

Festivals

Christmas

The following cultural notes describe both the origins and the current traditions of this festival. Explain as much as you feel is relevant to the class.

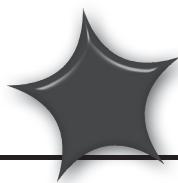
- Christmas Day is celebrated in countries around the world on December 25th, to commemorate the birth of Jesus. In the weeks before Christmas, people decorate a Christmas tree with ornaments. They usually put a star on the top, to remind them of the story of the birth of Jesus and the Three Wise Men. People also like to send each other Christmas cards with typical Christmas scenes and a Christmas message. Younger children write a letter to Santa Claus, or Father Christmas as he is sometimes called, to tell him what they would like for Christmas. On Christmas Eve, December 24th, they hang a Christmas stocking at the end of their bed or by the fireplace, if they have one. This stocking is similar to a very big sock. Traditionally, Santa Claus arrives in his sleigh pulled by reindeer. He flies through the air, lands on the roofs of children's houses, and delivers the presents by climbing down the chimneys with a huge sack of presents!
- On Christmas Day, families get together to eat a traditional meal. This usually consists of roast turkey, with vegetables. Dessert is often a rich fruit pudding served with a brandy sauce that is set alight! The table is decorated with candles and brightly colored crackers. Everyone pulls the crackers that make a loud bang. Children love to look inside the crackers to find a colorful paper Christmas hat, a small toy, and a Christmas joke.

Christmas worksheet 1

- Students need scissors, colored cardboard, glue, and Scotch tape.
- Students color and mount the Santa Claus and chimney onto thin cardboard. They then cut along the dotted lines.
- They fold a piece of letter size colored cardboard in half. They open the card, and place the Santa Claus behind the chimney, and tape the sides of the chimney to the front of the card so that the Santa can slide up and down easily.
- Write *Merry Christmas!* on the board. Students copy the message inside the card and sign their name.
- They illustrate the inside of the card with presents, Christmas trees, candles, etc.
- While students are working, circulate and ask questions, e.g., *What's this? What color is the Christmas tree?*
- **Optional follow-up activity:** Students give the card to a member of their family and say *Merry Christmas!* They then name all of the things they have drawn on their card.

Christmas worksheet 2

- Students color the four pictures and read the words. Ask them to cut out the four pictures. Staple the four pictures together to make a book, making sure that the half-way lines coincide. The children then cut along the horizontal line of the pictures, stopping before the stapled strip. By turning the different pages of the book, they can invent new Christmas characters.
- **Optional follow-up activity:** Students work in pairs, A and B. Student A makes up a new Christmas character without showing Student B. He/She names it, and Student B tries to make the same character. They swap roles.



Festivals

Mardi Gras

- The following cultural notes describe both the origins and the current traditions of this festival. Explain as much as you feel is relevant to the class, and ask students to point to the relevant items on the worksheet that you use first.
- Mardi Gras, that means “Fat Tuesday” in French, is a popular Catholic celebration in countries around the world. In English it is also known as Shrove Tuesday, that is the traditional feast day before the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday. Mardi Gras is a moveable feast in the Christian calendar and is directly related to the date of Easter. Mardi Gras always falls 47 days before Easter Sunday, so the date varies between February 3rd and March 9th. In the Middle Ages, it was a time when people confessed their sins so that they were forgiven before the season of Lent. Lent is a time when people give up eating rich, fatty foods, so Mardi Gras is the last chance to enjoy the foods that aren’t allowed. In England, this day is called “Pancake Day” and many people celebrate by eating pancakes because they contain fat, butter, and eggs that were traditionally forbidden during Lent.
- Today, Mardi Gras is associated with a period of celebration that lasts for days or even weeks before Ash Wednesday. This period is known as the Carnival season. In some cities the tradition of Carnival dates back to the 13th century. Some of the biggest and most famous carnivals take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Binche, Belgium; Venice, Italy; New Orleans, U.S.A.; Quebec City, Canada; Nice, France; and Barranquilla, Colombia. During the carnival, thousands of people gather in the streets wearing colorful masks and costumes to watch parades with amazing floats, and dancers in elegant costumes, jugglers, clowns, and mimes. There are spectacular displays of fireworks, singing and dancing, and, of course, plenty of tasty foods to eat.

