

# THE ANCIENT OLYMPIC GAMES

TO UNDERSTAND HOW THE OLYMPIC  
GAMES STARTED AND TO COMPARE THE  
GAMES OF ANCIENT GREECE TO THE  
GAMES THAT WE HAVE TODAY.



# THE OLYMPIC GAMES

- The ancient Greeks liked sport because it kept them fit and strong and made them better fighters for war.
- The first Olympic Games is thought to have been held in 776BC in Olympia.
- The Games were part of a very important religious festival and were held in honour of Zeus, the king of the gods.
- The city-states of Greece were usually at war with one another which made travelling around very dangerous but for the month when the Games took place, everyone agreed there would be peace.
- Messengers were sent out from Elis, a city near Olympia, to announce the sacred truce. This allowed people to travel in safety. An Olympic torch was lit and taken to every state in Greece before being carried to an Olympic opening ceremony.
- The truce was always honoured as the religious festival, of which the Games were a part, was more important than war.



# THE EVENTS



- The Games were held every four years.
- The first Olympic Games only lasted a day and the only event was a short race from one end of the stadium to the other.
- Gradually, more events were added to make four days of competitions. The events included boxing, chariot racing, discus, javelin, long jump and wrestling.
- One of the toughest events was the race for the hoplites, men wearing armour and carrying shields.
- The pankration, or all-in wrestling, was a very nasty event!
- All-in wrestling was very popular. There were hardly any rules! Biting and poking people's eyes were banned, but some competitors ignored these rules!

# THE EVENTS



- Boxing was tough too. The fighters wore leather gloves and a boxer was allowed to carry on hitting his opponent even after he'd knocked him to the ground!
- Cheating was punished. For instance, anyone caught trying to bribe an athlete had to pay for a bronze statue of Zeus.



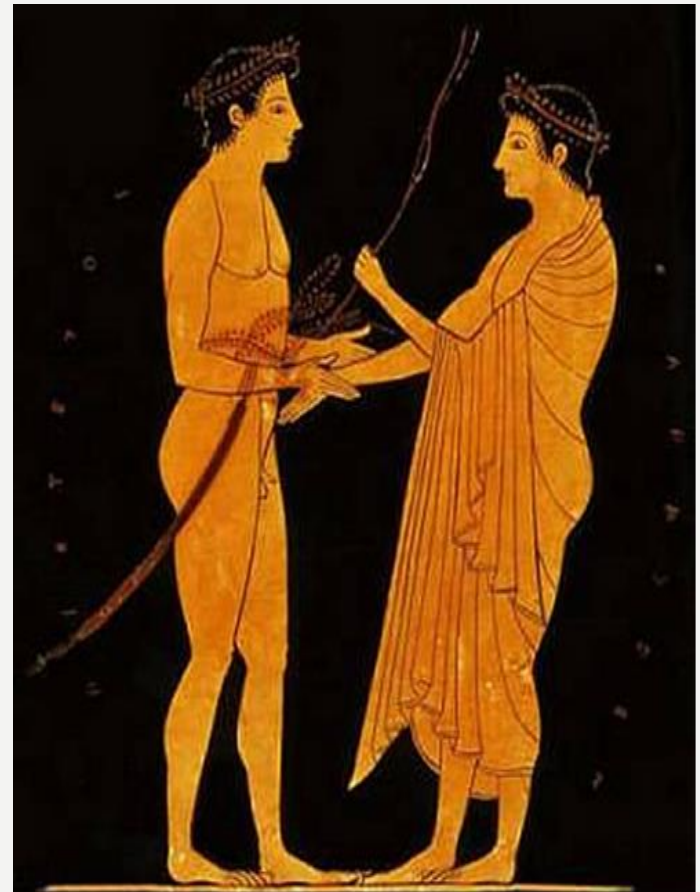
# THE OLYMPIC GAMES AND WOMEN

- Women were not allowed to compete in the Games nor watch them. The Games were dedicated to Zeus and therefore meant for men.
- Greek women had their own games called Heraia, held in honour of Hera, Zeus' wife.
- Apparently, only Spartan women liked sports!



# PRIZE-GIVING AT THE GAMES

- The ancient Olympic Games was not a friendly competition but fierce rivalry among the city states of the Greek world.
- Ancient Greece Olympic Games didn't have any medals or prizes. Winners of the competitions won olive wreaths, branches, as well as woollen ribbons.
- The main prize was fame and honour to the winning athlete's city. The winners were treated like heroes, had poems written about them, statues made of them and usually became very rich.



# THE END OF THE GAMES?

- The Olympic Games came to an end when the Romans invaded Greece.
- The Romans banned the Olympic Games in the year 394 AD.
- The modern Olympic Games then began in 1896. They continue to be held every 4 years although the 2020 Games have been postponed this year.



# MODERN OLYMPICS

- Before the Ancient Greek Olympic Games, a torch was lit outside of the Temple of Hera using flames created from rays from the Sun. Messengers took the torch around the country so that people knew about the games. Today, the torch is lit as it was during the ancient Olympic Games. The flame travels around Greece and then to the country where the games will be taking place.
- In the modern Olympics, medals are awarded to athletes who come 1st, 2nd or 3rd in their event. Gold is awarded to the winner who came 1st, silver is awarded to 2nd place and bronze to 3rd place.
- Both women and men take part in the modern Olympics, but they do not compete against each other.
- In the modern Olympics, there are more than 20 sports that athletes compete in.