Why Do We Give Valentines?

Classroom Companion

By Sheryl Dotson • Magsico Press • Ages 5–8 • Grades K–2



Designed to accompany *Why Do We Give Valentines?* by Sheryl Dotson. Access to the book is required for the complete lesson.

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One purchased, school-owned, or borrowed copy can support a class.

CLASSROOM COMPANION | ONE LESSON AND OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Start Here

Why Do We Give Valentines?

Designed to accompany **Why Do We Give Valentines?** by Sheryl Dotson. **Access to the book is required for the complete lesson.**

Required edition: First edition, Magsico Press. ISBN: 979-8-9823392-3-2.
Book pages: story 4-27; learning pages 28-32.
Audience: ages 5-8, grades K-2. Grade 3 challenges are optional.

Question and lesson goal

Why do we give valentines, and how can we show friends they matter?
Children will explain one way to show care, using a detail from Rocky's story. A kind note, drawing or spoken response can show understanding.

Materials and preparation

One book for the class; one pencil, crayons and one plain sheet per learner. Preview book pp. 4-32 and companion p. 11. Plan an inclusive sharing choice. No food or purchased gifts are needed. The core lesson uses no cutting; optional lacy edges need safety scissors and adult help.

Exact printing plan

Choice	Copies and supplies
Core lesson: My Secret Dot Letter	1 copy of p. 11 + 1 plain sheet per learner
Optional: Story Sequencing	1 copy of p. 12 per learner
Optional: Fact or Story?	1 copy of p. 13 per learner
Optional: Mailbox Trip Map	1 copy of p. 14 per learner
Optional: Friendship Calendar	No printable; 1 plain sheet per learner
Optional: Secret Friend	No printable; teacher prepares 1 name slip per participant

Teacher keeps: one copy of pp. 2-10 and 15-17, or views them digitally. Do not copy teacher pages for each child. Print selected sheets at actual size on US Letter; they work in grayscale.

No-print core: use plain paper or an oral, pointed, acted or drawn response. Choose only the resources that help your class; completing every sheet is not the goal.

Start with the lesson on p. 3 and read-aloud guide on p. 4. Optional choices and expanded sessions begin on p. 5. This free companion is a separate download, not part of the retail book.

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TEACHER GUIDE | ABOUT 45 MINUTES | K-2

One Complete Lesson

Why Do We Give Valentines?

Lesson: A Kind Message
Goal: Explain one way to show care using a detail from Rocky's story.
Question: Why do we give valentines, and how can we show friends they matter?

Book connection

Read the full story, pp. 4-27. Look closely at the secret dots on pp. 10-11, Rocky's cards on pp. 24-25 and Gus' reply on pp. 26-27. Use the dot-letter model on p. 31 and closing questions on p. 32.

Prepare and print

Use the supplies on p. 2. Print **one copy of p. 11 per learner** and provide one plain sheet, pencil and crayons each. Model G-U-S: three letters, three dots. For no printing, children draw, speak, point or act out a kind response. No scissors are needed.

Teaching sequence

Introduce and read (22 minutes). Invite a prediction from the cover, then read pp. 4-27 with a few pauses from p. 4. Ask what Rocky wants his friends to know. Explain that the mailbox trip is imaginary and that the traditions happen on different dates.

Explore and discuss (18 minutes). Revisit Rocky's message and book p. 31. Explain that our note borrows the dots from Denmark's Easter letters. Model p. 11, then let children plan a kind message. Copy only the message and dot signature onto plain paper. Partners explain how their idea connects to Rocky's cards. Accept oral, drawn or acted alternatives.

Reflect (5 minutes). Return to the opening question. Invite: "Rocky shows care by... I can show care by..." Ask children to point to a supporting picture or event. A child may keep the recipient private.

Notice understanding and adapt

Look for: a kind idea linked to one story detail.
Support: reread pp. 24-25; offer a sentence starter, home-language discussion, pointing or adult scribing.
Ready for more: explain two different ways the friends show care.
Answer guidance: p. 15. Dot counting supports the activity; handwriting and a finished card do not determine success.

Times are planning estimates. Allow enough time for the full read-aloud and adjust pacing to the class. The optional expanded route on p. 5 offers more time.

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TEACHER GUIDE | BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER

Read Aloud Guide

Why Do We Give Valentines?

Before reading

Look at the cover. What do you notice? What do you wonder?
What could a valentine tell a friend? Children may discuss the book instead of their own family experiences.

