Culture, symbolism and environment

a unit of work for 8 to 12-year-olds

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The Beijing Games: Culture, symbolism and the environment

Christina Papasavvas
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Introduction

Essential question for this unit of work
How has the 2008 Beijing Olympics been influenced by China's place in time and space?

Essential concepts include:
- culture and identity
- diversity
- unity
- international connections
- interdependence
- history
- geography
- environment and sustainability
- tourism.

Essential understandings (assessment)
- the Olympic Games is a long-standing tradition and has been conducted in many countries around the world in the modern era
- China has a significant history, population, culture and geographical size that continues to influence tourism and international relations
- the culture of China is embedded in the preparations for the Beijing 2008 Games
- China has implemented sustainability and environmental strategies to cater for the large influx of people
- the Olympic Games represent a number of values in international relations and are an expression of global unity.

Essential questions to drive the inquiry process
- where is China?
- what other countries have hosted the Olympic Games in the past?
- what other countries are participating in the Beijing Games and where are they located?
- how does symbolism relate to unity and the Olympic Games?
- what traditional symbols have been incorporated into China's preparation for the Games?
- what places and landmarks/tourist attractions in China will be visited by people during the games?
- how will the Beijing Olympics impact on China's population and resources?
- how has Beijing accommodated for the environmental impact of the increased number of visitors to the city?
- what steps has China taken to ensure the Beijing Games are environmentally sustainable?
- how have environmental issues impacted on your life at school and at home?
- how do the Olympic Games influence international relations?
- what impact do the Olympics have on our country?

Overview of unit

This inquiry-based unit of work aims to engage students in an in-depth study of the Olympic Games from a predominantly geographical perspective. It is designed for primary-aged students from 8 to 12 years. There are five main stages to the unit—each leads the student to deeper levels of understanding and research. The activities are intentionally open-ended so that teachers can modify the lessons to suit individual student ability and interest within their class.

The core concepts of the unit are stated above and there are links to various other subjects such as history and cultural studies/humanities, ICT and thinking processes. The unit also integrates with maths, literacy and art and design, and incorporates speaking and listening skills and group work.
Stage 1: Tuning in
Rationale
• sparking interest and engaging students
• to gauge and assess students prior knowledge and understanding
• students think about and pose their own questions and generate discussion relevant to the topic.

Essential focus questions
• Where is China?
• What other countries have hosted the Olympic Games in the past?
• What other countries are participating in the Olympic Games and where are they?

The questions above will enable students to gain a deeper understanding of China and it’s location and the location of cities and countries that have hosted the Olympic Games in the past.

Note: students are expected to be proficient in locating features on a map using coordinates. An introductory session prior to this activity may be required. See <www.kidsgeo.com/geography-games/latitude-longitude-map-game.php> for an interactive game on longitude and latitude.

Suggested activities
Resources required
• atlases
• copies of Activity Resource Sheet B1: World outline map
• A5 cards for the fact cards
• a large wall map of the world displayed in the classroom

Teacher–led
1. Students study atlases and participate in teacher-led game—‘Find it first’.
2. Teacher asks where a country is that is participating in the Beijing Games or a city that has hosted the Games in the past. Students race in teams (of two or three) to locate the country/Olympic host city and to give longitude and latitude co-ordinates.
3. Discussion follows game with the leading questions:
• What do all these countries have in common?
• Where is China?

Student-led
Students are given copies of a world outline map/blackline master (Activity Resource Sheet B1) and asked to research in pairs or small groups to answer questions such as:
• where is China?
• how could you travel there from your home town or city?
• what other countries share a border with China?
• what other countries are participating in the Beijing 2008 Games and where are they located?
• mark participating countries for this year’s games on an outline map of the world using a simple colour key
• which countries have the longest travel time?
• what time will they arrive in Beijing if they leave at … ?

Teacher–led
Students are asked if they know of any other countries/cities that have hosted the Olympics in the past. Other discussion questions may include:
• where were the original Olympic Games held?
• what years did other countries/cities host the games?
• after discussion and brainstorming, present students with the list of Olympic host cities and countries (Activity Resource Sheet B2).

**Student-led**

• allocate each student an Olympic Games host country
• students use the internet and other resources to find five facts about that country including its geographical location
• facts may include population, annual rainfall, tourist attractions, languages, religions and so on
• students present the facts on A5 cards to display in the classroom

• teachers can use all Olympic Games including winter and paralympics if required
• can be used as a homework/class research task.

As students share their findings and their A5 fact cards, mark the countries with a flag/sticker on a large wall map of the world and display the fact cards around the map.

