



The Olympic Games

4_A

Introducing the Read-Aloud

10 minutes

What Have We Already Learned?

Remind students that they are learning about the ancient Greek civilization and that religion is a shaping force in the formation of any civilization. Ask: “Who did the ancient Greeks believe created or controlled certain things that happened in nature?” (the Olympian gods and goddesses)



◀ Show image 3A-9: All twelve gods seated on their thrones

Ask students if they remember the name of the god who the ancient Greeks believed to be the king of all of the gods and goddesses. (Zeus) Ask them to point to the different gods and goddesses and to tell you what they remember about each one, including what each was believed to create in nature and life. (Zeus created lightning and thunder; Poseidon created earthquakes and storms in the seas; Apollo created music, light, and poetry; Artemis created hunting; etc.)

Remind students that they also learned how jobs are another important component of a civilization. Ask: “What different jobs did people have in the various city-states of ancient Greece?” (farming, shepherding, and seafaring) Explain that religion and jobs were not only important to the Greek civilization, they were also a shaping force in the formation of other civilizations as well.

Remind students that contributions are things or ideas that are shared and passed on over time because they are considered helpful and good. Now ask if any students can name contributions from other previously studied civilizations that are still in our lives today.

Note: Students who participated in the Core Knowledge Language Arts program in Grade 1 learned about the Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Maya, Aztec, and Inca ancient civilizations. Earlier in Grade 2, students learned about the Indian and Chinese civilizations.

For example, the contributions of early Chinese civilization include paper, silk, writing, and the Great Wall. Similarly, the Egyptians gave us the pyramids. Tell students that today they are going to learn about a unique contribution that the Greek civilization made that is still a part of our lives today.

Purpose for Listening

Share the title of today's read-aloud with students. Ask them if they have ever seen the Olympics and to share what they know about the Olympic Games. Tell students to listen to find out more about the first Olympic Games and to learn for whom they were first created.

The Olympic Games



◀ Show image 4A-1: Travelers gathering for Olympic Games

- 1 [Point to Greece and then to Egypt and Spain on a world map or globe.]
- 2 If people were hardy and able to walk a long distance, were they strong or weak?
- 3 Remember, the word *luxury* means comforts and pleasures. The wealthy people being carried in luxury were riding comfortably in carriages, whereas others were walking on the rugged ground.

The travelers came from all directions—from every part of Greece and from every Greek city-state. Some even came from such distant places as Egypt and Spain.¹ Many traveled on ships. Some rode on horseback or in horse-drawn chariots. Many hardy souls walked the whole way, determined to reach their distant goal, for they believed they were on a holy journey.² Rich and poor, carried in luxury and treading on foot, they came by the thousands to take part in and watch the Olympic Games.³



◀ Show image 4A-2: Olympic events

- 4 [Point to Olympia on Poster 1.] To compete means to try hard to outdo others in a task, race, or other contest.
- 5 or celebration
- 6 *Sacred* means holy or worthy of respect.
- 7 The word *race* can have other meanings. *Race* can also refer to a group of people who share the same history, language, culture, etc.

The Olympic Games were held every four years at the site of Olympia and included contests in which ancient Greek athletes would **compete**.⁴ Because these games were part of a religious festival⁵ to honor the king of the gods, Zeus, they were considered **sacred**.⁶ In the first Olympic Games, there were only footraces, or running races .⁷ Later came events like wrestling, boxing, racing horses and chariots, throwing the heavy stone discus, and throwing the javelin, a type of long spear.



◀ Show image 4A-3: Myron speaking to Pindar in carriage

- 8 Myron and Pindar were real artists who lived in ancient Greece.
- 9 If they were riding in a private carriage, do you think Myron and Pindar were wealthy or just like everybody else?

