



# HISTORY BITES

## LITTLE NIBBLES OF HISTORY

### *Where did the Olympics begin?*

*The Olympics date back to an Ancient Greek festival, which was part of a five day festival held every four years in honour of Zeus, the King of the Gods.*

It is believed there were similar festivals and games back as far as the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC, **yes, that long ago!**

However, the first recorded details we have are from 776 BC.

Nobody really knows their origins, though there are several legends, for example:



The Greek hero Hercules had just won a race at Olympia, a valley near the city of Elis, then as winner he proclaimed that the race should be re-run every four years to celebrate his victory.

Another asserts that Zeus, the King of the Gods, founded the games after defeating his father, Cronus, in a battle over who controlled the world.

A further declares that the guardians of an infant Zeus held the first event.

In fact, the most likely one is that the King of Elis decided in 884 BC to open up a local religious festival to the whole of Greece and the games were part of that festival.

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### *Where did the Olympics begin?*

The Olympics were first and foremost a religious event to celebrate the Ancient Greek gods, in particular Zeus. In Greece at this time there were several such festivals, but by 572 BC the Olympics had become the most important. The reason they were around athletics was that athletics were always a major part Greek festivals.

Finally, the reason they were, and are still, held every four years (until Covid-19 changed it!) was because Greeks wanted them to start at the beginning of a four year period known as an Olympiad, originally the festival was organised to coincide with the start of this cycle, interestingly 776 BC is considered as the first four year Olympiad.

At Educational Musicals we've published a musical

### *The Ancient Olympics The Legend of Callipateira*

a story based around the Ancient Greek Olympic games, which if you go to

<https://eml.coolski.co.uk/index.php/product/the-ancient-olympics/>

you can listen to two of the catchy songs, read two pages of fun script, then download it and start rehearsing immediately.



### *Isn't History Fun?*

*To learn more, go to:*

<https://www.sportingheritage.org.uk/content/what-we-do/education/ancient-olympics>

<https://faculty.elmira.edu/dmaluso/sports/greece/greecewomen.html>

<https://www.penn.museum/sites/olympics/olympicorigins.shtml#:~:text=In%20Greek%20mythology%2C%20Mt.,at%20Olympia%20is%20shown%20here.>

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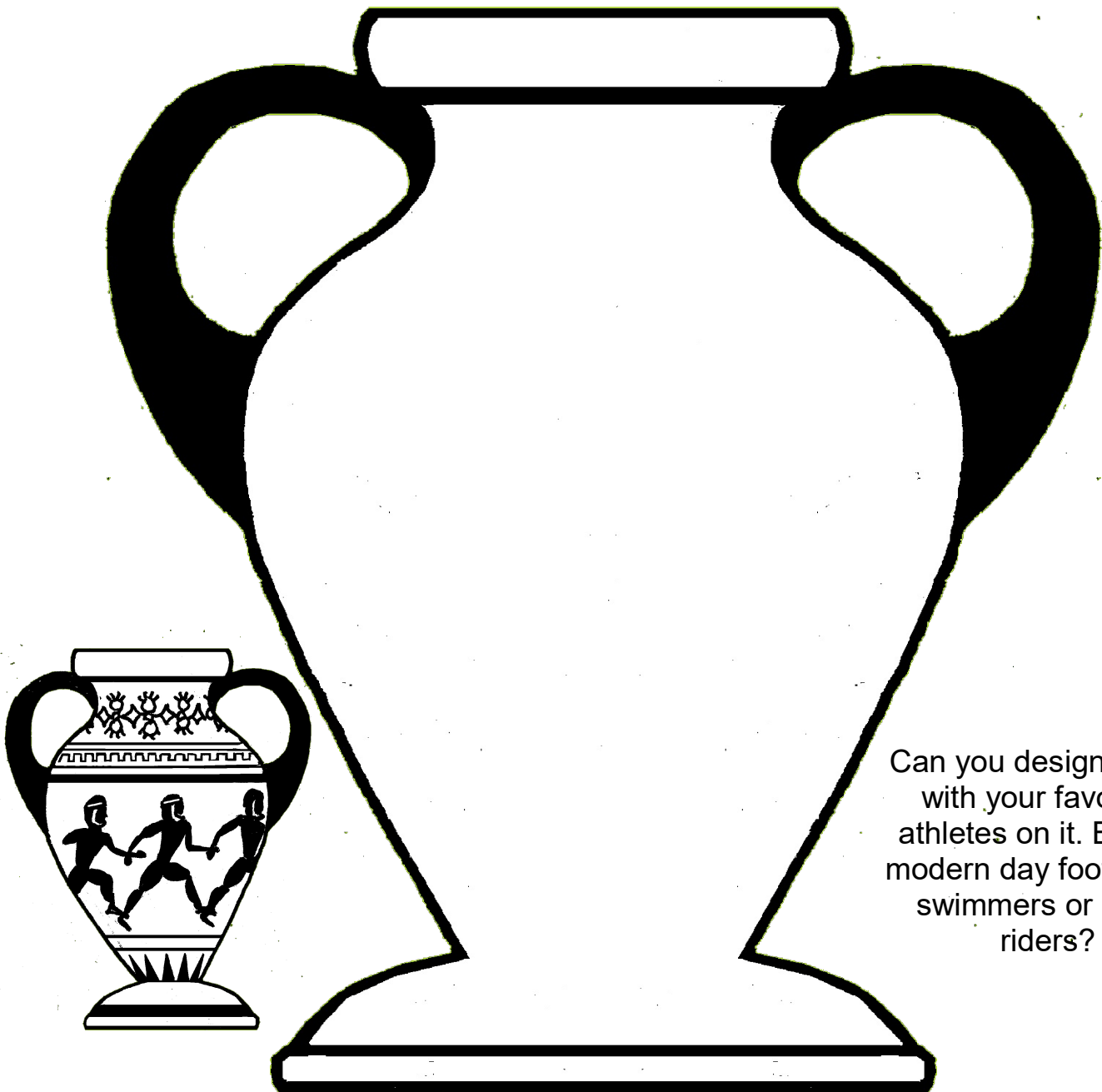
# HISTORY BITES

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**1 lesson**  
**CLASSROOM ACTIVITY**

## DESIGN AN OLYMPIC GREEK VASE

The Ancient Greeks depicted their favourite athletes on vases.



Can you design a vase with your favourite athletes on it. Be they modern day footballers, swimmers or horse riders?

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