

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## What is Mardi Gras?

Mardi Gras is a lively celebration that happens once a year. It usually takes place in late February or early March, on the day before Ash Wednesday. Mardi Gras is French for "Fat Tuesday," and it got this name because it was traditionally a day when people would eat lots of rich, fatty foods before the start of Lent, a period of fasting and prayer in the Christian calendar.

The tradition of Mardi Gras began in Europe. When people from Europe came to America, they brought this tradition with them. In the United States, Mardi Gras is most famously celebrated in the city of New Orleans, Louisiana, though other cities celebrate it too.

Mardi Gras is known for its exciting parades, beautiful costumes, and bright colors. The official colors of Mardi Gras are purple, green, and gold. Each color has a special meaning: purple stands for justice, green for faith, and gold for power.

One of the most famous parts of Mardi Gras are the parades. Different groups called "krewes" organize these parades and each one has its own theme and style. People on the parade floats throw small gifts, known as "throws," into the crowd. These can include beads, plastic cups, and doubloons which are like special Mardi Gras coins.

Mask wearing is another fun tradition of Mardi Gras. It's customary to wear masks, often decorated with feathers and jewels. These masks add to the sense of mystery and excitement. Some people also wear costumes or dress in the Mardi Gras colors.

Food is an important part of the celebration too. People enjoy dishes like jambalaya, gumbo, and a special cake called a King Cake. Inside every King Cake is a tiny baby figure. Whoever finds the baby in their piece of cake is said to have good luck and is responsible for buying the King Cake the next year!

So, Mardi Gras is a day full of fun, food, and celebration, all leading up to the quieter, reflective period of Lent.



# New Orleans

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### Reading Comprehension Questions

1. When is Mardi Gras celebrated?
2. Why is it called "Fat Tuesday"?
3. What do the official colors of Mardi Gras represent?
4. What are "krewes" in the context of Mardi Gras?
5. What is special about the King Cake?