



The History of the Olympic Games



When Were the First Olympic Games?

Many people think that the ancient Olympic Games started over 2,700 years ago. They took place in ancient Greece and had many different sporting events. The main focus was as a religious festival for the king of the Greek gods, Zeus.

What Sporting Events Were There in the Ancient Olympic Games?

Running

The running track was 192 metres long. Some people think that this is because 192 metres is how long the Greek hero Hercules could run on one breath.

Wrestling and Boxing

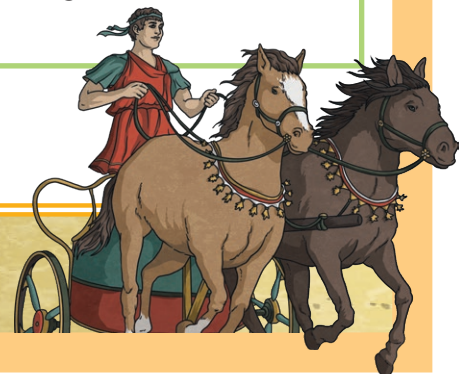
One of the wrestling matches was called pankration. The only rule in this match was that you couldn't bite your opponent or poke them in the eye.

Long Jump

A man on a flute often played music for the athletes during the long jump. This would have helped them to time their jumps.

Chariot Racing

Jockeys would race on chariots that were pulled by horses. The winners were the owners of the winning horse and not the jockeys who rode them.



Why Did the Ancient Olympic Games End?

Ancient Greece was taken over by the Roman Empire in the 2nd century BC. The Olympic Games continued but it is thought that they started to go downhill. A Roman emperor called Nero took part in the chariot race in AD 67 and ended up falling off his chariot. He still said that he was the winner although he didn't come first.

Several years later, a different Roman emperor named Theodosius I decided that he didn't like the Olympic Games being for the Greek god, Zeus. So, he decided to cancel all future Games.

How Did the Modern Olympic Games Begin?

1,500 years later, Baron Pierre de Coubertin was inspired by the ancient Olympic Games. He decided that he wanted to start a new athletics competition. His idea was accepted and he started the International Olympic Committee.

The first modern Olympic Games were held in 1896 in Greece. Since then, they have only been cancelled or postponed four times. Once in 1916 due to the First World War, in 1940 and 1944 due to the Second World War and again in 2020 as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.



Questions

1. What was the main focus of the ancient Olympic Games? Tick one.

- ☐ a sporting event
- ☐ a celebration
- ☐ a running race
- ☐ a religious festival

2. In which ancient event might you have seen a man playing a flute? Tick one.

- ☐ running
- ☐ wrestling
- ☐ long jump
- ☐ chariot racing

3. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they happened in.

- ☐ Emperor Nero said that he had won the chariot race.
- ☐ The first modern Olympic Games took place.
- ☐ The first ancient Olympic Games took place.
- ☐ Emperor Theodosius I cancelled the Olympic Games.

4. Draw **four** lines and match each ancient sport to the fact about it.

running	One of the matches in this sport was called pankration.
wrestling and boxing	Jockeys and horses took part in this sport.
long jump	This took place on a track that was 192 metres long.
chariot racing	Athletes used music to help time their jumps.

5. Fill in the missing words.

The first _____ Olympic Games were held in 1896 in _____.

6. Look at the section **What Sporting Events Were There in the Ancient Olympic Games?**
Find and copy one word which means **the person that you're trying to beat**.

7. Which ancient sport would you most like to take part in? Explain why.

Answers

1. What was the main focus of the ancient Olympic Games? Tick one.

- ☐ a sporting event
- ☐ a celebration
- ☐ a running race
- ☒ **a religious festival**

