

Subject
Language arts

Carnival history: find out a little more

Grade 5 - 6 -7

Summary

A reading comprehension activity about Grenada's Carnival using an earlier FC journal.

Overall

Expectations

Students will read a non-fiction piece of writing.

Students will explain their interpretation of a written work, supporting it with evidence from the work and from their own knowledge and experience.

Specific Expectations

Students will summarize and explain the main ideas in information materials and cite details that support the main ideas.

Students will make judgements and draw conclusions about ideas in written materials on the basis of evidence.

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BACKGROUND

The Goddard family are cruising the Caribbean on *sv Carapan*. We introduced them in an earlier FC journal. They arrived in Grenada in August just in time to see Grenada's cultural event of the year – **Carnival**. They've been very interested to learn more about Carnival's history so we suggested they check out the FC journal posted in August. After reading over the journal, Lisa (their teacher & mom) came up with questions for Ben (Grade 7) and Emma (Grade 5). Give them a try and see how you do.

Activity

Here is a blend of 7 questions Lisa prepared for her 2 students (her kids, Ben & Emma). Referring to the FC journal posted in August, answer the following questions. Ben and Emma's responses follow. Compare your answers to what they discovered, when you are finished.

1. Describe J'ouvert.
2. Describe Jab Molassi and explain why Jab Molassi was so important to the cane estate slaves.
3. Describe the original story of the Jab-Jab character? Why were children afraid of the Jab-Jab character?
4. What are the origins of the Carnival festival? Describe how the Caribbean Carnival is linked to the Roman Catholic period of Lent.
5. How did slaves in the Caribbean countries contribute to the modern celebration of Carnival?
6. What is a *Mas* band?
7. Why do you think Carnival is the most important cultural event in Grenada?

Ben and Emma's answers to the Carnival questions.

1. **Emma:** J'ouvert is the start of Carnival. People paint their bodies white, black, red, yellow and green. There is a different group for each colour. Each group had a flat bed truck with a DJ playing Soca Music.
2. **Emma:** Jab Molassi is the ghost of the cane estate and represented the fate of falling into a vat of boiling molasses. He is so important to the slaves because he is the ghost of where they are slaves – the cane estate.
3. **Ben:** The original story of the Jab-Jab character is Jab-Jab was first introduced in 1906. The story has changed from the old Jab-Molassi to the new, more familiar devil-like character. Jab-Jab has horns, a tail, a whip and can be dressed in satin or black.
Emma: The children were afraid of Jab-Jab because they were afraid he would take them away.
4. **Emma:** The origins of Carnival came from the Catholic religion in the 15th and 16th century. The tradition started with a wild costume festival before Lent. *Carnivale* means “put away meat”. Explorers colonized the West Indies. The explorers brought their culture with them including Carnivale and playing the drums is from the african slave trade.
Ben: The Caribbean Carnival is connected with Lent because Carnival was a holiday where they could pig out before the 40-day meat fasting period of Lent.
5. **Ben:** Slaves in the Caribbean contributed to modern day Carnival because in 1785 Carnival was introduced to the country after the French were forced out of Grenada. Its beginnings happened on the wealthy sugar plantations where huge parties were held and people danced into the early hours of the morning. But at the same time, the slaves were having their own party. After 1835 when slavery was abolished, the slaves moved their parties to the streets.
6. **Ben:** A *Mas* is an abbreviation of the French word masquerade. So Mas band means Masquerade Band.
7. **Ben:** I think Carnival is the most important cultural event because it is a holiday where people don't have to worry and can just be themselves. The slaves couldn't be themselves or express anything but that is why they go wild with music and costumes.