

# Carnival

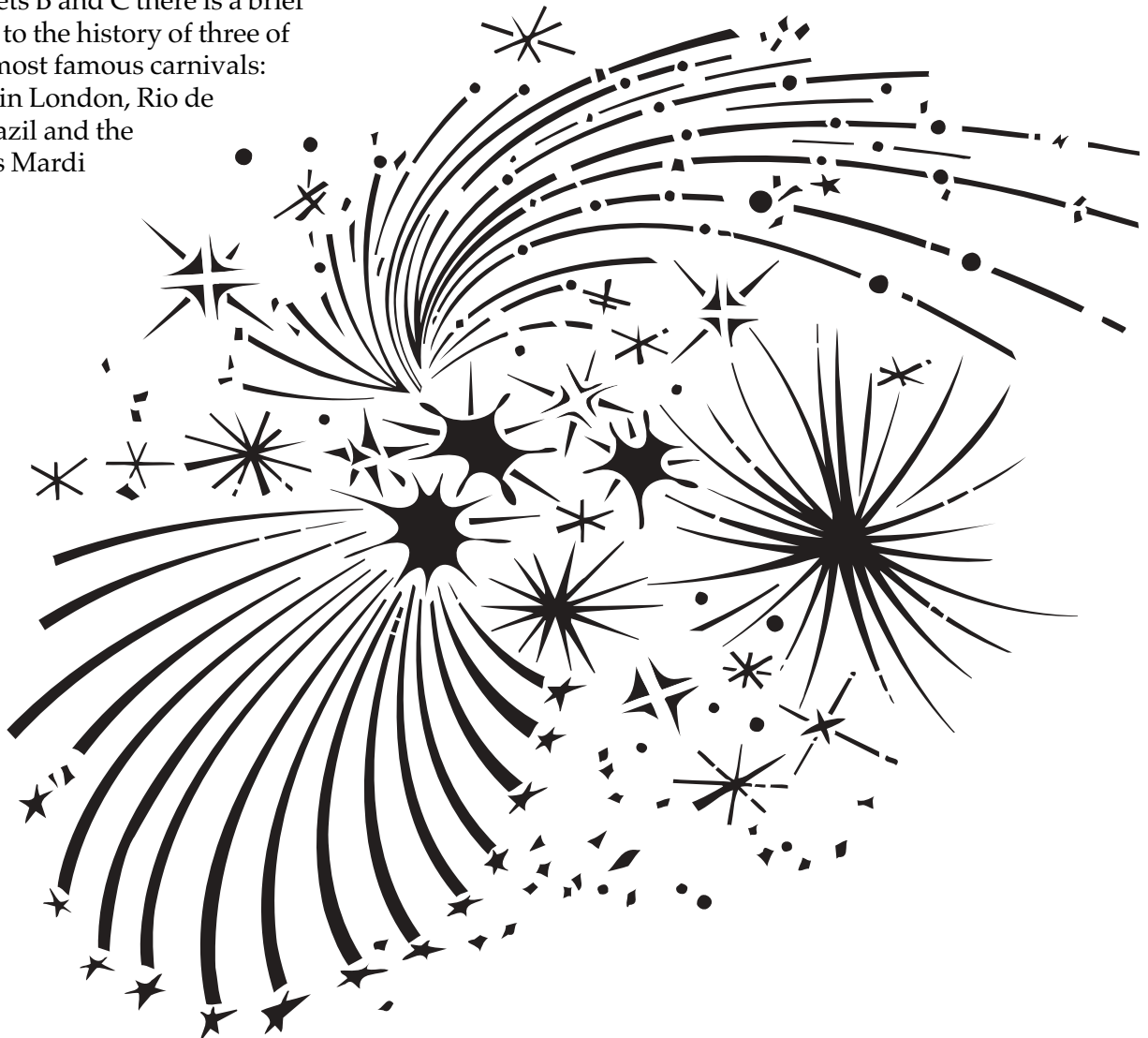
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1. Before you read the text below, try to answer these questions. Then read and check your answers.
  1. Where did Carnival originate?  
a. The United States   b. Italy   c. Brazil
  2. What was the original purpose of Carnival?  
a. to prepare for fasting   b. to celebrate the end of fasting   c. to make fasting more enjoyable
  3. The word *carnival* means goodbye to what?  
a. last year   b. evil   c. meat

## *The Origin of Carnival*

Carnival originated in Ancient Rome. It was a festival that took place immediately before Lent and prepared Christians for the period of fasting (not eating in the hours of daylight). During Lent, Christians were not allowed to eat any meat and the word *carnival* is thought to come from the Latin words *carne* and *vale*, meaning 'goodbye to meat'. Carnival quickly spread to other Italian cities and then to other European countries. Colonists introduced Carnival to the Americas. Nowadays Carnival celebrations take place in towns and cities all over the world.

On Worksheets B and C there is a brief introduction to the history of three of the world's most famous carnivals: Notting Hill in London, Rio de Janeiro in Brazil and the New Orleans Mardi Gras.



