

# EDUCATORS' GUIDE

# MAGIC TREE HOUSE®

## ***Hour of the Olympics*** and ***Ancient Greece and the Olympics:*** *A Nonfiction Companion to Hour of the Olympics*



PB: 978-0-679-89062-1  
EL: 978-0-375-89473-2  
Grades: 1-4  
F&P: M • Lexile: 380L

### **ABOUT** *Hour of the Olympics*

Jack and Annie are off on another adventure! This time they are sent to ancient Greece, where a very important event is taking place. Join them as they race against time and witness the very first Olympic games!



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Grades: 2-5  
F&P: S • Lexile: 590L

### **ABOUT** *Ancient Greece and the Olympics:* *A Nonfiction Companion to Hour of the Olympics*

What was it like to live in ancient Greece? What gods and goddesses did Greeks believe in? How did the Olympics start? What was the winner's prize? Find out the answers to these questions and many more in this Fact Tracker. Includes fun facts from Jack and Annie, fantastic photos and illustrations, and a guide to doing further research!

## CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

### **ACTIVITIES FOR** *Hour of the Olympics*

#### **No Women Allowed**

Annie is more than a little annoyed to learn that the identity of the author behind the story they seek must be listed as “anonymous” to hide the fact she was a woman.

Discuss other ways in which women were kept separate from the world of men in ancient Greece. How was freedom for “citizens” interpreted in this time and place? What were Plato's opinions on the subject?

Ask students to write a letter to Plato expressing their feelings on the discrimination shown women in his time. Have them list contributions women have made in different realms of society throughout modern history.

**CURRICULUM:** *History • Language Arts*

## ACTIVITIES FOR *Ancient Greece and the Olympics:* *A Nonfiction Companion to Hour of the Olympics*

### Getting Started

Ask students what their favorite games are on the playground, in the gym, and at home. Do they like to play games alone? With one other person? With groups or teams? Discuss the meaning of competition. What kinds of competition do they participate in at home, in school, or in their community? How do they feel when they win? When they lose?

Using a show of hands, ask how many students have heard of or watched the Olympics, an international competition involving many different sports. Show students pictures of different summer and winter Olympic sports. Which events are their favorites? Who are some of their favorite Olympic athletes?

Using a map or a globe, locate Greece and explain that our modern Olympics started with the ancient Greeks almost 3000 years ago as a festival to honor the Greek God, Zeus. Create a time line showing the geographic location of the winter and summer Olympic Games for the last five years. Note where and when the next games will be held. Explain that students are about to learn a great deal more about these games and the culture of the people who started them in this guide.

### It's Greek to Me!

The names of many of our geometric shapes have Greek origins. Polygons (Poly = many; gonia = angles) are closed figures that have several lines and angles. The first part, or prefix, in the names of these shapes tells how many sides and angles that shape has. For example:

Tri angle = 3

Penta gon = 5

Hepta gon = 7

Quadri lateral = 4

Hexa gon = 6

Octa gon = 8

Draw each of these geometric shapes on the blackboard or on individual handouts. Ask students to count the sides and angles in each and see if they can label each polygon correctly.

**CURRICULUM:** *Math • Language Arts*

### A Tale of Two Cities

Locate the city-states of Athens and Sparta on a map of Greece, identifying different physical features of their locations. List aspects of language, culture, and customs common to both.

Point out that democracy, the form of government we have in our United States, originated in Athens. Write a definition of democracy on the blackboard. Compare the ancient Athenian democracy with our modern democracy in America. Discuss if it is possible for a society to be democratic when all citizens do not enjoy equal rights.

Point out that totalitarianism, a form of government practiced in countries of our modern world (e.g., North Korea), originated in Sparta. Write a definition of totalitarianism on the blackboard. Using a Venn diagram, illustrate the similarities and differences between life in Athens and life in Sparta.

Under which form of government would students prefer to live? Why?

**CURRICULUM:** *History • Geography • Math*

### MTHing in Action

The stories of King Midas or Jason and the Golden Fleece are as popular today as they were thousands of years ago. Divide your students into small groups, assigning a popular myth from Greek folklore to each. Prepare a question sheet highlighting main ideas and significant plot events



to guide reading and discussion. Encourage students to offer their opinions about what happens and why in their story.

Have each group prepare a script for a Reader's Theater performance of their myth for the class. Note that even though all actors in the Greek theater were men, both boys and girls in their groups will be assigned a role in the cast or chorus for their play. Props, masks and costumes, based on their specific story, may add to the festivities. Arrange classroom seats in a large circle or semi-circle with a center stage area to create the feeling of an open air Greek theater.

**CURRICULUM:** *Language Arts • History • Art*

### The Nature of Heroism

Tales from the ancient Greeks generally connect heroism with physical strength and courage in confronting great dangers. Modern society, however, has recognized new kinds of heroes and different types of heroism. Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., actor Christopher Reeve, and astronaut Neil Armstrong have all been called heroes. What qualities do they possess? Who else, in our modern world, might be viewed as heroes in light of their spirit and contributions to contemporary life? Have students choose and research a person they believe to be a hero of our times and write a profile explaining what this person has done to deserve this status in his/her eyes.

**CURRICULUM:** *Research • Language Arts • Social Studies*

### Let the Games Begin!

Allow students to experience the satisfaction of competition and good sportsmanship in their own Class Olympics. Create a flag displaying a symbol for your Olympic competition. Select events to be included. Make it fun! You might have three-legged races, sack races, Frisbee throws, egg-relays or even a game of Greek Hoops, just to name a few. Have students design medals with poster board and paint them gold, silver, and bronze to recognize winners in each event. Choose up teams, review game rules for each event and let the games begin!

**CURRICULUM:** *Research • Language Arts • Social Studies*

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