A few purposeful stopping points

Spread 1, pp. 4-5: What is Rocky making? What does he wonder?
Spread 4, pp. 10-11: Count the dots. What could they tell us? Which season does this tradition belong to?
Spread 11, pp. 24-25: What does Rocky write? How does each card show care?
Spread 12, pp. 26-27: Who might have sent the three-dot poem? Which clues support your idea?

After reading - book p. 32

Why does Rocky give valentines?
How does Gus show care without saying it directly?
How could you show someone they matter without buying anything?
Invite one story detail as evidence. Children may speak, draw, point, act or dictate.

Words to discover - book p. 30

Valentine: a card or note that shows you care.
Tradition: a custom people pass along.
Keepsake: something saved to remember a person or a special time.
Legend: an old story that may mix facts and imagination.

Questions for a later rereading

Spreads 5-8, pp. 12-19; map p. 29: Choose two places. How are the traditions alike or different?
Spreads 9-10, pp. 20-23; history p. 28: What is known about Valentine? What remains uncertain? Is the poem about birds a science claim?

Keep the discussion welcoming

Welcome home-language discussion and visual support. Try “I notice...” and “In the book...” A child may pass on personal sharing. Explain religious origins accurately without requiring religious participation.

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TEACHER GUIDE | CHOOSE WHAT SUPPORTS YOUR CLASS

Optional Activities & Sessions

Why Do We Give Valentines?

The lesson on p. 3 works on its own. After reading the book, choose any activity below independently. There is no required multi-day sequence and no need to finish every printable.

Independent choice	Guide / time	Printing per learner
Story Sequencing	p. 6 / 15 min	1 copy of p. 12
Fact or Story?	p. 7 / 20 min	1 copy of p. 13
Our Mailbox Trip Map	p. 8 / 20 min	1 copy of p. 14
Friendship Calendar	p. 9 / 20 min	No printable; plain paper
Secret Friend	p. 10 / 20 min planning	No printable; teacher name slips

Optional expanded route – three sessions

Use this **instead of** the single lesson when more time would help. It is one possible route; each optional activity above also works separately. These are planning estimates.

Read and wonder – 25 minutes. Introduce the question (3); read the full story with selected pauses from p. 4 (19); share one detail (3). **Print:** none.

Revisit and retell – 25 minutes. Revisit Rocky's question (5); use Story Sequencing on p. 6 (15); discuss how the ending answers the question (5). **Print:** one p. 12 per learner, or use book pictures orally.

Create and explain – 25 minutes. Revisit pp. 24–27 and 31 (2); model a dot signature (3); plan, make and discuss a kind message (15); reflect (5). **Print:** one p. 11 plus one plain sheet per learner. Follow the core activity directions on p. 3.

No-print and low-print choices

The expanded route uses **two printed sheets per learner in total** (pp. 11 and 12), plus one plain sheet. Use oral retelling and plain-paper drawing instead if preferred. Teachers keep pp. 2–6 and 15–17 or view them digitally.

A map, factual sort, calendar or kindness activity can follow whenever useful. Additional activities do not make the original lesson more complete; choose them for a clear learning purpose.

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OPTIONAL ACTIVITY | ABOUT 15 MINUTES AFTER READING

Story Sequencing

Why Do We Give Valentines?

Goal: Retell key events and connect the ending to Rocky's question.
Revisit book pages: Story pp. 4-27; focus on spreads 1, 3, 4, 7, 11 and 12.

Materials and exact printing

One book; one pencil and **one copy of companion p. 12 per learner**. Read the story before this optional activity. No cutting is required.

Directions

Revisit (3 min). Look at Rocky's paper and glue (pp. 4-5), the Japan chocolates (pp. 16-17) and Gus' reply (pp. 26-27).

Retell (9 min). Read the six captions aloud. Children number the events 1-6, then explain "First... Next... Last..." to a partner using a picture or line from the book.

Reflect (3 min). How does the ending help answer Rocky's question? Invite a detail as evidence.

Support and no-print choice

Offer two choices at a time or adult scribing. **No-print:** point to matching book pictures and retell orally; children may act out an event.

Notice understanding

The child places making valentines before the mailbox trip and Gus' reply last, then explains one connection.

Optional Grade 3 challenge

Explain how the Denmark stop inspires the way Gus signs his reply.

Answer guidance

p. 15. Sheet order: 4, 1, 6, 3, 5, 2. Accept equivalent oral retellings.

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OPTIONAL ACTIVITY | ABOUT 20 MINUTES AFTER READING

Fact or Story?

