

CELEBRATIONS

Dragon Boat Festival

Age: Teenagers/Adults

Level: Intermediate (B1)

Time: 60-90 minutes

Activity: In this lesson, students will:

1. read an article about the Dragon Boat Festival, focusing on the language involved;
2. watch a video about the Dragon Boat Festival;
3. retell a story from their country involving dragons;
4. talk about a famous poet from their country and his/her most famous work.

Language focus: vocabulary related to the Dragon Boat Festival, and language for retelling and relating stories

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student; access to the internet (for Task 4 only), either on phones or on class computers

Note: The origin of this festival comes from a story about the death of a famous poet and what the local people did to appease his spirit after his death, so please be aware that this lesson mentions (but does not deal with in depth) both suicide and supernatural topics.

Procedure

1. Warmer

Students read the words and decide in pairs which ones they might use when telling a story about a dragon. Then they write up to six other words that they might want to use. Collect these words on the board for the students to use in later discussion tasks.

2. Key words

Students first find and underline the key words in the article, then match them to the definitions in part b, and finally, in part c, read how they are used in context.

Note: The words (not their definitions) are in the order that they appear in the article.

Key:

- | | |
|--------------|-------------------|
| 1. beats | 7. evil |
| 2. captured | 8. fierce |
| 3. dumplings | 9. finishing line |
| 4. drowned | 10. herbs |
| 5. encourage | 11. paddle |
| 6. frighten | 12. spirits |

3. About the festival

Students read the article and find the information to answer the questions.

Key:

1.
 - a. Qu Yuan.
 - b. 278 BC
 - c. In the Miluo River in China.
 - d. He committed suicide by drowning himself.
2.
 1. river, 2. evil spirits, 3. races, 4. rice dumplings

4. Video – Stanley Bay Dragon Boat Race

Follow the link to the video, or type the words *2017 Stanley Bay Dragon Boat Race* into a search engine to find the short (under three minutes) video.

Tell the students to say the words in the box out loud when they see those things in the video. Afterwards, ask students to tell you what else they saw in the video before you watch it again. Pause when you get to the written captions and make sure students understand what is written.

5. Discussion – dragons and poets

Find out if there are any myths or folk tales from the students' own countries or cultures that involve dragons. Get them each to retell one of the stories as well as they can (or to look it up to jog their memory, and then retell it). They can use the story framework provided, although it might be necessary to adapt it to fit their stories.

Using the second framework, students talk about a famous poet from their country – either from the past or the present day. This might be a poet that they had to study at school. Then, as well as they can, they should recite one of his or her most famous poems or say what it is about (if they can't remember the actual lines).

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Exercise 1: Warmer



Circle the words you might use when telling a story about a dragon.

strong	rice	large	fire	plants	wings	teeth	happy
boat	tail	fierce	villagers	river	poet	princess	

What other things would you include in the story? Write some words in the box.

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Exercise 2: Key words and expressions

a. Look at the key words in the box below. Quickly find and underline them in the article.

b. Match the key words in the box to the definitions, 1-12.

c. Read the article and notice how the key words are used in context.

fierce	paddle	finishing line	beats	evil	spirits
encourage	capture	drowned	dumplings	frighten	herbs

1. hits a drum to make a regular sound _____
2. took control of a place from your enemy during a war _____
3. small solid lumps of cooked food, usually made of flour and water or rice _____
4. died because he was under water for too long _____
5. make someone want to do something (faster and better) _____
6. make someone or something feel afraid _____
7. very bad _____
8. very angry, ready to attack _____
9. a line in sports that shows where a race ends _____
10. plant used for cooking or as a medicine _____
11. move a small boat through the water using a pole with a flat end _____
12. ghosts or magic creatures _____

DRAGON BOAT

The Dragon Boat Festival is celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth month in the Chinese calendar which is in May or June. It is a three-day festival when people do not have to go to school or work. Many people in China visit their families on this holiday. The festival is not about dragons, but there are thousands of dragon boats. Many people go to watch the dragon boat races with their families.

Dragon boats are long wooden boats that have a fierce dragon's head at the front and its tail at the end. A team of people sit in each boat and paddle it as fast as they can to the finishing line. One member of each team sits at the front of the boat and beats a drum to keep evil spirits away and to encourage his team to go faster and win the race.

The story behind the Dragon Boat Festival is about the death of China's most famous poet, Qu Yuan. Qu Yuan worked for the King of Chu, but after other people said bad things about Qu Yuan, the king became angry with him. Qu Yuan left Chu and went back to his village. While he lived there, he wrote poems that are still very famous in China today.

In the year 278 BC, Chu was captured by the Qin army. This made Qu Yuan so unhappy that he walked into the Miluo River and drowned himself. The villagers paddled quickly out on the river, but they could not save him.

Later, the villagers went back out on the river in their boats and threw rice dumplings into the river. The rice was for Qu Yuan's spirit and to keep evil spirits away from his body. Then they raced along the river beating drums to frighten the evil spirits away. This is why rice dumplings, called *zongzi*, are eaten at the Dragon Boat Festival.

During the festival many people wear pretty bags of herbs around their necks to keep evil spirits away. Luckily, the herbs also keep insects like mosquitos away.

Exercise 3: About the festival

1. Answer the questions with information from the article. Find:

a. The name of the poet.

b. The year that he died.

c. Where he died.

d. How he died.

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2. Complete the sentences about the Dragon Boat Festival using the words in the box.

races evil spirits rice dumplings river

After the poet died, the villagers raced their boats along the _____ (1) beating drums to keep _____ (2) away. That's why there are _____ (3) and drums at the Dragon Boat Festival today.

In the story, villagers threw _____ (4) into the river, and that is why people eat *zongzi* at the Dragon Boat Festival today.

Exercise 4: Video – Stanley Bay Dragon Boat Race

Watch the video of the Stanley Bay Dragon Boat Race in Hong Kong.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7u1LEBpmVY

Say these words below when you see the things in the video.

drum dragon paddle finishing line

Exercise 5: Discussion – dragons and poets

a. Is there a story from your country that has a dragon? Retell the story using the framework below.

The story takes place in _____ (*time and place*) .
The dragon is _____ .
In the story there is also a _____ (*person, situation, event*) .
At the end of the story _____ (*what happens?*) .

b. Complete the sentences to talk about a famous poet from your country.

_____ (*name*) is my country's most famous poet.
He/She lived _____ (*where and when*) .
His/Her most famous poem is _____ (*name of poem*) .
It is about _____ .