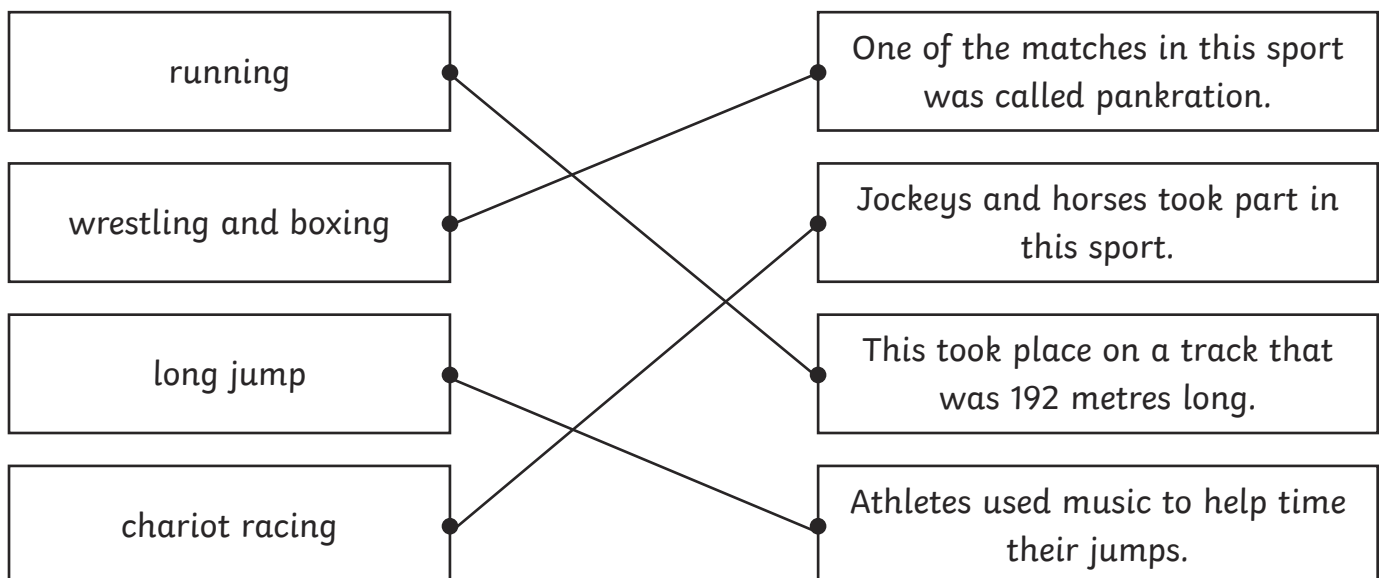
2. In which ancient event might you have seen a man playing a flute? Tick one.

- ☐ running
- ☐ wrestling
- ☒ **long jump**
- ☐ chariot racing

3. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they happened in.

- 2** Emperor Nero said that he had won the chariot race.
- 4** The first modern Olympic Games took place.
- 1** The first ancient Olympic Games took place.
- 3** Emperor Theodosius I cancelled the Olympic Games.

4. Draw **four** lines and match each ancient sport to the fact about it.



5. Fill in the missing words.

The first **modern** Olympic Games were held in 1896 in **Greece**.

6. Look at the section **What Sporting Events Were There in the Ancient Olympic Games?**
Find and copy one word which means **the person that you're trying to beat**.

opponent

7. Which ancient sport would you most like to take part in? Explain why.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I would most like to take part in the chariot racing because I really like horses and I would enjoy riding on a chariot that was pulled by a horse.



The History of the Olympic Games



When Were the First Olympic Games?

Many people think that the first ancient Olympic Games started in 776 BC, which is over 2,700 years ago. They took place in Olympia, Greece. Although there were several different sporting events, the main focus was as a religious festival to honour the king of the Greek gods, Zeus.

What Sporting Events Were There in the Ancient Olympic Games?

Running

In this event, competitors would run up and down a track that was 192 metres long. Some people think that this is because 192 metres is how long the Greek hero Hercules could run on a single breath.

Wrestling and Boxing

Ancient wrestling and boxing matches could be quite dangerous. One of the matches was called pankration. In this match, the only rule was that you couldn't bite your opponent or poke them in the eye.

Long Jump

Competitors would hold large weights in their hands and swing their arms around before jumping. A man on a flute often played music for the athletes that would help them to time their jumps.

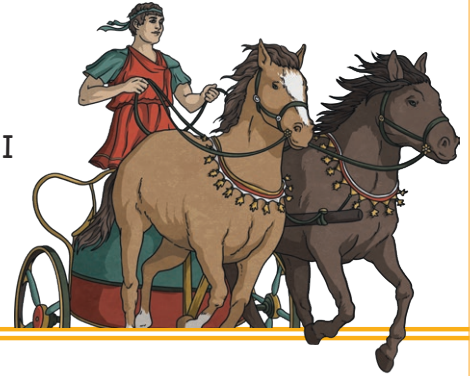
Chariot Racing

In the chariot race, competitors would race around a circular track on chariots that were pulled by horses. The winners were the owners of the winning horse and not the jockeys who rode them.

Why Did the Ancient Olympic Games End?

In the 2nd century BC, ancient Greece was taken over by the Roman Empire. The Olympic Games continued but it is thought that the quality of the Games began to decline. One piece of evidence that suggests this is the chariot race in AD 67. A Roman emperor named Nero took part in the race and ended up falling off his chariot. Although he didn't come first, he still declared himself as the winner.

