

Fasching und Karneval: Narren (fools)

der Narr, die Narren: (male) fool
 die Narrin, die Närrinnen: (female) fool
 der Jeck, die Jecke (Köln): fool in Cologne (dialect)

Narr



Just a couple of "Narren" (fools/clowns) out for a good time ...

The appearance of the "Narr" of course dates back to the Middle Ages, when a colorfully clad fellow who acted the fool provided some lighthearted entertainment, usually at court. Hence "Hofnarren" became the legendary bumbling - yet also crafty and humorous - "court jesters" of their time, alongside jugglers and/or acrobats. (Today the former would possibly be stand-up comedians or late-night talk show hosts, the latter would be circus performance artists.)

The traditional carnival season observed in many parts of Germany brings out the "Narr" (fool) in anyone feeling "verrückt" (crazy) enough to participate in this festival of seasonally sanctioned zaniness.

"Der Narr" (the fool) tends to meet up with many more "Narren" (fools) in the carnival capitals of Germany, including - but not exclusively limited to - Cologne, Düsseldorf and Mainz. A related regional description often used in Cologne "und Umgebung" (and the surrounding area), moreover, is "Jeck" or "der Jeck" (the fool). A "Jeck" may be someone dressed up like a clown, or jester.

Outside of carnival season the word "Narr" is not used that often in daily German language parlance. It may, however, be used in a tongue-in-cheek fashion, including in its verb form - "vernarrt."

Hence an expression such as "Die Narren sind wir" essentially means "The joke is on us." Or an outcry such as "Sie machen sich zum Narren!" more or less means "You are all buffoons!"

At the same time, a star-struck fan of a famous actor might say "Ich bin wahnsinning vernarrt in Jon Hamm!" (I've got the biggest crush on Jon Hamm.)

Some synonyms in German for "Narr" include, among others, "Holzkopf" (wood head), "Tölpel" (dolt, klutz), "Trottel" (dork, sucker), "Hanswurst" (hans' 'sausage'), "Witzbold" and "Schelm" (imp, prankster, joker).