

EXPLORING THE WORLD THROUGH STORY
LEVEL F: WISDOM TALES 3

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Welcome to *Exploring the World through Story!*

Exploring the World through Story introduces children to the diversity of human cultures through the study of world literature. Over the course of the elementary years—grades 3–5 or ages 7–11—children study **wisdom tales** from the world’s spiritual traditions, both ancient and modern.

At the elementary levels, EWS has three main educational goals. First, students become familiar with the **most important stories from each spiritual or cultural tradition**. Learning in this area is supported by reading and writing about the stories and by memory work. Second, a clear approach to structure helps students **learn the basics of literary analysis**. Finally, students **practice composition skills** with narrations and other writing activities.

About Level F

Each of the elementary levels of EWS covers stories from one major Asian tradition, one Abrahamic faith, and one ancient belief system or “mythology.”¹ In *Exploring the World through Story: Level F*, fifth graders read wisdom tales from the **Islamic, Norse, and Chinese traditions**. The stories have been chosen for their cultural or historical importance and for their literary influence.

➤ I recommend that students complete EWS Levels D and E before moving on to Level F, as some of the content in this level assumes familiarity with the stories and writing exercises from the previous levels.

EWS is a secular curriculum. As such, it makes no claims for or against the validity of any religious belief.

Exploring the World through Story: Level F is just one component of a complete English Language Arts program for fifth grade. Your child will also need, at minimum, formal [grammar and writing curricula](#). Some families may want to include spelling and vocabulary instruction, and if you have not already introduced [typing](#), I suggest you do so this year. Typing instruction should continue until the student can type 30 words per minute with good accuracy.

Daily independent reading is another must. Students should read for at least 30 minutes a day from a wide range of classic and contemporary fiction, poetry, and

¹ “Mythology may, in a real sense, be defined as other people’s religion.” —Joseph Campbell, *Thou Art That: Transforming Religious Metaphor* (New World Library, 2001).

nonfiction. I encourage parents to allow students the freedom to choose their own books for recreational reading.

About Wisdom Tales

Wisdom tales are teaching stories that affirm cultural values—often of a religious or moral nature—through the medium of imaginative narratives. The category of wisdom tales encompasses sacred stories from the whole range of the world’s spiritual traditions. It includes scriptural narratives as well as stories sometimes designated as myths or pious legends. Popular oral narratives (folktales) with a didactic or moral purpose form a significant part of the genre. Students encounter all of these types of stories in Levels D–F of this program.

Beyond the simple pleasure of reading interesting stories from around the world, there are three main benefits to the study of wisdom tales for today’s students. First, wisdom tales furnish a **repository of images and cultural reference points** that serve as sources for other art forms, including other types of literature. To read world classics with understanding, students must first become familiar with these foundational narratives. In addition, wisdom tales make an **ideal introduction to the basics of literary analysis** because, by design, they function on both a literal and a symbolic level. Wisdom tales invite the listener or reader to look beyond the surface of the narrative and inquire into its deeper meaning. Finally, because wisdom tales articulate and transmit cultural norms, they offer **insight into each culture’s distinctive values**. Students gain crosscultural understanding and appreciation through engagement with world wisdom tales. By becoming familiar with these stories, children will be well prepared, not only to continue their studies of world literature, but also to engage with a diverse world that is increasingly connected across national, cultural, and religious lines.

About the Lesson Plans

This curriculum provides plans for two lessons for each of the 36 weeks in the standard US school year, for a total of 72 lessons.

Please note that, at this level, EWS is not self-teaching; you will need to work closely with your child to assure that they are understanding the texts and getting the most out of the writing activities. Although there is relatively little preparation required of the parent to teach EWS, it is still important to **read through each lesson plan carefully** before teaching it to make sure you have all necessary materials on hand and understand how to implement the writing activities. A **Teaching Prep checklist** is

provided below for your convenience.

The lesson plans follow a standard format that makes it easy for parents and children to get into a rhythm with their literature studies. Each plan is divided into two parts: Reading and Writing Activities.

