

# Rio Carnival

## What is it?

The Brazilian Carnival is an annual celebration held forty days before Easter (marking the start of Lent), in Brazil. The Brazilian Carnival is known in Brazil simply as *carnaval*.

The best-known Brazilian Carnival celebration takes place in Rio de Janeiro, with its samba schools, blocos and bandas occupying entire neighbourhoods.

In the late 19th Century, the *cordões* (literally laces in Portuguese) were introduced in Rio de Janeiro, which consisted of groups of people who would walk on the streets playing music and dancing. The *cordões* were ancestors of the modern samba schools.

In Salvador and other cities of the Northeastern Region, there is another form of the Brazilian Carnival: the *Trio Elétrico*. A *trio elétrico* is an adapted truck, with giant speakers and a platform where musicians play songs of local genres such as *Axé* music and *Maracatu* (in Recife).

During the Carnival, a fat man is elected to represent the role of *Rei Momo*, the "king" of Carnival, whose rule is one of fun instead of that of everyday authorities. The tradition of the king probably originates with the tradition of the king and queen of *maracatu* which in turn has its origins in the days of slavery in the northeast where some slaves who were leaders were given a greater level of responsibility.

## Samba music

Brazilian *samba* music emerged in the 19th century as part of pre-Lenten Carnival festivities in Rio de Janeiro. During the 1920s *samba* groups were organized into "schools" that would compete against one another during Carnival for prizes. *Samba*, which also refers to an accompanying dance form, is of African descent with its percussion-dominated rhythms being traced to religious possession dances. The various drums, or *bateria*, are considered powerful instruments with supernatural connections to pagan gods.

Samba music has a tempo of about 100 beats per minute

Since its beginnings, samba has developed in several directions, from the gentle *samba-canção* to the drum orchestras which make the soundtrack of carnival parade. One of these new styles was the *bossa nova*, made by middle class white people. It got increasingly popular over time, with the works of João Gilberto and Antonio Carlos Jobim.

Unfortunately, until recently in Brazil if a "white" person dedicate himself to the samba art form, he is considered an intellectual, or eccentric, but if an African descendent does the same, he is seeing like somebody who does not want to get a job, or something in that level.

Nowadays, samba is still one of the most popular musical genres in Brazil.

## Challenge 1

Complete the following questions using full sentences

1. When is the carnival held?
2. Where is the most famous Brazilian carnival?
3. What were the ancestors of samba schools called?
4. What is a trio elétrico?
5. What is the purpose of the “Fat Man”?
6. What are the origins of the king and queen of maracatu?
7. When did Brazilian samba emerge?
8. What are samba groups called?
9. What is the Portuguese word for drums?
10. Why are drums considered powerful instruments?
11. Who invented the Bossa Nova?
12. What race issues surrounded samba musicians until recently?

## Challenge 2

Write a newspaper article about Samba for a magazine aimed at teenagers.

You should:

- Think of a headline i.e. “Samba – Past to Present
- Present it in an appropriate style – i.e. a bold headline, and maybe written in columns.
- Concentrate on good spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Make the information interesting (more interesting than it is presented on this worksheet!) and relevant to teenagers
- Use information you have found in the sheet and your answers as source material to write about.
- Present it neatly – to the best of your ability
- Add pictures

## Challenge 3

Design a float for a carnival.

- You will need to draw and label your float. Here is a picture of a “candy” float to give you some ideas.
- Your float should reflect your personality i.e. be based on something you like.
- **BE CREATIVE!**

