



CHANGES



Changes



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An event that involves the whole community is the street festival or carnival. Whole streets change their appearance, if only for a day or two.

Have you ever noticed how many things change their appearance, or transform from one shape into another?

In nature we see transformations all around us. Tadpoles turn into frogs, caterpillars into butterflies and tiny seeds into flowers and plants.

Transformations also take place in stories, especially in traditional tales – a frog is changed into a prince, an ugly duckling becomes a swan, straw is turned into gold, and so on.

As humans we can change our appearance through our clothing, hairstyles and make-up. We use face paints to look like animals or insects, we go to fancy-dress parties, and we take part in plays, pantomimes and shows. As we put on the costume we become a different person, character or being.

DID YOU KNOW?

In **Britain**, dragonflies used to be known as Horse-stingers. People wrongly believed that the long thin body of a dragonfly was a huge sting. In fact, dragonflies eat the flies that are attracted to the horses. That is why you see dragonflies near horses.



DID YOU KNOW?

In **Japan**, dragonflies are very popular because people think they bring success, happiness and good luck. Rice farmers believe that dragonflies are a sign of a good harvest. Samurai warriors would often place dragonfly symbols on their helmets to represent strength and courage.



DID YOU KNOW?

According to an ancient legend from **Tahiti**, thieves always carried dragonflies in their clothes. When a thief entered a house that he wanted to rob, he let the dragonfly go. People in the house were so dazzled by the sight of the dragonfly that they did not notice they were being robbed.



Dazzling Dragonflies

Dragonflies are beautiful insects, with long bodies, enormous eyes and two pairs of long, delicate, almost transparent wings. They are fascinating to watch because of their bright, metallic colours and their acrobatic flying skills. In Britain, they are usually seen at the end of summer, near water.



Life-cycle of dragonflies



Dragonflies live for only a few weeks as flying insects, spending most of their lives underwater. Adult dragonflies lay their eggs in ponds, lakes or slow-flowing streams. The eggs hatch into **nymphs**.



Dragonfly nymph crawling up a plant stem

A dragonfly nymph has no wings and is usually a dull brown colour. It lives for several months or years at the bottom of a pond and will eat almost anything smaller than itself. A nymph has a powerful, spiky lower jaw, which it can shoot forwards in an instant to seize its prey. Eventually, the nymph crawls up a plant stem out of the water. Its skin splits and an adult dragonfly is released, to start the cycle all over again.

How do dragonflies fly?

Dragonflies can move their front and back wings separately. This makes them more agile. They are flying experts that can hover, loop-the-loop or even fly backwards. They can move very quickly, with a maximum speed of 25–30 miles per hour – as fast as many cars in towns. This makes them excellent hunters and they eat large numbers of other insects, particularly pests such as flies, midges and mosquitoes.



A poem about a dragonfly nymph
and how it transforms into an adult dragonfly

The Dragonfly

1 There was once a terrible monster
 lived in a pond, deep under the water.

2 Brown as mud he was, in the mud he hid,
 among murk of reed-roots, sodden twigs,
 with his long hungry belly,
 six legs for creeping,
 eyes like headlights
 awake or sleeping;
 but he was not big.

3 A tiddler came to sneer and jeer
 and flaunt his flashing tail –
 Ugly old stick-in-the-mud
 couldn't catch a snail!
 I'm not scared –
 when, like a shot,
 two pincers nab him, and he's got!

4 For the monster's jaw hides a clawed stalk
 like the arm of a robot, a dinner fork,
 that's tucked away cunningly till the last minute –
 shoots out – and back with a victim in it!

5 Days, weeks, months, two years and beyond,
 fear of the monster beset the pond;
 he lurked, grabbed, grappled, gobbled and grew,
 ambushing always somewhere new –

6 *Who saw him last? Does anyone know?*
 Don't go near the mud! But I must go!
 Keep well away from the rushes! But how?
 Has anyone seen my brother? Not for a week now -
 he's been eaten
 for certain!

7 And then, one day, it was June, they all saw him.
 He was coming slowly up out of the mud,
 they stopped swimming. No one dared
 approach, attack. They kept back.

