

Name: _____

Ancient Olympic Games

The ancient Olympic Games were held in Olympia, Greece, where there was a temple for people to worship Zeus. The Olympic Games were part of a larger celebration honoring Zeus, the father of the Greek gods and goddesses.

The ancient Olympic Games began in the year 776 BC, and were held every four years for the following 12 centuries, until the year 396. The games began with one event, called the “stade” race, which ran the length of the stadion (stadium). Many more events were added over the years, including different kinds of foot races, wrestling, boxing, javelin, long jump and discus. The prize for each event was a crown of olive leaves.

The athletes participating in the games were free men who spoke Greek. Women were not allowed to participate.

Modern Olympic Games

The modern Olympic Games began in 1896, and were held in Athens, Greece. The Baron Pierre de Coubertin came up with the idea of holding the modern Olympic Games, and delegates from other countries agreed that it was a great idea. Baron Coubertin believed that the world sharing in the Olympic celebration of sports would encourage peace while bringing people together.

Nine countries sent only male athletes to the first modern Olympic Games. In 1900, women began to compete in the events. There are separate Summer and Winter Olympics. Both the Summer and Winter Olympics take place every four years – the Winter Olympics in Vancouver BC are celebrated in 2010, and the Summer Olympics will take place in London, England in 2012.

There are several events that take place during the Olympic Games. The prizes include medals – gold is given for first place in an event, silver for second place, and bronze for third place. The gold medal isn’t solid gold, but it is covered in a thin layer of gold.

The symbol of the modern Olympic Games is the five interlocking rings of different colors – red, black, green, yellow and blue. The colors are special since at least one appears in the flag of every nation of the world. This symbol was created by the Baron Coubertin, and each ring stands for the five continents that send athletes to the Olympic Games (North and South America are considered one continent in this case). There is also an Olympic Motto – “Citius, Altius, Fortius” – which means “Swifter, Higher, Stronger” in English.