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### KURENTI IN PTUJ

The Kurenti make their appearance during Kurentovanje which is a pre-Lenten carnival. This has its roots in the centuries old tradition of Shrovetide celebrations.

This festival is unique to the oldest city in Slovenia, Ptuj. (Pronounced: *Pt ooie*)  
The Kurenti wear sheepskin coats, hold wood clubs with a hedgehog skin attached and wear huge furry caps decorated with feathers and colored streamers. They gather in groups and jump around making a lot of noise. This is their way of announcing that winter is saying goodbye and that spring is on the way.

### ZLATOROG

Zlatorog had golden horns and lived in a beautiful garden on Mount Triglav. He was the guardian of a hidden treasure. Many men tried to kill Zlatorog to get the treasure. One day a greedy hunter came to steal the treasure. He stalked Zlatorog and then shot him. Zlatorog was injured and his blood ran for miles, carving out the mountains and lakes of what is now Triglav National Park. At the scene of Zlatorog's ambush a lovely flower, the world's first edelweiss according to legend, grew out of the soil and upon eating the blossom, Zlatorog had his life restored.

Zlatorog ran towards the hunter, who was blinded by the sunlight reflected from his gold horns, lost his balance and fell from the mountain to his death in the gorge below.

The Zlatorog legend presents us with a timely warning against greed.

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### MARTIN KRPAN

Martin Krpan was a very strong man who made a living by smuggling salt from the Adriatic Sea coast to inland villages of Slovenia with the help of his small mare. On one of his travels he meets the imperial carriage on a snowbound road, picks up his laden horse and moves aside so the Emperor's carriage can pass. This feat of strength did not go un-noticed by the Emperor.

Several years later the Emperor summoned Krpan to Vienna in order to fight against a brutal warrior who set up camp outside of Vienna and challenged all comers. This brutal giant had already slain most of the city's knights. Reluctantly, Krpan accepted the challenge, and by using his strength and ingenuity he defeated the brute in a duel. In gratitude, the Emperor gave him a special permit to legally traffic in salt as well as a pouch of gold pieces.

Martin Krpan's exploits represent courage, power, and cunning.

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### THE LJUBLJANA DRAGON

A long time ago, the Greek hero Jason and his companions from the ship Argo, stole the Golden Fleece. In an effort to escape its pursuers the ship took a wrong turn and, instead of sailing south on the Aegean Sea, it found its way to the mouth of the Danube River.

As there was no way back for them, they continued on up the Danube, the Sava and eventually the Ljubljanska River. At the source of the Ljubljanska they stopped, took the ship apart, put the pieces on their shoulders and thus carried the ship to the Adriatic Sea, where they put it back together and continued on their way back home.

The Argonauts found a big lake surrounded by a marsh. It was here that Jason came across a terrible monster, which he fought and eventually slew. This monster was the Ljubljana dragon, which today has a permanent abode on top of the castle tower in the Ljubljana coat of arms.

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