

For the Love of Literature

February 14 is widely celebrated as Valentine's Day, but it is also Library Lover's Day, a day for library patrons to shower their local libraries with love. If you're having a difficult time finding romance this year, perhaps these literary couples will tug on your heartstrings. Visit your local library and borrow a novel brimming with love.



The most famous literary couple in history must be Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. These young "star-crossed lovers" fall hopelessly in love against the wishes of their two feuding families, the Montagues and Capulets. If you are looking for a happy ending, *Romeo and Juliet* will not satisfy you. The story is a lesson in tragedy and heartbreak as the two young lovers die as a result of miscommunication and impetuosity.

For those seeking a relationship with a happy ending, look no further than Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. From the moment they meet, Elizabeth and Darcy detest each other. But as the old cliché goes, opposites attract. Elizabeth and Darcy must get over their excessive pride to realize that they do indeed love each other.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera* offers a more unique and complex depiction of love. Florentino Ariza and Fermina Daza fall in love while young, but when Fermina's father discovers the relationship, he moves the family away to another city. Fermina then meets Dr. Juvenal Urbino, a national hero who strives to eradicate cholera. After a tumultuous marriage to Urbino, Fermina reunites with Florentino, but her view of love has matured as much as she has.

The relationships between literary couples are as complex, or maybe even more complex than those we face in real life. Just ask Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan of *The Great Gatsby*, Allie Hamilton and Noah Calhoun of *The Notebook*, and Hermione Granger and Ronald Weasley of the *Harry Potter* series. On February 14, open a book and your heart.

February Birthdays

In astrology, those born between February 1–18 are the Water Bearers of Aquarius. These deep-thinking intellectuals have big and original dreams. The world is full of possibilities, and Aquarians seek freedom in order to reach their greatest potential. Those born between February 19–28 are Pisces' Fish. Pisces are friendly, wise, and selfless, making them compassionate and generous friends. Their intuitive and romantic natures also make Fish creative and expressive artists.

Rosa Parks (activist) – February 4, 1913
 Hank Aaron (ballplayer) – February 5, 1934
 Laura Ingalls Wilder (writer) – February 7, 1867
 Thomas Edison (inventor) – February 11, 1846
 Frederick Douglass (reformer) – February 14, 1818
 Smokey Robinson (singer) – February 19, 1940
 Nina Simone (singer) – February 21, 1933
 Julius Erving (athlete) – February 22, 1950
 Jackie Gleason (comedian) – February 26, 1916
 Elizabeth Taylor (actress) – February 27, 1932

Betcha Wanna PechaKucha



This February 20 will mark just the second annual celebration of International PechaKucha Day. PechaKucha (or PK for short), the Japanese term for "chit-chat," is a dynamic presentation method developed by two

Tokyo-based architects, Astrid Klein and Mark Dytham. PK allows the use of only 20 slides with 20 seconds of commentary per slide, for a total presentation of fewer than seven minutes. While the PK method originated in boardrooms, it has swiftly moved into the realm of schools and storytelling. "PK Nights" are routinely held amongst friends and colleagues all around the world, and the PK format has been used to tell jokes and stories, share autobiographies, make sales pitches, and deliver academic data. If you've never experienced PK, then February 20 is the time to check it out.

Villa South

Villa of Corpus Christi South | 4834 Yorktown Blvd. | 361-991-3252 | Fax: 361-991-2368

Celebrating February

Black History Month

Bird Feeding Month

Mend a Broken Heart Month

Women's Heart Week

February 1–7

Groundhog Day

February 2

Canadian Maple Syrup Day

February 6

Chinese New Year:

Year of the Ox

February 12

Valentine's Day

February 14

Mardi Gras

February 16

Justice for Animals Week

February 21–27

International Toast Day

February 25

Floral Design Day

February 28

Venice Unmasked

Venice is often called Italy's "City of Love," and for good reason. There may be nothing more romantic than a meandering gondola ride through the city's famous canals, especially if the gondolier serenades you with Italian love songs. It is no coincidence that history's most notorious lover, Casanova, called Venice home. Casanova was born in an era when Venice was a European Las Vegas, famous for its gambling houses, beautiful women, and its annual *Carnival*, the Venetian version of Mardi Gras that has been celebrated since the year 1162. This year's Carnival, running from January 30 through February 16, is made all the more special because it coincides with Valentine's Day.

