Chapter 3

**Echo: The Olympic Games**

This activity corresponds to “The Olympic Games” feature in your textbook. The following questions are designed to help you to comprehend the origins of the original Greek Olympic games. Once you have answered the questions in the Comprehension section, submit your answers and move on to the questions in the Analysis and Outside Sources sections. Each section is designed to build upon the one before it, taking you deeper into the subject you are studying. After you have answered all of the questions, you will have the option of emailing your responses to your instructor.

**Introduction**

Since 1896, every four years, the world’s nations celebrate athleticism, discipline, and sportsmanship in the modern Olympic games. The roots of the modern games can be seen in the Greece of nearly 3000 years ago. However, the origins of the games were more than athletic matches. They were part of an elaborate religious festival held to provide an outlet for the fiercely competitive Greek city-states.

**Comprehension**

1. What was the reason behind the ancient Olympic games? What sports/activities comprised the first games?

2. How did the ancient Greeks respond to defeat in the ancient world? What reward(s) awaited the victors?

3. What was the role of women in the Olympics? How did women respond to their exclusion from the games?

**Analysis**

1. The Olympics were revived by the Baron Coubertin in 1896. What was his vision for the Olympics? How did he conceive of the idea of Olympic competitions in relation to the conflict of European nations in and outside of Europe at the time?

2. The fourth-century Christian emperor Theodosius prohibited the ancient Olympics as being un-Christian. What aspects of the ancient Olympics might have led him to such a ban?

3. How were the games of the ancient Heraia (Heraea) a precursor for women’s athletics in our own time? Was the Heraia a “feminist event”?

**Outside Sources**
1. The website, *The Ancient Olympics* at http://perseus.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/Olympics/ gives a good overview of the Ancient Olympic Games, including some documents and ideas concerning the philosophy behind the ancient games. Based on this website, what was the philosophy behind the ancient games? Compare this philosophy to that of the modern games.

2. *The Ancient Olympic Games Virtual Museum* at http://minbar.cs.dartmouth.edu/greecom/olympics/ is a digitally enhanced website sponsored by Dartmouth College, which is free to use, but requires registration. Discuss the information found on this website.
3. **Outside Sources**

1. The BBC History website on mummies discusses the practice as seen in cultures around the world. How does this article add to your ideas about the practice of mummification?

   [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/egyptians/mummies_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/egyptians/mummies_01.shtml)

2. A *National Geographic* article from March 8, 2005 reveals an alternate explanation for the early death of King Tutankhamun, dissenting from the long-held belief that he was murdered. This site gives the text and some intriguing results from a reappraisal of the boy-king’s early demise.


3. What did King Tutankhamun look like? A long-standing controversy concerning the genetic and racial heritage of ancient Egyptians is revisited in this provocative article reappraising the origins of King Tutankhamun.