Among the travelers to the games one year were two men named Myron and Pindar.⁸ They made their way to the sacred site of Olympia in a private carriage drawn by a team of horses and driven by a servant.⁹ The passenger in the brown cloak, Myron, was so muscular that other travelers wondered, “Is he one of the Olympic athletes?” But Myron was not an athlete; he was a

sculptor who used his muscular arms and huge hands to carve statues out of bronze and marble.

Myron was telling his traveling companion, “Of course you are right, Pindar. I *could* just invite the champions¹⁰ to my home after the competition and carve statues of them there. But I want my statues to show the exact moment when a runner starts to pull ahead in a race, or the instant when a discus thrower is about to let go of that heavy stone and fling it down the field. So I prefer to see those Olympic events with my own eyes.”

His friend Pindar smiled and answered, “I, on the other hand, have written poems in honor of champions without ever having seen them compete. But I am less interested in watching a runner cross the finish line in first place than I am in the effort and **determination** it took for him to get there.¹¹ It is this I admire, and it is about this that I write.”¹²

Myron grinned. “Well, your way works for you, just as mine works for me.”

← **Show image 4A-4: Pindar speaking to friend**

Suddenly a voice called out, “Pindar! What are you doing with that Athenian? Don’t you know we Thebans are still fighting a war against Athens?”¹³

Turning, Pindar recognized a friend from his hometown of Thebes. Directing his carriage driver to stop the horses, Pindar said, “My friend, you know that all such conflicts¹⁴ are set aside here. Everyone is guaranteed¹⁵ safe passage going to, and returning from, the Olympic Games, so that all may gather to take part in this **grand** competition to honor Zeus and the other gods.”¹⁶ The Olympic Games were more important than the conflicts the cities were having with each other, and these conflicts were put on hold so that everyone could gather safely for these sacred Games.

10 or winners

11 Determination is firm purpose or resolve to accomplish something.

12 Pindar’s poems were called odes and were written to be sung together with instruments and dancing at special occasions like banquets and festivals.



13 [Show Athens and Thebes on Poster 1.] Athens and Thebes were two city-states in Greece that did not get along. Pindar was from Thebes, and Myron was from Athens. You will hear more about these city-states later.

14 or fights

15 or promised

16 If something is grand, it is impressive in size, appearance, or general character, like the word *magnificent* you learned earlier.

17 What are boundaries? (edges)

18 The Greeks believed that the gods created humans and gave them the talents that they possessed.



19 or very large

Pindar went on, “Besides, Myron and I are artists. When I write a poem, or when Myron carves a statue, our interest goes far beyond the boundaries of any one city.¹⁷ We honor these champions as examples, so that we might encourage all Greeks to do the best they can in their own lives. This is how we honor the gods, who gave us our hearts, minds, and muscles.”¹⁸

← **Show image 4A-5: Ancient Olympian victor with laurel crown**

By the time Pindar and Myron reached Olympia, the greatest athletes in the Greek world had already gathered. Pindar and Myron looked around excitedly at the running track, the long jump pit, and the vast¹⁹ horse racing stadium. In the distance, thick clouds hid the peaks of Mount Olympus.

All of the athletes were men, for there were no events for women in the original Olympic Games—with the exception of the horse and chariot races. If women owned horses, they were allowed to enter them into the races, but they were not the ones who rode the horses. Women were not even allowed to be present at the Olympic Games to see their horses win.

20 Victory is a win or triumph.

21 [Point to the wreath in the image.]
Laurel leaves are from a type of evergreen tree or shrub called a bay laurel.



22 What does compete mean?

23 So, today there are Olympic Games every two years.

Victory was a source of great pride for the winners and their home cities.²⁰ An Olympic champion received a wreath of laurel leaves to wear atop his head.²¹ But more than that, he knew his name would live forever as a hero in his city’s history. In fact, many cities awarded large sums of money to their champions.

