



The Dragon Boat Festival — Legend, Rhythm, and Rivalry on the Water

Reading Worksheet — Level F | tahricteaches.com

The Dragon Boat Festival, held on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, is one of Taiwan's most physically demanding **traditions**. Unlike quieter holidays built around family meals, this **ancient** festival centers on fierce competition: long, dragon-shaped boats racing down rivers and harbors while **gathered** crowds cheer from the banks. The event blends athletic **spirit** with a story that is nearly 2,300 years old.

According to **custom**, the festival honors Qu Yuan, a **poet** and government official from the state of Chu who drowned himself in a river after his king ignored his warnings about a coming invasion. Local villagers, the legend says, raced out in boats to try to save him, beating drums and splashing their paddles to keep fish and evil spirits away from his body. When they could not find him, they threw rice wrapped in leaves into the water so fish would eat the rice instead of his body.

That rice, now called zongzi, is still eaten throughout the festival, while the rescue attempt is reenacted every year as an organized **competition**. Teams of paddlers train for weeks to build the **strength** and **courage** needed to row in perfect unison, since even a single rower out of **rhythm** can slow the whole boat. A drummer at the front keeps the pace, and the fastest boats can reach speeds that rival competitive rowing.

Modern dragon boat racing has grown far beyond its origins. Taiwan hosts some of the most competitive races in the world, drawing international teams to cities like Lukang and Tainan. Paddlers describe the sport as demanding both raw **strength** and precise teamwork, since the boats can **float** off course if the **team** loses its shared **rhythm**.

Although the holiday has become a major sporting event, its **ancient** roots remain visible in every race. The drumbeats, the **gathered** crowds, and the dragon-shaped hulls all trace back to a single act of **courage** — ordinary villagers risking their lives on the water for a poet they admired. More than two millennia later, that same **spirit** of **competition** and respect still drives every team toward the finish line.

A. Vocabulary

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|--------------|-------|---|
| 1. tradition | _____ | a. to come together in one place |
| 2. ancient | _____ | b. the physical power or force a person has |

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| 3. gather ____ | c. a person who writes poems |
| 4. spirit ____ | d. a regular, repeated pattern of movement or sound |
| 5. custom ____ | e. very old, from a long time ago |
| 6. poet ____ | f. a strong feeling of energy, determination, or enthusiasm |
| 7. compete ____ | g. a usual way of doing something within a culture |
| 8. strength ____ | h. to try to win against others in a contest |
| 9. courage ____ | i. the ability to do something difficult or frightening |
| 10. rhythm ____ | j. a custom or belief passed down through generations |



B. True or False

1. The Dragon Boat Festival takes place on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. ____
2. The festival is a quiet holiday centered only on family meals. ____
3. According to legend, Qu Yuan was a poet who drowned himself in a river. ____
4. Villagers threw rice into the water to keep fish from eating Qu Yuan's body. ____
5. Zongzi is a type of rice wrapped in leaves still eaten during the festival. ____
6. Dragon boat teams need no training because paddling requires no skill. ____
7. Taiwan hosts some of the most competitive dragon boat races in the world. ____
8. A drummer at the front of the boat has no effect on the team's speed. ____
9. The festival's ancient roots are still visible in modern dragon boat races. ____



C. Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: ancient, courage, rhythm, gather, compete

1. The Dragon Boat Festival is an _____ tradition nearly 2,300 years old.
2. Villagers showed great _____ when they raced out to try to save Qu Yuan.
3. A single paddler out of _____ can slow down the whole boat.
4. Crowds _____ along the riverbanks to watch the race.
5. Modern teams _____ in races held across Taiwan and the world.

D. Comprehension Questions

1. When is the Dragon Boat Festival held, and how does it differ from quieter holidays?
2. According to legend, who was Qu Yuan, and why did he drown himself?
3. How did villagers try to protect Qu Yuan's body, and what food resulted from that effort?
4. What physical qualities do modern dragon boat teams need to succeed?
5. How does the article connect the festival's ancient legend to today's competitive races?

E. Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think a story about rescue and respect turned into a sporting competition over time?
2. What other festivals do you know that combine an old legend with a modern physical event?
3. The article says 'even a single rower out of rhythm can slow the whole boat.' How does this idea apply to teamwork outside of sports?





Answer Key

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

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

C. Fill Blanks: 1-ancient, 2-courage, 3-rhythm, 4-gather, 5-compete

D. Comprehension:

1. The Dragon Boat Festival is held on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, and unlike quieter family-meal holidays, it centers on fierce athletic competition.
2. According to legend, Qu Yuan was a poet and government official who drowned himself in a river after his king ignored his warnings about a coming invasion.
3. Villagers raced out in boats, beat drums, and splashed their paddles to keep fish away, and when they could not find him, they threw rice wrapped in leaves into the water — now known as zongzi.
4. Modern dragon boat teams need strength, courage, and precise shared rhythm, since paddling out of sync can slow or steer the boat off course.
5. The article shows that the drumbeats, gathered crowds, and dragon-shaped boats of modern races all trace back to the villagers' original act of courage trying to rescue Qu Yuan.