

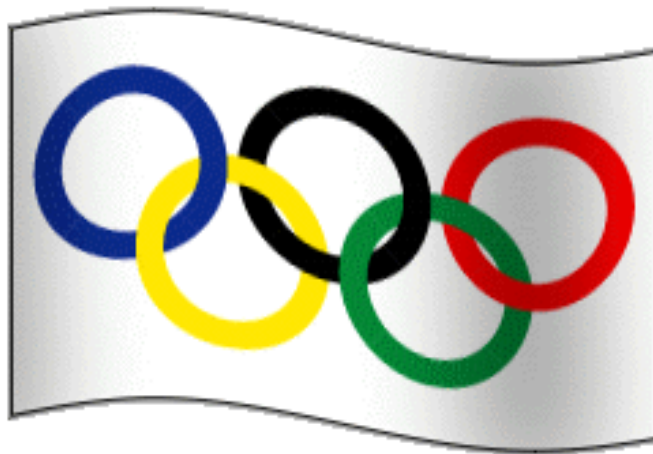
# The Ancient and Modern Olympics

## Interactive Learning Activities for Elementary, Middle & High School Students

Developed by

Erich Leaper, ELA/Civics Teacher, Greenfield High School  
Robert W. Maloy, College of Education University of Massachusetts Amherst

Complete a [Digital Choice Board for Olympics 2022](#)



**The Ancient and Modern Olympics** is a set of learning activities developed by social studies teacher Erich Leaper and University of Massachusetts Amherst faculty member Robert Maloy. It is designed to be utilized for in-person, virtual or hybrid learning and addresses the following curriculum standards:

Massachusetts Grade 7: Topic 4/Standard 7

- Identify the major accomplishments of the ancient Greeks

National Standards in World History for Grades 5 -12: Era 3

- [Standard 2: The Emergence of Aegean Civilizations](#)

## Opening Questions

1. What is Your Favorite Sport to Play or Watch on TV?
2. How Many Olympic Sports Can You Name?
  - Hint: 33 different sports would have been contested this year if the games had been held and 5000 medals would have been awarded.
  - Answer: [Sports at the 2021 Olympic Games](#)
3. What Sports Were Held at the Ancient Olympics?
  - Answer: [Sports at the Ancient Olympics](#)

### This Learning Activity is designed for 5 Days

- Day 1: The Olympics in Ancient Greece
- Day 2: The Heraean Games and Women in Olympic History
- Day 3: When Should Girls and Boys Compete Against One Another in School Athletic Events?
- Day 4: A History of Protests at the Olympics
- Day 5: Conduct Your Own Olympic Event with Paper Airplanes

### Day 1: The Olympics in Ancient Greece

The ancient Olympic Games were created to honor the Gods, specifically [Zeus](#), the most powerful God.



[Pictogram of ancient greek sport Pentathlon](#). Image by

Francois-Pier -Licensed CC BY-SA 3.0

Watch Video: [The Ancient Origins of the Olympics](#)

Watch Video: [The Ancient Olympics](#)

## Notes

- The games consisted of athletic competitions that took place between the major Greek city-states.
- The games were also largely contests for pride among rival city-states in a divided Greece.

- The first Olympic Games took place in Olympia, Greece in the year 776 BCE. There are four ancient Greek athletic game festivals, but the most popular were the games held at Olympia.
- The Isthmos, in the city-state of Corinth, were staged every two years and the Pythian games, near Delphi (in honor of Apollo), occurred every four years, Nemean at Argos was also important.
- All the festivals started with an offering to the Gods and an extensive sacrifice of cattle—often oxen. The athletes would also perform offerings to the Gods for their blessing and support.
- Before the games, the participants were required to train faithfully for 10 months and fulfill an oath, saying that the requirements for training will be fulfilled.
- More information is available at [The True Story of the Ancient Olympic Games](#), University of Arizona

### Primary Source Resources

[Athletics in Ancient Greece: Teaching with Primary Sources](#), PBS Learning Media

[The Olympic Games: A Historical Record Book of Champions](#) by Pausanias (CE 160)

[Accounts of the Hellenic Games, c 470 BCE - 175 CE](#), Ancient History Sourcebook Project

**Day 1 Activity for Students: Create a Television Ad for the Olympics**

## Day 2: The Heraean Games and Women in Olympic History

Women (as well as foreigners, slaves and dishonored people) were forbidden to watch or view the ancient Olympic Games.



Watch Video: [The Heraean Games](#)

**Creative Activity:** Students design a 3D model of a Heraean athlete or event

### Notes:

As a result, women created their own form of athletic games known as Heraean Games.

- They were held every four years, but did not contain as many events as the male version. The victorious athletes, like the men, were given valuable goods, privileges and honor.
- The games were held to honor the Goddess Hera. 16 athletes would weave a robe for the Goddess as a tribute to her and would then dawn special tunics cut just above the knee, with one shoulder covered and compete in footraces

### Web Resources

[When Ancient Greece Banned Women from Olympics, They Started Their Own](#), Atlas Obscura

[Short description the Heraean Games](#)

[Were the Ancient Olympics Just for Men?](#) provides information about the role of women in the first Olympic Games from the Penn Museum.

### Day 3: When should girls and boys compete against one another in school athletic events?

1. Today, in what sports do women and men compete together?

- Answer Below:

2. **State Your View:** When should girls and boys compete against one another in school athletic events?

3. **Propose Change at Your School**

a. Create a poster showing how you would provide girls with more opportunities to play sports in school?