Mardi Gras worksheet 1

- Photocopy the worksheet onto thin cardboard, one for each student. Have a few extra copies available just in case.
- Students need scissors, crayons or paints, glue, glitter, colored tissue paper, feathers, a straw, and Scotch tape.
- Help students cut out the masks or prepare them in advance. They can also cut out and color the shapes to glue onto the mask. Students color and decorate the masks with glitter, tissue paper, and feathers.
- They tape the straw to one side at the back of the mask so that they can hold it up to their face.
- **Optional follow-up activity:** Students play a guessing game. Invite a student to come to the front. The other students sit holding their masks up to their faces. The student at the front describes the mask of a student sitting down, e.g., *It’s blue, and it has 3 stars*, etc. The class guesses whose mask it is. The student who guesses correctly comes to the front and the game continues. Alternatively, bring in some festive music to class and students can have a Mardi Gras parade wearing their masks.

Mardi Gras worksheet 2

- Ask students to look at the pictures and to match the corresponding instructions to the lines beneath. Mime making a pancake with them.

Key: Put some flour in the bowl. Put an egg in the bowl. Put some milk in the bowl. Stir the pancake. Toss the pancake. Put some lemon and sugar on the pancake.

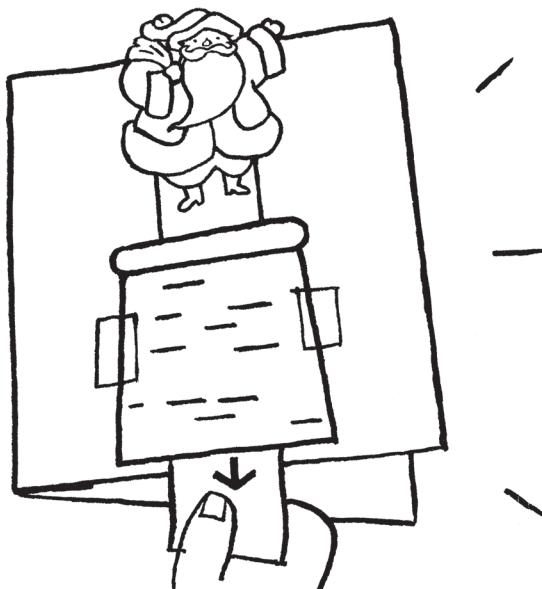
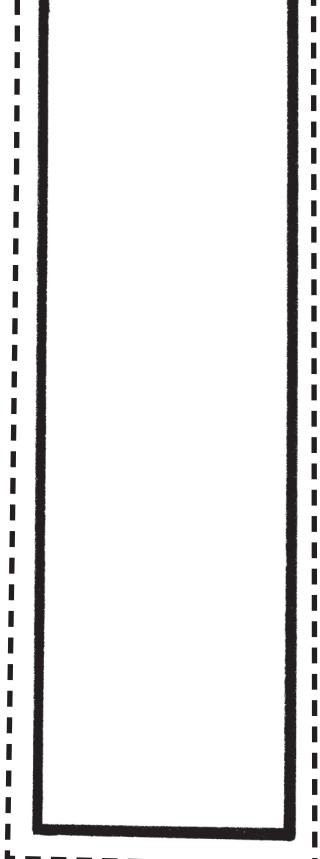
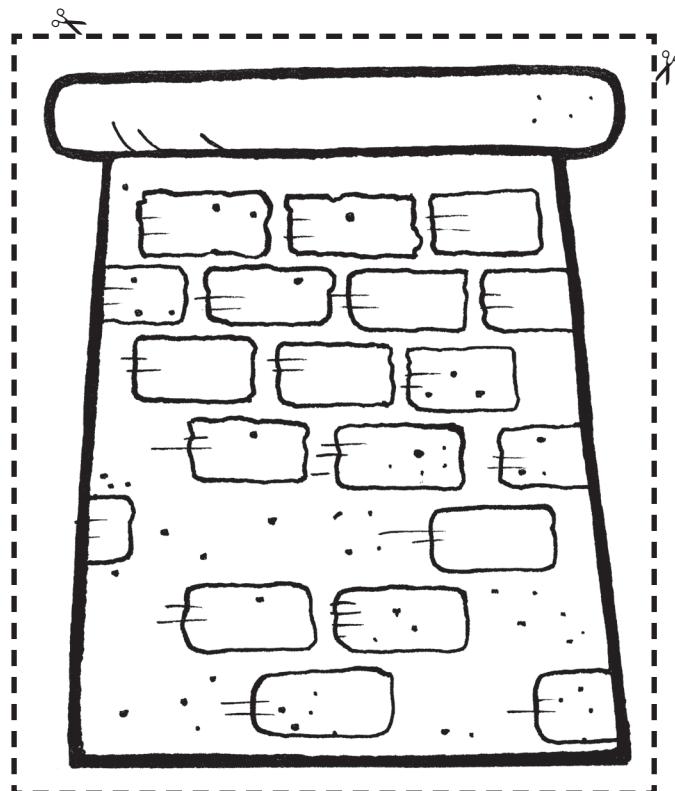
- **Optional follow-up activity:** Give each group a dice. Students take turns rolling the dice and “racing” to finish their pancake first. To do so, they have to check and name all the stages as they roll the number. However, the steps have to be checked in order, so a player cannot even begin until he/she has rolled a 1. He/She has to then roll a 2, etc. The winner is the first player to check all six stages.