**Assessment**

Detail of research and facts about the country, presentation, time management. Criteria can be negotiated by the teacher and students or designed by the teacher and linked to specific curriculum outcomes.
### Activity Resource Sheet B2: Olympic host cities and countries (summer)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Olympiad</th>
<th>Host city</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>State/province/region</th>
<th>Number of countries</th>
<th>Number of athletes</th>
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<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Sörmland and Uppland</td>
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<td>2407</td>
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1 cancelled for World War I
2 cancelled for World War II
**Activity Resource Sheet B2: Olympic host cities and countries (winter)**

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<th>Number of countries</th>
<th>Number of athletes</th>
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<td>Krasnodar Krai</td>
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</table>

¹ cancelled for World War I
Stage 2: Finding Out

Rationale

Students begin to process and organise their ideas using a variety of resources such as employing thinking tools and ICT. Teachers act as facilitators to assist students in sorting out and make sense of the information they have gathered.

Essential focus questions

- how does symbolism relate to unity and the Olympic Games?
- what traditional symbols have been incorporated into China’s preparation for the Games?
- what places/tourist attractions in China will be visited by thousands of visitors during the Olympics?

The questions above will assist students in developing a deeper understanding of the symbolism relating to the Olympic Games, both past and present, and how this is connected to culture.

Tourism and travel within China and Beijing are explored, linking culture, geography and history. The activities suggested below are designed as in-depth inquiry projects based around the core concepts. Teachers can modify one or all activities to suit individual student ability.

Suggested activities

Activity 1: Symbols

Resources required
- copies of Activity Resource Sheet B3: Olympic rings
- whiteboard markers of specific Olympic colours (or textas for use on paper)
- compasses for drawing and measuring.

Teacher-led

1. Students are asked ‘What is the current Olympic symbol?’ (the rings).
2. Students can come up to the board and draw their suggestions.
3. Display the correct rings—from left to right the top line is blue, black, red; bottom line is green and yellow.
4. Discuss symbolism and meaning of the rings …

The Olympic Rings have been a part of the Olympic Games since 1913. Baron Pierre de Coubertin began the modern Olympics. He chose to put the rings on a flag. The design came from Greece. Each ring stands for a region of the world. The regions are Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and Australia/Oceania. Each ring has a colour. The colours are blue, yellow, black, green, and red in that order. The colours come from flags around the world.

Jody Williams 2007

Student-led

Students independently design a new symbol for the Games to represent similar ideas, draft in workbooks, then ‘good copy’ on A4 paper with an attached key. Students use compasses and scale drawing when designing the flag. Discuss colours and imagery used and how it represents the international nature of the games.

Activity 2: Olympic imagery

Resources
- computers
- copies of Activity Resource Sheet B1: World outline map
- copies of Activity Resource Sheet B4: Olympic emblems and mascots.

Student-led

1. Organise students into small groups and allocate topics for research.
2. Students use the internet to research Olympic Games emblems, mascots and pictograms.
3. Discuss the emblems, mascots and pictograms from past games and compare these with the 2008 symbols.
5. On an outline map of the world, students mark the location of the host city/country for the Olympic Games they have researched. Present to the class in groups.
Activity 3: Travelling in China

Resources required
- travel brochures of local and international destinations
- copies of Activity Resource Sheet B5: Lotus Chart
- computers—one for each group
- resource books about tourism in China
- list of websites and weblinks relating to the research topic
- timetable of events for Beijing 2008 Games

Teacher-led
1. Give students access to a range of travel brochures and allow time for them to read through a few.
2. Identify the main features of a travel brochure such as layout, facts, the language used, information included, and so on.
3. Ask students to imagine that the Olympics are to be held in their home town/city. What tourist attractions would you recommend to visitors/travellers of your age and gender?

Student-led
1. Students design a brochure for a tourist attraction in their home country or a place they have visited overseas.
2. In small groups, students research tourism in China. Using a Lotus Chart identify the main cultural and historical sites and monuments a tourist would visit and write a few facts about each place. Students can also use some of the squares to draw/sketch the actual monuments. Mark these places accurately on a map of China. Present your work to the class as a role play as if you are the tour guide and the class are tourists/visitors.
3. Students select one topic from the list below and undertake independent research to develop a mini PowerPoint presentation:
   - festivals
   - people
   - food
   - traditions
   - legends
   - human wonders, such as the terracotta warriors, rice plains, etc.
   - natural wonders, such as native animals like the panda, silk worm, etc.
   - calligraphy
   - geographical tools and inventions, such as the seismograph and the compass.

4. If you went to the Beijing Games which events would you like to go and see? Study the timetable of events at <http://en.beijing2008.cn/cp/venues/schedule/ >

Assessment
Teachers can negotiate criteria for the brochure, Lotus Chart, PowerPoint presentation and itinerary.

