



Lesson Plan Summary

Magic Tree House #16: Hour of the Olympics

Let the Games Begin!

THIS EXTENTION WILL ENABLE EACH CHILD TO:

- Learn facts about Ancient Greece and the first Olympic games.
- Compare and contrast Modern day Olympics to the Ancient Olympics.
- Discover the meaning of the symbol for the Modern Olympics.
- Gain an appreciation for the spirit of competition and sportsmanship and how the ancient Olympic games formed the foundation for these values.
- Plan and engage in friendly competition with classmates in a class Olympics.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Reading:

- Write information to examine a topic
- Compare and contrast findings presented in a text
- Identify reasons an author gives to support points in a text
- Summarize a written text for information

Social Studies:

- Historical comprehension
- Chronological thinking

Physical Education:

- Demonstrate a mature form in most locomotor movements.
- Demonstrate qualities of movement with a partner.
- Create a movement sequence.
- Demonstrate positive response to challenges (good sportsmanship).

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Lesson Plan

Magic Tree House #16: Hour of the Olympics

Olympics Then and Now

In *Hour of the Olympics* and the accompanying Fact Tracker *Ancient Greece and the Olympics*, students learn that the Olympics began in Ancient Greece as a festival to honor Zeus, the ruler of all the other Greek gods, in 776 BC. They were an important part of Greek life and lasted 1,170 years until Greece lost its power. The games came to an end for many years until the first modern Olympics took place in Greece in 1896.

The Olympics remain an important part of our culture as well as that of many other nations. The Olympic spirit still remains as do many other important factors established in the early years of the Olympic Games. However, life has changed and evolved over the years, which have brought about differences in the Olympics of Ancient Greece and the modern Olympics of today. Remind your students that in *Hour of the Olympics*, Annie was not allowed to attend the games, much less compete, because she was a girl! Mary Pope Osborne and Natalie Pope Boyce note the similarities and differences of the Ancient and Modern day Olympics in the final chapter of the Fact Tracker, *Ancient Greece and the Olympics*.

Students are familiar with the practice of comparing and contrasting topics on a Venn diagram. Customize this idea by allowing your students to use the familiar five Olympic rings (as seen on page 104 of the Fact Tracker) to compare and contrast Ancient and Modern day Olympics. Ask them to complete the "Olympics Then and Now" activity sheet (provided). In the four spaces where the rings intersect, ask students to find four similarities of Ancient and Modern day Olympics. In the five spaces where the rings do not intersect, ask students to write five differences between the two.

Next, ask your students to color the Olympics rings as they appear on the Olympic flag. The official symbol of the Olympic Games is composed of five interlocking rings, colored blue, yellow, black, green, and red on a white field. The colors of the rings represent the flags of the countries that participate in the Olympics. Every flag of a country participating in the Olympics includes one of those colors.



Finally, follow up with a fun culminating activity: "Let the Games Begin!" Allow your class to participate in their own Ancient Olympic Games! Here are a few suggestions: Finally,

Let the Games Begin!

- Divide your class into cooperative groups of four. Tell the teams that they represent Greek city-states and that they will be competing in games similar to the games athletes competed in during the earliest Olympics that they read about in *Hour of the Olympics* and *Ancient Greece and the Olympics*. They can choose one of the following Greek city-states to represent.

1) Athenians, 2) Spartans, 3) Corinthians, 4) Megarians, or 5) Argives

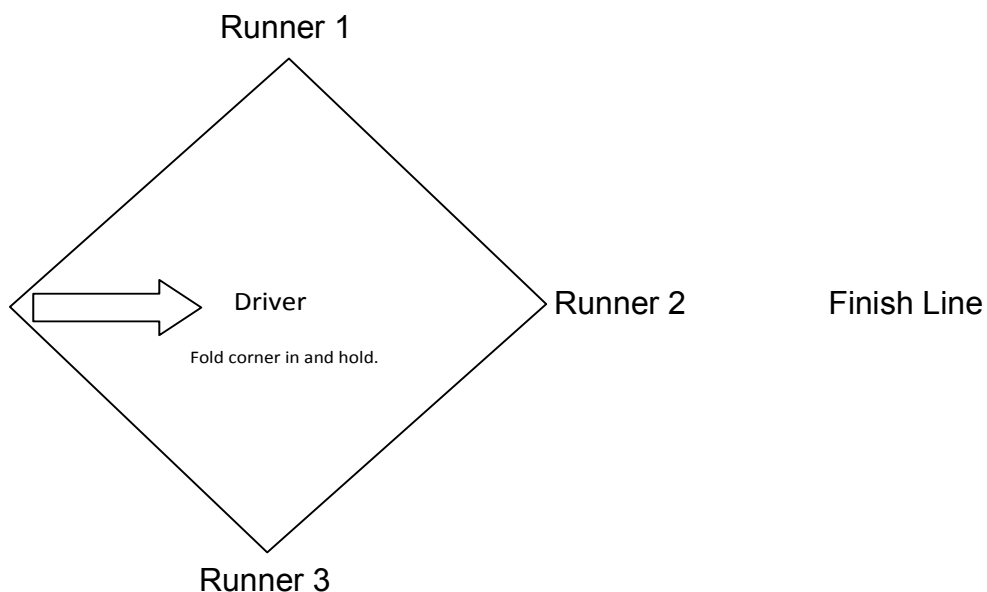
- Each of the team members will be competing in one of the first three events and all four will take part in the last event as a team effort – chariot races. The events should be held in a gym. Be sure to remind the children they learned that the word gymnasium comes from the Greek word meaning “to exercise naked”!! But assure them that they will be wearing Greek togas!
- Make togas out of large white trash bags: Cut arm holes in the sides and a large hole in the bottom of the bags for the child’s head. Tie around the waist with a “sash” (a piece of cloth or jute rope). Togas can also be made in the same fashion out of king size pillow cases (if resources are available). These “togas” can be stored for use with future classes.
- Allow each city-state to design their own flag being sure to use colors that appear in the Olympic rings. Team captains will carry the flag and lead their “delegation” in a line to the gym.
- Students can repeat an oath to be good sports and play fairly just as Olympians did in the ancient Olympics and as Modern Olympians still do today:

