

# USING THE OLYMPICS AS A LEARNING TOOL:

## ACTIVE RESEARCH AND SELECTING INFORMATION

— Atiya Khan

### Introduction

The London 2012 Olympics presents a fantastic opportunity for cross-curricular teaching. All children are likely to be engaged on some level, with different countries represented in a variety of sports, huge coverage in the news and in school with activities such as sweepstakes. Using a live topic provides 'children the opportunity to contextualise learning in meaningful experiences' (Rowley, 2009, p.24), while a cross-curricular approach allows children to 'make connections, not just within the subjects but between them in order to consolidate their learning' (Rowley, 2009, p.11). ICT can also be used to motivate children perhaps not interested in sport, and linking in with other subjects may add to the appeal of the topic. This article describes a history/geography lesson and ideas for cross-curricular teaching opportunities, including the use of ICT.

### What do we already know about the Olympics?

Invite children to contribute what they already know and write on a mind map on the board. This provides an inclusive introduction, a visual stimulus on the board, and identifies any 'experts' in the class who can share their knowledge or particular passions. Using talk partners, the pupils can remind themselves what a timeline is and how to search for information.

### How did the Olympics become what it is today?

The enquiry involves children finding the date, place and sport within an allocated period selected by the teacher using a range of sources, including the internet (see websites opposite), books and CDs. They will then need to interpret and organise the information, then physically place it on the class timeline in chronological order (History 1a/b, 5a/c) – see figure 1, and plot on a map (Geography 2c). The children can be split into groups, with each member having a specific role, such as book researcher, internet factfinder, plotter on timeline, mapper and presenter.

In carrying out this activity, a range of sources should be provided, and the teacher should raise questions to compare the information, such as querying the creator of the information, the target audience and the trustworthiness of the information. This will help them to recognise that 'History is much more than finding and retrieving information'. The children can then interpret their information, checking and choosing the information as a group, using their decision to exercise control over what they want to use (ICT 1a/b/c, 5a/b and History 4a/b).

The end product will be a class timeline (figure 1) and a world map showing the places where the games have been held, for displays and for use in subsequent lessons.

Finally children should present their findings to the group, explaining how they found, chose and worked out where to input their information, with the opportunity for peer or group self-assessment.

### The lesson plan

#### What are the teaching objectives?

- To gain understanding of the Olympics 2012 as an historic world event, and how the Games have evolved over time.
- To revise the meaning of chronological order and use this in context.
- To develop geographical skills by using a world map.
- To be able to search for information, and use information processing skills to compare information and organise it.
- To be able to explain their choice of information, and how they worked out where to input information, for example explaining their understanding of chronological order or how they worked out where to plot a given country on the world map.

#### Success criteria

I can work as a team to:

- find facts (date, place, sport) about the Summer Olympics in a particular period
- use a range of sources
- put information on a timeline
- plot information on a map.

#### Year group

Year 5, mixed ability within groups, with roles allocated based on personal targets.

#### Teaching time

One hour.

#### Key question

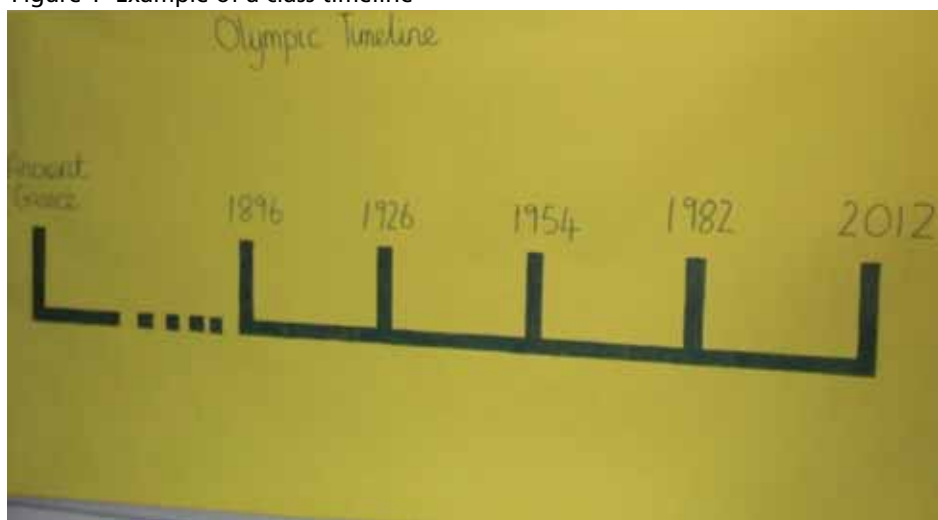
What is the most reliable source?

