

Mardi Gras

"Laissez les bons temps rouler!" (Let the good times roll!)

— A traditional Cajun expression linked to Mardi Gras, reflecting its spirit of celebration and joy.



Warm up

- Have you ever attended a large festival or carnival? What did you enjoy most about it?
- What comes to mind when you hear the words "Mardi Gras"?
- If you could attend any celebration in the world, which one would it be and why?
- Why do you think people like to dress up for parades and festivals?
- What's the most memorable food you've eaten at a special event?



1. Match the words below to their correct definitions.

- a. parade float → 2
- b. abstain → 5
- c. indulge → 4
- d. procession → 6
- e. dazzling → 3
- f. spectacle → 1

1. Very bright, impressive, or beautiful in a way that catches attention.
2. A large, elaborately decorated platform, often used in parades.
3. An impressive or dramatic public display or event.
4. To enjoy something, often in a way that feels like a luxury.
5. To choose not to do or have something, often for religious or health reasons.
6. A group moving forward in an organized way, often in a ceremony.



2. Read the text and answer the following questions.

Mardi Gras, known as “Fat Tuesday,” is one of the world’s most vibrant and deeply rooted celebrations. Each year, the streets of New Orleans, Louisiana, explode with color and music as the city bids farewell to excess before the Christian season of Lent begins. But this famous festival is more than just a party—it’s a tradition blending European, African, and Creole influences into an unforgettable spectacle.



Mardi Gras traces its origins back over a thousand years to medieval Europe, particularly France, Italy, and Spain. These regions held lavish feasts and masked balls before Lent, a 40-day period of fasting and reflection in the Christian calendar. The idea was simple: indulge before you abstain—hence the name “Fat Tuesday.” Lent always begins on Ash Wednesday, so the final day of feasting and celebration naturally falls on the Tuesday before it.

When French colonists arrived in Louisiana in the 17th century, they brought these festival traditions with them. Records show that as early as 1699, French explorer Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville landed near present-day New Orleans and named the site Pointe du Mardi Gras. By the 18th century, New Orleans and Mobile (now in Alabama) were hosting masked balls, street processions, and grand feasts, setting the stage for today’s Mardi Gras.

One of Mardi Gras’ most iconic traditions is the use of masks and costumes, dating back to its European origins. Historically, masks allowed people to shed their social identities so nobles and commoners could celebrate together. Today, they remain a key part of the festival, adding a sense of mystery and fun.

By the 19th century, organized parades and krewes, social clubs responsible for hosting Mardi Gras events, became central to the celebration. The first official parade rolled through New Orleans in 1857, thanks to the Mistick Krewe of Comus, who introduced elaborate floats, masked riders, and theatrical themes. Over time, more krewes formed, each adding its own flair—leading to the dazzling, over-the-top spectacle we see today. From extravagant floats to the spirit of anonymity behind a mask, Mardi Gras continues to be a celebration of creativity, culture, and community.

- a. Why is Mardi Gras always celebrated on a Tuesday? *Mardi Gras is always on a Tuesday because Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, making the previous day the final chance to feast before fasting.*
- b. How did Mardi Gras evolve from a European tradition into the grand festival seen in New Orleans today? *Mardi Gras originated in medieval Europe with feasts before Lent. French colonists brought it to Louisiana, where it evolved with parades, krewes, and grand celebrations in New Orleans.*
- c. Why do people wear masks and costumes during Mardi Gras? *Masks allowed people to shed their social identities so nobles and commoners could celebrate together. Today, they add mystery and fun to the festival.*

Past Perfect

The Past Perfect helps show which action happened first and provides a clear timeline of events. It is formed using had + past participle.

✓ *When they left the house, it had started to rain.*

✗ *When they left the house, it had not started to rain.*

? *Had it started to rain before they left the house?*



3. Rewrite the scenario using a single past perfect sentence

- a. Sarah arrived at the party at 9 PM. John left the party at 8:30 PM.

When Sarah arrived at the party, John had already left.

- b. I arrived at the office. The meeting started before I got there.

When I arrived at the office, the meeting had already started.

- c. Emily watched a movie. She finished her homework earlier.

When Emily watched the movie, she had already finished her homework.

- d. We arrived at the station. The train departed earlier.

When we arrived at the station, the train had already departed.

- e. Mia lost her keys. She put them in her bag earlier.