- For background, review [Issues Related to Girls and Boys Competing with and Against Each Other in Sports and Physical Activity Settings](#) by the Women's Sports Foundation

### Background Reading for Day 3

While girls in this country have always played sports and games for fun, formal athletic participation and competition for women did not happen until the 1880s with the forming of separate clubs where females could play tennis, croquet, bowling and archery—although often under different rules than for men. The first intercollegiate basketball game between women teams was played in 1896 ([Bell, 2008](#)).

The first women's amateur golf tournament was held in 1895. Women's hockey teams started in the 1910s and 1920s, particularly in Canada and the Pacific Northwest. Women's hockey was added as an Olympic event in 1998. The first professional sports league for women, the [All-American Girls Baseball League](#) (showcased in the movie *A League of Their Own*) was started in 1943, during World War II.



[Babe Didrikson Zaharias, 1948](#), Public Domain

The nation's most prominent mid-20th century woman athlete was **Babe Didrikson Zaharias**. A multisport star in track and field events (shot put, hurdles, and high jump), baseball, and golf, she set numerous records in different sports and could outperform males in each ([About "Babe" Didrikson Zaharias](#)).

Didrikson qualified for all five individual women's track and field events in the 1932 Olympics, but was allowed to compete in only three of them. The Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) was established in 1950 with Babe Zaharias as one of the original 13 founders. For more



on her life and times, visit the *resourcesforhistoryteachers* wiki page, [Babe Didrikson Zaharias, Woman Athlete and Equality Pioneer](#). Her 1955 autobiography “[This Life I've Led](#)” is available online from Internet Archive.

Today, more than two in every five girls participate in high school sports, spurred on in part by the achievements of Serena and Venus Williams, Simone Biles, Mikaela Shiffrin, Alex Morgan, Lindsey Vonn, Michelle Wie, Danica Patrick and many others. Still participation in high school sports by boys (4,565,580) exceeds girls (3,415,306) by more than a million participants ([National Federation of State High School Associations, 2018](#)).

**Answer:** Modern-day sports where men and women compete against one another include Equestrian events, horse racing, Ultimate Frisbee, car racing, sailing, surfing, and mixed team events in tennis, golf, and badminton.

#### Day 4: A History of Protests at the Olympics



American sprinters Tommie Smith & John Carlos, 1968

### Create a Political Protest SketchNote

- Suggested Historical examples in [The Role of Political Protest](#)

**Day 5: Conduct Your Own Olympic Event with Paper Airplanes**

**Science is QUESTIONS--NOT ANSWERS. When we find answers, we have more questions.**

Those questions power investigations; they keep people trying through hundreds and thousands of mistakes to achieve an answer to questions. We are asking you to question while doing this workshop and to record your questions after you fold, launch, fly, and relaunch your paper plane.



- View the first videos to be amazed! [Longest Paper Airplane Flight on YouTube](#)
- View the second to learn what we do not know about a paper airplane. [Throwing Paper Airplanes With The World Record Holder](#)
- View the third to be tutored in how to fold, launch and fly your choice of one paper airplane. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVjIBZG\\_QrY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVjIBZG_QrY)
- Take a selfie of you and your plane to attach to the email and write two "I wonder" questions you are thinking about your plane and flight.

Example of an I Wonder Question from Tyler Volpe Knock:

I wonder how much impact folding precise, straight lines has on the flight length?

I wonder if flying my plane outside where there's wind, would affect the length or path of my plane's flight?

***Additional Information--NOT for the class workshop but for those interested in these resources:***

[Paper Airplanes](#) from the Exploratorium

[Paper Airplanes from NASA](#)

[Paper Airplanes Inducted into the National Toy Hall of Fame in 2017](#)

[Lesson Plan: Take Off with Paper Airplanes](#)

Complete a [Digital Choice Board for Olympics 2022](#)

<p><b>Build a Past, Present &amp; Future Timeline or Map</b></p> <p>Design an interactive timeline (<a href="#">Sutori</a>, <a href="#">Canva</a>, <a href="#">Timeline JS</a>) or <a href="#">StoryMap</a> that showcases the past, present, and future of the Olympics from the <a href="#">Heraean Games</a> to 2050.</p> 	<p><b>Design a Gold Medal</b></p> <p>Explore the history of the <a href="#">Olympic medal designs from 1896 to 2022</a>, then sketch a design for a gold medal for the 2024 Olympics that represents the host country's culture and history.</p> 	<p><b>Predict the Winners</b></p> <p>Select 3 <a href="#">winter olympic events</a> and examine the trends of the past winners of these events. Based on your findings, predict which country will win the gold medal in these events in 2022.</p> 
<p><b>Design an Advertisement</b></p> <p>Conduct a <a href="#">critical media literacy analysis</a> of TV/online advertisements for previous winter olympics and then use the persuasive design techniques you uncovered during your analysis to produce an online ad for the 2022 Olympics.</p> 	<p><b>Olympics 2022 Choice Board</b></p> <p><b>BEIJING 2022</b></p>  <p><a href="#">Winter Olympics Logo   Public Domain</a></p> <p>Need more activity ideas? Explore the <a href="#">Ancient and Modern Olympics learning activity plan</a> developed by Erich Leaper.</p>	<p><b>Write a Persuasive Letter</b></p> <p>Research the events of the winter Olympics from Chamonix (1924) to Beijing (2022) and identify one event you think should be added to the next winter olympics. Write a persuasive letter to convince the <a href="#">International Olympic Committee</a> to add that sport in 2026.</p> 