**Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Band: \_\_\_\_\_**

**THE OLYMPICS**

**DIRECTIONS: Actively read about the Olympics in ancient times and compare to the modern day. Label where you see enduring issues. Evaluate the similarities and differences as well how it has changed over time.**

**I. Introduction**

Besides being an athletic competition, the Olympics have a deeper meaning and importance today. In ancient Greece, the Olympics had a purpose of peace-making. The Olympic Games, attracted people from nearly all the ancient Greek cities. During the Olympics, all conflicts among participating city-states were postponed until the Games were finished. Stopping of hostilities was known as the **Olympic peace** or truce, although some accounts say the Greeks never completely suspended their wars. Most importantly though, is that the Olympic Games were mainly a religious festival and not just a series of athletic events, like they are today

**II. History**

The Olympics originally started as a series of competitions between representatives from cities in Ancient Greece. The events were mainly athletic, but also included combat and chariot racing. In this era the Olympics were of fundamental religious importance as the events were held in parallel (at the same time) with rituals to honor Zeus and Pelops, mythical Gods of Olympia- the location of the original Olympic ‘stadium’. The Olympics were held every four years and this period, known as **Olympiad**. Since the Greeks did not have a calendar the Olympics were used as a way of time measurement in between Olympics. Winning an event was of great value and recognition as the winners were idolized by the Greeks on a national level. The winners were also immortalized through the writing of poems and construction of statues. Many winners are documented in ancient Greek myths and legends, stories still being told to this day.

The Greeks believed that a healthy body was very important. Most men and boys practiced sports every day because they enjoyed them and wanted to keep fit. Sport was a good preparation for war too. The Greek armies had to be fit enough to march long distances over Greece’s mountainous lands, carrying all their heavy equipment, and then begin the fight with the enemy. The Olympics helped in this training.

The Olympic Games reached their peak in Ancient Greece during the 5th and 6thcenturies BC. The rise in power of the Romans and their influence upon Ancient Greece eventually resulted in the end of the event in around 400AD.

Each Greek city-state had the ambition to have the greatest number of Olympic victors and this resulted in the institution of many laws that encouraged athletics. **Lucian, in ca 170 BC**, mentions characteristically:

*“the very word Olympics is, for me, a magnificent thrill, absolutely a universal thrill, and it raises the awareness of humanity in the* ***inner world (in Greece).*** *True, in the* ***outer world (outside of Greece)*** *we may notice some wrong forces, but in the inner world the Olympics is a great opportunity for the upliftment of human awareness…This world is full of sadness, sorrows, frustrations and depression, and so many unfriendly, hostile things happen. But in the Olympics at least we get the opportunity to meet together for a few weeks and create oneness-world family.”*

The first modern Olympic Games as we know them today were held in Athens in 1896 as a tribute to their origin. The games brought together 14 nations and 241 athletes. The Olympics is a dynamic way to celebrate sporting achievement and international friendship. This wonderful attitude is explained by the great **Emil Zatopek**, who competed in the 1948 Olympics:

*“For me, the 1948 Olympics was a liberation of the spirit. After all those dark days of the war, the bombing, the killing, the starvation, the revival of the Olympics was as if the sun had come out. I went into the Olympic Village in 1948 and suddenly there were no more frontiers, no more barriers. Just the people meeting together. It was wonderfully warm. Men and women who had lost five years of life were back again.”*

Today, we see such things as North and South Korea, who have been enemies for about 70 years fielding a joint women’s hockey team, and both countries walking in together in the opening ceremonies.

The Olympics is a rare occasion where 204 countries from around the world come together in a spirit of friendship and sporting endeavor; it is like a sporting United Nations. During the Olympics it is much easier to break down the barriers that often keep nations ignorant of each other’s cultural differences. Through sport, we can remember there is much more that unites us than divides us.

The sheer variety in cultural differences between the 204 visiting countries is also likely to have a lasting effect and may well bring us a new and undiscovered sports, recipes or dances that have been hidden gems for generations. With this in mind the question about moving the location of the Olympics becomes simple to answer. Put simply- to let as many countries as possible share the cultural, economic and world recognition that the Olympics may provide. **Pierre de Coubertin**, the ‘father of the modern Olympics’ said that:

*“the important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win, but to take part; the important thing in life is not triumph, but the struggle; the essential thing is not to have conquered, but to have fought well.”*

Though winning is not everything in the Olympics today, however winning a medal has its benefits. Winning a medal can lead to millions of dollars in endorsements as well as instant fame as a celebrity.

**QUESTIONS ON THE BACK🡪**

**Using the document, identify a minimum of THREE similarities and differences regarding the Olympics in Ancient Greece compared to the modern day Olympics.**

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| **SIMILARTIES** | **DIFFERENCES** |
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**Reread the quotes of Luian, and of Emil Zapoteck. How do these quotes show how the Olympics have endured or changed over time?** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**How has the importance of the Olympics endured or changed over time?** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**The enduring issue this best associates with is (check all that apply):**

* **CULTURAL DIFFUSION**
* **HUMAN RIGHTS**
* **IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENT ON HUMANS**
* **POWER**
* **TECHNOLOGY**
* **SCARCITY**