Carnival Beginnings

Directions: Read the passage below about the origins of Mardi Gras, then answer the comprehension questions that follow.

"The Birth of a Celebration"

Long before the bright parades and colorful beads of today, Mardi Gras began as a day of joy before a time of fasting. The name "Mardi Gras" comes from French, meaning "Fat Tuesday." In medieval Europe, people celebrated by eating rich foods before Lent, a season of reflection and sacrifice. When French explorers arrived in Louisiana in the early 1700s, they brought the lively tradition with them.

Over time, New Orleans became the heart of Mardi Gras. Local groups called *krewes* started organizing parades filled with music, costumes, and decorated floats. Each krewe created its own style, adding mystery and excitement to the celebration. Bright colors-purple for justice, green for faith, and gold for power-became symbols of the holiday's spirit.

Today, Mardi Gras is more than just a festival-it's a connection to history, culture, and community pride. People from around the world visit Louisiana to join the fun. The traditions may have changed through the centuries, but the heart of Mardi Gras still beats with the same joy that began hundreds of years ago.

1. What does the term *Mardi Gras* mean in French?

2. Why did people in medieval Europe celebrate Mardi Gras?

3. Which U.S. city became the center of Mardi Gras celebrations?

4. What are the three main colors of Mardi Gras, and what does each stand for?

5. What did *krewes* contribute to the Mardi Gras celebration?

6. How has Mardi Gras changed over time while keeping its traditions alive?

7. Based on the passage, why do you think Mardi Gras attracts people from around the world today?

8. Write one sentence describing what you think makes Mardi Gras unique among holidays.