

Did you know?

No medals were awarded.

The Ancient Olympics



Above is an image that was depicted on a Greek Pot, helping historians piece together the events of the Olympics.

The Greeks loved sport and the Olympic Games were the **biggest** sporting event in the ancient calendar.

The Olympic Games began over 2,700 years ago. Every **four years**, around 50,000 people came from all over the Greek world to watch and take part. Originally, the games were part of a religious festival to honour **Zeus**. He was the god of the sky and the leader of the Greek gods whose abode was Mount Olympus which was the highest mountain in Greece.

Did you know?

At the end of the Games, there was a feast instead of an closing ceremony

Where did the games take place?

Even though the games were named after Mount Olympus they weren't played there. Instead, they were held in the religious sanctuary of Olympia near Greece's southwest coast. The land there was beautiful and rich with olive trees.

What Events Were Part of the Ancient Olympics?

At the beginning, the games were just short foot races designed to keep Greek men fit for the intensity of war. The path for the foot races was about 700 feet (213 metres) long and dead straight. It was also wide enough for twenty men to run side by side. Only men who spoke Greek were allowed to take part in the races. Bizarrely, men ran the races without any clothes on! As the Games developed, other events were added. Horse races, **chariot races**, boxing, and wrestling were all popular events. There was also a special event that consisted of five different sports activities: wrestling, running, the long jump, disc throwing, and spear throwing but there were no team sports like in the modern Olympics. Unfortunately for women, they were unable to take part.

Did you know?

One of the races involved men racing in armour so they were ready for battle.

Were there any rewards?

There were no gold, silver and bronze medals. Winners were given a **wreath of leaves**. These olive leaves were taken from a sacred tree that was located at Olympia behind the temple dedicated to Zeus. To reward his mastery of the events, a statue was built in the winner's honour.

Why did they end?

The Ancient Olympic Games were held for over a thousand years and ended in 393 AD when the Roman **emperor** Theodosius banned them. He had outlawed the worship of the ancient gods because of new beliefs in Christianity. The buildings were eventually torn down and the city was buried under earthquakes and floods.

Glossary

Chariot race - two wheeled vehicle drawn by horses that were raced on a track

Emperor - ruler of an empire

Mount Olympus - Where the gods were supposed to live and ruled by Zeus.

WALT use the text to retrieve and record information, explain features of texts and explain words in context.

1. How long ago did the Ancient Olympics first begin?
2. The Greek games were originally performed to honour which Greek God?
3. Where did the God Zeus live?
4. What did the Greeks do at the end of the Ancient Olympics?
5. True or false – the Ancient Olympics were held at mount Olympus?
6. Name two features of the land near Greek's Southwest coast.
7. What was the first ever event in the Ancient Greek Olympics?
8. Name three other events that were added to the Greek Olympics.
9. Why was there an event where men had to run in armour?
10. What were the winners of events presented with?
11. Find and write the word in the first paragraph that means '**in charge**'
12. Where was the religious sanctuary?
13. Look at the paragraph title – *what events were part of the Ancient Greek Olympics?* – find the word closest in meaning '**weirdly**'
14. Look at the [paragraph titled – ***Were there any rewards?*** Find the word that is closest in meaning to ***positioned***.
15. What do you think the word ***outlawed*** means?
16. Why do you think this text uses sub-titles?
17. What is the purpose of the '***did you know***' boxes?
18. Would you expect to see a piece of writing like this in a ***history magazine, a newspaper*** or in a ***story book***? Give reasons for you choice.