The **Reading** section begins with the **Teaching Notes**, a short introduction to the text with background information for you, the instructor. Read through this section before teaching the lesson, and **highlight** any information you want to share with your child. The most important terms, names, and references appear in bold type for your convenience.

You will then **ask your child to read the story aloud**. By fifth grade, most students can read fluently, so the books for this level have been chosen with independent reading in mind. However, as children’s decoding, comprehension, and fluency skills vary widely, you can always continue to read the stories aloud to your child as needed.

As part of the Reading section, I have provided lists of **names and vocabulary words** that may be unfamiliar to your child. The vocabulary lists are made up of “Tier Two” words, “words that are of high utility for mature language users and are found across a wide variety of domains.”² The vocabulary lists in EWS are meant as a ready reference so students don’t have to interrupt their reading to look up new words. Rather than listing formal dictionary definitions, I offer what Isabel Beck and her colleagues refer to as “student-friendly explanations” that build on the child’s existing vocabulary and knowledge base. If you like, you can use the lists as a resource for further vocabulary instruction.³

About the Writing Activities

The second part of the lesson, **Writing Activities**, includes a variety of scaffolded composition tasks. The narration and dictation activities in EWS-F align with the skills taught in [Writing with Ease: Strong Fundamentals](#) by Susan Wise Bauer. EWS’s writing activities also integrate techniques from [The Writing Revolution](#) by Judith C. Hochman and Natalie Wexler, as well as ideas from the [Core Knowledge Language Arts](#) curriculum.

² Isabel L Beck, et al., *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*, 2nd ed. (Guilford Press, 2013), p. 9.

³ For instructional ideas, see Beck et al., pp. 183-193.

To get the most out of the writing activities, students at this level should be able to (1) accurately retell a short tale in their own words and (2) comfortably write 5–8 sentences without assistance. They should also understand the basics of paragraph structure, including the use of a topic sentence, supporting (body) sentences, and a concluding sentence.

The focus of this year's writing work is **paragraph expansion**. After an eight-week review of skills taught in previous levels, students practice expanding paragraphs through the use of examples, evidence, explanation, and elaboration. In this level, students work with the types of paragraphs most relevant to the study of literature: narrative (plot summaries); informational (e.g., character descriptions, nonfiction); and expository (explanation and analysis).

Next you'll find sentences for **dictation**. The dictation process is explained fully in Appendix A (p. 229). You may wish to use the dictation sentences for grammar analysis, following the process taught in your grammar program. I list some common options in Appendix B (p. 230).

The Writing Activities section concludes with **memory work**. You'll find an **implementation guide** in Appendix C (pp. 231–233) and a **complete list of memory work items** in Appendix D (pp. 234–238). The memory work selections can also be used for **copywork**.

The **Student Worksheet pack** includes student copies of the graphic organizers and other worksheets for the lessons that require them. **Print the student worksheets single-sided and store them in a three-ring binder** rather than having them spiral-bound. This will prevent the need to flip back and forth when the student is referring to graphic organizers during the writing process. At this age, students can use regular wide-ruled notebook paper without a midline for dictation and other writing exercises.

Scheduling Options

EWS-F consists of 72 lessons—two per week for a 36-week school year. You can either teach each complete lesson on a single day in a longer block or split the material up, teaching each lesson over two days for a total of four days' work.

Option A: 2x/week

- **Two lessons per week** plus daily memory work review
- **60-90 minutes per lesson**
- Complete reading, writing, dictation, and memory work for each lesson in one day

Option B: 4x/week

- **Four lessons per week** plus daily memory work review
- **30-45 minutes per lesson**
- Days 1 and 3: Complete reading, dictation, and introduce new memory work
- Days 2 and 4: Complete writing activity and review memory work

Lesson Prep Checklist

- Read through the lesson plan carefully.
- Highlight information from the Teaching Notes to share with your child.
- Preview the writing activity.
- Print out the student worksheets.

Lesson Presentation Checklist

- Introduce the reading.
- Listen as the student reads the day's story aloud.
- Present new vocabulary as needed during the reading.
- Introduce and supervise the writing activity.
- Present the dictation.
- Review old memory work.
- Introduce new memory work.

