

# Calliope Teacher's Guide for Calliope: *Greek Olympics*

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## INTRODUCTION

Ask students what they know about the modern Olympic Games. Encourage them to name events, athletes, host cities, or other pieces of information that pertain to the Games today. Write their ideas on chart paper. Then explain that the Olympics as we know them have been in existence only since the late 1800s, and that these modern Games were based on the original Olympics, which were held regularly for many centuries in ancient Greece. Have students talk in pairs or small groups about ways in which the original Olympics might have been different from the Olympics of today and ways in which they might have been the same; then have students share the highlights of their discussions with the entire class. Record their ideas.

## MAP IT!

Have students study a map of Greece and the Mediterranean region. Have them locate Athens, Sparta, and Olympia.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What did Pelops do to make sure he won the chariot race against Oenomaus? Do you think Pelops's actions were justified? Why or why not?

Why was a monthlong truce declared while the ancient Olympics were being held?

What were living conditions like for the athletes at Olympia? Do you think the hardships were worth the glory of taking part in the Games and possibly winning an event? Explain your reasoning.

List some of the non-athletic events that were part of the ancient Greek Olympics. Were the sporting events or the non-sporting events a more important part of the Olympics of the time? Defend your answer.

What was the pankration? Why did the Greeks hold the winners of this competition in such high regard?

What were the five events of the pentathlon? Which two were considered the most important by the ancient Greeks?

How were olives and olive trees important in the ancient Olympic Games?

What was the penalty for married or widowed women who watched the ancient Olympic events? Why did Callipateira choose to break the rule? Why was she not punished as the law required?

What was the Heraea? Why was it developed?

When a chariot driver won an Olympic race, who was awarded the victory prize? What is your opinion of this arrangement? Why?

What were some of the exaggerated tales the ancient Greeks told about the lives and feats of their greatest athletes, such as Polydamas and Milon? Do modern-day Americans tell similarly exaggerated stories about real people?

Why did the original Olympic Games come to an end?

Who was Pierre de Coubertin?

What is the Olympic flame? How is it connected to the original Olympics?

How are modern Olympic host cities determined? Could your community host an Olympic Games? Why or why not?

## **WRITE ABOUT IT**

The sidebar "Who's the Founder?" on page 4 gives several possible explanations for the origin of the Greek Olympics. Write a short story offering your own theory of how the ancient Games began. Be creative!

Write a paragraph explaining which original Olympic event you would most like to participate in, and why.

Create a travel brochure encouraging sports fans of the ancient world to attend the original Olympics.

Choose an ancient Olympic event, such as wrestling, running, or a chariot race. Write a description of a competition in this event as though you are a sports reporter for a newspaper. Be sure to include "interviews" with athletes and trainers.

Invent your own Olympic event. Draw competitors taking part in it and write a description of the rules.

## **ALL ABOUT ART**

Construct a model of the Olympic hippodrome using clay, craft sticks, and other materials.

Retell the legend of the tortoise and the hare in comic strip form.

Make "the Wrestlers of Olympia" on page 23.

Use blank 4"x 6" index cards to make a series of 5-6 "Postcards from Olympia." Show different events from the ancient Olympics on one side. On the reverse of each card, write a short description of the event pictured on the front.

### **GETTING DRAMATIC**

With a partner, act out the tale of the tortoise and the hare on page 18.

In a small group, read the play "Callipateira Breaks the Rule" on pages 24-27. Present this play as a readers' theater performance for another group or class.

Write and act out a scene in which an important ruler consults an oracle.

Reenact the trial of the monument that "killed" Theagenes's opponent, described on page 34 in the article "I Won!"

### **THEN AND NOW**

Do you think that chariot races could ever become a part of the Olympic Games again? Why or why not?

How do historians of today know about the ancient Olympics? How could historians of the future learn about the modern-day Olympics?

### **JUST FOR KICKS**

Complete the word puzzles and quizzes on pages 19 and 29. Then use the vocabulary words and information from this issue to construct puzzles of your own for classmates to solve.

Design a board game about the Greek Olympics. For example, have players start as young boys with Olympic dreams and work their way toward becoming Olympic champions as they move around the board.

### **MATH AND SCIENCE**

Practice jumping the way Olympic competitors did. Then jump five times and record the length of each jump. Finally, find the median, mean, mode, and range of your five attempts.

Use library resources and the Internet to learn more about olive trees. Present your findings to the class.

One lap around the ancient hippodrome was about 1,200 meters. If you walked all the way around your school building, would that be greater than, less than, or equal to one lap around the hippodrome? Make a prediction; then measure to find the answer.

Use library resources or the Internet to find the number of countries participating in each modern Olympics since 1896. Make a line graph to show some or all of this data. Write a short description of what the data shows.

The ancient Greeks held Olympic Games every four years, beginning in 776 B.C. Would 676 B.C. have been an Olympic year? What about 577 B.C. or 500 B.C.? How do you know?

### **DIGGING DEEPER**

Do you think the ancient Olympic running champions were faster or slower than the Olympic running champions of today? Defend your answer.

Read one of the books suggested on page 45. Write a brief report on it or give a short booktalk about it to the class.

With a partner, generate a list of questions you still have about the ancient Greek Olympics. Use library resources or the Internet to help you answer as many of these questions as possible.

### **WRAP UP**

Review the list of differences and similarities between the ancient and the modern Olympics that students developed in the introductory activity. Have students evaluate which of the differences and similarities they listed were accurate and which were not. Then have them extend both lists, based on the information given in this issue of *Calliope*. Ask students to decide for themselves whether the two forms of the Olympics are more alike than different, or more different than alike, and have them defend their thinking.