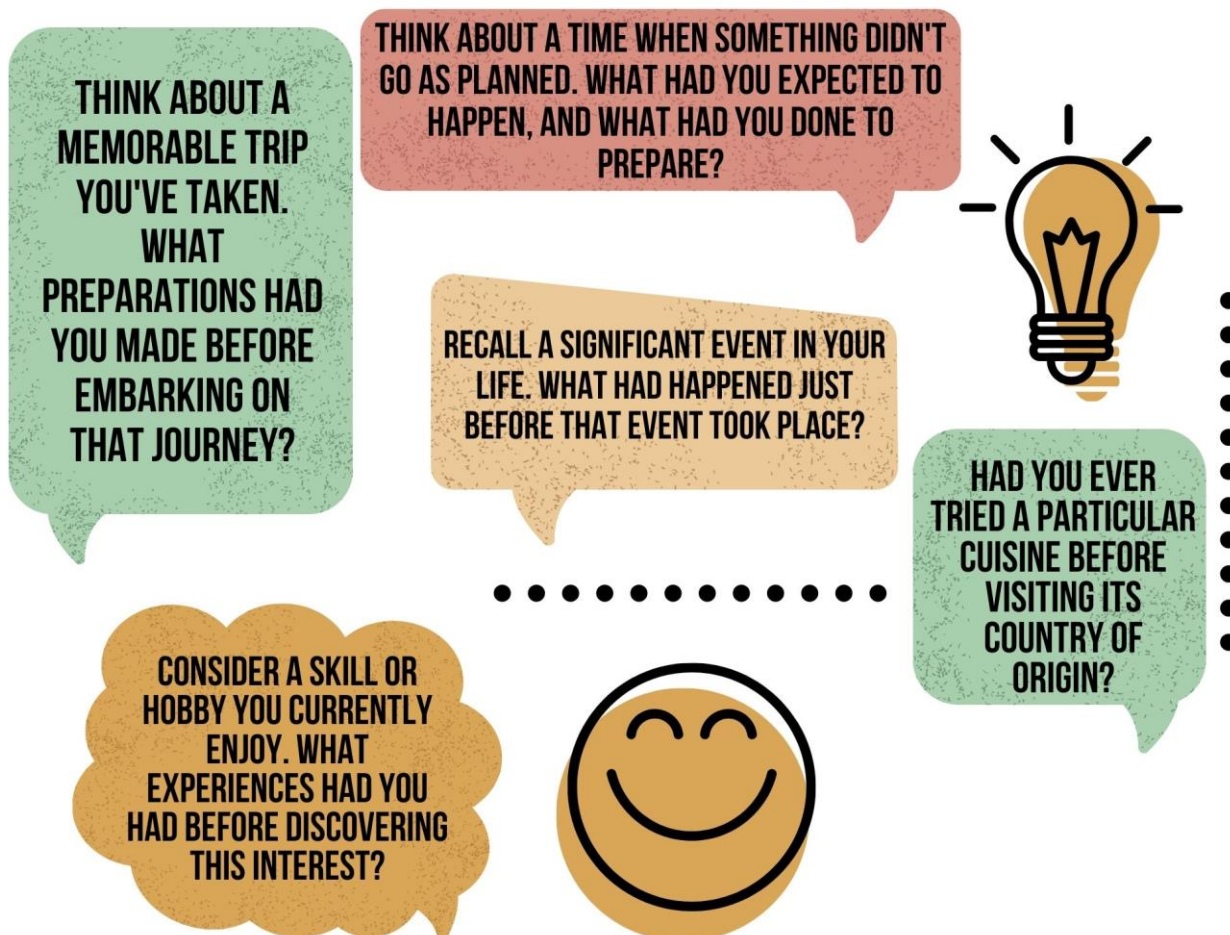
When Mia lost her keys, she had already put them in her bag.

- f. They went for a walk. They ate dinner earlier.

When they went for a walk, they had already eaten dinner.



4. Discuss in small groups.



5. Research and presentation

In small groups, research another festival celebrated in February or March. Prepare a short presentation covering its origins, traditions, and any unique aspects. Use visuals if possible, and explain why you think it is an interesting festival. Here are some ideas to choose from, or you can find one of your own:

- Carnival in Brazil
- Holi in India
- Nowruz (Persian New Year)
- Chinese New Year

