

◦ Making Comparisons ◦

To explore the similarities and differences between the Olympic Games in ancient times and the modern Olympic Games.



Read this information about the Olympic Games and use it, along with the knowledge you have gained in the lesson, to compare the modern and ancient Greek Olympics.

The Olympics in Ancient Greek Times

Where were the Olympic Games held?

The Games were held at Olympia, a sacred site (or sanctuary) dedicated to the worship of the ancient Greek god, Zeus. Inside the temple at Olympia, there was a giant statue of Zeus which was one of the ancient Seven Wonders of the World.



What happened at the opening ceremony?

The athletes stayed in the nearby city state of Elis just before the Games began. The athletes, their supporters and the Olympic Games officials would walk in a procession from Elis to Olympia, where the Games were held. It was about a 36km walk and took a day and a night to arrive. Religion was the most important part of the opening ceremony and also of the whole ancient Olympic Games. The Olympic Games were a part of the Festival of Zeus. On the opening day, in front of the enormous statue of the god Zeus, the athletes made a promise that they would not cheat. The opening ceremony was a grand spectacle. The ancient Greeks believed that the gods liked to watch the Games. The opening ceremony and the entire Games were not just about sport and religion but they were also an important part of Greek culture. Sculptors, painters and other artists would gather at the Games, as would street entertainers.

Who competed in the Games?

Only free males who were Greek could take part in the Games. People from outside the empire, enslaved people and women were not allowed to compete. As the empire grew to new regions, competitors from further away travelled to take part, many travelling from as far away as North Africa and Asia Minor.

What events were included in the Games?

The first Games had only one race (a foot race) but more events were added as time went on. Historians know that the Games included the following events: chariot racing, horse racing, pentathlon (long jump, discus, foot race, javelin and wrestling), running events, boxing and pankration.

What did the winners receive?

Winners would receive a crown made with olive leaves to wear on their head and they were presented with a branch from an olive tree. They would also have ribbons tied around their arms. The most important prize for the ancient Greeks was to win the admiration of those watching and, more importantly, that they made the gods happy.

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	Ancient Greek Olympic Games	Modern Olympic Games
Name some events.		
Where was/is it held?		
How often was/is it held?		
Who competed/competes?		
What was/is the main focus of the event?		
What did/do they wear?		
What did/do winners receive?		