Qingming Festival

Wisdom Culture & Education Organization

Global Culture Awareness Organization
The Origin of Qingming Festival

Did you know that there are festivals in each season that bring family members together? The Chinese New Year is in winter, the Mid-Autumn Festival is in autumn, and the Dragon Boat Festival (Duanwu Festival) is in the summer. Which festival is in spring? In spring, there is the Qingming Festival, a festival to commemorate our ancestors. The other three festivals are based on the lunar calendar while the Qingming festival uses the solar calendar. The Qingming Festival is the 106th day after the winter solstice. It usually falls on April 4, 5, or 6.

How did the Qingming Festival originate? The following are three popular theories about the festival’s origin:

1. Emperor HuangTi’s birthday – Legend says that Emperor HuangTi’s birthday (4700 years ago) was on April 5th. They set this day as a festival to worship ancestors.
2. Solar Term - In ancient times, each year is composed of 24 solar terms, including Lichun, ChunFen, etc. The solar term of QingMing occurs around April 5th. The QingMing Festival is named after the solar term.
3. Emperor LiuBang in Han Dynasty – Legend says that Emperor LiuBang (about 2200 years ago) commemorated his parents at their grave around the time of the Qingming Festival. Because the cemetery was overrun with weeds and tall grass, he could not find their gravestones. LiuBang sprinkled pieces of paper in the air and prayed that the paper would fall on his parents’ graves – they did. Since then, ordinary people began to celebrate Qingming Festival on that day.
Qingming Festival and Hanshi Festival

Have you heard of a festival called Hanshi Festival? The former Hanshi Festival was 105 days after the winter solstice, exactly one day before Qingming Festival. One of the customs of the Hanshi Festival prohibited the use of fire. People can only eat cold food and wait until Qingming Festival to cook with fire. In ancient times, people would celebrate Hanshi Festival and then Qingming Festival right afterwards. Over time, Qingming Festival slowly replaced Hanshi Festival and people began to forget about the Hanshi Festival, however, many of the customs of Qingming Festival are largely based on the practices of the Hanshi Festival.

The Origin of Hanshi Festival

There are two legends that explain why fire was prohibited during the Hanshi Festival:
1. In ancient times, people believed that there were two very unique stars in the sky. If these two stars appeared together in the eastern hemisphere, there would be a large risk of fire. The time these two stars appear coincides with the day before Qingming Festival. Therefore, during this time frame, fire was prohibited and people could only eat cold foods.

2. Long ago, people created log fires. Because of the different seasons, unique types of firewood had to be used. When people had to change the wood between seasons, this would be called “Changing of Fire”. Before changing the firewood, they needed to extinguish the fire and worship their ancestors, therefore creating a festival without fire – Hanshi Festival.
The Traditional Customs of Qingming Festival

The customs of Qingming Festival include tomb sweeping, hiking and kite-flying. People use this opportunity to commemorate their ancestors.

(1) Tomb sweeping consists of Péi mù and Guà zhǐ.

- Péi mù: If it is a new tomb, a son was recently born in the family, a family member was recently married, or the family moved to a new house, then the family must conduct Péi mù.
Guà zhǐ: When regularly tomb sweeping, families only need to Guà zhǐ. Guà zhǐ is easier as it involves less steps: weeding → Placing paper over tomb with stone weights → worshipping the God of Land → Paying respects to ancestors

(2) Hiking: During Qingming Festival in the beautiful spring season, the whole family would take uplifting walks to relax after tomb sweeping. In ancient times, girls were not allowed outside, but during Qingming Festival, they were given this opportunity to go out and play.

(3) Kite Flying: Another one of the favorite customs of people during the Qingming Festival. After flying the kite high in the sky, the line is cut, representing the release of any sickness and bad luck. If kites are flown at night, lanterns are hung on ends of the kites and flown into the night sky like many shining stars.
**Unique Customs of Qingming Festival-1**

- **Polo** – Girls can also play
- **Shooting at willow tree** – An archery competition
- **Swings** – One of girls’ favorite activities in the past
- **Cù Jú** – Modern soccer
- **Cockfighting** – A form of gambling
- **Tug-of-War** – Used as an old method of exercise
Gift of fire (Cì Huǒ) – Emperor gave a new fire to his Minister

Willow accessories – Can wear on head or hang on door to avoid bad fortune

Planting trees – The spring is most suitable for planting trees

Silk festival – Commemorate silkworm goddess

Painting eggs – Eaten to represent cherish of life

Carving eggs – A beautiful decoration
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<tr>
<th><strong>What to eat during Qingming Festival?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rùn bǐng</strong> (like spring roll): Soft flour skin wrapped around cooked meats and vegetables.</td>
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<td><strong>Herb rice cake</strong>: The cake skin is made from cudweed, wormwood and glutinous rice flour.</td>
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<td><strong>Red rice cake</strong>: It is shaped with a turtle design to represent longevity.</td>
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<td><strong>Sǎn zi</strong>: Fried rice noodles dipped in salt or sugar.</td>
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<td><strong>Zǐ fú</strong>: Steamed buns with dates and walnuts.</td>
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<td><strong>Wū rěn fàn</strong>: Rice steamed with oriental blueberry leaves.</td>
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<td><strong>Date cake</strong>: Steamed buns with dates.</td>
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<td><strong>Peach porridge</strong>: Porridge cooked with peach petals - healthy for the body.</td>
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<td><strong>Eggs</strong>: Legend says eating eggs during Qingming Festival will make your body stronger.</td>
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Let’s read a poem together

Qingming by Dùmù of the Tang Dynasty

Near the Qingming Festival, rain lightly falls,
A weary traveler treks on a path of sorrow,
“Please sir, where is the wine tavern?”
A young herder points afar to the Xinghua village

During the time surrounding the Qingming festival, light rain often falls
A weary traveler on a path is distressed and upset
Yearning for the company of people, he asks around for a wine tavern
A young herder points afar, directing the traveler to a village of apricot blossom

as he cannot return home in the middle of his journey to commemorate his ancestors

About 1200 years ago

Xinghua
Why do we celebrate Qingming Festival?

Tomb sweeping with relatives so you can connect with their loved ones' feelings.

You can take this opportunity to learn more about your ancestors.

Understand that we must obey and respect our parents and elders.

To learn to love ourselves and seize the now.

Family tree (Source: http://edu.ocac.gov.tw/biweekly/670/j1.htm)
1. What are the four most important festivals in Chinese culture?
2. Is Qingming Festival lunar or solar calendar?
3. Explain one theory of the origin of Qingming Festival.
4. Explain one theory of the origin of Hanshi Festival.
5. What are some of the special customs of Qingming Festival?
6. Please explain why we place paper on top of the tombs.
7. There are many activities related to Qingming Festival. Please explain one.
8. What are Qingming eggs? How are they different from regular eggs?
9. What rice cake will people in Taiwan make to worship their ancestors? Which one do you most want to eat?
10. There are many foods for Qingming Festival, please select one and explain its characteristics.
11. Please explain why we celebrate Qingming Festival.
編者後記

藉由對文化的認識與了解，提高學習興趣，是學習語文最有效的方法之一。

中華節慶淵源流長，既表現出先民異彩紛呈的生命力，也蘊蓄著一份幽邃珍貴的文化資產。本教本每年選擇一個節日主題，採用多元聚焦的方式，以淺顯易懂的語詞，為孩子介紹多彩多姿的節慶內容，並透過節慶教學，讓學生認識各國文化的不同，以增加學生之世界觀。

本教本除供老師課堂教學之外，另備有網上彩色版 PDF 電子書，是親子節慶文化學習的最佳參考資料。

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