

## **The History**

According to legend, Dragon Boat racing originated in China more than 2,300 years ago. Chinese history describes the fourth century B.C. as the Warring States period; a time of shifting alliances and treachery.

The patriot and poet Qu Yuan championed political reform and truth as essential to a healthy state. The King, who had fallen under the influence of corrupt ministers, banished his most loyal counselor, Qu Yuan, from the kingdom.

Left to wander the countryside, Qu Yuan composed some of China's greatest poetry, expressing his fervent love and loyalty for his country, and his deep concern for its future. Upon learning of his kingdom's devastation at the hands of a rival kingdom, Qu Yuan threw himself into the Mei Lo River in a ritual protest.

The people loved Qu Yuan. They raced in their fishing boats to the middle of the river in a vain attempt to save him. They beat on drums and splashed their paddles in the water, trying to keep the fish from his body and ward off evil spirits. To honor his soul and ensure it didn't go hungry, they scattered rice into the water.

Eventually dragon boat races became a cultural tradition to mark the anniversary of Qu Yuan's death - primarily a form of amusement and fun, while also highlighting the history of this colorful event. The Modern Era of Dragon Boat racing began in 1976 during the first Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Festival. The sport debuted in the U.S. in the early '80s. Now in more than 100 cities, every year people come together to pay tribute to this fallen statesman by paddling to the beat of their own drum.

The traditional dotting of the Dragon's eye before dragon boat racing awakens the dragon and unleashes its fire, giving boats and their crews the strength of the dragon.

Enjoy a great day of racing! Paddles Up!