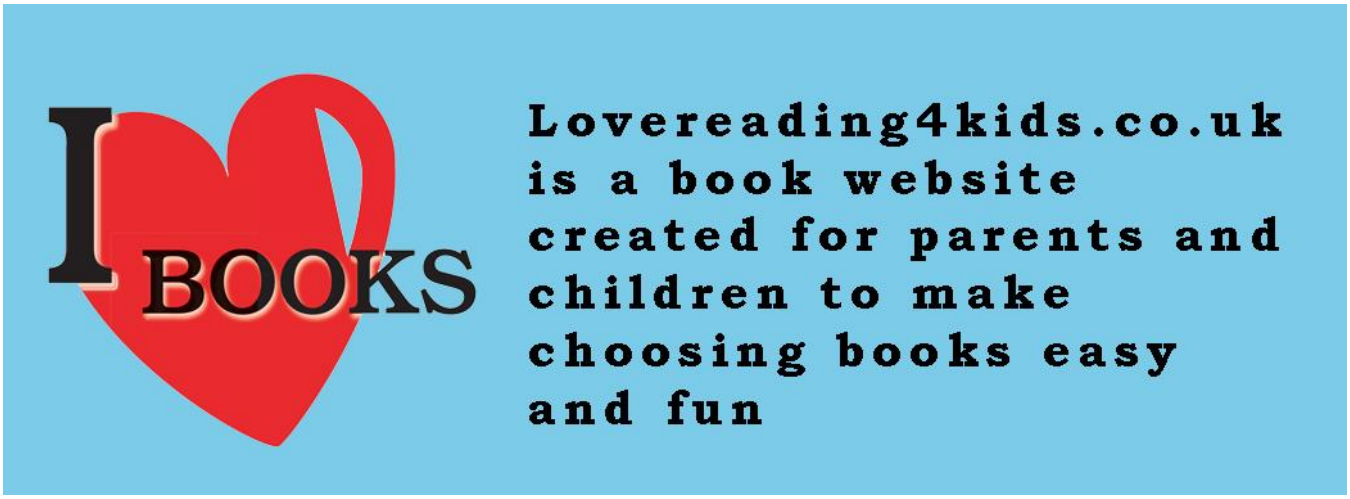


Opening extract from

The Olympic Games Sticker Book

Written by

Susan Meredith

Illustrated by

Galia Bernstein

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How the Games began

The Olympic Games is the biggest multi-sport event in the world. No one is quite sure how they began, but the first recorded Games took place in ancient Greece almost 3,000 years ago. They were held every four years – just as they are today.

The Games take their name from the place where they were held – Olympia, a beautiful spot where people went to worship Zeus, king of the Greek gods. The Games were held in his honour.



Visitors flocked to the Games in increasing numbers after a magnificent temple was built at Olympia.

The temple contained a statue of Zeus said to be a huge 13m (43ft) high.

This is how the temple might have looked when it was first built.



A 19th-century illustration of the statue of Zeus at Olympia

To honour Zeus, a flame was kept burning day and night. For the modern Games, a torch is lit at Olympia and carried in a relay all the way to the host city.



At modern lighting-the-torch ceremonies, actors play the role of ancient Greek priestesses.

The Games were about more than sport and religion. Every Olympiad – four year period – a temporary truce was called between the warring city states of Greece so that people could travel safely to the next Games.



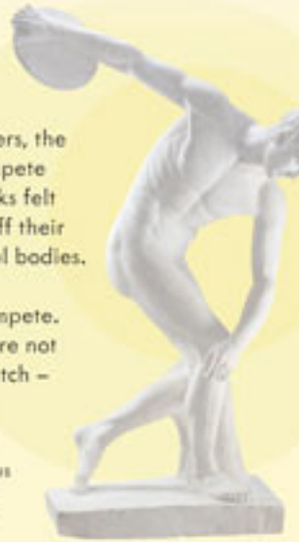
Messengers told soldiers to lay down their arms.



Equestrian events consisted of chariot racing as well as horse racing.

Except for charioteers, the athletes had to compete naked, as the Greeks felt they should show off their strong and beautiful bodies.

Only men could compete. Married women were not even allowed to watch – on pain of death.



A statue of a discus thrower at the ancient Games

The very first Games had only one event – a running race. But the competition expanded until it lasted five days, with events in long jump, shot put, javelin, discus, equestrian, boxing, wrestling, pankration, and even a race in armour.