Required Materials for EWS: Level F

☐ *Muhammad* - Demi

[Hardcover](#)

This modern telling of the life of Prophet Muhammad, based on traditional *sīrah* (prophetic biography), provides historical background for understanding the origins of Islam. This book is read over two weeks and is also used over three additional lessons for a writing project.

☐ *Tales from the Quran and Hadith* - Rana Safvi

[Paperback](#) | [Kindle](#)

Safvi's text features clear, graceful retellings of key stories from the Quran and *hadith* (traditions of Prophet Muhammad). This book usually ships from outside North America, so order well in advance, or consider the Kindle version. This book is used for five weeks.⁴

☐ *DK Norse Myths* - Matt Ralphs

[Hardcover](#) | [Kindle](#) | [Audible](#)

Readable text and eye-catching illustrations make this collection of stories based on the Eddas ideal for students of this age. This book is used for twelve weeks.

☐ *Tales of a Chinese Grandmother* - Frances Carpenter

[Hardcover](#) | [Paperback](#) | [Kindle](#)

With its charming frame story of a Qing dynasty family, this collection imparts historical details as well as a core set of well-known Chinese folktales. This text is used over the final trimester of the year.

☐ *Chinese Myths and Legends* - Shelley Fu

[Hardcover](#) | [Kindle](#)

This collection includes extended retellings of some of the best-known origin tales and literary masterworks of Chinese culture. Selections from this text are interspersed with Carpenter's stories over the last trimester of the year.

⁴ Two additional online resources round out the Islam unit. Links are provided in the schedule and on the lesson plan pages.

Additional Materials

- Print-out of student worksheets, three-hole punched
- 1" three-ring binder to store worksheets
- Wide-ruled filler paper or notebook
- Pencils, pens, erasers
- [Highlighters](#) (three different colors)
- A supply of [lined index cards](#)
- An [index card file box](#)
- [Tabbed index card dividers numbered 1-31](#), to fit the file box
- Optional: small white board, markers, and eraser (for grammar analysis)

Further Reading Suggestions

Adult Reference

[12 Major World Religions](#) provides neutral, fact-based descriptions of major contemporary world religions plus three ancient traditions (Egyptian, Greco-Roman, and Norse). Teen/adult reading level.

Wisdom Tales for Family Reading

[Sacred Stories: Wisdom from World Religions](#) offers five stories from each of the following traditions: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Native American, and Sacred Earth (ancient and modern polytheism).

[In the Beginning: Creation Stories from Around the World](#) is an outstanding collection by acclaimed Black children's author Virginia Hamilton that includes many tales from indigenous cultures. Illustrated by Barry Moser.

[Wisdom Tales from Around the World](#) is an award-winning collection of short wisdom tales from master storyteller Heather Forest.

Supplemental Reading for Level F

CKHG Units: [Medieval Islamic Empires](#), [The Vikings](#), [Ancient China](#), [Dynasties of China](#)

The Core Knowledge Foundation offers free, high-quality downloadable resources for grades K-8. The student readers from these units provide valuable background knowledge for students who have not yet studied these cultures or a good review for those who have. The Medieval Islamic Empires unit (4th grade level) covers the life of Muhammad and the basics of Islamic belief in historical context. The Vikings reader (3rd grade level) describes Viking seafaring and raiding; chapter 6 includes a brief introduction to Norse religious belief. The Ancient China unit discusses various facets of Chinese culture in simple language (2nd grade level), while the Dynasties of China unit (4th grade level) focuses on history, art, and inventions. Highly recommended as enrichment reading.

[*The Islamic Year: Surahs, Stories, and Celebrations*](#) - Noorah Al-Gailani & Chris Smith

Traces the life of Prophet Muhammad through the Islamic religious calendar; includes recipe and craft ideas along with multicultural folktales that exemplify Muslim values like generosity, equality, and justice.

[*Ayat Jamilah: Beautiful Signs*](#) - Sarah Conover & Freda Crane

Lovely collection of Quranic stories, folktales, legends, and biographical sketches from a variety of Muslim-majority nations and cultures. One story from this book, from an online resource, appears in Lesson F-16.