Why Do We Give Valentines?

Goal: Distinguish real-world facts and traditions from imaginary events or poetry.
Revisit book pages: Spreads 9-10, pp. 20-23; robin facts p. 30; revisit pp. 12-15.

Materials and exact printing

One copy of companion p. 13 and one pencil per learner. Marking F/S needs no scissors. For optional cutting, provide child safety scissors, glue sticks and adult help.

Directions

Revisit (4 min). Read the selected history and robin passages. Explain that fiction can include real information. A tradition is something people actually do; it is different from an imaginary animal action.

Sort and explain (12 min). Read the mixed cards. Children mark F or S, or cut and glue four cards into each box. Partners explain one choice using evidence from the book.

Reflect (4 min). Name one real-world fact and one imagined event. Explain how you knew.

Support and no-print choice

Model one card; read all directions aloud. **No-print:** read the cards and let children point to two labeled areas or tell an adult their choice.

Notice understanding

The child explains a choice rather than assuming everything in a storybook is imaginary.

Optional Grade 3 challenge

Explain why a legend may mix history and imagination; compare that with a tradition people practice.

Answer guidance

p. 15. Card order: F, S, S, F, F, S, S, F. The bird line is poetry, not a fact about all birds. Beliefs are not automatically classified as false.

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OPTIONAL ACTIVITY | ABOUT 20 MINUTES AFTER READING

Our Mailbox Trip Map

Why Do We Give Valentines?

Goal: Locate the five mailbox stops and connect at least two places to their traditions.
Revisit book pages: Map p. 29; country spreads 4-8, pp. 10-19; Chaucer pp. 22-23.

Materials and exact printing

One copy of companion p. 14, one pencil and crayons per learner. Preview the world, Europe and UK views. A separate globe is optional.

Directions

Revisit (4 min). Find Pennsylvania, the story's home, on book p. 29. Match two numbered places to the letters or keepsakes.

Explore (12 min). Color the home heart; circle places 1-5 across the map views; add a star beside England. Explain that closer-up views show parts of the same world at different scales. Partners name two places and traditions.

Reflect (4 min). Name or draw one celebration outside February and connect it to a place.

Support and no-print choice

Model one location and read names aloud. **No-print:** point to places on the book map or a teacher-displayed map; answer orally.

Notice understanding

The child matches at least two numbers to places and uses an inset with help.

Optional Grade 3 challenge

Name Colombia's and Japan's continents and explain why an inset is useful.

Answer guidance

p. 15. Denmark 1; Finland 2; Wales 3; Japan 4; Colombia 5. January 25 in Wales, March 14 in Japan or September in Colombia are possible final responses.

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OPTIONAL ACTIVITY | ABOUT 20 MINUTES AFTER READING

Friendship Calendar

Why Do We Give Valentines?

Goal: Match traditions to dates and notice that celebrations occur throughout the year.
Revisit book pages: Spreads 5–8, pp. 12–19; date list on p. 29.

Materials and exact printing

No printable. Provide one plain sheet and crayons per learner. Prepare board headings for January, February, March and September. Keep the book open to p. 29.

Directions

Revisit (4 min). Read the four date entries. Ask whether all celebrations happen on February 14.

Draw and compare (12 min). Fold or divide the plain sheet into four areas. Draw a spoon for January 25 in Wales, a friendship heart for February 14 in Finland, a return-gift bow for March 14 in Japan, and friends for Colombia's third Saturday in September. Partners explain two matches.

Reflect (4 min). Name one celebration outside February. Explain how the book supports your answer.

Support and no-print choice

Provide picture choices; scribe dates. **No-print / no-paper:** children point to month headings while the teacher draws shared symbols. Home traditions need not be shared.

Notice understanding

The child connects a date and place correctly and recognizes that the examples use different dates.

Optional Grade 3 challenge

Explain why "third Saturday in September" falls on different date numbers in different years.

Answer guidance

p. 15. Accept equivalent symbols explained by the child. Denmark's letters belong to the Easter season, not one fixed date.

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OPTIONAL ACTIVITY | ABOUT 20 MINUTES AFTER READING

Secret Friend

Why Do We Give Valentines?

Goal: Plan a welcome act of kindness and connect it to a story tradition.
Revisit book pages: Colombia, pp. 18-19; Rocky's cards, pp. 24-25; discussion p. 32.

Materials and exact printing

No printable. Prepare one name slip per participating child. Privately assign a different classmate to each participant so everyone gives and receives kindness. A shared class kindness is an equal alternative. No gifts or food.

