Lesson 8

What is Junkanoo?

Kalik, Kalik, that's the sound of cowbells. It's Junkanoo time! Junkanoo, our premier cultural celebration, can be traced back to our ancestors from **West Africa**. They brought the festival with them when they were brought to The Bahamas. In The Bahamas, Junkanoo is an **extravaganza** and is becoming a thriving economic enterprise. We are proud of it! Tourists are fascinated by the colours, sights, sounds, and excitements of our festival.

The rhythmic sounds of cowbells, goat skin drums, and whistles, accompanied by an array of brass instruments, create a sweet musical beat that will move you; while brilliantly coloured costumes capture your eye, and bring much visual delight. This **bi-annual** cultural highlight takes place on **Bay Street** in New Providence and other Family Islands during the early morning hours, from 1:00 am - 9:00 am on **Boxing Day** (the day after Christmas) and **New Year's Morning**. Junkanoo can also be experienced on many celebrated occasions such as **Independence Day** (July 10th), and there is also a **Junior Junkanoo Parade** in December, held in New Providence and other family islands.

The History of Junkanoo

Junkanoo, named after the West African **John Canoe** Festival, originated in the Bahamas around the 17th century as a **masquerade.** Slaves, their faces were hidden under a flour paste, celebrated on Boxing Day, the day after Christmas. Later flour paste was replaced by wire masks held on a stick. Junkanooers blew bugles and horns and beat on goat skin drums. In the late 20's when sponging was big business in the Bahamas, many Junkanooers covered themselves totally in sea sponges.

By the mid-thirties, the entire costume was fringed. Prizes were awarded, and group participation began. Soon, the costumes were fringed, not in cloth, but newspaper, then, multicoloured crepe paper. By the way, it wasn't until the **sixties** that women participated in Junkanoo.

There are participating groups such as the Valley Boys which was led by Gus Cooper, The Saxons is led by Percy Viola Francis, and Roots, The Music Makers, One Family, and many others in Nassau, Grand Bahama, and the Family Islands.

As stated, Junkanoo can be traced back to our ancestors in **Africa**. They brought the festival with them when they came to The Bahamas as **slaves**. Similar festivals are also enjoyed in **Jamaica, Bermuda**, and other Caribbean Islands. Junkanoo is an important part of our culture. We are proud of it. Tourists are fascinated by the colours, sights, and sounds and excitement.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Making a Junkanoo skirt

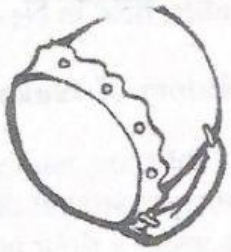
First, cut the shape of the skirt out of thin cardboard and fixed wire around the top. This helps keep the shape of the skirt.

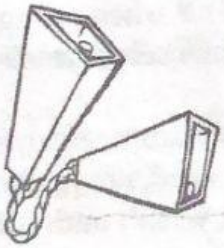
Then, use scissors to cut thin strips of crepe paper, fringed one edge with shears.

Next, get some flour paste or glue and stick the strips of crepe paper onto the lower edge of the skirt. Make sure the fringed edge is at the bottom, and the straight edge is at the top. Place the strips very close together so that they overlapped.

Making a Junkanoo drum

First, the skin of the sheep or the goat is soaked in lime for months. They are then stretched lightly over barrels or garbage cans, fastened all around with small nails and left to dry. Just before the parade begins the drum are heated over a small fire. The heated skins give the drums just the right sound. The cowbells add the 'kalik, kalik' beat. Brass bugles, whistles, and horns complete the unique sound of Junkanoo music.





LIVEWORKSHEETS

1. Junkanoo is (1)

(A) annually
(B) every summer
(C) every month
(D) bi-annual

2. Give two times of the year when Junkanoo can be seen in The Bahamas. (2)

_____ _____

3. Who is Junkanoo named after? (1)

_____

4. Who brought Junkanoo to The Bahamas, and from which century? (2)

_____

_____

5. Name TWO other Caribbean countries where you can find festivals similar to Junkanoo. (2)

_____ _____

6. Put the following events in order showing how Junkanoo evolve using the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4. [4]

_ it wasn't until the sixties that women participated in Junkanoo

_ Slaves' faces were hidden under a flour paste

_ by the mid-thirties, the entire costume, was fringed

_ later flour paste was replaced by wire masks held on a stick

7. Tourists are spellbound by our Junkanoo, which word in paragraph SIX that means the seam as '*spellbound.*' (1)

_____

8. Give the name of **ONE** instrument other than the drum that completes the unique sound of Junkanoo. (1)

_____

LIVEWORKSHEETS

9. Use the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 to put in order how a drum is made. [4]

__heat the drum just before the parade

__Stretch and nail the sink over a barrel.

__allow the skin to dry

__soak the skin of the sheep or goat

10. When did women start participating in Junkanoo? [1]

_____

11. During what time of the year is Junior Junkanoo held in The Bahamas? [1]

_____

12. Who are the participators in Junior Junkanoo? [1]

_____

LIVEWORKSHEETS