Venice's Carnival is thought to have started in 1162 with the military victory of the Venetian Republic over Ulrico di Treven, a powerful ally of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I who attempted to strip Venice of its independence. After Ulrico di Treven's defeat, Venetians gathered in San Marco Square for dancing and rejoicing. This informal celebration continued for centuries until it was made an official holiday during the Renaissance. It was also during this era that Venetian mask-makers were elevated to a special standing in Venetian society, enjoying preferential laws and their own artistic guild.

By the 18th century, masks were a way of life for Venetians, and laws permitted mask-wearing for six months of the year. Some historians believe that masks were a response to Venice's strict class hierarchy. Ordinary people and aristocrats alike wore masks to hide their true identities. So disguised, people could anonymously engage in Venice's many popular but ill-reputed pastimes such as gambling. Is it any wonder that Venetian mask-makers held such power in society? In time, masks were outlawed. It was only in 1979 that Venetian artisans revived the tradition of mask-making. Since then, masks and costumes have become lavish and sumptuous works of art, and opulent masquerade balls are now the most sought-after invitations during Venice's fabulous and romantic Carnival.

An Olympic “Miracle”

On February 22, 1980, no one expected an American hockey team made up of collegiate players to defeat Russia’s Olympic hockey powerhouse. The Soviets hadn’t lost an Olympic match since 1968 and had won four straight gold medals. And how could anyone forget the Soviets’ 10–3 rout of the U.S. team during an exhibition game just a few weeks prior at Madison Square Garden? Even with a sold-out crowd and home-ice advantage, hopes of an American Olympic victory were slim. It would take a miracle.



The American team was the youngest in U.S. Olympic history, with an average age of 21 years. Coach Herb Brooks drafted his team heavily from two powerhouse college hockey teams, the University of Minnesota and Boston University, bitter rivals that had recently faced off in the NCAA national semifinal in 1976. But Brooks was looking for more than just talent on the ice. He also subjected potential players to a 300-question psychological test that examined their performance under extreme stress. Not only were the Americans playing against legendary Russian players like Vladislav Tretiak, Valeri Kharlamov, and Viacheslav Fetisov (players who would later enter the Hockey Hall of Fame), but they had to play under the cloud of a decades-long Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviets. At the time of the Lake Placid Winter Olympics, President Jimmy Carter was contemplating a boycott of Moscow’s 1980 Summer Olympic Games after Russia’s invasion of Afghanistan. Matters of both sport and politics made the two nations international adversaries.

If fans expected a blowout, they were pleasantly disappointed. The game was a relentless back-and-forth battle for the lead. Russia’s superior talent was on full display, but the young and scrappy Americans took a 4–3 lead with 10 minutes left to play and were able to hold off for a win. It was as much a political victory as a sporting one. Two days later, the U.S. would take the gold against Finland, but history would forever remember the “Miracle on Ice” against Russia.

A Monstrous Tradition

February 12 rings in the Chinese New Year, the Year of the Ox. A visitor to China will find homes decorated in red. Come midnight, loud fireworks will boom and crackle. These time-honored traditions spring from the myth of the monster Nian, half-dragon, half-kirin, a hooved and one-horned beast. Nian lived at the bottom of the sea but would rise from the depths each New Year’s Eve to ravage the villages. So, each New Year’s, the villagers would flee to the mountains. One year, a beggar arrived to find the village deserted. Only an old woman remained, and in return for shelter, the beggar promised to scare Nian away. The beggar busied himself decorating the woman’s house with red. When terrible Nian arrived at midnight, it roared in anger when it saw the red door. The beggar lit firecrackers to terrorize Nian. Dressed all in red, he laughed in Nian’s terrible face, and the monster fled. The villagers returned to learn that Nian was scared of the color red and the loud firecrackers. To this day, every New Year’s Eve, the Chinese still drape their homes with red and light firecrackers at midnight.