Useful websites for student research
Emblems
<http://en.beijing2008.cn/>
<www.olympic.org/uk/games/>

Pictograms
<http://olympic-museum.de/pictograms/Picto1968.htm>
<http://olympic-museum.de/index.html#pictograms>
<www.olympic.org/uk/games/>

Mascots
<www.mapsofworld.com/olympic-trivia/olympic-mascot.html>
<www.olympic.org/uk/games/>. 
Activity Resource Sheet B3: Olympic rings
**Activity Resource Sheet B4: Olympic emblems and mascots**

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<thead>
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<th>Year Olympic Games were hosted</th>
<th>Emblem/mascot/pictograms</th>
<th>Geographical location of host country</th>
<th>Other information about host country</th>
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</table>
Activity Resource Sheet B5: Lotus diagram

The lotus diagram supports students in engaging in creative thinking and critical analysis as they explore new ideas. Students develop deeper understanding by examining a variety of related areas by breaking broad topics into components. The steps involved are:

1. Determine the topic to be studied and state it clearly.
2. Brainstorm to prioritise the major topics.
3. Write the main topic in the centre of the rectangle of the lotus diagram.
4. Place each of the eight sub-topics in the rectangles surrounding the centre rectangle.
5. Transfer each of the sub-topics to its corresponding numbered rectangle and brainstorm more subtopics or applications.

Stage 3: Sorting out

Rationale
Students use a variety of resources, including their own prior knowledge and experiences, and begin gathering information to assist them with their understanding.

Essential focus questions
- How will the Beijing Olympics impact on China’s population and resources?
- How has Beijing accommodated for the environmental impact of the increased number of visitors?
- What steps has China taken to ensure the Beijing Games are environmentally sustainable?
- How have environmental issues impacted on your life at school and at home?

These questions relate directly to environment and sustainability. Student now have an understanding of geography, history and culture in China. Through the sorting out stage, students will apply this knowledge and their own perspectives when studying environmental challenges for China and the world by linking their own experiences to their learning.

Suggested activities

Resources
- reading material about Beijing’s environmental strategies, available from these weblinks
  <http://en.beijing2008.cn/12/12/greenolympics.shtml>
- highlighters for students to mark important information
- A3 paper for posters
- compasses for drawing.

Teacher-led
1. Brainstorm possible solutions to some of the problems that China faces due to the huge number of people visiting around the time of the Games. For example: air pollution, noise pollution, accommodation, resources such as water, cost of new facilities and infrastructure such as the new Dragon-shaped airport, the Bird’s Nest stadium, and so on. Use a concept map, a mind map or compile a list.
2. Brainstorm possible solutions for Beijing’s environmental issues by linking directly to the students experiences at school and at home.
3. Provide students with reading material on the actual strategies that Beijing has used to ensure the Games are ‘green’ such as recycled steel for new roadways, providing 20,000 ‘green buses’ for transport, using solar power for bathrooms and street lighting in the athletes’ village and developing wastewater recycling plants.
4. The slogan for the games is ‘one world, one dream’. How can this relate to environmental issues around the globe? How has global warming and climate change had an impact on practises in your school and community? For example, recycling, composting, rubbish-free lunches, using less power and water, walking to school, etc. Create a class mind map.

Student-led
Design a poster with the olympic slogan and an environmental message on it to display around your school and/or in your classroom.
Stage 4: Drawing conclusions, going further, reflection and action

Rationale
Students:
- discuss their findings and reflect on their learning
- form opinions based on theirs and others’ investigations
- suggest solutions and ideas based on their findings and possibly initiate actions for going further and making an impact out in the real world.

Essential focus questions
- What impact do the Olympics have on our country?
- How have the Olympic Games influenced international travel and connections through time?

Suggested activity

Resources
- computers for research.

Teacher-led
1. Where is the torch relay going? As a class, track its journey.
2. In what other ways have the Games impacted on our country in 2008? For example, athletes, school and community competitions, celebrations, protests, etc.

Student-led
1. In small groups, brainstorm responses to question 2 (games impacts) and share with the rest of the class from most popular answer to least.

Visit these websites ...
for Australian students
<www.olympics.org.uk/home2.aspx>
for students in the UK

2. Where do you think the Games should be held next? Give reasons for your choice.

Stage 5: Drawing a conclusion to the unit and assessing overall learning

To conclude the unit and assess overall learning, pose the Essential Question to students and ask them to write a response (about half to a full A4 page) …

How has the 2008 Beijing Olympics been influenced by China’s place in time and space?