

The Ancient Olympic Games



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GREECE WAS THE HOME OF THE FIRST OLYMPIC

Games, which took place over 3,000 years ago. The Greeks honored their gods by competing in events that would display their athletic abilities. The Ancient Olympics was a religious festival held every four years by a large city-state. The term Olympiad means four successive years. During these celebrations all fighting ended, and the games were held.

Originally only male Greek citizens were allowed to compete, but later, the games were opened to women and foreigners. The enthusiasm for the games continued with the inclusion of pageants, parades and feasts. As the festival grew, it became one of the largest and most important events to the Greeks.

Unfortunately, this trend didn't continue. Beginning around 100 B.C., when the Roman Empire conquered Greece, there was an Olympic decline that lasted for several decades. It was the Roman Emperor Theodosius I that finally ended the games in 393 A.D.

Make Sport, Not War!

DO YOU EVER HAVE ARGUMENTS OR fights with your family and friends? Of course, all people have disagreements at some time or another. Peace and harmony are valuable goals. Ancient Greece included many city-states that were often at war with each other. The ancient Greeks realized that athletes must be allowed to travel and compete in safety. Every four years an Olympic truce—called Ekecheiria—was called in the spirit of the Games. The truce began with three ancient kings. King Iphitos of Elis signed a peace treaty with King Lycurgus of Sparta and King Cleosthenes of Pisa.

The treaty declared Olympia and the surrounding region of Elis to be a sacred and safe place. This meant that all conflicts and wars in the region had to end, especially during the Ancient Olympic Games. All Greek rulers approved the king's treaty. This message of peace assured the athletes, families, artists, and guests safe passage to the Ancient Olympic Games.



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Primary Grades

SOCIAL STUDIES: Mythology

Many ancient people felt that individual gods controlled forces of nature. Stories of these gods are called myths. Find books on the Greek myths in the library. Read about Zeus and other Greek gods.



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Intermediate Grades

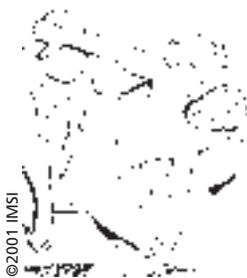
(Adapt Primary Grade ideas)

SOCIAL STUDIES: Mythology Plays

Research the myths and legends of the Ancient Olympic Games. Use library and Internet resources. Create a short skit about your favorite myth. Share your myth skits with the class.

SOCIAL STUDIES: Make Sports Not War

Ancient cities and countries often fought each other over land boundaries and other issues. Greek city states were often at war, but during the duration of the Games, all fighting stopped. Consider having an Olympic week with scheduled competitions. During this week, no one is allowed to fight or argue. Create a plan, class rules and a prize for those who follow the rules.



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LANGUAGE ARTS: Read and Quiz

Read the selection. Identify new vocabulary and spelling words. Write five questions that relate to the information found in the fact sheet. Trade with a neighbor, and see if they can answer your questions, while you answer theirs.

GEOGRAPHY: Map Reading

Look at a map. Find the country of Greece. Draw a map of the Mediterranean Sea. Label Greece, Italy and several other surrounding countries.



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