My name’s Macy and I come from New Orleans, in the south of the USA. When people think of New Orleans they think of Mardi Gras—and they’re right. This is where it all began!

The Mardi Gras Carnival first came to New Orleans from France in 1699 when the French explorers celebrated their traditional holiday here. Later, in 1857, a group called the Mystick Krewe of Comus had a parade at night. They wore masks, costumes, and had dancing and music. This is how the custom of ‘krewes’ began. Today there are more than 60 krewes in New Orleans, who have their own parades, dances and parties in the city.

The celebrations begin on 6th January, about two weeks before Mardi Gras. Mardi Gras means ‘Fat Tuesday’. The name is for Shrove Tuesday, the day before Lent starts. Some people believe that the name comes from the custom of using up all the fats in the home before Lent.

But the main event at Carnival is the parade. Each krewe chooses a king and a queen for its parade. Some krewes choose famous celebrities—one year we had the actors Elijah Wood and Kevin Costner. The krewes decorate lorries as floats in the parades, and dancers and bands follow the floats. People watching shout, ‘Throw me something, Mister!’ and the people on the floats throw beads, coins, sweets and toys into the air.

In 1872, the King of Carnival chose purple (for justice), green (for faith) and gold (for power) as the official Mardi Gras colours.

There is also a traditional cake. The round King Cake symbolizes the different faiths coming together, and is decorated in the Mardi Gras colours. Inside each cake there is a plastic toy baby. The baby is the Baby Jesus. If you get the slice of cake with the baby in it, it means good luck. It also means you have to make next year’s King Cake!

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**Glossary**

explorer *esploratore*
mask *maschera*
costume *costume*
custom *usanza*
fat (n) *il grasso*
parade (n) *sfilata*
float (n) *carro allegorico*
sweets *caramelle*
justice *giustizia*
faith *fede*
power *forza, potere*

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**Mardi Gras**

1 Leggi il brano. Le seguenti frasi sul Martedì Grasso sono false. Correggile.

Spanish priests first brought the Carnival to New Orleans.

French explorers first brought the Carnival to New Orleans.

1 The first Mardi Gras celebration in New Orleans was in 1872.

2 The traditional colours of Carnival are red, green and white.

3 There is one Carnival King and Queen.

4 The Carnival Kings and Queens are never famous people.

5 The King Cake is round because it is a symbol of the moon.

6 It’s bad luck to get the piece of cake with the toy baby in it.

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2 Ascolta una canzone tradizionale sul Martedì Grasso.

**Carnival Time**

The Green room is smokin’, and the Plaza’s burnin’ down.

Throw my baby out the window; let those joints burn down.

All because it’s carnival time, woah, it’s carnival time.....!

Oh well, it’s carnival time and everybody’s having fun!

Clai-borne Street is rocking from one side to the other.

The joints are jammin’, packing; I’m about to smother.

All because it’s carnival time, woah, it’s carnival time.....!

Oh well, it’s carnival time and everybody’s having fun!

Right Now, it’s carnival time, woah, carnival time.....!

Oh well, it’s carnival time and everybody’s having fun!

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3 Descrivi un cibo tipico del carnevale o di un giorno di festa usando le seguenti domande per aiutarti:

- What is it called?
- When do you eat it?
- What are the origins of this food?
- What are the ingredients?
- How do you make it?