



Mardi Gras

(beginner level)



MARDI GRAS

Mardi Gras means "Fat Tuesday". It began as a Christian **celebration**. "Fat" symbolized how much people ate on the Tuesday before Lent. Lent is a period a few weeks before Easter. Long ago Christians fasted during Lent. To fast means to **give up** food. These days Christians usually give up a bad **habit** during Lent.

Mardi Gras is sometimes a one-day celebration. Christians call this day Shrove Tuesday (or Pancake Tuesday). Most Mardi Gras celebrations aren't **religious** anymore.

Some countries celebrate Mardi Gras for weeks at a time. These parties are called festivals or carnivals and they mark the change of winter to spring. Activities include dressing up, dancing, and having **parades**.

New Orleans is well known for its Mardi Gras parades. "Krewes" are private clubs that organize the events. Krewe **membership** is secret to the public. Nobody knows what the parade floats will look like. The people on the floats wear masks and toss **party favors** to the crowds. The colors of Mardi Gras are purple, gold, and green. These stand for justice, power, and faith.

Rio de Janeiro also hosts springtime festivals. Rio's Carnival is "The greatest party on earth." It is well known for its samba school parade. **Celebrities** love to watch the famous parade from private balconies. Judges decide which samba school has the best dancers and costumes.

Canadians enjoy an annual carnival too. It is not in the springtime. Quebec City's Winter Festival is one of the largest in the world. Close to one million people visit this winter **amusement park** each year. Activities include sleigh racing and dog sledding.

READING COMPREHENSION

A. True or False? Write T if the answer is true and F if the answer is false.

1. Mardi Gras means "Fat Celebration". _____
2. The Christian holiday of Easter comes after Lent. _____
3. Lent refers to the springtime season. _____
4. A "Krewe" is a type of parade. _____
5. Dog sledding is a typical event at Carnival in Rio. _____

**READING COMPREHENSION - continued****B. Who, What Where, When, Why, How? Answer the following questions.**

1. Who catches the party favors? _____
2. What are the traditional colors of Mardi Gras? _____
3. Where is the world's largest winter carnival held? _____
4. When does Pancake Tuesday take place for Christians? _____
5. Why are there judges at Rio's samba parades? _____
6. How do celebrities watch the samba parades? _____

C. Write your own 6 questions about the reading using Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How. Give your questions to a partner to answer.

1. _____ ?
2. _____ ?
3. _____ ?
4. _____ ?
5. _____ ?
6. _____ ?

VOCABULARY REVIEW**A. Match the words on the left with the correct meaning on the right.**

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. celebration | a) very well known people |
| _____ 2. give up | b) belonging to a group |
| _____ 3. habit | c) belief in a certain God or spiritual world |
| _____ 4. parade | d) a street show of people in costumes and decorated vehicles |
| _____ 5. religious | e) something you do without thinking about it (good or bad) |
| _____ 6. membership | f) small gifts you receive at a party |
| _____ 7. floats | g) a place to enjoy rides, games, and other fun activities |
| _____ 8. party favors | h) to no longer do or have |
| _____ 9. celebrities | i) decorated vehicles in a parade |
| _____ 10. amusement park | j) a party to mark or honor a special event |

**GROUP ACTIVITIES**

A. Mardi Gras is a celebration. It marks the end of winter and the beginning of spring. Work together as a class to complete the two charts.

Winter: *Brainstorm a list of nouns, verbs, and adjectives about the season of winter.*

Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives

Spring: *Brainstorm a list of nouns, verbs, and adjectives about the season of spring.*

Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives

**GROUP ACTIVITIES - continued****B. Poetry Partners**

A diamonte poem is a poem that is in the shape of a diamond. It contrasts two opposite subjects, such as sun and ice. Diamonte poems are useful for practising word forms.

Here is the format:

subject 1
2 adjectives describing subject 1
3 ing words describing subject 1
2 nouns related to subject 1, 2 nouns related to subject 2
3 ing words describing subject 2
2 adjectives describing subject 2
subject 2

Here is an example:

Winter
cold, snowy
freezing, blowing, sledding
coat, scarf, flowers, sun
blooming, shining, dancing
beautiful, new
Spring

Directions: Write a diamonte poem with a partner using one of the following pairs of opposites from the reading passage. Practice reading your poems out loud together. Recite your poem to the class.

Opposite Pairs:

1. winter and spring
2. party and rest
3. dancer and audience
4. feasting and fasting
5. Mardi Gras and Lent


JUST FOR FUN: WORD SCRAMBLE

Work alone or with a partner. Unscramble the following words from the reading. Then find some of them in the word search below.

1. readsp _____
2. stolfa _____
3. orsvaf tyarp _____
4. up vegi _____
5. bracelteoni _____
6. krap temusaenm _____
7. tibah _____
8. tisecbeleri _____
9. gisuoreli _____
10. drapae _____

FLOATS
 FAVORS
 HABIT
 RELIGIOUS
 PARADE





Answer Key

These activities are designed for lower level ESL learners, but can be adapted to suit your students' needs.

Reading - Have your students read the article about Mardi Gras. You can ask them to read aloud to monitor pronunciation, or silently on their own. When they are finished the reading put them into small groups or pairs to discuss the follow up questions.

Reading Comprehension

A. True or False

1. F 2. T 3. T 4. F 5. F

B. Who, What, Where?

- The people watching the parades catch the party favors.
- The traditional colors of Mardi Gras are purple, green and gold.
- The world's largest winter carnival is held in Quebec City.
- Pancake Tuesday takes place the day before Lent begins.
- Judges watch to see which samba school has the best dancers and costumes.
- Celebrities sit in private balconies to watch the parades.

Vocabulary Review

A. Matching

1. J 2. H 3. E 4. D 5. C 6. B 7. I 8. F 9. A 10. G

Just for Fun

A. Unscramble the words

- | | | | | | |
|-----------|----------------|-----------------|------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. spread | 2. floats | 3. party favors | 4. give up | 5. celebration | 6. amusement park |
| 7. habit | 8. celebrities | 9. religious | 10. parade | | |

B U G T W E R F U B
 V S Q E M O E H J M
 S L M I U P L L I Q
 S T W H A B I T U F
 I N A W V C G D L X
 K P M Q J Z I L A S
 N O R N L N O H W P
 H A Q W K F U U Z C
 A F A V O R S M S P
 Q C E D A R A P Q G