In AD 393, another Roman emperor named Theodosius I decided that he didn't like the Olympic Games being a festival for the Greek god, Zeus. Because of this, he cancelled all future Games.



How Did the Modern Olympic Games Begin?

Around 1,500 years after the ancient Games were cancelled, Baron Pierre de Coubertin wanted to start an international athletics competition. He was inspired by the ancient Games in Olympia. When his idea was accepted, he started the International Olympic Committee.

The first modern Olympic Games were held in 1896 in Athens, Greece. Since then, the modern Games have taken place almost every four years. They have only been cancelled or postponed four times. Once in 1916 due to the First World War, in 1940 and 1944 due to the Second World War and again in 2020 as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.



Questions

1. When were the first ancient Olympic Games thought to have been held? Tick one.
 - ☐ 776 BC
 - ☐ AD 67
 - ☐ AD 393
 - ☐ 1896
2. Why do some people think that the running track was 192 metres long? Tick one.
 - ☐ That was how much space there was.
 - ☐ It was how far Zeus could run on a single breath.
 - ☐ It was how far Hercules could run on a single breath.
 - ☐ 200 metres was a little bit too far.
3. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they happened in.
 - ☐ Baron Pierre de Coubertin was inspired by the ancient Games.
 - ☐ The first ancient Olympic Games took place in Olympia.
 - ☐ The first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens.
 - ☐ Ancient Greece was taken over by the Roman Empire.
4. What reason did Emperor Theodosius I give for cancelling the ancient Olympic Games? Tick one.
 - ☐ He didn't enjoy losing at the chariot race.
 - ☐ He didn't like that it was a festival for Zeus.
 - ☐ He didn't want to travel to Olympia anymore.
 - ☐ He wanted there to be a Roman Empire Games instead.
5. In which section would you find information about the Roman Empire's effect on the ancient Olympic Games?

6. Look at the section **How Did the Modern Olympic Games Begin?**
Find and copy one word which shows that Pierre wanted the Games to be **worldwide**.

7. Using 20 words or fewer, summarise what you have learnt about the ancient Olympic Games.

8. Do you think that it was fair for Emperor Theodosius I to cancel the ancient Olympic Games? Explain your answer.

Answers

1. When were the first ancient Olympic Games thought to have been held? Tick one.

- ☒ **776 BC**
- ☐ AD 67
- ☐ AD 393
- ☐ 1896

2. Why do some people think that the running track was 192 metres long? Tick one.

- ☐ That was how much space there was.
- ☐ It was how far Zeus could run on a single breath.
- ☒ **It was how far Hercules could run on a single breath.**
- ☐ 200 metres was a little bit too far.

3. Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they happened in.

- 3** Baron Pierre de Coubertin was inspired by the ancient Games.
- 1** The first ancient Olympic Games took place in Olympia.
- 4** The first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens.
- 2** Ancient Greece was taken over by the Roman Empire.

4. What reason did Emperor Theodosius I give for cancelling the ancient Olympic Games? Tick one.

- ☐ He didn't enjoy losing at the chariot race.
- ☒ **He didn't like that it was a festival for Zeus.**
- ☐ He didn't want to travel to Olympia anymore.
- ☐ He wanted there to be a Roman Empire Games instead.

5. In which section would you find information about the Roman Empire's effect on the ancient Olympic Games?

Why Did the Ancient Olympic Games End?

6. Look at the section **How Did the Modern Olympic Games Begin?**

Find and copy one word which shows that Pierre wanted the Games to be **worldwide**.

international

7. Using 20 words or fewer, summarise what you have learnt about the ancient Olympic Games.

Pupils' own responses, such as: They started in 776 BC in Olympia. There were lots of sports and a religious festival for the god, Zeus.

8. Do you think that it was fair for Emperor Theodosius I to cancel the ancient Olympic Games? Explain your answer.

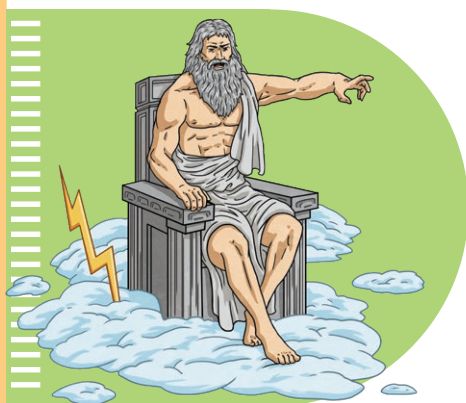
Pupils' own responses, such as: I do not think that it was fair of Emperor Theodosius I to cancel the ancient Olympic Games because lots of people enjoyed going to the Games. It's not fair that they couldn't enjoy it anymore because he disagreed with it being a festival for Zeus.