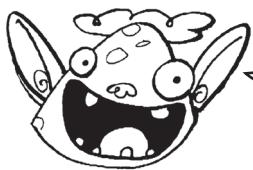
Christmas worksheet 1



Make a Christmas card.



Christmas worksheet 2



Color and play.

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man

rein

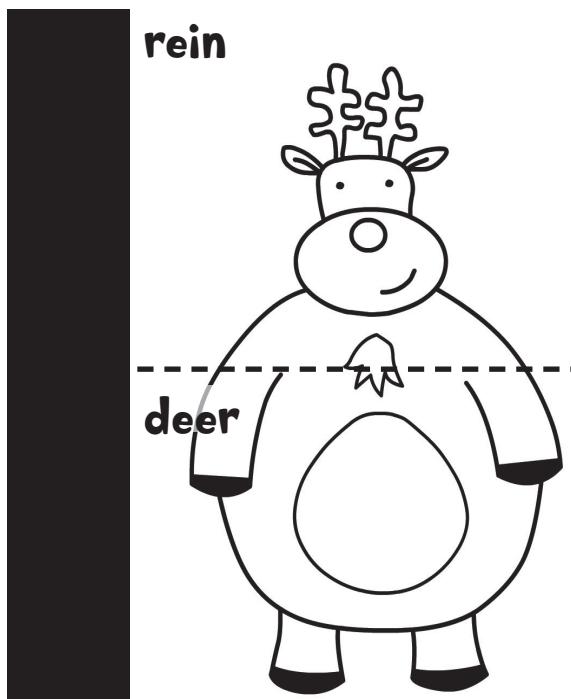
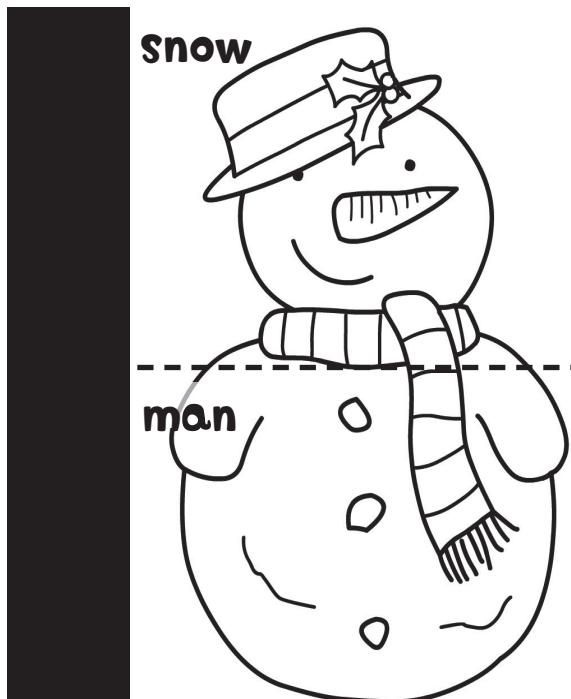
deer