Pankration was a brutal mixture of boxing and wrestling with only two rules – no biting and no eye gouging.





Long jumpers didn't do a run-up but jumped from a standing start. To help them jump further, they swung weights forwards and backwards, for momentum.

At the ancient Games, winners were crowned with a wreath of olive leaves. This tradition was revived for the Athens Games of 2004, when winners were given a wreath as well as medals.



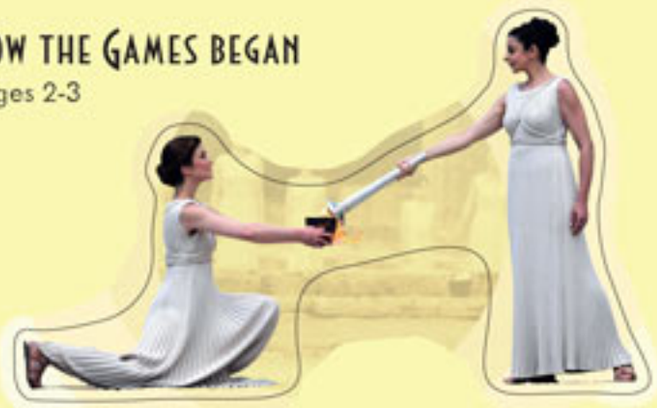
The medal winners of the women's artistic gymnastics floor exercises, 2004

By the year 393, Greece was under Roman rule and Emperor Theodosius I banned the Games. His soldiers destroyed the temple, Olympia fell into ruins, and there were no more Games for over 1,500 years.



Emperor Theodosius I

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The Winter Games

Today there are seven sports at the Winter Games, with almost a hundred events. From their introduction in 1924 until 1992 the Winter Games were held in the same year as the Summer Games. Now, they are two years later.





The separate winter competition was set up because the Games had grown very big – and it made more sense to hold snow and ice events in the cold.

Even in winter, there can be snow shortages. In 1964 the Austrian army had to take extra supplies to the Games at Innsbruck.



Many winter sports began in the cold countries of Scandinavia. At the 1924 Winter Games, athletes from Norway and Finland won more medals than all the other countries combined.

Norwegian skater Sonja Henie made her debut in 1924, aged only 11, going on to win gold medals at the next three Games.

Skating is the oldest Olympic winter sport. It is split into figure skating, including dancing, and speed skating (races).



Vladimir Grigorev of Russia ahead of Sin Da-woon of South Korea in the men's 1000m short track speed skating semi-final, 2014

Short track skaters always go anti-clockwise. Their blades are to the left so their boots don't scrape on the ice when they lean over.

Ice hockey originated in Canada and Canadian teams have won most Olympic medals. The game is played with a disc called a 'puck', instead of a ball.



A Canadian player (in red) fights for the puck with a Swede in the women's ice hockey final, 2006. Canada won gold.

Curling teams compete at sliding a heavy, polished 'rock' along a sheet of ice. They brush the ice with brooms to help the rock move along.



Lui Yin of the Chinese women's team slides the rock in their bronze-medal-winning match, 2010.

Skiing has the most events. It is split into several types of races, some including jumps, and 'freestyle' events, judged on how acrobatic they are. Freestylers perform jumps, twists and flips, up to 20m (over 65ft) off the ground.



Dara Howell of Canada leaps her way to gold in a women's freestyle skiing event, 2014.

Snowboarding – a sport taken up by several surfers and skateboarders – is the newest skiing discipline, introduced in 1998.



Ina Meschik of Austria weaves around a flag in the women's snowboard parallel slalom, 2014.

Biathlon combines cross-country skiing with rifle shooting. It started in Scandinavia, where people used to go hunting through the snow on skis.



Bobsleigh and **luge** athletes make superfast, timed runs down a narrow, twisting ice track.

Bobsleighers sit in a sled which they steer by pulling on ropes. But luges and bobsleigh 'skeletons' have no seats or steering and competitors lie on them.



The French four-man bobsleigh team compete at Albertville, France, in 1992.



Athletes push a skeleton, at a run, then jump onto it on their stomachs and go head first.

On a luge, athletes lie on their backs and travel feet first. There is a men's doubles luge event, in which one athlete lies on top of the other.