A Crackerjack Idea



Sugar-coated popcorn and peanuts were a common snack at the end of the 19th century, but in 1896 Fritz and Louis Rueckheim created a formula that prevented the mix of popcorn and peanuts from sticking together. One customer who sampled this idea found it so wonderful that he exclaimed, “That’s a crackerjack!” The *Cracker Jack* name was born. It wasn’t until February 19, 1913, that Cracker Jack placed the first of their famous prizes inside a box. These were small prizes such as metal tops, tiny joke books, paper dolls, and even miniature furniture. When Cracker Jack began offering prizes in a set or series, sales soared; people wanted to collect entire sets. Perhaps the most famous prizes of all were the baseball cards of 1914. Today, a complete set of 144 cards is worth tens of thousands of dollars.

Making Black History



In 1915, historian and journalist Dr. Carter G. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH). He was just the second African American after W. E. B. Du Bois to obtain a Ph.D. from Harvard University and one of the first scholars to study the African diaspora. As a member of the American Historical Association (AHA), Woodson realized that the AHA had no interest in the history of African Americans. He set out on his own to create an institution where African American scholars could study black history without misrepresentation. The ASALH was the result of those efforts.

For over a decade, Woodson worked with the most prominent black intellectuals and activists in America to promote his cause: W. E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, John E. Bruce, T. Thomas Fortune, and Hubert Henry Harrison. In 1926, Woodson brought more prominence to his movement by championing “Negro History Week” during the second week of February. He wanted the week to coincide with the birthdays of abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass and President Abraham Lincoln, two key figures of African American history. This event was an opportunity for schools and communities to organize celebrations of African Americans and their contributions to American society by offering free lectures and performances and establishing black history clubs.

During the coming decades, mayors from cities all across America proclaimed the second week of February “Negro History Week.” Then, in 1970, the Black students and educators at Kent State University expanded on Woodson’s vision and declared the entire month of February Black History Month. In 1976, President Gerald Ford followed suit, officially recognizing Black History Month nationwide. The theme that year was *America for All Americans*. This year’s theme is *The Black Family*, offering, in the words of the ASALH, “a rich tapestry of images for exploring the African American past and present.”

Striking Gold

On February 10, 1942, Glenn Miller and His Orchestra received a unique trophy from his record label, RCA Victor. As congratulations for selling 1.2 million copies of the song “Chattanooga Choo Choo,” a feat no other artist had yet to achieve, Miller was gifted the first gold record on a live radio broadcast. The record wasn’t solid gold, but rather a vinyl record sprayed with gold, but soon other record labels began to follow suit, taking it upon themselves to award their musicians with gold records. Today the issuance of gold records is left to the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA). The RIAA awarded Perry Como the first official Gold Record for “Catch a Falling Star” in 1958 after it sold 500,000 copies. The RIAA also has a Platinum Record for one million copies, a Multi-Platinum for two million, and a Diamond for 10 million copies sold. A visit to Chattanooga’s former rail station, which has been transformed into a landmark hotel where train cars serve as rooms, reminds visitors of Glenn Miller’s extraordinary honor all those years ago.

Sleep on It



If you’re feeling sleepy on February 28, feel free to nod off wherever you’re sitting or standing, for it is Public Sleeping Day. For some, sleeping in public is taboo behavior and an embarrassing social faux pas. But in some places, such as Japan, napping in public on a bench, on the subway, at the mall, or even in the office is considered a sign of hard work and diligence. The perception is that a person is working so hard that they are exhausted and cannot help themselves from falling asleep on the spot. The Japanese even have a term for it: *inemuri*. While some translate it as “sleeping on the job,” a more faithful translation is “being present while asleep.” An intentional nap is frowned upon, but falling asleep unintentionally while trying to be present is quite acceptable.