Santa

claus

Christmas

tree

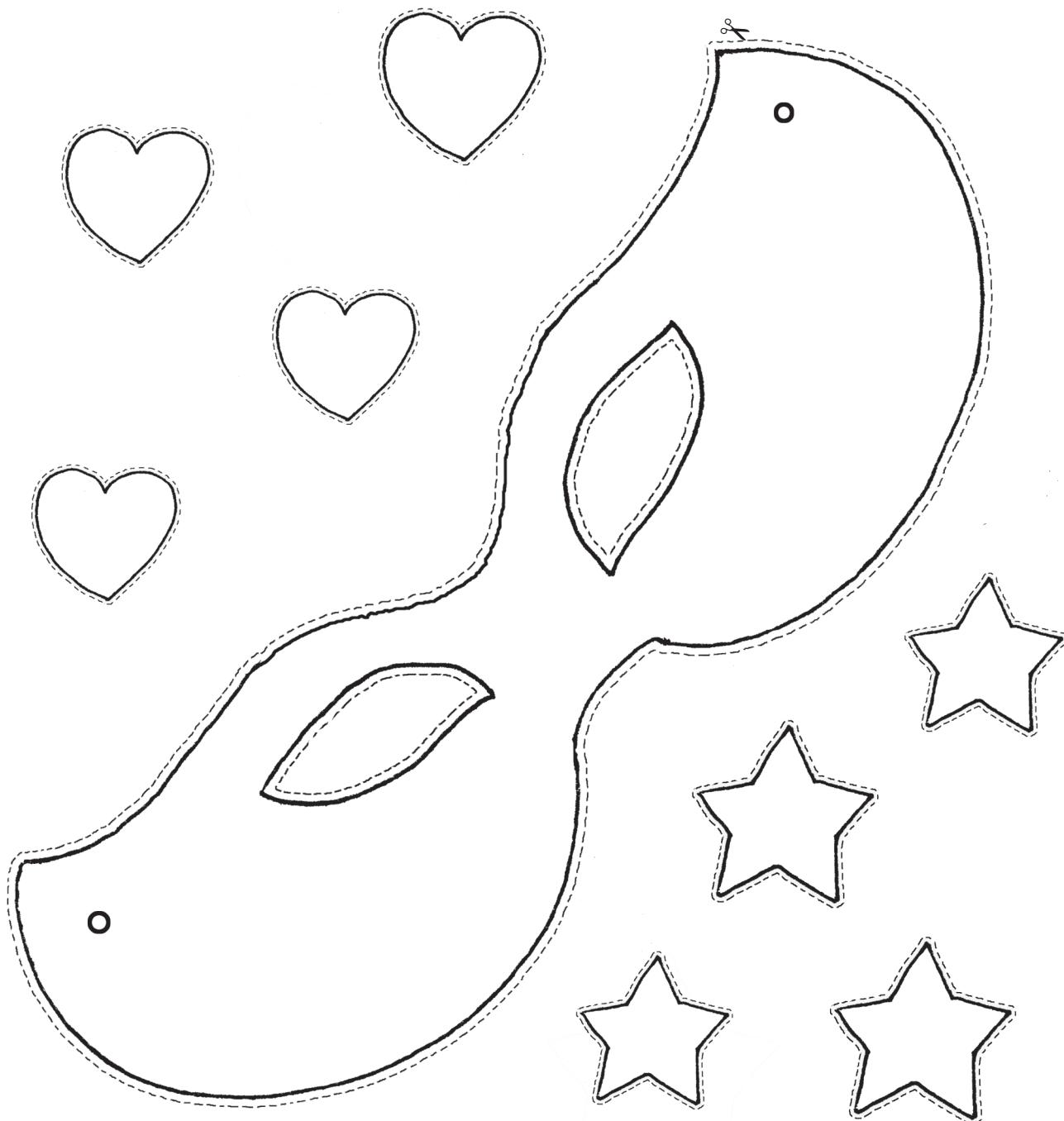




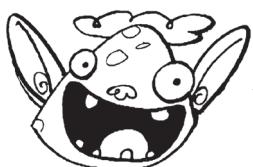
Mardi Gras worksheet 1



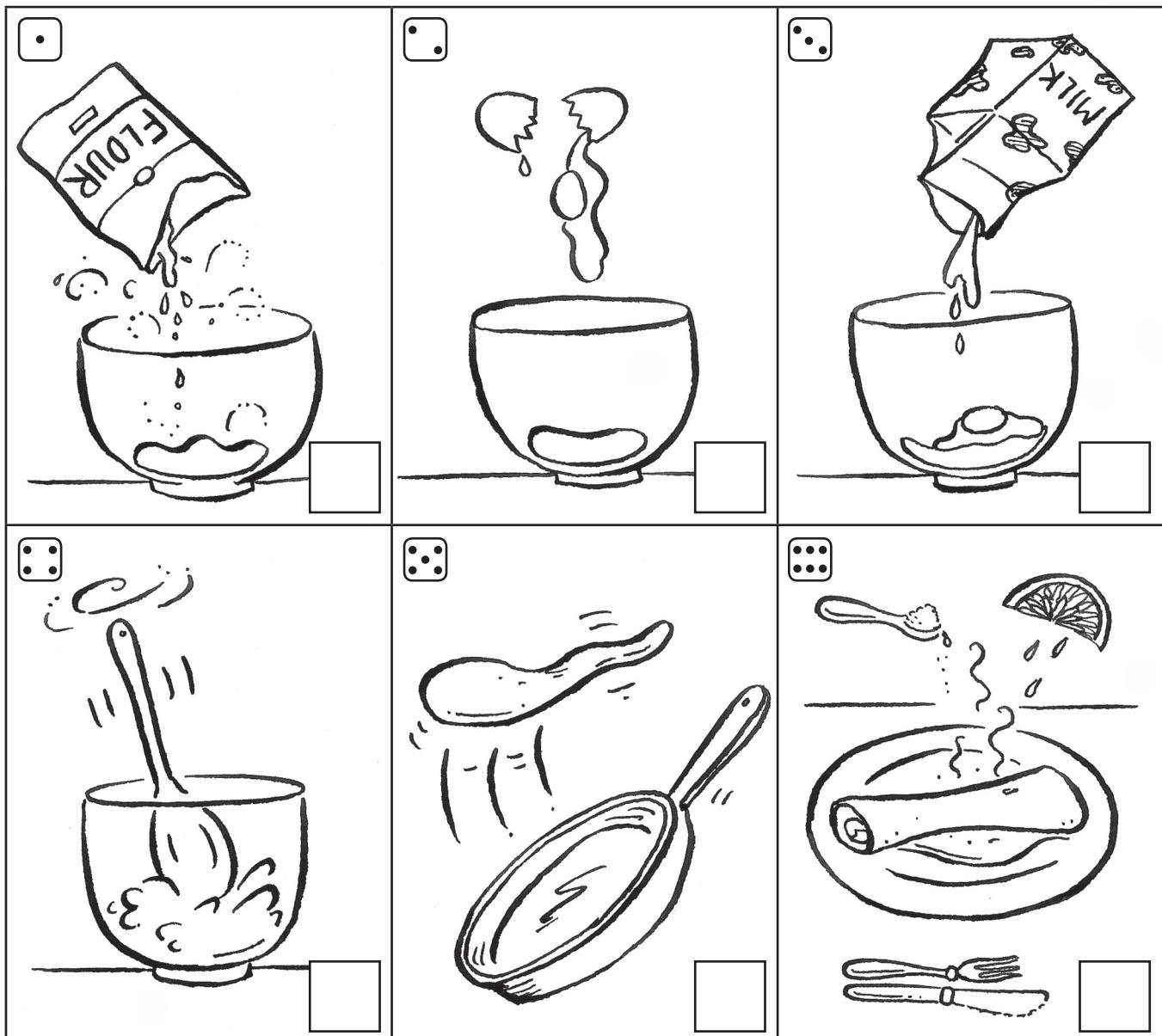
Make a Mardi Gras mask.



Mardi Gras worksheet 2



Match and play.



- Put some flour in the bowl.
- Put some flour in the bowl.
- Put some lemon and sugar on the pancake.

- Toss the pancake.
- Put an egg in the bowl.
- Stir the pancake.