[*The Wise Fool: Fables from the Islamic World*](#) - Shahrukh Husain & Micha Archer

Humorous and thought-provoking wisdom tales featuring Mulla Nasruddin, the legendary character known under different names throughout the Islamic world. One story about him appears in Lesson F-15 (online resource).

[*D'Aulaires' Book of Norse Myths*](#) - Ingri d'Aulaire & Edgar Parin d'Aulaire

Classic illustrated volume of stories based on the Eddas.

[*Treasury of Norse Myths*](#) - Donna Jo Napoli

Lavishly illustrated, large-format collection. Middle-school reading level.

[*Confucius*](#) and [*The Legend of Lao Tzu*](#) - Demi

Beautifully illustrated picture books introduce these important Chinese figures.

[*Chinese Fables: The Dragon Slayer and Other Timeless Tales of Wisdom*](#) - Shiho S. Nunes

Modern retellings that emphasize traditional Chinese cultural values.

[*Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*](#), [*When the Sea Turned to Silver*](#), and [*Starry River of the Sky*](#) - Grace Lin

Award-winning contemporary novels that draw on Chinese folklore. Lower middle-grade reading level.

LESSON F-5

“The Creation of Man”

Tales from the Quran and Hadith, pp. 1-10

Reading

Teaching Notes

Unlike the previous Abrahamic scriptures studied in EWS Levels D and E, the Quran is not arranged as a chronological narrative. It is a single, cohesive text compiled within a single lifetime, rather than a collection of disparate books like the Hebrew and Christian scriptures.

The Quran references many stories from these previous scriptures, as well as stories from outside the scriptural canons of Judaism and Christianity. For example, the Quran includes stories about the childhood of Mary, the mother of Jesus, that do not appear in the canonical gospels but that are accepted as pious legends by some Christians. Likewise, it references childhood stories about Jesus that were known to certain early Christian communities⁵ but are considered non-canonical by most Christians. However, the Quran does not narrate many of these stories in full but makes passing reference to them as illustrations or historical examples while discussing other matters. In some cases, the stories are told more fully in the **Hadith**—collections of sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad as narrated by his companions—or in later commentaries. Our text pieces these narratives together into connected stories, and I have arranged them in rough chronological order.

Today’s reading tells the story of the creation of humans and their subsequent banishment from paradise. The story broadly parallels the narrative in the first three chapters of Genesis, studied in EWS-D. As in many other creation stories from around the world, including some we’ll read later this year, humans are made from mud or clay. They gain a soul when God breathes his spirit into them. The first human woman is formed to be a companion to the first man, made of the same form and substance. The pair succumb to the temptation by an antagonist figure—the Serpent in the Torah, the djinn Iblis in the Quran—and are punished by being banished from their garden home.

The Quranic narrative has some distinct differences from the biblical one, however. The angels—created beings of light—assist God by carrying the

⁵ See The Infancy Gospel of Thomas: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infancy_Gospel_of_Thomas

materials needed for the creation of humans. Several angels and their functions are named, including Jibreel (Gabriel), whom we have already met in the story of the Night of Power. The Islamic story includes more details on the tempter figure, here named Azazil and also called Iblis or Shaitaan (the Arabic for Satan). Unlike the Jewish and Christian lore that portrays Satan as a fallen angel, Iblis belongs to the race of djinn, intelligent beings made from smokeless fire.⁶ As our text explains, angels are incapable of sin, while djinn and humans exercise free will.

In literary terms, Iblis functions as a classic antagonist, paralleling the biblical serpent as tempter. Motivated by the sin of pride, he is unwilling to bow down to humans as the angels do. Although punished by God for his disobedience, Iblis is granted time to make his case against humanity. As in the book of Job in the Hebrew scriptures, God permits Iblis to tempt humans to wrongdoing. Iblis's primary means of attack is "whispering," that is, putting disobedient thoughts into the minds of humans. This sets up an ongoing conflict between good and evil, on both a cosmic and a personal scale.

