

Carnaval: Origins

Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain the historical roots of the Carnaval celebration.
 - Analyze Carnaval celebrations of any one city to identify evidence of the historical roots in current activities.
 - Compare and contrast modern Carnaval celebrations with those of ancient times.
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Materials

- Student Handout: **Carnaval Origins**
 - Student Handout: **Carnaval KWL Chart**
 - Student Handout: **Carnaval: Comprehension Questions**
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Activities

1. Distribute the student handout entitled **Carnaval KWL Chart**.
 - a. As a class, instruct students to complete the first two columns of the KWL chart. (K stands for what they already know. W is what they would like to learn.)
 2. Distribute the student handouts entitled **Carnaval Origins** and **Carnaval: Comprehension Questions**.
 - a. Direct students to read the “Carnaval Origins” article, independently or with a partner.
 - b. Independently, direct half the class to answers Questions 1-4 while the other half answers Questions 5-8.
 - c. In pairs, ask students to share the answers and discuss the article, including any facts that surprised or particularly interested them.
 3. As a class, direct students to list what they have learned in the L column of the KWL chart, using the questions they answered.
 - a. Review the “W” on the KWL charts to see if all questions were answered. If not, allow volunteers to do further research that can be shared with students at a later time.
 - b. Ask students to share any facts that particularly caught their attention.
 4. Extension Activity 1
 - a. Using available Internet or library reference materials, assign teams of students to research Saturnalia, Lupercalia, Samhain, the winter solstice, or other pre-Christian celebrations and to explain how these celebrations are reflected in modern holidays or festivities.
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**Activities
(continued)**

- b. Direct teams to present the information learned to classmates in a 5 minute speech.
 - c. If the classroom possesses the capability, students should be encouraged to include a PowerPoint presentation to accompany their speech.
5. Extension Activity 2
- a. Assign each student team a city from the following list that also celebrates Carnaval:
 - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (www.ipanema.com/carnaval)
 - Venice, Italy (www.carnavalofvenice.com)
 - Nice, France (www.nicerendezvous.com/EN/index_us_carnaval.php)
 - Québec, Canada (www.carnaval.qc.ca)
 - New Orleans, LA, USA (carnavalneworleans.com)
 - b. Using the websites, direct students to take notes about the activities that occur during the Carnaval celebration in their selected city.
 - c. Instruct students to write an essay explaining how the origins discussed previously can be seen in modern Carnaval celebrations of their city. (Numerous specific examples should be included in their text.)
 - d. Ask teams to share the information learned in a brief presentation to the class as a whole. (PowerPoint presentation optional)
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Carnaval Origins

What is Carnaval?

Carnaval is a public celebration with a parade, elements of a circus, and a street party held just before the Christian period of Lent begins. It is celebrated world-wide with well-known celebrations in Rio de Janeiro, Venice, New Orleans, Mazatlan, Mexico, as well as Olinda, Recife, Bezerros, and Salvador in Brazil.



Origins

For many Christians, the forty days of Lent that begins on Ash Wednesday is a penitential time of preparation for Holy Week and Easter during which “shrivers,” or priests, used to hear confessions to absolve them from their sins. Traditionally, because many “give up” certain foods or activities as an act of repentance, they need to eliminate meat and fat from the house before Lent begins. Getting rid of these rich foods turned into a party which has become “Mardi Gras” (Fat, or Shrove, Tuesday), “Fastnacht” (often incorrectly translated as Donut Day), or Carnaval. The word Carnaval comes from a combination of the Latin words “caro” (meat) and “vale” (farewell), so the celebration is a time to say goodbye to the flesh, letting go of the earthly, or bodily, self for the upcoming season. Today celebrations range from one day (the Tuesday before Lent) to several weeks.

Some researchers argue that the origins of Carnaval can be found in Saturnalia (Saturn’s festival) and Lupercalia, festivals that predate the Christian era. During these celebrations there was a temporary subversion of civil order; wanton, unbridled freedom abounded. It has also been tied to the beginning of spring when many felt a need to scare away evil spirits. To do this, they used processions and people with masks, as well as a lot of music and noise. Later processions with patron saints were added. We can certainly see elements of all these older celebrations in modern day ones.



Carnaval KWL Chart



As a class or in small groups, complete the first two columns of the chart. After reading the article, “Carnaval Origins” and completing the questions, add information to the last column.

Know Here's what I already know about Carnaval.	Want to Know I think I will find the answers to these questions in the article.	Learned I learned these facts from the article.

Carnaval: Comprehension Questions

Name _____ Date _____

Instructions *Answer only those questions your teacher assigns you. Please use complete sentences and go back to the text to find complete answers. **Be sure to use your own words!** Don't just copy the ones from the text.*

1. What is Lent?

 2. Explain the origin of the word Carnaval.

 3. If you wanted to find more information about Saturnalia or Lupercalia, where would you look? List as many as you can.

 4. In your opinion, why did ancient people feel a need to scare away evil spirits?

 5. What is Carnaval?

 6. Name two other names for Carnaval that come from other languages.

 7. Give examples of “temporary subversion of civil order.” (Use ideas from the article and your own experiences.)

 8. Why do you think ancient people used the methods they did to scare away evil spirits?
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