The History of the Olympic Games



The Olympic Games were thought to have started over 2,700 years ago in ancient Greece. Read on to find out about the ancient Games and how the modern Games first started.



When Were the First Olympic Games?

The ancient Olympic Games were believed to have started in 776 BC. These Games took place in Olympia, Greece. They were held every four years and competitors took part in several different sporting events. However, the main focus was as a religious festival to honour the king of the Greek gods, Zeus.

What Sporting Events Were There in the Ancient Olympic Games?

Running

During the running events, competitors would run up and down a track that was 192 metres long. Some people believe that this is because 192 metres is how long the Greek hero Hercules could run on a single breath.

Wrestling and Boxing

The wrestling and boxing matches seen at the ancient Olympic Games were quite dangerous. One of the most dangerous matches was known as pankration. In this match, the only rule was that you couldn't bite your opponent or poke them in the eye.

Long Jump

Competitors would hold large weights called halteres in their hands and swing their arms around before jumping from a standing position. A man on a flute often played music for the athletes that would help them to time their jumps.

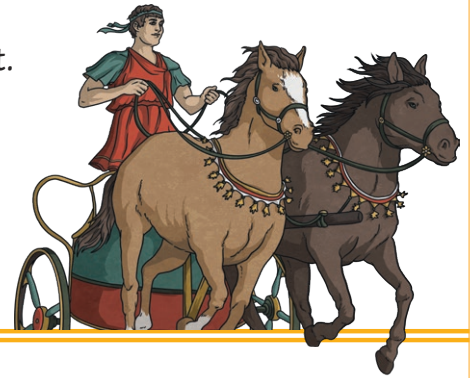
Chariot Racing

In the chariot race, competitors would race around a circular track called a hippodrome on chariots that were pulled by horses. In this dangerous race, the winners were considered to be the owners of the winning horse and not the jockeys who rode them.

Why Did the Ancient Olympic Games End?

In the 2nd century BC, ancient Greece was invaded and taken over by the Roman Empire. Although the Games continued, it is thought that they started to decrease in quality. One piece of evidence that suggests this is the chariot race in AD 67. A Roman emperor named Nero took part in the chariot race and fell off part way through the race. However, he still declared himself as the winner at the end of the race despite not coming first.

In AD 393, another Roman emperor named Theodosius I decided that he didn't like the Olympic Games being a festival for the Greek god, Zeus. Because of this, he announced that he was cancelling the Games.



How Did the Modern Olympic Games Begin?

Around 1,500 years after Theodosius I cancelled the Games, a French baron named Pierre de Coubertin suggested the idea of holding an international athletics competition. He wanted it to be held every four years just like the ancient Games in Olympia. When his idea was accepted, he started the International Olympic Committee.

The first modern Olympic Games were held in 1896 in Athens, Greece. Throughout their history, the modern Games have taken place almost every four years. They have only been cancelled or postponed four times. Once in 1916 due to the First World War, in 1940 and 1944 due to the Second World War and again in 2020 as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.



Questions

1. What happened in the 2nd century BC? Tick one.

- ☐ Ancient Greece was invaded by the Roman Empire.
- ☐ Emperor Nero declared that he had won the chariot race.
- ☐ Emperor Theodosius I cancelled the ancient Games.
- ☐ The first ancient Olympic Games took place.

2. Draw **four** lines and match each section to its summary.

When Were the First Olympic Games?

Information about the different competitions that competitors could take part in.

What Sporting Events Were There in the Ancient Olympic Games?

Information about the Roman Empire's effect on the ancient Olympic Games.

Why Did the Ancient Olympic Games End?

Information about the ancient Games including where they were held.

How Did the Modern Olympic Games Begin?

Information about the revival of the Olympic Games.

3. What were **halteres**?

4. What reason did Baron Pierre de Coubertin give for wanting the Olympic Games to be held every four years?

5. Look at the section titled **When Were the First Olympic Games?**
Find and copy one word that means the same as **appreciate**.

6. Describe Emperor Nero's personality.

7. **The ancient Olympic Games were believed to have started in 776 BC.**

Explain why you think that the author has chosen to include the words '**were believed to**' in this sentence.