### Subsequent lessons

#### PE/Literacy

- Based on the book *Weslandia* by Paul Fleischman, the children could work in groups to invent their own game for Sports Day, while acquiring and developing skills, using tactics and evaluating their performance in PE (1a/b, 2a/b/c, 3a/b).
- Children will practice their use of instructional language by writing the rules for their invented game (En3, 1c, 7b, 12), and they can swap their rules with another group, giving real purpose for their writing.

Figure 1 Example of a class timeline



- Children should have the opportunity to refine their rules.
- The children can record themselves playing their game by means of video recording, which could act as an inclusion strategy for children feeling less confident in PE and may increase 'engagement and motivation' for children 'who were otherwise reluctant learners' (Ofsted, 2005, p14).

## PSHE/Citizenship/Literacy

- Using *Weslandia* as a starting point, children can discuss feelings around competition and inclusion (PSHE, 1a/b/c, 2a/b/f/g/k, 4a, 5b/c/f), providing a context for 'addressing inequalities and inclusion', (Blake and Plant, 2005, p.21) then each group would prepare a presentation to persuade their class to vote for their favourite game for Sports Day.
- The presentation allows the children to practise their persuasive language, and a video recorder can be given as an option as a format to deliver their presentation. This again could be a motivating factor for some children, encourage inclusion and permit 'experimentation and risk taking without penalty ...' (Hall, 2010, p.43), so that children could delete their films if they were not satisfied with them. Giving the children a choice 'is seen by many as a more motivating teaching and learning strategy ....' (Meadows, 2010, p.406).
- Exercising 'pupil voice', by allowing the children to vote for their favourite game for use in a real context on Sports Day, will encourage children to 'feel valued and included ...' (Robinson, 2010, pp.334-335). Voting would also introduce children to the concept of democracy, and for them to recognise how a collective vote can make a difference to the outcome, by 'developing participation and active citizenship skills' (Blake and Plant, 2005, p.19, citing Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation 1998, National Healthy School Standard 2003) (Citizenship 2g).

## What are the intended learning outcomes?

- 1 To find and choose facts and put them in chronological order.
- 2 To invent our own game for Sports Day.
- 3 To prepare and deliver a persuasive presentation.

### Other ideas

#### Science:

- Health benefits
- Nutrition
- Pulse rate

#### Music and dance:

- Opening ceremony

#### PSHE:

- What it feels like to go to another country

#### Numeracy:

- Ticket prices
- Cost of building
- Data handling

#### D.T.:

- Design own stadium

#### Geography:

- Flags and meanings
- Class flag
- Use of stadium after Olympics
- London as a city

#### Literacy:

- Big writes
- Persuasive/instructional writing
- Diary entries
- Guide book for tourists
- Trip to Olympic site

## Conclusion

The lesson ideas presented should provide children with memorable, meaningful experiences to engage and motivate them in their learning. A trip to the Olympics site would also provide real context to their learning.

## Resources

Websites on the Olympics:

**Olympic history and timeline** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/olympics2000/fans\\_guide/features/history/874495.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/olympics2000/fans_guide/features/history/874495.stm)

Ancient Greeks: the Olympic Games provides a brief summary of the origins of the Olympic games: [www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/ancient\\_greeks/the\\_olympic\\_games/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/ancient_greeks/the_olympic_games/)

**Olympics Timeline** [www.factmonster.com/spot/olympicstimeline3.html](http://www.factmonster.com/spot/olympicstimeline3.html)

**Ancient Greece** provides background <http://woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/Homework/Greece.html>

**London 2012 Teaching Resources** <http://projectbritain.com/olympics/teachingresources.html>

## References

- Blake, S. and Plant, S. (2005) *Addressing Inclusion and Inequalities through PSHE and Citizenship*. London: National Children's Bureau
- Fleischman, P. (1999) *Weslandia*. London: Walker Books
- Hall, D. (2010) *The ICT Handbook for Primary Teachers*. London, New York: Routledge
- Meadows, J. (2010) E-Learning. In: Arthur, J. and Cremin, T. (eds.) *Learning to Teach in the Primary School*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 402-413
- Ofsted. (2005) *Embedding ICT in schools – a dual evaluation exercise* [online]. Available from: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Curriculum/Information-and-communication-technology/Secondary/Embedding-ICT-in-schools-a-dual-evaluation-exercise](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Curriculum/Information-and-communication-technology/Secondary/Embedding-ICT-in-schools-a-dual-evaluation-exercise)
- QCA (2011) *The Key Stage 2 curriculum* [online]. Available from: <http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/key-stages-1-and-2/subjects/index.aspx>
- Rowley, C. and Cooper, H. (2009) *Cross-curricular Approaches to Teaching and Learning*. London: Sage

Atiya Khan is a student at the University of the West of England.