Australia and the Olympic Games
The First Games Athens 1896
Teacher Guide

Teacher Guide, Activities and Resources

The First Modern Olympics – Athens 1896

The ancient Olympics were a Greek athletics competition which mixed religion and athletic performance between the Greek city-states and some Greek colonies for every four years from 776BC for over 1000 years. Just before the beginning of the 20th century there was a successful move to have a modern version of the Olympic Games in which many countries could participate in the spirit of equality, fair play and co-operation. The first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens in 1896. And Australia had one representative whose attitude and performance thoroughly reflected the principles of the Olympic Games.

In line with the new Australian History Curriculum the content in this section provides opportunities to develop historical understanding through key concepts, including evidence, continuity and change, cause and effect, perspectives, empathy, significance and contestability. In this section these concepts are investigated within the particular historical context of the 1896 Athens Olympics to facilitate an understanding of the past and to provide a focus for historical inquiries.

This is a multimedia resource and provides a range of opportunities for evidence based learning, especially those relating to Information and Communications Technologies (ICT).

Each lesson is divided into three sections, Historical Context, the Games and Performances.

This section of the educational resource focuses on:

- the historical context for the 1896 Athens Olympics
  - the key features of the ancient Olympics
  - the movement to revive Olympism and the Games
  - the role of Coubertin and others
  - Athens in 1896
  - Australia in 1896, in the lead up to Federation
  - The ancient marathon and its role in the modern Olympic Games

- The Games of the first Olympiad
  - The preparations and set up for Athens, with a focus on the Panathenaic Stadium
  - The beginning of protocols and traditions of the modern Olympic Games, such as emblems and symbols

- Performances
  - Key events and individual performances, such Edwin Flack for Australia
  - The first Olympic Marathon
  - Team results summary and analysis
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Australian Curriculum for History links

The Making of the Modern World and Australia

For Year 9, The Making of the Modern World and Australia section of the Stage 5 curriculum provides a study of the history of the making of the modern world from 1750 to 1918. It was a period of industrialisation and rapid change in the ways people lived, worked and thought. It was an era of nationalism and imperialism, and the colonisation of Australia was part of the expansion of European power. The period culminated in World War I 1914–1918.

1896 was just a few years before Australia moved from a series of British colonies to a federated democracy. The exploits of Edwin Flack, a British migrant from Melbourne, at the Athens Olympic Games surprised most Australians and appealed to their new nationalism. He became an Australian popular sporting hero alongside cricketers who represented Australia abroad. This could be used in Depth Study 2a Making a nation.

Learners will have the opportunity to:

- Outline the purpose and features of the ancient Olympics
- briefly describe the steps taken to revive the ancient Olympics
- discuss the concept and features of the modern Olympics
- use sources to explore the key features of the first modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896
- outline the purpose of the modern Olympic Games
- examine the preparations for the Games of the first Olympiad
- identify which countries were represented
- identify some of the team and individual performance highlights of the events at the Games
- investigate why the marathon, an event not in the ancient Olympics, became a feature event at the modern Olympic Games from 1896.
- examine the background and personal experience of Edwin Flack at the first modern Olympics
- collect information and produce an ICT presentation on an aspect of the 1896 Athens Olympics

Resources

Historical context

The ancient Olympic Games

Frequently Asked Questions about the ancient Olympics:
http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/Olympics/faq1.html

Overview from Olympic Museum Lausanne:
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Ancient Greece.co.uk:  http://www.ancientgreece.co.uk/festivals/story/Olympics.html


Click on the ‘Antiquity’ button on the top navigation line. Now read about: importance, site, Olympiad, rules, Athletic events, Olympic victors, art.

The revival of Olympism

Baron Pierre de Coubertin role in the revival of Olympism

Australia in 1896

A few sources and for research to build a picture of Australia in 1896.
http://www.abc.net.au/federation/fedstory/home.htm
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federation_of_Australia

The ancient marathon

Marathon Run (New World Encyclopedia):
http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Battle_of_Marathon#Marathon_run

The Games

Glimpses of the first Olympic Games
http://www.onlinefootage.tv/video/show/id/7893

The award of medals

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Oaths

http://www.pe04.com/olympic/trivia/oath_t.php

Performances

Some individual performances

Study the information on the International Olympic Committee site:
http://www.olympic.org/results?q=athens%201896

Edwin Flack


Assessing the success of the Athens 1896 Olympic Games

The Official Report of the 1896 Olympic Games:

Books

Baron de Coubertin [et al.], The Olympic Games of 1896. Lausanne, Comité International Olympique, c1983.