Directions

Revisit (4 min). Read the Colombia passage and look at Rocky's cards. Explain that this gift-free classroom activity is inspired by amigo secreto.

Plan and rehearse (12 min). Children choose one or two welcome acts, such as inviting someone to play or helping with materials. Rehearse the words or action with a partner. Participation and personal sharing are optional.

Reflect (4 min). Explain how the idea shows care and connects to the book. Carry out the act later in the day; invite an optional reveal before dismissal.

Support and no-print choice

Offer picture choices, adult scribing or an acted response. **No-print:** give assignments privately aloud. Children may help the class as a group instead.

Notice understanding

The child names a specific, welcome action and explains how it could help someone feel included.

Optional Grade 3 challenge

Explain how the classroom adaptation keeps the idea of caring while changing the gift exchange.

Answer guidance

p. 15. Accept different kind acts. This is a classroom adaptation; gifts are not required. The 20 minutes cover planning and reflection, not the later action.

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CORE LESSON PRINTABLE | A KIND MESSAGE

My Secret Dot Letter

Why Do We Give Valentines?

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

In Denmark, people send secret dot letters before Easter. Plan your own kind note.

1. Write your first name. Count the letters.

_____ My name has ☐ letters.

2. Color one dot for each letter. Add more dots if needed.

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

3. Write, draw or tell a kind message. A silly poem is welcome.

Try: I'm glad you're you because...

4. Sign with dots, not your name!

Gus: G-U-S = 3 dots.

5. Make your letter. Keep this planning sheet. Copy only your message and dots onto a plain sheet. With a grown-up, you may fold and cut a lacy edge.

No-card choice: say a kind sentence, draw for the class display or do a kind act. No gifts needed.

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OPTIONAL PRINTABLE | STORY RETELLING

Story Sequencing

Why Do We Give Valentines?

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

What happened first? Write 1 to 6 in the circles.



◯ Gus hugs a box of chocolates from Japan.



◯ Rocky starts making valentines with paper and glue.



◯ Gus answers with a poem signed with three dots.



◯ Ms. Hazel shows a secret dot letter from Denmark.



◯ Rocky makes a card for each friend.



◯ The friends knock on Gus' burrow door.

Tell a partner: "First... Next... Last..." Point to a picture that helps you.

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OPTIONAL PRINTABLE | FACTS AND IMAGINATION

Fact or Story?

Why Do We Give Valentines?

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Cut and glue the cards into the two boxes. Or leave them in place and write F for fact or S for story/poem.

REAL-WORLD FACT

F: true in the real world

IMAGINARY EVENT / POEM

S: imagined in a story or poem

CUT ON THE DASHED LINES, OR MARK F / S IN EACH CARD.

Valentine's Day is on February 14. ___

A robin cuts paper hearts and makes valentines. ___

In Wales, some people give carved wooden lovespoons. ___

All birds choose mates on Saint Valentine's Day. ___

A tortoise pulls a sled of letters through the snow. ___

In Finland, February 14 is called Friend's Day. ___

A groundhog slides a poem under his burrow door. ___

Adult American robins have an orange-red breast. ___

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OPTIONAL PRINTABLE | GEOGRAPHY

Our Mailbox Trip Map

Why Do We Give Valentines?

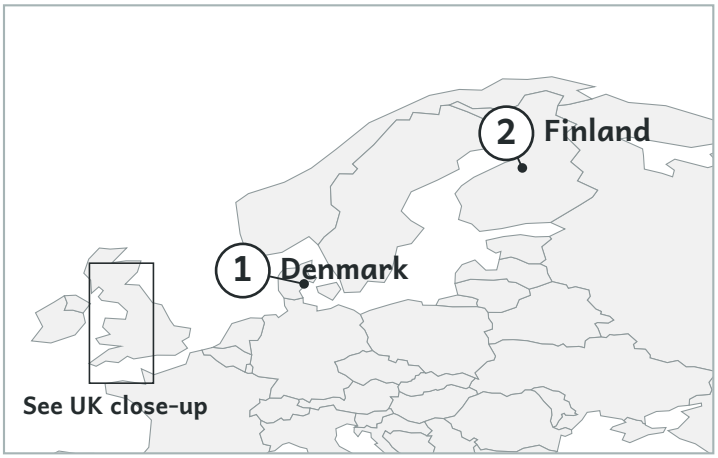
Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Color the home heart. Circle places 1-5. Add a star beside England in the close-up.

