

White Day



The history of Valentine's Day and White Day in Japan is interesting. Valentine's Day was introduced to the country in the 1950s. The famous Isetan department store in Tokyo held a Valentine's sale in 1958. It was not very successful. The store sold only three chocolate bars in three days. This is probably because not many Japanese people knew about Valentine's Day.

When next February came, Isetan tried again. It explained to customers that Valentine's Day was a romantic day of gift-giving in western countries. Due to a translation mistake, however, the idea somehow spread that women were supposed to give chocolates to men on this day.

The popularity of Valentine's Day slowly grew in Japan. The misunderstanding about women giving chocolates to men, however, was never cleared up. Even today, it is Japanese **custom** for women to give chocolates to the men in their lives.

Some of these gifts of chocolate are meant to be romantic gifts. These are called "honmei choko" in Japanese. These are usually expensive chocolates that women reserve for their boyfriends or husbands. Japanese women often give cheaper chocolates (called "giri choco") to their male co-workers and friends. These are not chocolates given out of love. They give them because they feel they should do so. It is an **obligation** (which means "giri" in Japanese).

Although only women are supposed to give chocolates on Valentine's Day, men must do the same in March. Japan celebrates "White Day" on March 14. It is one month after Valentine's Day. Since 1978, men in Japan give gifts of white chocolate to the women in their lives. **Like** the women on Valentine's Day, men also give expensive chocolate to those they love. They offer cheaper chocolate to their female colleagues and friends. White Day has recently spread to other Asian countries. South Korea, Taiwan, and China now celebrate it.



1. According to the article, which holiday was introduced to Japan in the 1950s?
 - a) White Day
 - b) Christmas Day
 - c) Thanksgiving
 - d) Valentine’s Day
2. According to the article, why was the first Valentine’s sale at Isetan unsuccessful?
 - a) the chocolates were too expensive
 - b) the department store was not popular
 - c) few Japanese knew about Valentine’s Day
 - d) there was a translation mistake
3. The word “custom” in paragraph 3 could be replaced with:
 - a) variety
 - b) material
 - c) tradition
 - d) ability
4. According to the article, how is Valentine’s Day different in Japan from western countries?
 - a) it is celebrated on a different day
 - b) in Japan, women give gifts to men
 - c) chocolate is much cheaper in Japan
 - d) it is a national public holiday in Japan
5. According to the article, what kind of chocolate do Japanese women usually give to co-workers?
 - a) giri-choco
 - b) white chocolate
 - c) honmei-choco
 - d) expensive chocolate
6. The word “obligation” in paragraph 4 could best be replaced with:
 - a) difficulty
 - b) possibility
 - c) responsibility
 - d) opportunity
7. According to the article, what has recently happened with White Day?
 - a) it has become unpopular
 - b) it has spread to other countries
 - c) it has been moved to a different day
 - d) it is not celebrated anymore in Japan
8. The word “like” in paragraph 5 is closest in meaning to:
 - a) same as
 - b) as if
 - c) for example
 - d) such as

Answers: 1. (d) 2. (c) 3. (c) 4. (b) 5. (a) 6. (c) 7. (b) 8. (a)