8 Up a tall reed they saw him climbing
 higher and higher, until
 he broke the surface, climbing still.

9 There he stopped, in the wind and the setting sun.
 We're safe at last! they cried. *He's gone!*
 What became of the monster, was he ill, was he sad?
 Was nobody sorry? Had he crept off to die? Was he mad?

10 Not one of them saw how, suddenly,
 as if an invisible knife had touched his back,
 he has split, split completely –
 his head split like a lid!
 The cage is open. Slowly he comes through,
 an emperor, with great eyes burning blue.

11 He rests there, veils of silver a cloak for him.
 Night and the little stars travel the black pond,
 and now, first light of the day,
 his shining cloak wide wings, a flash, a whirr,
 a jewelled helicopter,
 he's away!

12 O fully he had served his time,
 shunned and unlovely in the drab slime,
 for freedom at the end – for the sky –
 dazzling hunter, Dragonfly!

Libby Houston

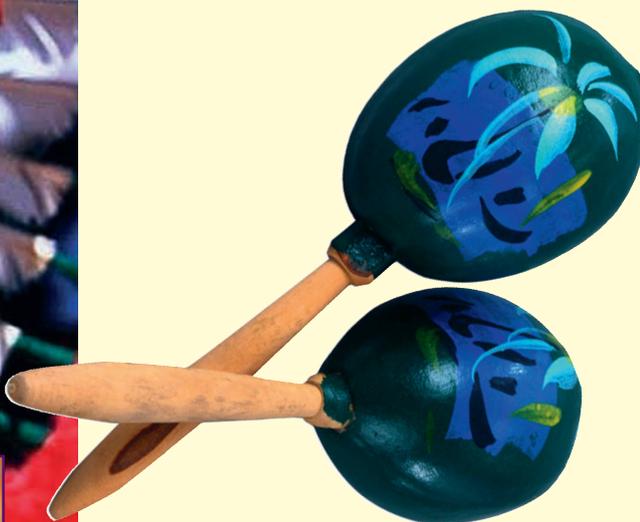


In the poem, an ugly nymph was transformed into a beautiful dragonfly. This article explains how cities around Britain are transformed by carnivals into colourful, lively places.

CARNIVAL IN BRITAIN

Carnivals are large outdoor street festivals. They are held in many towns and cities in Britain, with some of the largest attracting more than 100,000 visitors each year.

The first Caribbean carnival in Britain was held approximately forty years ago. People who had come to Britain from the Caribbean, where the carnival tradition is very strong, dreamed of creating a festival of music and dance to bring people together. The carnival was very small, with just a few people walking through the streets in costume and carrying steel drums. Although it was small, that first carnival was a great success.





Now the idea has spread and carnivals have become hugely popular. Everyone can take part. Carnivals are also great summer tourist attractions that make towns and cities exciting places to visit.

The main event in every carnival is the street parade or procession. A carnival parade includes dancers, musical bands and performers, dressed in brightly coloured costumes. There are also large, highly decorated trucks called floats. For a few hours the roads are closed to normal traffic and the carnival procession makes its way through the city like a giant exotic snake.



An interview with Carl Williams

artist and carnival costume designer



Where do you find your ideas for the costumes?

In the Caribbean tradition, costumes don't have to look like anything real – you can just use your imagination to create whatever fantasy you like. Of course, colour is very important and the costumes have to be light enough to carry. I often take my inspiration from insects or birds because of the beautiful shapes and colours in nature.





How are the costumes put together?

I run a carnival club – a workshop where people meet to make their costumes. Once we have decided on the design, we construct a frame or skeleton with thin wire. The frame is then covered with shiny lightweight fabrics, such as silk, that will shimmer and sparkle in sunlight. Many of the costumes include complicated head-dresses or masks decorated with feathers, sequins and glass beads.

Costumes can take months to prepare and are very expensive to make, but the effects can be stunning. Just for a few hours ordinary human beings are transformed into tropical birds, beautiful butterflies or some other weird and wonderful creatures.



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