← **Show image 4A-6: Photos of modern athletes**

In some regards, things have not changed much in the twenty-seven centuries since the first Olympics. Modern athletes, too, may win fame, even if their greatest reason to compete is for the love of the sport.²² The Summer Olympics are still held every four years, but now there are also Winter Olympics—with winter sports such as skiing, bobsledding, and figure skating—that are held two years after every Summer Olympics.²³ The location of the Olympic Games also changes each time; they have been hosted in cities such as Seoul, Korea; Atlanta, Georgia; and Athens,

Greece. Men—and now women—from all over the world travel to the chosen city to compete. Even if their countries are not getting along, people set aside their conflicts, just as in the ancient days, in honor of the games.



← **Show image 4A-7: *The Discus Thrower***

Even though many centuries have passed since Myron and Pindar traveled to the Olympics, they, too, are still remembered. Today, Myron's depiction of an Olympic champion, *The Discus Thrower*, remains one of the most famous statues in the world. The original statue was lost long ago, perhaps in a war or an earthquake, but fortunately, someone had made an exact copy, so we still can admire Myron's work.



← **Show image 4A-8: Apollo priests praying at Delphic temple; Apollo statue in background**

As for the poet Pindar, the Greeks loved his poems so much that for centuries after his death, he was remembered by the priests and priestesses at Apollo's temple.²⁴ They would pray at closing each night, "Let Pindar the poet attend the supper of the gods."²⁵ Later still, when the Greek king, Alexander the Great, ordered that Pindar's home city of Thebes be destroyed in a war, Alexander commanded his soldiers, "But keep Pindar's house safe from the flames!" Pindar's ideas about doing our best with whatever talents we are given, and about getting along peacefully with one another, remain part of our thinking today. In fact, we still call this way of seeing things "the Olympic spirit."

24 Priests and priestesses were men and women in charge of the temples and ceremonies. Each god and goddess had a temple in Greece with a statue. The Greeks would go to the temples and offer gifts to their gods.

25 The priests and priestesses were hopeful that Pindar was with the gods, eating and enjoying himself.

Comprehension Questions

10 minutes

If students have difficulty responding to questions, reread pertinent passages of the read-aloud and/or refer to specific images. If students give one-word answers and/or fail to use read-aloud or domain vocabulary in their responses, acknowledge correct responses by expanding the students' responses using richer and more complex language. Ask students to answer in complete sentences by having them restate the question in their responses.

1. *Literal* What was the name of the religious festival, or sacred celebration, that people from all directions traveled to see and compete in? (the Olympic Games) Who were they held in honor of? (Zeus, king of the gods) Where were they held? (Olympia)
2. *Evaluative* Why do you think people traveled such great distances to see and compete in the Olympic Games? (Answers may vary.)
3. *Inferential* What events were included in the first Olympic Games? (footraces) What are some events included in today's Olympic Games? (Answers may vary.)
4. *Literal* Who were Myron and Pindar? (two wealthy men traveling to the Olympic Games in a carriage; Myron was a sculptor, and Pindar was a poet.)
5. *Evaluative* How were Pindar and Myron similar? (They were both artists who created things for others to appreciate; they both honored the athletes by sculpting them or writing about them; etc.) How were they different? (They created different types of art; Myron liked to be at the Olympic Games to actually see the athletes, so he could sculpt them accurately; Pindar liked to write odes, or poems written to be sung, about the determination of the athletes, and felt he didn't have to be at the games to do that; Myron was from Athens and Pindar was from Thebes.)

6. *Evaluative* How are the grand Olympic Games today the same as the first Olympics held in ancient Greece? (The champions today receive fame; conflicts are set aside for countries to gather together; etc.) How are they different? (The games today are held every two years, alternating between winter games and summer games; they are in a different city every time; they have both male and female athletes; the champions don't receive money for winning; the champions wear medals instead of laurel wreaths; etc.)
7. *Evaluative* Do you think it takes a lot of determination to make it to the Olympic Games? Why or why not? (Answers may vary.)



