

Brazil Today

Carnaval! The Celebration of Brazil

Brazil's warm climate and beautiful beaches attract people from all over the world. What else attracts people to Brazil? The country's reputation for fun! During Carnaval, seven weeks before Easter, for four straight days, Brazil turns into one big party. It is Carnaval time!

Carnaval began similar to the **tradition**¹ of Mardi Gras in the United States. Both started as a feast and celebration before the fasting of Lent. But today, Carnaval is not as much about religion as about fun and pleasure. People parade, dance, play music, and wear costumes and masks. Everyone catches the spirit of Carnaval. Bright colors are everywhere and people become more outgoing.

Carnaval combines many **elements**² of Brazil's heritage: masked balls from the Portuguese aristocrat tradition, music handed down through the ages from West Africans in Brazil, and paint and marching from the Native American tradition. People from every background and social class take part in Carnaval in one way or another.

One way to celebrate is through singing. Many people sing songs written for Carnaval as they parade. Here is a translation of the first simple words ever written for a Carnaval song. They are almost like a chant:

Hey, make way
I want to pass
I like parties
I can't deny that

Part of the Carnaval is the *escolas de samba*. *Escolas de samba* are groups, or almost like clubs that perform together. They spend a lot of time

¹ **tradition:** the passing down customs from one generation to the next

² **elements:** parts

during the whole year preparing for Carnaval. The **exhibitions**³ involve parades with breathtaking floats made of crepe paper, flowers, and other materials. There is also music. Each parade lasts about 90 minutes. Judges choose the best groups of floats and the best songs written each year. Often the songs have political or historical themes. They are fun, but they are also passionate and smart. The songs speak to the people of Brazil. Brazilians are very loyal to their favorite *escola*. People from the community pour time and effort into the *escola de samba* to make their parade the best, loudest, and most **dazzling**.⁴

³ **exhibition:** a display for the public

⁴ **dazzling:** arousing admiration by an impressive display

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. According to the passage, what other holiday is Carnaval most similar to?
 - a. Mardi Gras
 - b. Thanksgiving
 - c. Easter
 - d. Fourth of July

2. The author mostly describes Carnaval by
 - a. interviewing people who have participated in it.
 - b. describing some of the winning *escolas de samba*.
 - c. comparing it to other holidays around the world.
 - d. giving details about the traditions of the holiday.

3. Why does the author most likely say that the *escola de samba* songs “speak to the people of Brazil?”
 - a. Every Brazilian has to sing one song on a stage.
 - b. The songs have themes that are meaningful to the people.
 - c. The songs all come from different foreign countries.
 - d. Music is the most important part of Carnaval to the people.

4. Read the following sentences: “What else attracts people to Brazil? The country’s **reputation** for fun!”

The word **reputation** means

- a. what someone is known for
 - b. laws against something
 - c. a musical group
 - d. a historical recording
-
5. The passage “Carnaval” is mostly about
 - a. how to prepare for a parade.
 - b. why tourists come to celebrate in Brazil.
 - c. how Easter is celebrated in Brazil.
 - d. a celebration that takes place in Brazil.

6. What parts of Carnaval combine elements from different cultures in Brazil's history?

7. Explain whether a foreign tourist in Brazil would be able to enjoy Carnaval as much as a native Brazilian person.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

Brazil offers visitors a great deal of culture, _____ during Carnaval.

- a. never
- b. however
- c. especially
- d. next

9. Read the following sentence.

During Carnaval, Brazilians and tourists have fun by celebrating with music, dancing, and parades.

Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

- 1. Who? Brazilians and tourists
- 2. What do Brazilians and tourists do? _____
- 3. How? _____
- 4. When? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** elements: parts.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 760

Featured Text Structure: Descriptive – the writer explains, defines or illustrates a concept or topic

Passage Summary: Brazil’s Carnaval celebration started as a feast before the fasting during the Christian holiday of Lent, but today it is more about pleasure than religion. People from all backgrounds take part in Carnaval, which involves parades, dancing, and singing.

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2. The author mostly describes Carnaval by
 - a. interviewing people who have participated in it.
 - b. describing some of the winning *escolas de samba*.
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 - d. **giving details about the traditions of the holiday.**

3. Why does the author most likely say that the *escola de samba* songs “speak to the people of Brazil?”
 - a. Every Brazilian has to sing one song on a stage.
 - b. **The songs have themes that are meaningful to the people.**
 - c. The songs all come from different foreign countries.
 - d. Music is the most important part of Carnaval to the people.

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The word **reputation** means

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5. The passage “Carnaval” is mostly about
- how to prepare for a parade.
 - why tourists come to celebrate in Brazil.
 - how Easter is celebrated in Brazil.
 - a celebration that takes place in Brazil.**
6. What parts of Carnaval combine elements from different cultures in Brazil’s history?

Suggested answer: Carnaval features elements of Brazil’s past such as masked balls from Portuguese tradition, music from West Africa, and painting and marching from Native Americans. Students can also mention that *escolas de samba* can have historical themes.

7. Explain whether a foreign tourist in Brazil would be able to enjoy Carnaval as much as a native Brazilian person.

Suggested answer(s): Answers may vary. Students can say yes, foreign tourists would be able to enjoy Carnaval just as much because there is so much to see and hear. The music and parades would be very exciting for a tourist.

Students can also say no, foreign tourists would not be able to enjoy Carnaval as much because the themes speak to the people of Brazil. Locals enjoy it more because it speaks to their heritage and they are loyal to their community’s *escola* in the parade.

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1. Who? Brazilians and tourists
2. What do Brazilians and tourists do? **have fun**
3. How? **by celebrating with music, dancing, and parades**
4. When? **during Carnaval**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** elements: parts of something.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.