

Carnival: around the world essay



**ASSIGN
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Carnival: Around the World An interesting holiday that I do not celebrate is Carnival. Carnival is very popular in Brazil, but is also celebrated in almost every other country. The Carnival celebration in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil is considered the biggest party in the world, according the Guinness Book of World Records, 2010. Carnival typically involves a public celebration or parade combining some elements of a circus, mask, and public street party. The streets of Rio de Janeiro fill with people trying to party, celebrate, and have a good time.

Music and drinking are also a major part of the festival. It is unknown when Carnival originated, but some believe it may date back to pre-Christian times. Carnival stems from the Catholic religion and is a festival that is held directly before lent. In the days before Lent, all rich food and drink had to be disposed of. The consumption of this, in a giant party that involved the whole community, is thought to be the origin of Carnival. The word “Carnival” is believed to originate from the late Latin expression *carne vale*, which translates to “farewell to meat. This makes sense because Carnival is just a huge festival celebrating the last day that Catholics can consume rich foods such as meats and wine before they must fast for forty days of lent. Carnival is celebrated world wide, but varies from region to region. In Russia, they celebrate Maslenitsa, which is their form of Carnival. It is celebrated the last week before the Great Lent. Maslenitsa is also known as Butter week, Pancake week, or Cheesefare week because dairy products are forbidden during lent.

Lent also excludes parties, secular music, dancing and other distractions from the spiritual life. Thus, Maslenitsa represents the last chance to partake

of dairy products and those social activities that are not appropriate during the more prayerful, sober and introspective Lenten season. In Peru, Carnival is also celebrated. The celebration takes place in the city of Cajamarca, which is considered the capitol of the Peruvian Carnival. Locals and tourists of all ages gather and dance around the unsha, a tree adorned with ribbons, toys, balloons, fruits, bottles of liquor, and other prizes.

At a certain point the Mayordomo (governor of the feast) walks into the circle. The governor chooses a partner to go to the unsha, where they attempt to cut down the unsha by striking the tree three times with a machete. The machete is passed from couple to couple as each strikes the tree three times. When the unsha finally falls, the crowd rushes to grab the prizes. The person who successfully brings down the unsha becomes next year's governor of the feast. The Carnival of French Guiana is a major aspect of the culture of the country.

Like other Carnivals around the world, its duration is variable, determined by movable religious festivals. Carnival begins at Epiphany and ends on Ash Wednesday, so typically it lasts through most of January and February. During this period, from Friday evening until Monday morning the entire country throbs to the rhythm of the masked balls and street parades. Normal life slows almost to a stop. Costumes play a large role in French Guiana's Carnival, but what makes it unique compared to other carnivals worldwide is the masked balls, also known as touloulou balls.

A touloulou is the term given to the females who attend these balls. These are women wearing highly decorative gowns, gloves, masks and

headaddresses which cover them completely so that they are not only unrecognizable, but the color of their skin cannot even be determined. Touloulou's can attend the balls for free, while the many men who attend must pay admission. Thus, the setup is designed to make it easy for a woman to create a temporary liaison with a man she fancies in total anonymity. The United States also has its own form of Carnival, better known as Mardi Gras.

Mardi Gras originated around the gulf coast, and earliest celebrations were held in Mobile, Biloxi, New Orleans, and Pensacola. In modern times, the most famous Mardi Gras in the United States is held in New Orleans, Louisiana. Celebrations are concentrated for about two weeks before and through Fat Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday. Usually there is one major parade each day. Some days may have several large parades. The largest and most elaborate parades take place the last five days of the season.

In the final week of Mardi Gras, many events large and small occur throughout New Orleans and surrounding communities. The celebrations consist of costumes, dancing, strings of beads concentrated into a small area infused with the Louisiana culture of jazz music, Cajun food, and tendency to have a good time. At a glimpse, Carnival may just seem to be some party in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, but as we look further we realize that Carnival is a celebration that occurs around the world by many cultures in similar, but different forms.

Whether its Carnival, Malenitsa, or Mardi Gras, they are all celebrations that occur before lent. These celebrations show the similarity of human nature around the world, and proves that we are all very much alike. Almost every culture that participates in lent has its own form of carnival that dates far back before we had communication technology like we do today. Carnival truly is an amazingly unique and interesting holiday that I, and most people that share the same region as I do, do not celebrate. Works Cited “ Mardi Gras History. Mardi Gras New Orleans 2012. Web. 05 Feb. 2012. . Raymi, Inti. “ Peru Festivals – Cajamarca Carnival. “ Online Travel Guides of Travel Destinations – Las Vegas, Caribbean, Hawaii and Machu Picchu. Web. 05 Feb. 2012. . Shubnaya, Ekaterina. “ Maslenitsa – Russiapedia Of Russian Origin. “ Get Russianalized – Russiapedia. Web. 05 Feb. 2012. .