



Teacher's Guide

Greeks: Olympic Mind-Body Legacy **Cultural Legacies of Ancient Civilizations Series**

Grade Levels:

7 - 12

Subject Areas:

Social Studies

World History

World Geography and Cultures

Synopsis:

Explains that during the great Hellenic period, ancient Greece was still a collection of city-states which often rivaled one another. In spite of this, during the Olympic Games that were held every four years, the athletes and their adoring fans sublimated their violence into a type of mind and body worship dedicated to their chief god, Zeus. Traces the origin of the games to female foot races to honor the goddess, Hera. Goes on to explain the cultural significance of the ancient Greek's honor of the fit male body as a value that prepared young men to defend their city-state in times of war.

Learning Objectives: Students will:

- Explain why the ancient Greeks honored the mind-body connection personified by the athletic male body.
- Understand that the city-states represented in the Olympic Games were often enemies of one another.
- Explain the meaning of "sublimated" as it applies to the Olympic Games, its athletes, and the public in general.
- Understand that the games have always been associated with nationalistic as well as religious ideals.

Vocabulary:

tangible, longevity, Peloponnese, meticulous, chronological, city-states, status, pentathlon, kudos, pentathlete, discus, esteem, sublimated, hostilities, prowess, truce

Pre-Viewing Discussion:

What is the origin of the original Olympic Games? Was there a religious aspect to these games?

What events of our Summer Olympics have their origins in ancient Greece?
What events of the original games are no longer staged in our Olympics?

In the time of the ancient Greeks, was Greece itself a unified country? What was the social structure at this time?

Can you imagine why men in ancient Greece had to keep themselves fit? Why isn't it necessary for all men to keep themselves fit in our day and age?

Post-Viewing Discussion:

Why has Olympia always been a religious site? What is there about the landscape that fits it to be a place of worship? Who first worshipped there?

How do we know that the ancient Greeks honored their athletes? What was the usual occupation of most athletes?

How did the mind-body legacy of ancient Greece find its way into Greek art? How many examples of the worship of the body can we find in art and sculpture that came after this period?

How did the Olympic games sublimate the aggressive tendencies of the ancient Greeks?

Further Activities:

Investigate the opinions of scholars who believe that the original Olympics began as funeral games. What examples are there in literature and in historical documents that sports were once used to honor the dead? What famous connections have been made between aggression and death?

Investigate the first recorded event of the ancient Olympic games and how this race evolved over time to other individual events of the ancient Olympic games.

Further investigate the importance of physical exercise and the spirit of competition in ancient Greek society.

Investigate the other Six Wonders of the Ancient World, in addition to Olympia as the Seventh, and their significance to their cultures of origin.

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