As a result of Iblis's meddling, humans succumb to sin and are banished from the garden. Unlike the Genesis narrative, the Quranic garden is not imagined as existing on the earthly plane but in a heavenly realm. Both this original garden and the paradise awaiting righteous believers after death are called *Jannah* in Arabic, and the two are sometimes considered to be one and the same.⁷

Vocabulary

ashraf-ul-makhlūqat /ah-SHRAF-ool-MAKH-loo-kaht/: (Arabic) Human beings are the noblest creation.

Alhamdulillah /ahl-HAHM-doo-lee-LAH/: (Arabic) Praise be to God

Qayamat /kuh-YAH-mut/: (Arabic) the Day of Judgment

Hawwa /HAW-wah/: (Arabic) Eve, Chavah

fashioning: making, designing

prostrating: bowing down with one's face to the floor

displayed: showed

tasked with: given the job of

Resurrection: rising from the dead

⁶ Djinn is sometimes anglicized as "jinn" or "genie," as in the famous wish-granting being from the story of Aladdin.

⁷ The English word [paradise](#) comes from the Persian word *pardis*, meaning garden or park.

sustenance: nourishment, food
djinn: being made of fire
malleable: able to be formed or molded
forbearance: patience, self-restraint
capacity: ability, possibility of containing
perilous: dangerous
exquisite: extremely beautiful
fragrant: good-smelling
tranquility: peace and quiet⁸
transgression: sin, breaking a law
recesses: deep, hidden places
lures: traps, snares, temptations
avowed: sworn
enmity: conflict, hatred
diadem: royal headband, crown
respite: a break (in time), a rest

Writing Activities

➤ Student Worksheets: pp. 4-5

Sentence Completion

Over the next few lessons, we will review sentence-level composition techniques from previous levels of EWS that will be used this year to help students expand paragraphs and revise their writing.

In today's activity, your child is asked to complete sets of sentences that end with *but*, *because*, and *so*.⁹ Remind the student that these words show the different directions a sentence can take. *But* shows contrast or reversal; *because* shows cause; and *so* shows result.

Responses will vary, but possible answers appear here in italics. The worksheet also asks the student to indicate the page number on which the information in their answer appears. This trains students in close attention to the text and will be helpful later, when students are asked to provide textual citations for the claims they make in essays and research papers.

⁸ Our text uses British spellings; I have given the equivalent US American spelling here.

⁹ See *The Writing Revolution*, pp. 40-43 for a further explanation of this type of exercise.

The angels saw God working with clay, but they did not display any curiosity about what he was doing. (p. 1)

The angels saw God working with clay because God was fashioning something. (p. 1)

The angels saw God working with clay, so they helped by carrying clay, mud, and water. (p. 2)

Azazil lived among the angels, but he was a djinn. (pp. 2-3)

Azazil lived among the angels because he had shown great piety and obedience. (p. 2)

Azazil lived among the angels, so he was always to be found with them, engrossed in worshipping God. (p. 3) [Other answers are possible.]

Azazil refused to bow down to Adam, but God did not send him to Hell immediately. (p. 6)

Azazil refused to bow down to Adam because Azazil was jealous of Adam. (p. 5)

Azazil refused to bow down to Adam, so God banished Azazil from the Garden. (pp. 5-6)

Adam was lonely in the Garden of Eden, but God created a woman for him while he slept. (p. 7)

Adam was lonely in the Garden of Eden because he had no one to share the beauties and comforts of the Garden with. (p. 7)

Adam was lonely in the Garden of Eden, so God created Hawwa to be his companion. (pp. 7-8)

Azazil tempted Adam and Hawwa, but they repented and asked God's forgiveness. (p. 10)

Azazil tempted Adam and Hawwa because he wanted to prove that humans were prone to weakness. (p. 6) OR because he wanted to avenge himself. (p. 8)

Azazil tempted Adam and Hawwa, so the humans were banished from the Garden of Eden to Earth. (p. 10)

Dictation

The angels could not disobey the Lord, but he could and he would. A creature of fire bow down to a creature of mud? Unthinkable! Until this moment, Azazel was God's favored creature, full of wisdom and beauty, recipient of God's bounty and mercy in the Garden of Eden. But no more.¹⁰

Memory Work

Review memory work items 1-4 with your child. You may also wish to review the memory work about paragraph structure on page 17.