◀ **Show image 4A-7: *The Discus Thrower***

8. *Literal* What do you see in this image? What is the name of this famous sculpture? (*The Discus Thrower*) Who sculpted the original version? (Myron) What does it depict? (an Olympic athlete throwing the discus in the Olympic Games)

[Please continue to model the *Think Pair Share* process for students, as necessary, and scaffold students in their use of the process.]

I am going to ask a couple of questions. I will give you a minute to think about the questions, and then I will ask you to turn to your neighbor and discuss the questions. Finally, I will call on several of you to share what you discussed with your partner.

9. *Evaluative Think Pair Share:* Have you ever competed in a sporting event? Do you think you had an “Olympic spirit”? Why or why not? (Answers may vary.)
10. After hearing today's read-aloud and questions and answers, do you have any remaining questions? [If time permits, you may wish to allow for individual, group, or class research of the text and/or other resources to answer these remaining questions.]

Word Work: Grand

5 minutes

1. In the read-aloud you heard Pindar say, “Everyone is guaranteed safe passage going to, and returning from, the Olympic Games, so that all may gather to take part in this *grand* competition to honor Zeus and the other gods.”
2. Say the word *grand* with me.
3. If something is grand, it is very impressive in size, appearance, or general character.
4. Philip loved to play his grandmother’s grand piano, because it produced a much bigger and fuller sound than his smaller upright piano.
5. Have you ever experienced something grand? Try to use the word *grand* when you tell about it. [Ask two or three students. If necessary, guide and/or rephrase the students’ responses: “_____ was grand because . . . ”]
6. What’s the word we’ve been talking about? What part of speech is the word *grand*?

Use a *Drawing/Writing* activity for follow-up. Directions: Draw a picture of something grand and write one sentence about your picture. Be sure to use the word *grand* in your sentence. [Allow students to share their drawings and sentences with the class.]



Complete Remainder of the Lesson Later in the Day



The Olympic Games

4_B

Extensions

20 minutes

Sayings and Phrases: Where There's a Will, There's a Way

Proverbs are short, traditional sayings that have been passed along orally from generation to generation. These sayings usually express general truths based on experiences and observations of everyday life. Although some proverbs do have literal meanings—that is, they mean exactly what they say—many proverbs have a richer meaning beyond the literal level. It is important to help your students understand the difference between the literal meanings of the words and their implied or figurative meanings.

Ask students if they have ever heard anyone say “where there’s a will, there’s a way.” Have students repeat the proverb. Ask them what they think this proverb means. Explain that this proverb is another way of saying that no matter how difficult a task may seem at first, if you have the determination to do it and the desire to work hard, you can always find a way to succeed or make something happen. Explain that the athletes who compete in the Olympic Games have to work very hard for a long time and be very determined. Tell students that while these athletes are training for the Olympic events, they may think to themselves, “Where there’s a will, there’s a way.” Ask students to share a personal experience of a time when they could have used this saying. Look for opportunities to use this saying in your classroom.

Civilization Chart (Instructional Master 1B-1, optional)

Show students Image Cards 8 (Ancient Olympian) and 9 (Apollo's Temple). Ask students what they see in the images. Ask students: "For whom were the ancient Olympic Games held?" Remind students that the gods and goddesses of the ancient Greeks had temples with statues dedicated to them. Ask students in which square these Image Cards should go. Place the cards in the "Religion" square.

Ask students what a contribution is. Remind them that a contribution is something that is shared or passed down over time because it is considered helpful and good. Show students Image Cards 10 (Present-day Olympians), 11 (*The Discus Thrower*), and 12 (Pindar and Myron). Ask students what they see in the images. Ask students which square these Image Cards should go in. Place the Image Cards in the "Contributions" square, and have students explain why the Olympics, Pindar's poems, and Myron's statue of *The Discus Thrower* are considered contributions.

Review with students what is already on the Civilization Chart, and have them discuss what they remember about each image.

- ✈ Above and Beyond: You may wish to have some students complete Instructional Master 7-B7 on their own by drawing pictures and/or writing words in each square.