



CARNIVAL

a story about stepping out of your comfort zone



Teacher's Guide

LESSON PLAN

This guide is a set of suggestions of what you can do with your students regarding the story, *Carnival*. A summary of the steps to this lesson plan is as follows:

- 1) Set the scene - - A few lead-in questions to orientate the students** Choose one of the questions suggested in 'A' to get the students talking about some ideas that will appear in the story. 'B' is to briefly orientate the students to the physical setting.
- 2) Introduce the story - -** Have the students read various parts of the beginning of the story and answer the questions described below to help orientate them. Tell them that they don't need to understand all the vocabulary in order to answer the questions or understand the story sufficiently to get something out of it.
- 3) Read the rest - -** Let the students finish the story, then answer the two questions.
- 4) Vocabulary look - -** A quick look at some of the vocabulary appearing in the story which could be useful when speaking about it in the discussion. Get the students to do most of the explaining (or guessing) of the meaning.
- 5) Post story discussion - -** Place the students in small groups (3 or 4) and have them participate in discussing one of the suggested themes. There is one placed in the student handout and 3 others suggested here in the Teacher's Guide. If you like, there are also two possible role-plays to choose from as well.

NOTE: It is recommended that the language level of the students is at a minimum in the early stages of Advanced (they have already completed level B2 in Europe) or a very strong upper intermediate.

1

Set the scene

**A: Choose 1 of the following for
an opening class discussion**

- Imagine you started a job last year and because you haven't worked all that long, you're entitled to only a week's holidays this year. What would you do with your week of vacation?
- Do you always do the same thing during your holidays? Have you ever done something very different or go on an adventure?
- What are the advantages of spending your holidays in a comfortable, relaxing manner? What kind of holidays could somebody go on that would be less 'comfortable' and why would somebody choose that?

1

Set the scene

B: The setting

- Write 'Flin Flon' on the board and ask the students in what country would they find this town. **Canada**
You can explain that it's an isolated mining community located many hundreds of kilometres from the nearest city. The winters are long and cold (-40 degrees and colder). And that it really exists. They can google it to check.
- Carnival is very famous and celebrated in different ways in different parts of the world. You could elicit what people do in Rio de Janeiro, in Venice, in New Orleans (where it is called the Mardi Gras). And bring the focus to Quebec City where there is a much colder version. How would the celebration be expressed there? **ice sculptures, even an ice castle: Bonhomme's ice palace, the carnival effigy is always worn to access the sites, sledding, float parade, dancing, ice climbing, sleigh rides, canoes races on the frozen river and more!**

- Give the students a copy of the story.
- Have them read the italicized sentence below the title. Elicit a couple of situations where one is expected to have fun and what one could do if it wasn't working out the way you would expect. (If no ideas for situations, you could suggest: being at a party, celebrating Christmas or a family/work get-together, going on a holiday.)
- Tell the students to read the first five paragraphs (until the end of line 22). Make sure they stop at that point. (Fast finishers can reread what they have just read.)
- Place the students in pairs. Tell them to not look at the story but speak with their partner to see what they can remember about the two offers the man received to spend his holidays with his friends. After they have recalled all that they can, they check back with the story to see if there was anything they missed.
- Ask the class if they would like to try any of those activities if they were invited to come along.

- Tell the students to read the next two paragraphs (until the end of line 32).
- Ask them what they would do in that situation where their friend backed out at the last minute. Would they go alone? Not go at all and just chill out at home for a week? Postpone the holiday and go with your best friend another time (and miss the Carnival)? Take up one of the earlier offers, but only for one week?

- Give each student the Student Handout but they don't read the questions until later. (This activity isn't for exam practice, so they can get into the story first, then have a look at the questions.)
- Tell the students to read the rest of the story and when they're done, they can answer the questions the best they can. They should do it individually, then check their answers with another student when they are done. Confirm their answers by eliciting from the class what they have.

Q1: What was the narrator fed up with? (hint: it's in the top half of the second page)

Answer (line 48): *"Being stuck in his shyness" In other words, he felt trapped, typically allowing his shyness to limit what he does and experiences.*

Q2: What did the homeless man do to make the narrator feel nervous? (3 things)

Answers: 1- (line 94): *He repeated himself a lot.*

2- (line 96): *He spoke very intensely about some references in the Bible.*

3- (line 102): *He started shouting and making accusations.*

- These 5 items are in the story. If the students know what they mean, they think of how they can explain them, especially in terms of how they relate to something in the story. If they aren't familiar with them, they look at the sentences and the context they are in and try to figure them out.
 - ▶ to take somebody up on something (line 22)
 - ▶ to back out (of something) (line 26)
 - ▶ kind of (+ adjective/adverb/noun/verb) (line 36)
 - ▶ to be down on one's luck (line 101)
 - ▶ to soften the blow (in the afterword)
- After going over the pronunciation, give the students a few minutes to do the task. (They can confer in pairs if they like.) Then ask different individuals to communicate the meaning.

● **Suggested themes for discussion:** (#1 is on the Student Handout)

1) The narrator stepped out of his comfort zone a few times in the story:

- a) when he decided to go on his trip alone,
- b) when he decided to leave the holiday he had planned (Carnival in Quebec City) to go to Montreal, and
- c) when he took on the temporary responsibility of looking out for the homeless man.

What would you have done in each of these situations?

2) The narrator mentioned that being shy closed some doors for him. Can you think of some possible specific examples of what 'doors' might be closed (not necessarily only for the narrator, but for people in general)? *(For example it could affect getting jobs or promotions, meeting or getting to know people, missed opportunities, not defending yourself as well as you could)* He also said that it might have some benefits too, but he couldn't appreciate them at the moment. How would being shy be something positive? *(For example developing patience and tolerance, placing things into perspective, building up of determination and being selective)*

3) Planned vs improvised holidays What do the people in your group prefer and why?

4) Alternative holidays Are there any that you definitely would or would not like to try? Are there other alternatives that you have tried or heard about?

1- Work on an organic farm (every year a different kind of farm and in a different country)

2- You and your partner go to a city that neither of you has been to before. Have breakfast together then split up. Explore different places on your own then meet and talk about your adventures at lunch or supper.

3- Same idea as #2, except don't say where you will meet or what time. Thinking about how well you know your partner, try to work out when and where and see if you're successful. Best to do this only for lunch, and then have a definite meeting time and place for supper if you weren't successful for the lunch meeting.

4- Stay away from the typical tourist attractions. Just walk down streets and occasionally talk and interact with people. See what happens.

5- Same idea as #4, but in a country where you don't know the language. It may sound strange, but millions of people do this every year.

●1 Take turns with one of you being the homeless person and the rest of you interacting with him/her. Try it with the perspective that the homeless person wants something from you. S/He won't take no for an answer and tries appealing to the rest in different ways. S/He's very persistent and the others don't want to be rude.

●2 Situation: The manager was notified by the receptionist that an unpaying guest is suspected of staying in the hotel room. S/He knocks at the door and the tourist begins speaking but doesn't open the door.

Person 1: the tourist Person 2: the hotel manager

optional Person 3: the vagrant optional Person 4: the hotel detective accompanying the manager

► There are also other stories with lesson plans found at

<http://maxenglishcorner.com/hst-harvey-skidoo-tree-series-homepage-mec/>

► The following link provides some videos to get you better acquainted with Carnival in Quebec. Perhaps you might show one in class.

<http://www.oneschoolroom.ca/carnaval-de-quebec/>