¹⁰ This text has been slightly modified from the original.

LESSON F-26

“Thor Goes Fishing”

DK Norse Myths, pp. 42-43

Reading

Teaching Notes

We have met **Thor** in passing in previous stories, but here we get a better picture of this popular character. The Norse god of thunder is a larger-than-life figure, known more for his brawn than for his brain. Like the Greek Heracles, he is legendary for his prodigious appetite. In the Eddas, we often find Thor battling giants and trolls or getting caught up in some scheme of Loki's.

Historically, Thor was the god of the common folk, especially farmers; as we've seen, his wife, Sif, is the goddess of the grain. Hints of Thor appear in American folklore characters like Paul Bunyan and Stormalong, whose battle with the Kraken mirrors Thor's fishing for Jörmungandr in today's story. The figure remains extremely popular in modern times, as evidenced by the success of the Marvel comics and films that feature him.

Today's story also reflects details of Norse host-guest etiquette, when Thor's greed puts his host, Hymir, in an awkward position.

A greedy man, if he be not mindful,
eats to his own life's hurt:
oft the belly of the fool will bring him to scorn
when he seeks the circle of the wise. –Hávamál 20

Jörmungandr, a child of Loki, is a gigantic serpent that encircles the earth, biting its own tail. It plays a role in Ragnarok, the end of the world. [Scholars have noted](#) the similarity between Thor's fishing for Jörmungandr and several other Indo-European myths, especially the Vedic storm god [Indra](#)'s slaying of [Vritra](#). For more details about Jörmungandr, see pages 78-79 of the text.

Vocabulary

Jotunheim /YOH-tun-hime/: land of the giants

Hymir /HI-meer/: a friendly giant

Jörmungandr /YOR-mun-gan-der/: the World Serpent, child of Loki

ungracious: rude
pantry: room for storing food
bait: item used to lure fish or animals
minnow: small fish
heaved: pulled, tugged

Writing Activities

➤ Student Worksheet: p. 34

Paragraph Expansion with Examples

Today your child will again practice expanding a paragraph by adding specific examples to support general statements. The completed paragraph might look like this:

Thor was an extremely ungracious guest. He was gluttonous. Hymir slaughtered three of his best bulls to feed Thor, but the god gobbled them up in one sitting. He did not respect Hymir's property. He used the head of the biggest of Hymir's remaining bulls as fishing bait. In the end, he did not even respect Hymir's life. When Hymir cut his fishing line, Thor pushed the giant overboard. Hymir certainly made a big mistake when he invited Thor in for dinner!

Dictation

Hymir was a generous host, and he slaughtered three of his best bulls to feed Thor. The god, however, was such an ungracious guest that he gobbled them up in one sitting. Hymir stared at his bone-strewn table. "We'll have to go fishing tomorrow to restock my pantry," he said at last.

Memory Work

Review memory work items 12-17.

LESSON F-56

“How the Eight Old Ones Crossed the Sea”

Tales of a Chinese Grandmother, pp. 147-154

Reading

Teaching Notes

The **Eight Immortals** or [Bāxiān](#) are figures from Chinese folklore and popular religion as well as the subject of numerous legends and humorous folktales. Collectively, they represent the range of human experience: male and female (and other—[Lán Cǎihé](#)'s gender is ambiguous), rich and poor, young and old, martial and scholarly, honored and humble, physically strong and disabled. Many of them are associated with historical persons, but as literary characters, they have taken on a life of their own. Today's reading gives a very brief description of each of them on page 151, and you can learn more from the "[Bygone China](#)" channel and from an episode of "[Legends of Ancient China](#)," both on YouTube.

