

Mardi Gras ... and beads



Mardi Gras, the time just before Lent, is celebrated all over the world as a time for over-indulgence, parades, food, and parties. Mardi Gras is French for fat Tuesday. The name came partially from it being the day before Ash Wednesday and partially because the day usually involves eating rich food before the Lenten season of fasting begins.

Traditionally people wear and gather beaded necklaces that are thrown from floats in the various parades. The beads used to be made of glass and were imported from Czechoslovakia and Japan but now they are almost all plastic and made in China. The plastic can't be recycled like plastic bottles. So the beads fill landfills and never decompose. This isn't good for our environment and some groups in New Orleans have been trying to make a difference.

It is estimated that 25 million pounds of beads are thrown from floats each year. This year the last float in a few of the parades will be a "catch and release" float.

1. Do you know what is usually meant by "catch and release"? Write a definition for this phrase.

This last float gathered more than 100,000 pounds of beads last year. Those gathered beads are inspected and cleaned and then resold.

2. What percent or fraction of the beads thrown last year was recycled?

This year the same organization, Arc of Greater New Orleans, is setting up bead recycling containers along the parade route and hope to raise their poundage of collected beads to recycle.



I did a little research and found that I could buy a 35-pound box of Mardi Gras beads for \$43.95. The box contains about 30 bags of beads and each bag has 12 necklaces.

3. How many necklaces are in one 35-pound box of beads?
4. About how much would it cost per necklace to buy a box of beads in this way?

If I bought 10 or more 35-pound boxes of beads I could get each box for a smaller price. For 10 or more boxes, each box would cost \$39.56.

5. About how much would it cost for each necklace if I bought the necklaces in this large quantity?

6. How many boxes of beads would have to be bought to supply New Orleans with the 25 million pounds of beads that are traditionally thrown for Mardi Gras?
7. How much would that many boxes of beads have cost if bought at the large quantity price?
8. About how many necklaces would that have been?
9. The recycled beads are resold for less than what the brand new beads cost. This year Arc of Greater New Orleans is selling a 30-pound box of strung beads for \$20. I don't know how many necklaces are in a 30-pound box but we did figure out how many necklaces are in a 35-pound box.
 - a. See if you can figure out a way to calculate how many necklaces would be in a 30-pound box.
 - b. Now find the unit price for one recycled necklace.
10. In problem #7 you found out how much those 25 million pounds of new beads would cost. Now try to figure out how much 25 million pounds of used beads would cost and how much money could be saved if we threw only recycling beads.
11. Do you have any Mardi Gras necklaces?
12. Write a paragraph to share with your class about Mardi Gras beads, their expense, and the trash?

Sources: <http://www.mardigrasneworleans.com/mgdates.html><http://www.louisianatravel.com/top-10-things-about-mardi-gras>
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