

# YEAR 5

# READING



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## 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.*



## The Day of the Turtle

This text is from a novel. In the extract, Laura, who lives on an island, has found a turtle on the beach. It is 1907 and the story is told through Laura's diary entries.

I shall remember today as long as I live. This morning I slipped away as soon as ever I could. I'd lain awake most of the night wondering how I was going to get my turtle back into the water. But as I made my way down to Rushy Bay, the morning fog lifting off the sea, I had no idea at all how I would do it.



Even as I uncovered him, I still didn't know. I only knew it had to be done. So I talked to him. I was trying to explain it all to him, how he mustn't worry, how I'd find a way, but that I didn't yet know what way. He's got eyes that make you think he understands. Maybe he doesn't, but you never know. I fetched some seawater in my hat and I poured it over him. He seemed to like it, lifting his head into it as I poured. So I did it again and again.

He was weak though. He kept trying to move, trying to dig his flippers into the sand, but he hadn't the strength to do it. His mouth kept opening and shutting as if he was gasping for breath.

Then I had an idea. I scooped out a long deep channel all the way down to the sea. I would wait for the tide to come in as far as it could, and when the time came I would ease him down into the channel and he could wade out to sea. As I dug I told him my plan. When I'd finished I lay down beside him, exhausted, and waited for the tide.

The tide was coming in now, closer all the time. Then there was barely five yards of sand left between the sea and my turtle, and the water was washing up the channel just as I'd planned it. It was now or never.

I told him what he had to do.

'You've got to walk the rest,' I said. 'You want to get back in the sea, you've got to walk, you hear me?'

He tried. He honestly tried. Time and time again he dug the edge of his flippers into the sand, but he just couldn't move himself.

The flippers dug in again, again, but he stayed where he was. I tried pushing him from behind. That didn't work. I tried moving his flippers for him one by one. That didn't work. I slapped his shell. I shouted at him. All he did was swallow once or twice and blink at me. In the end I tried threatening him. I crouched down in front of him.

‘All right,’ I said. ‘All right. You stay here if you like. See if I care. You see those gulls? You know what they’re waiting for? If they don’t get you, then someone else’ll find you and you’ll be turtle stew.’ I was shouting at him now. I was really shouting at him. ‘Turtle stew, do you hear me!’ All the while his eyes never left my face, not for a moment. Bullying hadn’t worked either. So now I tried begging.

‘Please,’ I said, ‘please.’ But his eyes gave me the answer I already knew. He could not move. He hadn’t the strength. There was nothing else left to try. From the look in his eyes I think he knew it too.

I looked down at him. He was nudging at the sand with his chin, his mouth opening. He was hungry! I don’t know why I hadn’t thought of it before. I had no idea at all what turtles eat. So I tried what was nearest first - seaweed of all sorts, sea lettuce, bladderwrack, whatever I could find.

I dangled it in front of his mouth, brushing his nose with it so he could smell it. He looked as if he was going to eat it. He opened his mouth slowly and snapped at it. But then he turned his head away and let it fall to the ground.

‘What then?’ I asked.

A sudden shadow fell across me. Granny May was standing above me in her hat.

‘How long have you been there?’ I asked.

‘Long enough,’ she said and she walked around me to get a better look at the turtle.

‘Let’s try shrimps,’ she said. ‘Maybe he’ll eat shrimps. We’d better hurry. We don’t want anyone else finding him, do we?’ And she sent me off home to fetch the shrimping net. I ran all the way there and all the way back.

Granny May is the best shrimper on the island. One sweep through the shallows and she was back, her net jumping with shrimps. She smiled down at my turtle.



She told me to dig out a bowl in the sand, right under the turtle’s chin, and then she shook out her net. He looked mildly interested for a moment and then looked away. It was no good. Granny May was looking out to sea, shielding her eyes against the glare of the sun.

‘I wonder,’ she murmured. ‘I wonder. I shan’t be long.’ And she was gone, down to the sea.

When she came back, her net was bulging with jellyfish, blue jellyfish. She emptied them into the turtle’s sandy bowl. At once he was at them like a vulture, snapping, crunching, swallowing, until there wasn’t a tentacle left. ‘He’s smiling,’ she said. ‘I think he likes them. I think

perhaps he'd like some more.'

'I'll do it,' I said. I picked up the net and rushed off down into the sea. They were not difficult to find. I scooped up twelve big ones in as many minutes. He ate those and then lifted his head, asking for more. We took it in turns after that, Granny May and me, until at last he seemed to have had enough. I crouched down and looked my turtle in the eye.

'Feel better now?' I asked, and I wondered if turtles burp when they've eaten too fast. He didn't burp, but he did move. The flippers dug deeper. He shifted - just a little at first. And then he was scooping himself slowly forward, inching his way through the sand.

I was cavorting up and down like a wild thing, and Granny May was just the same. The two of us whistled and whooped to keep him moving, but we knew soon enough that we didn't need to. Every step he took was stronger, his neck reaching forward purposefully. His flippers were under the water now. He was half walking, half swimming. Then he dipped his snout into the sea and let the water run over his head and down his neck. He was going, and suddenly I didn't want him to. I was alongside him, bending over him.



'You don't have to go,' I said.

'He wants to,' said Granny May. 'He has to.'

He was in deeper water now, and with a few powerful strokes he was gone, cruising out through the turquoise water of the shallows to the deep blue beyond. The last I saw of him he was a dark shadow under the sea making out towards the island of Samson.

This is the longest day I've ever written in my diary and all because of a turtle. My wrist aches.

Dragonflies lay their eggs in ponds. A young dragonfly, or nymph, is brown and lives at the bottom of a pond. It will eat almost anything smaller than itself, with its strong jaw which shoots forward to grab its prey. Eventually, the nymph crawls up a stem, its skin splits and an adult dragonfly bursts out.

## 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*





#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COPYRIGHT HOLDERS

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