In Daoism, and in Chinese culture generally, an "[immortal](#)" (PY: *xiān*) is not a god per se, but a human being who has, usually through intense spiritual cultivation, achieved supernatural powers and great longevity. The Eight Immortals play a role that is somewhat analogous to medieval saints in the Catholic and Orthodox Christian traditions: They are figures of spiritual power who come to the aid of those in need and are therefore venerated and loved by the common people. They also act as patrons of those in various professions or life circumstances. In keeping with the Daoist emphasis on naturalness and spontaneity, the Eight Immortals often appear as tricksters of sorts, upsetting the status quo.

Today's reading dates from the Ming dynasty and is the origin of a popular Chinese saying, "The Eight Immortals cross the sea, each reveals their divine powers," used to refer to a situation where people use their individual skills to achieve a common goal. The tale features the Dragon King of the Eastern Sea, Áo Guāng, as the frame story is set at the time of the summer [Dragon Boat Festival](#), which will be the subject of this lesson's writing activity.

In addition to a corpus of folktales,¹¹ the Eight Immortals appear in several longer works, notably the Ming dynasty novel *Journey to the East* by Wu Yuntai.¹² Historically, the *Bāxiān* have been a popular subject for [paintings](#) and in the [decorative arts](#), as today's story mentions, as well as [Chinese opera](#). They still appear regularly in contemporary popular culture, including martial arts films, comics, and fantasy novels.

Vocabulary

[Chu \(Qu\) Yuan](#): ancient Chinese poet (ca. 339-278 BCE)

[junks](#): traditional Chinese ships

surly: irritable, sullen

Writing Activities

➤ Student Worksheets: p. 69-70

Paragraph Composition

Today your child will use the information from their reading and from [this webpage](#) to compose a simple informational paragraph about the Dragon Boat Festival. The student worksheets provide questions as scaffolding to help the child organize the information. You may want to print out the web article so the child can highlight the information they want to include.

➤ Note that the child will be expanding this paragraph with an additional narrative summary and other details in the next lesson, so they should only briefly mention the origin of the festival and the reason for eating *zòngzi*, sticky rice dumplings.

A completed simple paragraph might look like this:

The Dragon Boat Festival is an important traditional festival and public holiday in China. It is celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. The festival commemorates the death of Qu Yuan, a famous

¹¹ See, for example, Kwok Man Ho and Joanne O'Brien, trans., *The Eight Immortals of Taoism: Legends and Fables of Popular Taoism* (Meridian, 1990) or the open source collection [Stories and Myths of Eight Immortals](#).

¹² Not to be confused with the even more famous Ming novel, *Journey to the West* by Wu Cheng'en.

poet and court official who lived from around 339 to 278 BCE. During the festival, people race dragon boats. They also eat special sticky rice dumplings called *zongzi*. People used to hang mugwort and calamus on their doors to drive away disease and to bring good luck, but this custom is more common in rural areas than in cities nowadays. The Dragon Boat Festival is so important that it has even been recognized as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Dictation

Upon the vases in the family hall, on some of the teapots and the eating bowls, on fans, and on scroll paintings they had seen likenesses of these eight famous persons who possessed the gift of living forever, and who usually traveled together.

Memory Work

Q: Who are the Eight Immortals?

A: The Eight Immortals are figures from Daoist folklore and popular religion.

Using the information from today's reading and from [this webpage](#), answer the questions to compose an informational paragraph about the Dragon Boat Festival.

Celebrating the Dragon Boat Festival

[T. S.] What is the Dragon Boat Festival and where is it celebrated?

When is the festival celebrated?

What is the origin of the festival? What does it commemorate?

What popular sport is practiced during the festival?

What special food do people eat?

What is another traditional custom? Is it still common?

[C. S.] How has the Dragon Boat Festival been recognized as significant?

SAMPLE

Expand the paragraph you wrote about the Dragon Boat Festival by adding a narrative summary of the story of Qu Yuan. Use the following questions to guide your writing.

Who was Qu Yuan?

Why did the king change his ways?

How did Qu Yuan try to change the king's mind?

What did Qu Yuan do then?

Why do people go out in boats on the fifth day of the fifth month?

Next, expand the section about the traditional food for the festival, [zongzi](#) or sticky rice dumplings. Answer these questions:

Why do people eat zongzi?

Why are the zongzi wrapped up? What did the official dream?