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# Carnival

2. Before you read, which carnival do you think each statement refers to? Write *Notting Hill*, *Rio de Janeiro* or *New Orleans* next to the statements. Then read and check your answers.

1. It first took place in 1964. \_\_\_\_\_
2. It was started in 1723. \_\_\_\_\_
3. It was originally started by immigrants from Trinidad. \_\_\_\_\_
4. It was started by Portuguese settlers. \_\_\_\_\_
5. It has another name, which means *Fat Tuesday*. \_\_\_\_\_
6. It takes place in August each year. \_\_\_\_\_
7. It has an official flag and anthem. \_\_\_\_\_
8. It is the largest carnival in the world. \_\_\_\_\_
9. The main music is jazz. \_\_\_\_\_
10. The main dance is the samba. \_\_\_\_\_

### *Notting Hill Carnival, London*

From the early 1950s, Trinidadian immigrants in London used to meet in pubs to enjoy the sounds of jazz and calypso. In 1964, this turned into a tiny street party in the Notting Hill Gate district and the carnival was born. In the mid-1970s, many other local West Indian communities joined in and by the 1980s it had become the second largest carnival in the world.

The Carnival takes place at the end of August each year and has about a million visitors. The streets are full of sound systems and DJs, colourful processions and costumes and people dance and party all night.

### *Rio de Janeiro Carnival*

The Carnival in Rio de Janeiro takes place between late February and early March. It is the largest carnival in the world with several million visitors.

The Rio Carnival was started in 1723 by immigrants from Portugal. The samba, a local dance, added Afro-Caribbean flavour to the celebrations. Today the dance remains at the heart of the carnival and tens of thousands of dancers compete each year in the carnival's samba contest.



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## *New Orleans Mardi Gras*

The New Orleans Carnival is also known as Mardi Gras ('Fat Tuesday' in French). Mardi Gras is actually the final day of the carnival – the day when everyone ate as much as possible before they began to fast.

New Orleans has always had a multi-cultural community and has a long history of people celebrating their identities. The modern-day Mardi Gras was started in 1857, when an official Mardi Gras flag was designed and the Mardi Gras anthem was chosen. The song includes these unusual lyrics:

*'If ever I cease to love,  
May cows lay eggs and fish grow legs.  
If ever I cease to love.'*

Today, visitors can see a range of events accompanied at all times by marching bands which fill the streets with the sound of New Orleans jazz.

**3. Write three questions about the information in the texts above. Then work in small groups. Ask and answer each other's questions.**

For example, *Which is the second largest carnival in the world?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ ?
2. \_\_\_\_\_ ?
3. \_\_\_\_\_ ?

**4. In small groups discuss the questions.**

1. Have you ever been to any of these carnivals? If so, describe your experience. If not, would you like to go to any of them?
2. Have you ever been to a carnival, big or small? Tell your group about it.
3. Imagine you were asked to organise a local one-day carnival in your neighbourhood. What events, parades and music would you have? Plan your carnival.

# Teacher's notes

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## *Tasks*

To find out about the origin of carnivals and about three famous carnivals by reading short texts.

To ask and answer questions about the texts.

To discuss questions related to carnivals and to plan a carnival.

## *Preparation*

One copy of worksheets A, B and C for each student.

## *Procedure*

1. Inform the students that London's Notting Hill Carnival takes place at the end of August each year. Elicit from the students anything they know about this carnival. Elicit the names of other carnivals they know and brainstorm information about them.
2. Give the students a copy of worksheet A and ask them to try to answer the questions. Ask the students to read the text to check their answers. Establish the meaning of *fast* before the students read, if necessary.

*Answers* 1. b 2. a 3. c

3. Give the students copies of worksheets B and C and ask them which carnival they think each statement refers to. The students then read the text to check their answers.

*Answers* 1. Notting Hill 2. Rio 3. Notting Hill 4. Rio 5. New Orleans (Mardi Gras)  
6. Notting Hill 7. New Orleans 8. Rio 9. New Orleans 10. Rio

4. Check the answers with the whole class. At this point you could ask the students to read in more detail, underlining any vocabulary they do not understand. Then check this with the whole class.
5. Ask the students, working individually or in pairs, to write questions about the texts. Ask the students, in groups, to ask and answer each other's questions – either from memory or by scanning the text.
6. The students then discuss, in pairs or small groups, the questions in 4. Ask the students to report back anything interesting from their discussions and to give a brief summary of the carnival they have planned.

## *Follow up*

1. Ask the students to prepare a poster advertising the carnival they have planned.
2. Ask the students to do further research (e.g. using the Internet or encyclopaedias) and prepare a poster about the carnivals they read about.
3. Ask the students to imagine they have just visited one of the carnivals and to write a postcard or e-mail to a friend telling them about it.

## *Websites*

For more information about the Carnivals in the texts, visit the following sites:

[www.carnaval.com/cityguides/london/lon\\_carn.htm](http://www.carnaval.com/cityguides/london/lon_carn.htm)

[www.mardigrasneworleans.com](http://www.mardigrasneworleans.com)

[www.ipanema.com/carnival/home.htm](http://www.ipanema.com/carnival/home.htm)