**The Ancient Olympics Games**

(Reading comprehension exercise level B1)

*Five sentences have been removed from the text. Choose from sentences A-H the one which fits each gap. There are three extra sentences you do not need to use.*
The Olympic Games of ancient Greece was a very different event to the international spectacle that we watch every four years. What started out as an ancient Greek festival dedicated to Zeus, the ruler of all Greek gods and goddesses, has become the pinnacle٭ of sport. 1)… But let's return to 776 BCE, to the ancient city of Olympia, where the Olympic Games were first held.

So, what were the ancient Olympic Games like? Just like today's Olympics, they were held every four years.2) … More events were added over time and the Olympic Games grew into a five-day religious sporting celebration.

Like today's athletes, competitors needed to qualify to compete in the ancient games. It was a great honour to be crowned a champion. Past champions were held in high esteem. Sculptures of them were displayed in Olympia to glorify their achievements and inspire others.

Men from Greece, Italy, Africa and Asia Minor travelled to Olympia to take part in events which included running, chariot races, bareback horse-riding and the pentathlon.

3) …

Unlike today's athletes who compete for gold medals, winners of events in ancient Greece were awarded with a wreath made from the branches of an olive tree.

The competition was held over five days with spectators being entertained in a carnival-like atmosphere with poetry, music and social gatherings between events.

4) …Even during times of conflict, the Games allowed neighbouring groups to put aside their differences and compete in peace to honour their gods.

The Roman Emperor Theodosius decided to ban the Olympic Games in 393 CE as Christianity had taken over as the official religion. It was no longer acceptable to hold an event in the name of the ancient gods and the temples were pulled down. 5)…

The Games were reintroduced in 1896 with the first Games of the modern era held in Athens. The modern games resurrected some ancient ceremonial traditions and ideals. This has resulted in them becoming a modern symbol of world peace from their humble beginnings in ancient Greece.

٭the most successful point, the culmination

1. The site was eventually destroyed by an earthquake in the sixth century.
2. However, many people nowadays watch the event on TV.
3. They began as a simple running race held to honour the God Zeus.
4. By the time he retired, Michael Phelps had collected a total of 23 golds, three silvers and two bronzes.
5. An Olympic gold medal is something all today's elite athletes dream about winning.
6. For approximately one thousand years the Olympic Games continued to meet every four years.
7. The marathon is a modern event that was first introduced in the Modern Olympic Games in 1896 in Athens.
8. Women were not allowed to participate or even attend the Games and the penalty for any female caught watching an event was death.

Suggested follow-up activities:

1. List 5 Greek Gods and 5 Godesses (and their roles).
2. Identify 3 similarities & differences between the Ancient and Modern Olympic Games.
3. Mention 2 sports that you believe should be included among the olumpic events. Justify your choices.
4. Create a banner to represent your country in the next Olympic games.

Answer keys:

1 – E

2 – C

3 – H

4 – F

5 – A