

The Olympic Games

The Olympic Games began over 2,700 years ago in Olympia, in south west Greece. Every four years, around 50,000 people came from all over the Greek world to watch and take part. The ancient games were also a religious festival, held in honour of Zeus, the king of the gods.

There were no gold, silver and bronze medals. Winners were given a wreath of leaves and a hero's welcome back home. Athletes competed for the glory of their city and winners were seen as being touched by the gods. Only men could compete, and they did so without wearing any clothes!

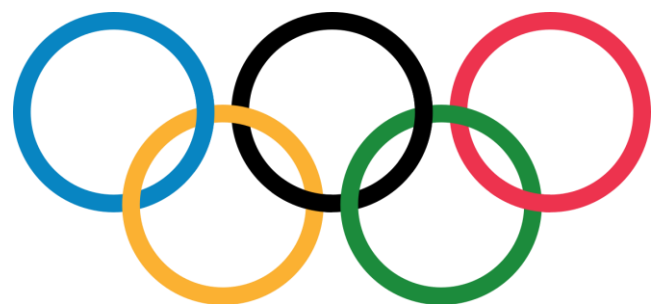
Before the games began, messengers were sent out to announce a 'sacred truce' or a peace. This meant that any wars should be called off, so that people could travel safely to Olympia.

The entire games were dedicated to Zeus. Visitors flocked to see the Temple of Zeus. Inside stood a huge gold and ivory statue of the king of the gods himself.

The main event at the Olympics was not a sporting events, but a sacrifice. On the third day of the games, 100 oxen were sacrificed and burnt on the Altar of Zeus.

This altar was not made from stone. Instead it was made from the leftover ash of all the sacrificed oxen. By around 200AD, the mound of ash stood six meters high!

Only men, boys and unmarried girls were allowed to attend the Olympic Games. Married women were barred. If they were caught sneaking in, they could be thrown off the side of a mountain as punishment!



The Trojan Horse

To break the stalemate of the long and bloody Trojan War, wily **Odysseus** comes up with a sneaky plan. Most of the Greeks will pretend to sail away, while a few hide inside of a giant wooden horse. Despite the arguments of the priest Laocoön and the seer **Cassandra**, the Trojans drag the horse inside the city thanks to the lies of a Greek named Sinon. That night, Odysseus and the rest of the Greeks inside the horse sneak out, open the gates for their buddies, and finally lay waste to the city of Troy.

Hercules/Heracles

Hercules (known in Greek as Heracles) is one of the best-known heroes in both Greek and Roman mythology. His life was not easy - He endured many trials and completed many tasks, but the reward for his suffering was a promise that he would live forever among the gods at Mount Olympus.

He was a demigod, with Zeus as his father and a mortal human mother. Hera (the queen of the gods and Zeus' wife) was furious when she heard that he had been born and she tried many times to kill him.

Ancient Greek Pottery

This is recognisable from its black and orange colouring and its repeating patterns. These often show images of gods, battles or scenes from myths.



Homework Ideas

- (1) Some Ancient Greek characters were made up two or more animals (see the pictures top right). Create your own character made up of two or more animals. Remember to give it a name.
- (2) Using old boxes, toilet roll holders and other materials, can you create your own Parthenon.



- (3) Create a monster mask for an Ancient Greek monster such as Medusa, a minotaur or a cyclops.



- (4) Read or watch the story of the Minotaur. Write it in your own words or draw some scenes from it.
- (5) Write a description of Medusa or another character.
- (6) Create and decorate your own Ancient Greek pot or plate.



REMEMBER TO BRING INTO SCHOOL ANY HOMEWORK THAT YOU COMPLETE TO SHOW YOUR TEACHERS.