



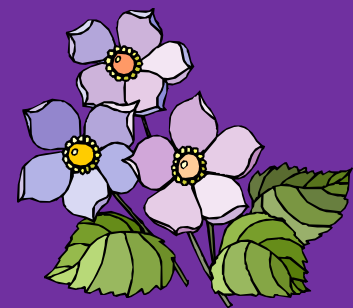
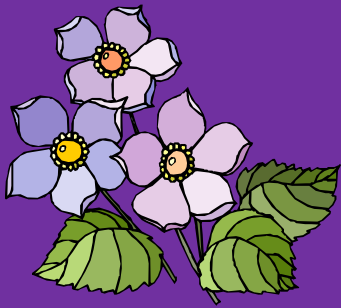
The History and Origin of Carnaval and Mardi Gras



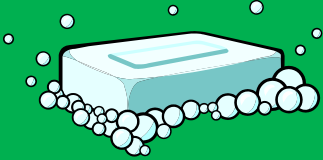
Don't confuse the terms!



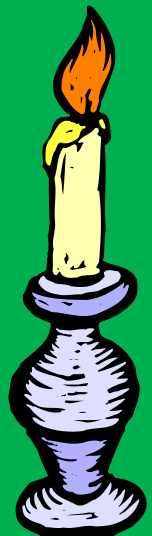
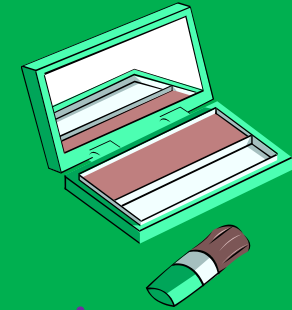
- Carnaval is the entire season of celebration.
- It includes the parades, the dances, the costumes, the throws, the parties, etc.
- Mardi Gras is the very last day of the season.
- It's the big day that everyone looks forward to.
- It's a little bittersweet because everyone anticipates the arrival of Carnaval, but at the end of the day, all the fun is over until next year.



- In Europe, there were many celebrations to welcome spring.
- **After a long, harsh winter, spring was a welcomed relief.**
- People celebrated in hopes that their crops and animals would be plentiful.
- **Mardi Gras was originally part of the spring festival in France.**
- During the original celebration, many years ago, there were NO floats, no candy, and no marching bands.
- **Instead, people paraded a fat ox down the street.**
- The ox represents bounty, plenty, and prosperity. When the people saw the ox, they cheered loudly, and they felt hopeful that the spring harvest would yield lots of food.



- Mardi Gras is always celebrated on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday.
- Mardi means Tuesday in French.
- Gras means animal fat in French.
- Many years ago, animal fat was a luxury for the peasants. They could use it to season their food, make candles, soap, lotion, cosmetics, etc.
- On Mardi Gras Day (Fat Tuesday) everyone was expected to use as much of the animal fat as possible, and at the end of the day, they burned any remaining fat so as not to be tempted.
- WHY??? Because the day after Mardi Gras (Ash Wednesday) is a religious holiday that marks the beginning of Lent.





- Lent is a six-week period of sacrifice. (46 days total or 40 days if Sundays are not included) It begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Easter Sunday.
- For those who choose to attend an Ash Wednesday service, they will receive ashes in the shape of a cross on their forehead or hand. The ashes originally came from the animal fat that was burned on the evening of Mardi Gras.
- The ash cross represents the sacrifice the person plans to make throughout the season of Lent.
- Food is the most common form of sacrifice during this time period. (example: giving up a favorite food or beverage)
- However, the sacrifice can be anything that is meaningful to the individual.

- The French call the days before Lent "Le Carnaval."
- In Latin, the words "carne" and "vale," means "farewell meat."
- January 6 is the last day of the Christmas season, and it is known as Epiphany (or Twelfth Night).
- Many Christians believe this was the night that the three wise men arrived to see baby Jesus.

- They warned Mary and Joseph that King Herod wanted to kill Jesus, and they urged the new parents to take the baby and leave quickly.



- Therefore, the Carnival season begins on January 7 because the three wise men saved the baby, and now the celebration can begin.
- If you stop by a bakery on January 7 through Mardi Gras Day, you can buy a special dessert. Do you know what it is?
- A king cake!! This cake symbolizes how the wise men saved the baby.
- However, a French king cake (la galette des rois) looks very different from an American king cake.
- Also, the person who finds the baby or the trinket inside the cake becomes the "King or Queen for the Day."





- In the early days, the peasants were the ones who burned the fat and celebrated before Lent.
- The nobility (the wealthy people) saw what the peasants were doing and thought it looked like a lot of fun, but they **COULDN'T DARE BE SEEN** celebrating with the poor people.
- So --- they eventually decided to attend the celebration, **BUT** they wore masks and costumes to hide their identities.
- The tradition of masks and costumes during Carnival still continues today!!

Mardi Gras Arrives in the U.S.

- Pierre Le Moyon, Sieur d'**Iberville** and his younger brother Jean-Baptiste Le Moyon, Sieur de **Bienville** were sent by King Louis XIV (14th) to establish a French settlement in the "New World."
- On March 3, 1699, the explorers landed at the mouth of the Mississippi River and set up a camp.
- At the same time, France was celebrating Mardi Gras, so the camp was named Pointe du Mardi Gras.

- Three years later (1702), the French founded a settlement near present-day Mobile, Alabama , and the first official Mardi Gras celebration took place.
- In 1718, the French founded the city of New Orleans, and the Mardi Gras celebration quickly spread.
- In 1872, the King of Carnival (Rex) chose the official colors:
 - Purple = justice
 - Gold = power
 - Green = faith





Mardi Gras in Canada



- French explorers settled in Canada and brought Mardi Gras with them.
- Many Canadian cities combine Mardi Gras celebrations with winter sports games.
- Canada's most famous Mardi Gras is held in Quebec City.
- The people enjoy having a break from the long, harsh winter.

- In 1955, Quebec began "Le Carnaval de Québec," and it lasts for 17 days.
- Parties, masquerade balls, parades - also outdoor winter activities - snow sculpture contests, ice canoe races across the St. Lawrence River, and Roll in the Snow events
- The symbol of Quebec's carnival is Bonhomme the snowman.





- Bonhomme arrives in early January, and the mayor welcomes him and presents him with a key to the city.
- Bonhomme is "in charge" during Carnaval.
- Each year, an ice palace is built for Bonhomme.
- It takes more than 9,000 tons of ice and snow to make the palace





















- Typically, fifteen men work on the palace for two months.
- It is usually 75 feet tall, and tourists are invited to visit it.
- At the end of Mardi Gras Day, Bonhomme returns the key to the city to the mayor and bids farewell until next year.

