

MODULE 1

Class Title: The Reality of Valentine's Day.

Aim of Lesson: To see how popular culture offers an unreal, virtual idea of love and compare it to Islam's idea of love.

Lesson Format: PowerPoint presentation and discussion

Handout: In folder

(Greeting to students) *Assalam alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

(*Taooz*) *Aoodhubillahi min AsShaytanir Rajeem*

(*Tasmiyah*) *Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*

(*Du'a*) *Rabbish rahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli*

(Surah At Ta-Ha 20: Verse 25-28)

Slides 1-3:

Don't you just love to talk about LOVE. I do. Love makes the world go round, do you agree? Of course; love can be between a mother and child, or between a husband and wife. It's a beautiful emotion, fresh and crisp like daisies in sunshine, deep and powerful like the ocean.

The things we do for the sake of love are mind boggling. Mums stay up nights for their lil' brats – why? 'cause of love. If you think you're in love, you would climb a mountain, reach out and pluck stars from the skies and take a dive in the deepest ocean – yeah pretty big drama eh.

Slides 4-6:

And hey, theres nothing wrong with that. Love is definitely a very positive emotion. I mean in itself its all fine and hunky dory.

Can anyone tell me what their perception of love is?

Student: My perception of love is that it is a way to unite everyone on this planet.

Student: I think it is about sharing your feelings.

Student: Relationships.

Teacher: Right.

We know love is definitely positive, right? It is mentioned in the *Qur'an* in several places and in different contexts.

The *Qur'an* speaks about love between a believer and Allah (swt), "The believers are stauncher in (their) **love** for Allah." (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2: Verse 165)

Then it speaks of love between a husband and a wife. Such a cool, beautiful relationship!

“And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves that you may dwell in peace and tranquillity with them. And He has put love and mercy between your hearts” (Surah Ar-Rum 30: Verse 21)

Aww – isn’t that beautiful that Allah (swt) is the One who has put this tug-your-heart-strings thingie midgie in our hearts so we feel this strong emotion for another person. It’s not a man-made thing at all.

Slides 7-8:

Then alas, February fourteenth comes along and some silly I don’t know perhaps ignorant people, hijack love. And sells it like cheap candy that leaves a bad taste in the mouth but is wrapped in very fancy paper. Have you ever tasted candy like that? Yuck, awful tasting, all chemically with probably no food-grade ingredient – eww.

Slides 9-11:

And they call it Valentine’s Day. From the beginning of Feb the bombardment begins. Advertisements in newspapers and on televisions, advertising things like dinner for two, deals for couples only, etc. We see cards and balloons being sold everywhere. And what is Valentine’s Day without chocolates and roses? You see these kids on the street at traffic lights, begging you to buy a rose-bud for your beloved. Also all sorts of stuffed toys with all sizes of red hearts on them – some quite tacky really – being sold in every shop. Latest trend is cupcakes. Send a special cupcake to your special someone.

Slides 12 and 13:

Also, we are exposed and brain-washed from a very young age. Kids start making cards for their moms and dads, little babies are made to wear Valentine’s Day clothes, and then there are poor little doggies, who are dressed as Cupid by their owners. Now, please, this is surely animal abuse – must report it to PAWS (Pakistan Animal Welfare Society). What has this poor dog done to deserve this! All in the name of love.

Slides 14-16:

However, it is not just for the sake of love because the cost of showing this love is seventeen billion dollars (according to one survey in the United States). So we see that, when we get our bill, love isn’t so pretty after all.

Slide 17:

Sweets for your sweetie; confectioners produce between eight billion to nine billion candy hearts, enough to stretch from coast to coast (we are talking about America). They also produced thirty six million heart shaped boxes of chocolates.

Slide 18:

While electronic cards have replaced paper ones, Valentine’s Day cards are still a

huge business with approximately one hundred and nineteen million cards being sold each year, according to Hallmark. Someone at Hallmark is surely smiling and thinking yeah, red roses I do LOVE you.

Slide 19:

Love is for sale people. Cupid must be a capitalist!

Slides 20 and 21:

How did it all begin? Let's go back to the history of this holiday. Valentine's Day began as a pagan ritual in the 4th century BC to honour the pagan god, Lupercus who was depicted as a wolf; this holiday, called Lupercalia, was celebrated between the 13th and the 15th of February .

