

Dragon Boat Festival

ESL Reading Worksheet — Level F | tahricteaches.com



The Dragon Boat Festival is one of Taiwan's most exciting **traditional** holidays, celebrated every year on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. This festival has been observed for over two thousand years and honors the memory of Qu Yuan, an ancient Chinese **poet** and government official. When Qu Yuan drowned himself in a river, local people raced out in boats to save him. This **legend** became the origin of the exciting dragon boat races we see today throughout Taiwan and around the world.

Dragon boat races are the most **thrilling** part of this festival celebration. Teams of twenty paddlers sit in long, narrow boats decorated with dragon heads and tails. A drummer sits at the front, beating a rhythm to help the **paddlers** row together in perfect **synchronization**. The boats race down rivers and lakes while crowds cheer loudly from the shore. Major races in Taiwan attract teams from many countries who compete for prizes and glory.

Zongzi are special **sticky** rice dumplings that people eat during the Dragon Boat Festival. These pyramid-shaped treats are wrapped in bamboo leaves and tied with string. Inside, the rice is mixed with delicious fillings like pork, mushrooms, egg yolk, or sweet beans. Making zongzi is a family tradition where **generations** work together in the kitchen. The bamboo leaves give the rice a wonderful smell and help keep the dumplings fresh.

Many interesting **customs** and beliefs are connected to the Dragon Boat Festival. Some families hang special plants called **mugwort** and calamus above their doors to keep away evil spirits. Children often wear colorful pouches filled with sweet-smelling herbs around their necks. Drinking realgar wine was once common to protect against illness. These ancient practices show how the festival blends celebration with traditional beliefs about health and protection.

Today, the Dragon Boat Festival is a public holiday when families gather for special meals and activities. Many people travel home to spend time with their parents and grandparents. Schools and offices close so everyone can join the celebrations. The festival reminds people of the importance of loyalty, courage, and standing up for what is right. These values from Qu Yuan's story continue to inspire people across Taiwan and beyond.

A. Vocabulary

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|--------------------------|---|
| 1. traditional _____ | a. an old story from the past |
| 2. poet _____ | b. people who row with paddles |
| 3. legend _____ | c. following customs from the past |
| 4. thrilling _____ | d. very exciting and enjoyable |
| 5. paddlers _____ | e. traditional ways of doing things |
| 6. synchronization _____ | f. tending to stick to things |
| 7. sticky _____ | g. doing things at the same time |
| 8. generations _____ | h. people of different ages in family |
| 9. customs _____ | i. a person who writes poems |
| 10. mugwort _____ | j. a plant used in traditional medicine |

B. True or False

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|--|--|---|
| 1. The festival honors a poet named Qu Yuan. _____ | 2. Dragon boats have teams of 30 paddlers. _____ | 3. Zongzi are wrapped in banana leaves. _____ |
| 4. A drummer helps paddlers row together. _____ | 5. The festival is on the fifth lunar month. _____ | 6. Mugwort is hung to keep away spirits. _____ |
| 7. The festival has been celebrated for 500 years. _____ | 8. Zongzi can have sweet or savory fillings. _____ | 9. Dragon boat races only happen in Taiwan. _____ |

C. Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: traditional, poet, legend, thrilling, synchronization, sticky, customs

1. The Dragon Boat Festival is a _____ holiday celebrated in Taiwan.
2. The festival honors Qu Yuan, an ancient Chinese _____ and official.
3. The _____ of Qu Yuan explains why people race dragon boats.
4. Watching dragon boat races is the most _____ part of the festival.
5. Many interesting _____ and beliefs are connected to this celebration.

D. Comprehension Questions

1. Who was Qu Yuan and what happened to him?
2. How many paddlers are on a dragon boat team?
3. What are zongzi made of and what are they wrapped in?
4. What plants do families hang above their doors during the festival?
5. What values does the festival remind people about?

E. Discussion Questions

1. Would you like to race in a dragon boat? Why or why not?
2. What traditional foods does your family make for special holidays?
3. Why is it important to remember stories from the past?

Answer Key

A. Vocabulary: 1-c, 2-i, 3-a, 4-d, 5-b, 6-g, 7-f, 8-h, 9-e, 10-j

B. True/False: 1-T, 2-F, 3-F, 4-T, 5-T, 6-T, 7-F, 8-T, 9-F

C. Fill Blanks: 1-traditional, 2-poet, 3-legend, 4-thrilling, 5-customs

D. Comprehension: 1. An ancient Chinese poet and official who drowned himself in a river; 2. Twenty paddlers; 3. Sticky rice with fillings, wrapped in bamboo leaves; 4. Mugwort and calamus; 5. Loyalty, courage, and standing up for what is right