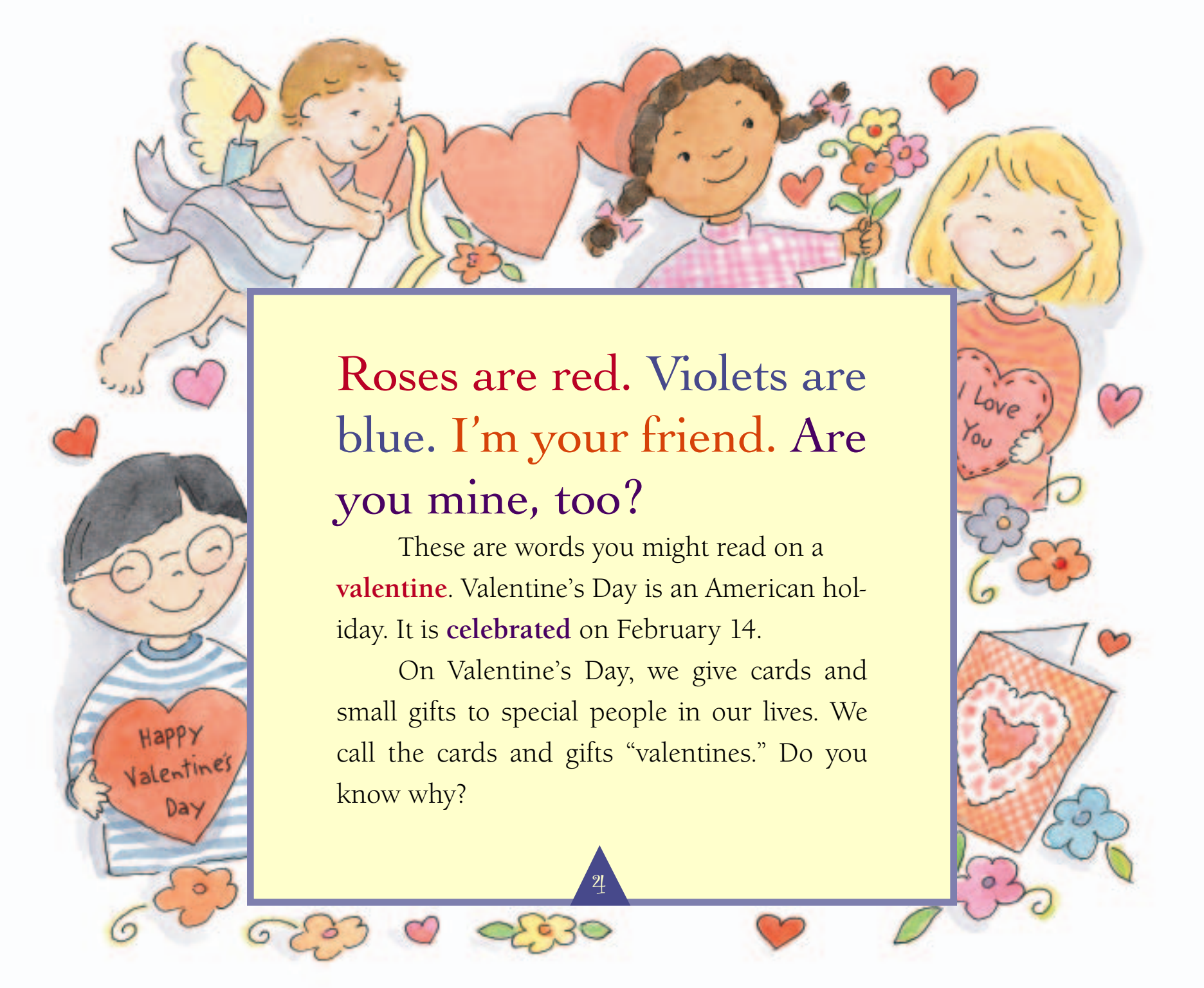
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Table of Contents

How Valentine's Day Began	5
How Valentine's Day Got Its Name	6
Flowers for Valentine	9
How Valentine's Day Spread	12
The First Paper Valentines	17
Valentine's Day Comes to America	21
American Valentines	22
Things You Might See on Valentine's Day.	24
What You Can Do on Valentine's Day.	29
Glossary.	30
Where You Can Learn More about Valentine's Day	31
Index	32



Roses are red. Violets are blue. I'm your friend. Are you mine, too?

These are words you might read on a **valentine**. Valentine's Day is an American holiday. It is **celebrated** on February 14.

On Valentine's Day, we give cards and small gifts to special people in our lives. We call the cards and gifts "valentines." Do you know why?

How Valentine's Day Began

Many stories tell how Valentine's Day began. Some people believe the holiday came from a **festival** that Romans celebrated more than 2,000 years ago. They called the festival *Lupercalia*. It was given in honor of the Roman god Lupercus.

Roman **shepherds** believed that Lupercus protected their crops and animals from hungry wolves. To thank Lupercus, the shepherds held a feast in his honor on February 15.

At that time, the Roman calendar was different from the one we use today. The month of February came later in the year. So on the feast of Lupercalia, the Romans also celebrated the beginning of spring.

The day before Lupercalia, all the girls put their names in a jar. Each boy drew a name. The girl whose name he chose became his partner for games. Sometimes, the two promised to marry each other.

How Valentine's Day Got Its Name

The festival of Lupercalia changed when the Romans became **Christians**. The Romans did not believe in Lupercus any longer. They wanted to keep the holiday, however.

The Romans decided to rename the holiday Saint Valentine's Day. It was in honor of a Christian priest named Valentine. Valentine lived in Rome many years ago. There are many stories about this man.

In one story, Valentine broke the law. The **emperor** would not let any of his soldiers marry. He believed that single men made better soldiers. Valentine did not agree. He helped young men and women get married. The emperor put Valentine in prison for disobeying the law. Then, on February 14, A.D. 269, he put Valentine to death.