Slide 22:

The main attraction of this ritual was a lottery which was held to distribute young women to young men for 'entertainment and pleasure', until next year's lottery. A lot of vulgar activity took place as well.

Slide 23:

To end the celebration they used to sacrifice goats and dogs. After the sacrifice they would make whips out of the skins of the goats or dogs, drench them in the blood of the sacrifice, some young men stripped or wore very little clothes and then whipped young women. Basically, Lupercalia was a celebration to avert evil spirits so that fertility and health would prevail in the city. So, to avert all evil, they used to whip women, so that they could bear children. They thought this was a way that women could be fertile.

Slide 24:

Christianity tried, without success, to stop the celebration of Lupercalia. It replaced the lottery of the names of women with a lottery of names of saints. So, as they couldn't stop it, they altered it. The idea was that during the following year the young man would copy the life of the saint whose name he had drawn.

Slides 25 and 26:

In CE 496, Pope Gelasius also changed the name of the festival from Lupercalia to Saint Valentine's Day.

Slide 27:

There are as many as fifty different Saint Valentines in history, so if you do some research on the internet, you will come across many different stories, but the most popular one that we know of is the one in which Saint Valentine was a romantic saint who fell in love with his jailer's daughter. He was, in literal terms, a romantic saint, and he actually worked for love. At that time the Roman Emperor didn't allow men in

the army to get married, because he thought they would get distracted, so Saint Valentine secretly set people up and got them married. But he was caught and jailed and today we all hear about him.

Slide 28:

Christianity couldn't stop it, so Christianity ended up doing in Rome as the Romans did!

Slide 29:

Then this "love" spread from Europe to the Americas around the 1840s. The Yankees spotted a great way to make an extra buck and before you could say Christopher Columbus – began the era of marketing Valentine's Day with a vengeance.

Slide 30:

Esther A. Howland, an enterprising woman, made the first Valentine's Day cards in the 1840s and she sold so many cards that she made five thousand dollars. Can you believe that? Five thousand dollars in the 1840s was like billions for us right now. She started the tradition of cards.

Slide 31:

OK. So we know the pagan roots of this festival. We also nodded our heads off – that yes, this is a capitalists dream come true occasion. And we also agree – it is big time tacky to turn love into a commodity. So the question is ..

Why do we get manipulated so easily by this Valentine's Day hype?

Slides 32-38:

Because of the way we have started to look at love: "He loves me, he loves me not. She loves me she loves me not."

From a very early age, we see this particular "idea" of love promoted in the media. Who hasn't heard of Barbie and Ken? Raise your hands – see, all of you know perfect Miss Barbie Doll!

Television, movies, books, songs, advertising jingles, billboards ... you name it and there is this cheap promotion of love or idea of love. Seems like if a young girl or boy doesn't have a boyfriend/girlfriend – they are deprived of a basic human right!

All these stories that we see in the media and movies have made our head spin. We don't know real love from virtual love.

Slide 39:

So all the guys think they are Romeos and us girls want to be Juliet, the lot of us.

Slide 40:

Welcome to love in la la land.

Boy meets girl, the boy is, of course, tall and handsome – perhaps dark is replaced by perfectly chiselled, groomed and hunky.

Can't think of many Juliets dreaming of a young man in ankle high trousers or Heaven-forbid *shalwar*! With an *amama* on his head and a flowing beard.

And the girl has to be “fair and lovely”. All you darkies out there, go kill yourself ‘cause you are just losers. Over-weight, pimples, crooked nosed types may also leave the room. Please don't call us, we'll call you (yeah sure! As if that will happen any time soon) – chuckles romance in la la land.

Boy says, “I will take you out but don't tell your parents.”

And the girl says, “Okay, I will skip college and meet you secretly.”

Boy says, “Dad can I borrow your car? I have to go study.”

Girl says, “Mom, can you pick me late, I have an extra classes today.”

And they all live happily ever after?

That is what we get from the media and that's what we get from the movies. Cinderella too, dated the prince and then they got married and lived happily ever after. We never get to hear what happened after that.

Slide 41 and 42:

2.3 million Marriages take place in America each year; more than six thousand men may kiss the bride per day, though just nine percent of proposals are lobbed in February. Only nine percent; if people really love the way they claim to love, the figure should've been a lot more than nine percent.

Slide 43:

Virtual love is dishonest, deceitful, dramatic, destructive and dumb. It causes us pain, heartache, anxiety, tension and ends in failure because it is not real.