OUR WORLD



EUROPE, CLOSER UP



UNITED KINGDOM, CLOSER UP



Dots show approximate locations. Insets use different scales. Made with Natural Earth.

Name or draw one celebration that happens outside February.

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TEACHER SUPPORT | ANSWERS AND REASONING

Answer Guidance

Why Do We Give Valentines?

Page 11 · My Secret Dot Letter

Personal responses. Accept a kind sentence, drawing, dictated note or poem. Count one dot for each letter in the chosen first name; ignore spaces and punctuation. Add dots for longer names. Copy only the message and dots to the final letter. Children may choose a shared kindness instead.

Page 12 · Story Sequencing

Story order: 1 start valentines; 2 knock on Gus' door; 3 Denmark letter; 4 Japan chocolates; 5 Rocky's cards; 6 Gus' reply.
Cards left to right, top to bottom: 4, 1, 6, 3, 5, 2.
Matching book spreads: 7, 1, 12, 4, 11, 3.

Page 13 · Fact or Story?

Cards left to right, top to bottom: F, S, S, F, F, S, S, F.
Facts: February 14; Finland's Friend's Day; Wales' lovespoons; adult American robins' orange-red breasts. Imagined events/poem: tortoise mail sled; robin crafts; groundhog poem; all birds choosing mates on the same date.
Reasoning example: "The bird line is an idea in Chaucer's poem, not evidence about every real bird." A storybook can contain both real information and imagination.

Page 14 · Our Mailbox Trip Map

Home: Pennsylvania, USA. 1 Denmark; 2 Finland; 3 Wales; 4 Japan; 5 Colombia. England is labeled in the close-up. Outside February: St. Dwynwen's Day, January 25; White Day, March 14; Colombia's celebration in September. Denmark's letters are linked to the Easter season, not one fixed date.
Optional Grade 3: Colombia is in South America; Japan is in Asia.

Pages 9–10 · Calendar or kindness

January 25 / Wales; February 14 / Finland; March 14 / Japan; third Saturday in September / Colombia. Accept kind acts such as inviting someone to play or helping with classroom materials. The act must be welcome and include others.

Sample reflection

"Rocky wants his friends to know they matter." Accept different words supported by a story detail. A thoughtful explanation matters more than completing every sheet.

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TEACHER SUPPORT | CAREFUL DISTINCTIONS

Teacher Background & Skills

Why Do We Give Valentines?

Facts, traditions, legends and poetry

History: Christians remembered saints named Valentine on February 14. Little is known about their lives for certain; many popular stories are legends.
Poetry: Chaucer wrote about birds choosing mates on Valentine's Day. This is not a scientific claim that all birds do so.
Story: Rocky and his friends are fictional characters. Their mailbox trip includes real traditions.

Traditions in the book

Denmark: gækkebreve are Easter-season letters signed with dots.
Finland: February 14 is Friend's Day (Ystävänpäivä).
Wales: some people give carved lovespoons; St. Dwynwen's Day is January 25.
Japan: chocolates are popular Valentine's gifts; White Day is March 14.
Colombia: Love and Friendship Day is the third Saturday in September; some people play amigo secreto.
Customs vary among families and communities. These are examples, not rules for everyone.

Misconceptions to address

"All Valentine stories are proven history." Many are legends; distinguish what is known from what is uncertain.
"Legends are lies." Legends may mix history and imagination.
"Everything in a storybook is imaginary." Books can include real facts and traditions.
"Everyone must celebrate." Participation can focus on friendship and the book; religious or family sharing is never required.

Skills practiced

Literacy: questions, key details, vocabulary, sequence, evidence and explanation. Social studies: comparing traditions respectfully. Geography: using world and inset maps. Social-emotional learning: kindness and inclusion.
These are descriptive connections. No formal curriculum alignment, standardized assessment or organizational endorsement is claimed.

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TEACHER SUPPORT | BACKGROUND AND CLASSROOM COPYING

Sources & Permissions

Why Do We Give Valentines?

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https://www.ucl.ac.uk/social-historical-sciences/news/2021/feb/was-seynt-valentynes-day-middle-english-expression-love

Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Easter
https://um.dk/storbritannien/en/denmark-in-the-uk/danish-traditions/easter/

ThisisFINLAND - Finns treasure friendship on Valentine's Day
https://finland.fi/life-society/treasure-friendship/

Visit Wales - Celebrate St Dwynwen's Day
https://www.visitwales.com/info/history-heritage-and-traditions/st-dwynwens-day

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