The Olympic Oath

"In the name of all competitors, I promise that we shall take part in these

Olympic Games, respecting and abiding by the rules that govern them, in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of sport and the honor of our teams."

- Have four ancient Olympic Games for competition. The games listed below are described in the Fact Tracker, *Ancient Greece and the Olympics*, but other games of your choice could be substituted. Set up four stations in the gym ahead of time. Parent volunteers will be needed for this event. One parent per game is advisable. All four will be needed for the chariot race.
1. **Discus** – (Frisbee) – Provide a Frisbee and an open space in the gym for competition. You will need a measuring device to determine who threw the “discus” the greatest distance.
 2. **Javelin** – Provide a child’s foam spear for throwing and an open space in the gym. (One can be made using a “noodle” pool toy.) A measuring device will be needed to determine distance.
 3. **Stade** (foot race) – Remind students that the Greek word stade is where we get the word stadium in the English language. There were several different stades in the ancient games, but the most difficult was the one in full armor. Allow your students to compete in this race by wearing “armor” consisting of a football helmet and a metal trash can lid for a shield! Plastic lids would also work. You will need one of each for each runner. They should run the length of the gym. Use a timer to determine each runner’s time.
 4. **“Chariot Race”** – In the ancient games, we learn (in the Fact Tracker) that chariot races were a popular event. Remind students that a magic chariot rescued Jack and Annie in the book *Hour of the Olympics*. Although you cannot organize a chariot race similar to those used in the ancient Olympics, you can play a version of the game with groups of children. This game must be played on a smooth floor and would not be suitable as an outside game. Give each group an old, large blanket or quilt, and ask them to line up at the starting line. Have one child (driver) from each team sit in the center of the blanket. The other children each hold one corner of the blanket while the “driver” holds onto the other corner sitting backwards in the middle of the blanket. On the word “Go,” the runners holding the blanket run across the gym, trying to beat the other teams to the finish line while the driver in the middle holds on. If the driver falls off, the team must stop until the child is back in position. This game will take up a great deal of space as each team will race at the same time the full length of the gym.



Drivers sit backwards in the middle, fold the “free” corner in toward them, and hold on! The first chariot team across the finish line is the winning team. Of course, close adult supervision will be required for this activity to ensure safety.

- At the end of the games. Have a victory ceremony for each event. The winners will receive a wreath of olive branches for their head as the athletes did in Ancient Greece! These can be made by cutting and gluing paper olive leaves on the rim of a paper plate with the center of the plate cut out. The winning chariot team will need a wreath for each member.
- Follow team leaders with flags back to the classroom in a closing ceremony parade complete with music and cheering!

Here are some of the comparisons that your students might note after reading the books to complete the “Olympics Then and Now” activity sheet:

- **Differences** (to be noted in the parts of the Olympic rings that DO NOT intersect)
Students may use phrases rather than complete sentences to conserve space:
- Modern day Olympics are a sporting event only and do not honor the Greek gods as the Ancient Olympics did.
- Olympics are now held in different countries – not just in Greece as Ancient Olympics were.
- Modern Olympics are not just for men and boys. Women and girls play a big part today.
- We have the summer and winter games today, not just summer games as in the Ancient Olympics.
- Champions in Ancient Greece were crowned with an Olive wreath. Modern day Olympians receive medals of gold, silver, and bronze.

- **Similarities** (to be noted in the parts of the Olympic rings that DO intersect)
Encourage students to use words or phrases to save space:
- Both Ancient and Modern day Olympians devote years to training.
- Modern and Ancient Olympians both took an oath to play fair and obey rules.
- In both Ancient and Modern Olympics athletes promise to be good sports and do their best.
- There are no chariots in Modern day Olympics but there are races involving horses.
- There are still foot races, javelin, discus, boxing, long jump, and the pentathlon in Modern day Olympics.

Olympics Then and Now

Name: _____

After reading *Hour of the Olympics* and the Fact Tracker *Ancient Greece and the Olympics*, you will discover that there are similarities and differences between the Olympic games of Ancient Greece and those of today. The Modern Olympic symbol is five interlocking rings whose colors represent the flags of all the countries that participate in the Olympics. The colors are from left to right, blue, yellow, black, green, and red. Color the rings and write in the spaces that DO NOT intersect the differences between the Olympic games of Ancient Greece and the games of today. Next, write in the four areas that DO intersect the similarities that exist between the Ancient games and the Olympics we know today.

