



Crafts Around the World Series

Asia: Taiwan Dragon Boat Festival Paper Zongzi

Purpose:

Introduce youth to some simple cultural traditional crafts from around the world. Journey around the continents, learning how to make simple crafts and having fun creating.

Objectives:

- Learn the cultural history and origins of the craft.
- Inspire global exploration.
- Develop fine motor skills.
- Increase cultural awareness and creativity.

Education Standards:

- Understand the visual arts in relation to history and culture.
- Apply geometric methods to solve design problems.

Experiential Learning:

- Create a Paper Zongzi by folding, cutting, and taping paper.

Encourage thought and discussion with these questions:

What happened? What's important? So what? Now what?

Audience: Grades K–6

Enjoy learning how to make simple crafts from six of the seven continents: **Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America.**

CONTINENT: ASIA

Asia is the largest of the world's continents. It is home to 48 countries, three of which (Russia, Kazakhstan, and Turkey) have part of their land in Europe. Some areas combine Asia and Europe into one continent called Eurasia.

COUNTRY: TAIWAN

Taiwan, officially the Republic of China, is an East Asian country in the northwestern Pacific Ocean. It is at the junction of the East and South China Seas, with the People's Republic of China to the northwest, Japan to the northeast, and the Philippines to the south.

4-H Taiwan has been running since 1952. There are currently 83,000 members, aged 9-24. 4-H Taiwan is dedicated to fostering positive youth development and leadership through camps, workshops, and hands-on activities. These programs empower young people to apply what they learn by organizing their initiatives and giving back to their hometowns and communities.



Photo courtesy of 4-H Taiwan



Dragon Boat Festival Paper Zongzi

What is Paper Zongzi?

Zongzi is a traditional Chinese food made of sticky rice filled with meat, beans, or other ingredients. It is wrapped in bamboo leaves and cotton string. People steam and eat Zongzi during the Dragon Boat Festival to honor the memory of Qu Yuan.

The design of Paper Zongzi is to help learners experience the essence of the Dragon Boat Festival in an easy and accessible way by using colored paper, cotton string, and pieces of mugwort.

What is the Dragon Boat Festival?

The festival is celebrated for a famous Chinese poet, Qu Yuan. He loved his country very much and always spoke honestly to his king. However, the king did not listen to him and sent him to a faraway place. Feeling very sad and hopeless, Qu Yuan jumped into the river. People were moved by his story, so they threw Zongzi into the river to prevent the fish from eating Qu Yuan's body, and they also rowed the dragon boat to search for him. These practices have evolved into how we celebrate the Dragon Boat Festival today.

Why do we use pieces of mugwort?

After the Dragon Boat Festival, the weather becomes hot and humid as it gets closer to the summer solstice. People hold special ceremonies on this day to protect themselves from sickness and bad luck.

Among all the traditions, using mugwort plants is the most popular. People hang mugwort at their doors or carry it with them to stay safe and healthy.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

TIME:

30-45 minutes or multiple days, depending on the interest to learn more.

MATERIALS:

8" x 8" square paper (A color similar to leaves is preferred)

12-inch cotton string (about 30 cm)

1-2 pieces of mugwort

INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO LINK:

View this instructional video to guide you in creating your Paper Zongzi:

<https://youtu.be/7Mle2mHDnx4>



Dragon Boat Festival Paper Zongzi

PROCEDURE: How to make your Paper Zongzi

Step 1: Fold paper five times.

- 1-1. Fold the paper in half and then unfold it.
- 1-2. Fold both sides inwards to align with the center crease.
- 1-3. Fold the top edge down by 1 cm.
- 1-4. Fold the bottom edge up to meet the top edge.
- 1-5. Fold the top left corner inward along the crease connecting the bottom left corner and the midpoint of the top edge, then unfold. Repeat the same step with the top right corner, folding it inward along the crease connecting the bottom right corner and the midpoint of the top edge, then unfold.

Step 2: Add the cotton string.

- 2-1. Unfold the paper (as in Step 1-2), and place the cotton string evenly across the upper part of the paper, with both ends extending beyond the paper edges.
- 2-2. Fold the bottom half of the paper up again to sandwich the string between the paper layers.

Step 3: Seal the Zongzi shape.

- 3-1. Use one hand to open the bottom section. With the other hand, tuck the 1 cm folded edge inside.
- 3-2. Secure the folds with a small piece of tape.

Step 4: Shape the triangle.

- 4-1. Gently open the top part of the paper. Press both sides inward at the center to form a triangular shape, like a Zongzi.

Step 5: Finish with string and mugwort.

- 5-1. Tie a bow with the cotton string on both sides
- 5-2. Place small pieces of mugwort or scented herbs inside — and you're done!



Dragon Boat Festival Paper Zongzi

Art and Science

Experiment with different sizes or types of paper. Try different decorating techniques and materials, such as colored pencils and paints. Try making the actual Zongzi by viewing the tutorial “How to Make Zongzi 粽子 (Bamboo Sticky Rice Dumpling) | Dragon Boat Festival,” created by [Angel Wong's Kitchen](#). View the tutorial at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DmO5Ezy43ao>.

Ask questions and make discoveries!

Research

Research other traditions related to the dragon boat festival based on the following introduction:

Dragon Boat Festival

Today in Taiwan, dragon boat racing has become a fun and exciting sport. Teams of people row together, racing to the finish line. A drummer sits at the front of the boat, beating a drum to help everyone paddle in the same rhythm. Winning a dragon boat race is not just about being strong; it's about teamwork and listening to each other.

Perfumed Medicine Bag

Perfumed medicine bags, also called sachets, are small cloth bags filled with nice-smelling herbs, that are believed to keep people strong and healthy, like mugwort and realgar. People would wear sachets around their necks or hang them on doors and windows to bring happiness and health to their families.

View the following two instructional videos to guide you in creating your paper sachets: How to Make Paper Sachets (1): https://mediaspace.msu.edu/media/1_h1r4jjco

摺紙教學| 綁一串香香粽 端午節香包|Origami tutorial Dragon Boat Festival fragrant sachets: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKHJ_5z9sY4

Reflection Questions:

What surprised you and why? When were you the most creative, and why do you think that is? What made you curious today? What can you do with what you learned today?

REFERENCE:

Taiwan-panorama. (1982). *Dragon Boat Festival* <https://4-h.me/0zune>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

The activity was developed by Michigan State University Extension Educator Janis Brinn; Gao Xin-Mei (Joanna), IFYE Delegate; and Taiwan 4-H, 2023.