

TRADITIONAL CARNIVAL CHARACTERS (PART 2 of 2)

The stories behind the traditional Carnival characters lend meaning and significance to these unusual portrayals. The custom is usually passed on orally to family members or other interested persons. The masqueraders would offer entertainment in the form of humour, songs or skits in exchange for money. In some cases threats and scare tactics were used to coerce bystanders into giving them cash. Some of the best known characters are as follows: **Drag the picture to its correct description.**

JAB JAB

The name of this mas is derived from the French patois for "Diable Diable". It is pretty devil mas. The Jab Jab has a thick whip of plaited hemp which he swings and cracks threateningly. These whips can reduce the costumes of other Jab Jabs to threads.

JAB MOLASSIE

Jab is the French patois for *Diable* (Devil), and Molassie is the French patois for *Mélasse* (Molasses). The Jab Molassie is one of several varieties of devil mas played in Trinidad and Tobago Carnival. The costume consists of short pants or pants cut off at the knee, and a mask and horns. The Jab Molassie would carry chains, and wear locks and keys around his waist, and carry a pitch fork. He may smear his body with grease, tar, mud or coloured dyes (red, green or blue)

MINSTRELS

Black and white minstrels are based on the American minstrel shows popular around the turn of the century in which white singers painted their faces black. The local minstrels are black persons who perform with their faces painted white. Their costume consists of a scissors tail coat, striped trousers, tall straw hat and gloves

MOKO JUMBIE

Moko is a derivation of the god "Moko", coming straight out of West African tradition. Moko is a "diviner" in the Congo language. The term "jumbie" or ghost was added by the freed slaves. It was believed that the height of the stilts was associated with the ability to foresee evil faster than ordinary men. The Moko Jumbie was felt to be a protector of the village.

SAILOR MAS

This character was introduced in the 1880s when British, French and American naval ships came to Trinidad. It is one of the more popular costumes, being lightweight and inexpensive. There are several variations on the sailor mas, including Free French Sailor, King Sailor, and Fancy Sailor to name a few.

PIERROT GRENADE

The Pierrot Grenade is egotistical and retains the scholarly mien, but instead of the elegant costume, he wears rags. His gown consists of crocus bag (burlap), on which strips of coloured cloth, small tins containing pebbles, and small boxes that rattle, are attached. He may wear a hat or a coloured head tie on his head, and his face is covered with a grotesque mask.

MIDNIGHT ROBBER

His "Robber Talk" is extravagant and egocentric, and boastful. It is derived from the tradition of the African Griot or storyteller, and the speech patterns and vocabulary are imitative of his former master. He wears a black satin shirt, pantaloons, influenced by the American cowboy tradition, and a black, flowing cape. He also wears a huge black, broad-brimmed, fringed hat. In his hand he carries a weapon – either a dagger, sword or gun – and a wooden money box in the shape of a coffin. He carries a whistle which he blows to punctuate his tales of valour.