Slide 44:

Islam is very realistic and constructive; it shakes us awake and brings us into the real world.

Slides 45 and 46:

There is plenty of room in Islam for real love and romance and flirting; flirting with your husband or wife. Yes, you guys will have to wait till you get married.

Flirting and Islam – you think huh? No way. Islam means *tajweed* lessons and doing *salah* and being good to the neighbours – no fun, let alone naughtiness. *Astaghfirullah!*

Well, you have another think coming. Our *deen* not only allows but encourages a fun, flirtatious relationship between a boy and a girl – within the boundary of a marriage.

Jabir b. ‘Abdullah (ra) reported: ‘Abdullah died and he left (behind him) nine or seven daughters. I married a woman who had been previously married. Allah’s Messenger (pbuh) said to me: Jabir, have you married? I said: Yes. He (again) said: A virgin or one previously married? I said: Messenger of Allah, with one who was previously married, whereupon he said: Why didn’t you marry a young girl so that you could sport with her and she could sport with you, or you could amuse with her and she could amuse with you? I said to him: ‘Abdullah died (he fell as martyr in Uhud) and left nine or seven daughters behind him; I, therefore, did not approve of the idea that I should bring a (girl) like them, but I preferred to bring a woman who should look after them and teach them good manners, whereupon he (Allah’s Messenger) said: May Allah bless you, or he supplicated (for the) good (to be) conferred on me (by Allah). {Muslim, Book 8, Number 3460}

Rasool Allah (pbuh) himself raced with his wife Ayesha (ra). When she was younger she won, so years later he raced her again and won this time and said to her now we are even! he was such an amazing husband (pbuh). His wife Sawdah (ra) used to walk funny sometimes to make him laugh.

Slide 47:

Islam gave us *nikah* {marriage contract}. We can have all the romance we want with our spouse and get rewarded by Allah (swt) for it! Talk about win-win situation.

Slide 48:

The Prophet (pbuh) said, “*Nikah* is my *sunnah* {way of the Prophet (pbuh)}. He who turns away from my *sunnah* is not of me.” [Ibn Majah, Bukhari]

Slide 49:

The Prophet (pbuh) enjoyed an especially meaningful and fulfilling married life. He never had any extramarital relations with girls, even before his Prophet-hood. He always greeted his wives with a kiss. By modern standards, he was a very liberal and open-minded man. When Muhammad (pbuh) was asked who was dearest to him, he replied that Khadija (ra), his first wife, was closest to his heart, even though twenty years had passed since her death. When asked who the second most beloved person was for him, he said it was his present wife, Aisha (ra).

Slide 50:

Love is very expressive, but these days men are made to be very harsh and strong, and if they are emotional they are said to be weak. But do you think Muhammad (pbuh)

was weak? He was excessively strong, yet he was very loving. The Prophet (pbuh) had no problem declaring his love for his wives in public.

But he never ever touched a woman who was not his *mahram*.

Slide 51:

Without respect love gets lost, without caring love gets boring, without honesty love gets unhappy and without trust love gets unstable.

Now, at your age you are probably thinking that you'll understand this when you grow up and get married, but think about the love between you and your mom; the kind of love you guys have is as powerful as the oceans, its deep and it's strong, right? So think of the love between you and your mom, you and your dad and you and your siblings. And the romance with a guy – its worth waiting for **after** marriage.

Slides 52 and 53:

There is no room in Islam for affairs or boyfriends and girlfriends. There is no respect, caring, honesty or trust in such relationships. In the beginning, everyone is blind and they think their relationship is perfect but it's only a matter of time before reality sets in; it's a different story and that's what Allah (swt) is saving us from. He doesn't want us to get hurt because he loves us so much.

Slide 54:

The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Whenever a man is alone with a woman, Satan (*Shaytan*) is the third among them" {Tirmidhi}

Slide 55:

Islam promotes love that builds families and deep rooted relationships.

Why should we single out just one day to show our love? If we truly love a person, why show it only on 14th February? Love becomes more of a formality and becomes materialistic.

May Allah (swt) grant us the ability to differentiate between real and virtual love and may He bless us with plenty of romance in our lives – with our spouses – amen

(Du'a for end of a gathering) *Subhana Rabbika Rabbul Izzati 'amma yasifun wa salamun 'alal mursaleen, walhamdulillahi Rabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *Assalam alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*