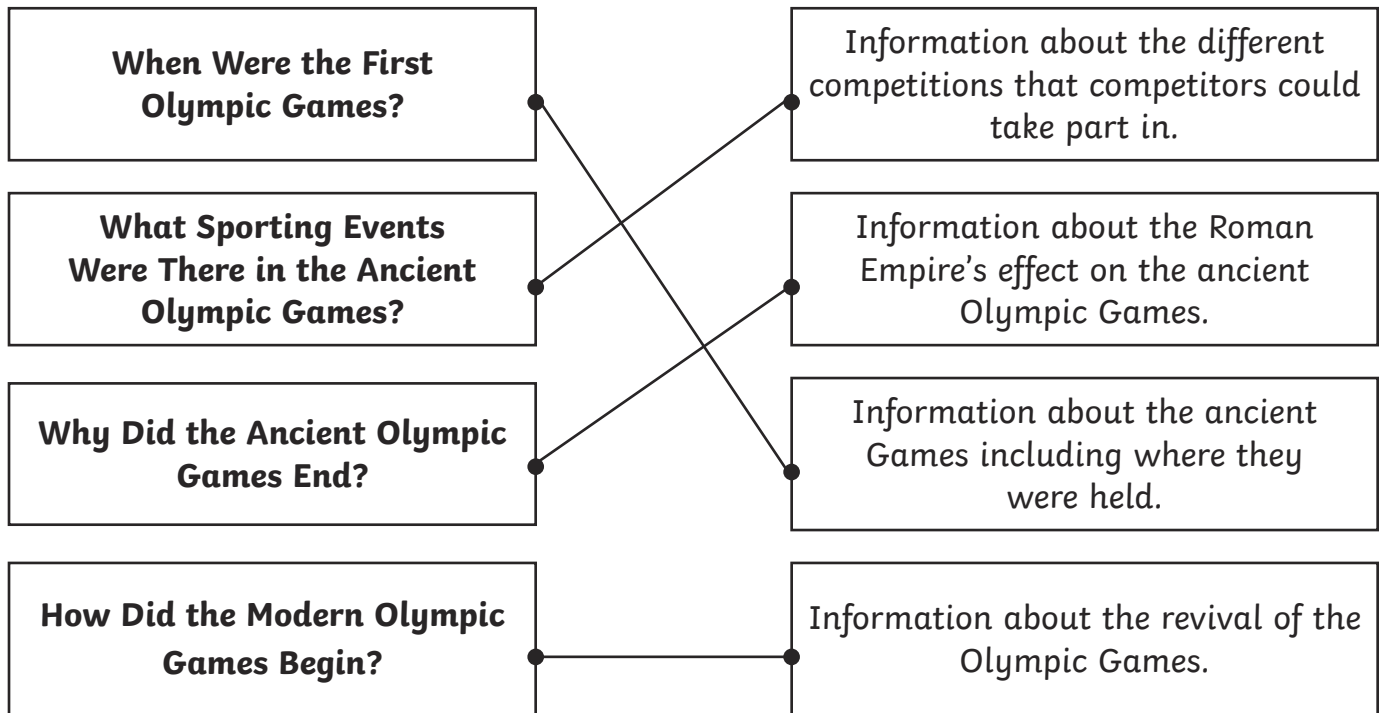
8. Explain how the layout of the text helps you to understand the information.

Answers

1. What happened in the 2nd century BC? Tick one.

- ☒ **Ancient Greece was invaded by the Roman Empire.**
- ☐ Emperor Nero declared that he had won the chariot race.
- ☐ Emperor Theodosius I cancelled the ancient Games.
- ☐ The first ancient Olympic Games took place.

2. Draw **four** lines and match each section to its summary.



3. What were **halteres**?

Halteres were large weights that long jump competitors held in their hands.

4. What reason did Baron Pierre de Coubertin give for wanting the Olympic Games to be held every four years?

He wanted it to be held every four years just like the ancient Games in Olympia.

5. Look at the section titled **When Were the First Olympic Games?**

Find and copy one word that means the same as **appreciate**.

honour

6. Describe Emperor Nero's personality.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Emperor Nero was selfish and unfair because he declared himself as the winner of the chariot race despite falling from his chariot and not winning.

7. **The ancient Olympic Games were believed to have started in 776 BC.**

Explain why you think that the author has chosen to include the words '**were believed to**' in this sentence.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the author has chosen to include the words 'were believed to' because it is not a certain fact. It happened so long ago that there could have been some mistake when working out the date of the first ancient Olympic Games.

8. Explain how the layout of the text helps you to understand the information.

Pupils' own responses, such as: The text is set out with clear headings that all ask a question. As you know that the answer to the question is written beneath each text, it makes it easier to find the information. The illustrations also help to give you a better idea of what the text is talking about.