

**Carnival** “Caribbean carnival arts offer all of us — just like it did for the African peoples brought to the Caribbean — a dynamic tool for self-expression and exploration.”

*Caribbean Festival Arts*, written by John W. Nunley and Judith Bettleheim (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988)

## What is Carnival?

Outside of the Caribbean “Carnival” represents an amusement park. Within the Caribbean however, “Carnival” is a festival of colours, which is transformed into costumes (Mas short for Masquerade), calypso, steel band music, dance and an array of different ethnic food and Caribbean art; which attracts millions of people from around the globe.

## Where did Carnival come from?

Different writers have indicated that Carnival originated in Africa and Europe. According to a study conducted by Dr. Hollis of Urban Liverpool, Carnival was originated in Africa. From the early morning activities of the slaves who were then limited to the slave yard because they could not venture out onto the streets.

## Carnival Origins in Europe

Hundreds and hundreds of years ago, the followers of the Catholic religion in Italy started the tradition of holding a wild costume festival right before the first day of Lent. Because Catholics are not supposed to eat meat during Lent, they called their festival, *carnevale* — which means “to put away the meat.”

## What has Carnival become?

Carnival has become a year-round business entity in America that provides the following:

- A year-round business that provides enjoyment to millions of people
- Increases tourism and generates revenue for different city governments
- Provides employment and social stability
- Pays tribute to an art form in cities where Carnival is kept

**Notting Hill Carnival** The first Notting Hill Carnival took place in 1964 when London’s Caribbean community introduced the carnival to ease racial tensions. Since then it has become a popular and colourful annual event celebrated by more than two million Londoners of all backgrounds. The carnival consists of costume parades, a steel band, jazz and reggae performances, and countless street vendors selling exotic Caribbean food, the last weekend of August.

## Comprehension questions

- 1) What is carnival a main tool for?
- 2) What is the difference between the representation of carnival inside and outside the Caribbean?
- 3) How did carnival originate in Africa?
- 4) How and where did carnival originate in Europe?
- 5) What has carnival become?
- 6) State three positive factors that carnival provides.
- 7) When does Notting Hill carnival take place?

## Now discuss...

- What does Carnival mean for you?
- Do you celebrate Carnival?
- Name some famous Carnivals in Spain or Catalunya.
- In pairs, talk about a personal carnival experience.

