

"The Olympic Games are a waste of money

FACTS AND FIGURES

- The first modern Olympics began in Athens on April 5, 1896. They hosted just 251 athletes from 13 countries playing nine sports and cost \$10 million in today's terms. They were initiated by Pierre de Coubertin, a French aristocrat convinced that athletic prowess could save his nation from military humiliation.
- The 2008 Olympics in Beijing, China, cost over \$40 billion, making it the second most expensive Games after the Russian 2014 Winter Olympics (51bn). Even though it was less, it hosted three times as many events.
- Australia estimates it gained \$3.2b extra tourist revenue in the 4 years after Sydney 2000.
- With increased security fears Athens spent \$1.5b on security out of a total of \$12b on the 2004 games.
- To make way for Beijing's 2008 Olympic infrastructure, 1.5 million people were forcibly evicted from their homes with minimal compensation. The neighbourhoods were destroyed and residents removed to the outskirts of the city far from friends, family and places of work.
- Rio de Janeiro's 2015 preparations for the OG were marred by bloody confrontations between police and residents who resisted attempts to forcibly remove them.

VOCABULARY: Olympic Games

- | | |
|--|---|
| ◦ Bronze/silver/gold medal | ◦ Reward : récompense |
| ◦ Bidding process : candidature | ◦ Runner-up: deuxième, finaliste |
| ◦ Burden : fardeau | ◦ Short-lived :éphémère # lasting |
| ◦ Championship :championnat | ◦ Showcase: vitrine |
| ◦ Contestant = participant | ◦ Sporting event :événement sportif |
| ◦ Doping : dopage | ◦ Sportsmanship: esprit sportif |
| ◦ Economic spinoffs = fallout | ◦ Substitute : remplaçant |
| :retombées économiques | ◦ Supremacy |
| ◦ Facilities: installations | ◦ Swimming: natation |
| ◦ Front runner : le favori, chef de file | ◦ To boo: huer |
| ◦ IOC: International Olympic Committee | ◦ To cheat : tricher |
| ◦ Opponent = contender : | ◦ To host: accueillir |
| adversaire | ◦ To perform :accomplir |
| ◦ Power struggle : lutte de pouvoir | ◦ To rehabilitate = renovate |
| ◦ Ranking = placement: classement | ◦ To support: encourager |
| ◦ Referee : arbitre | ◦ To tie up funds : immobiliser des fonds |
| | ◦ Track-and-field: athlétisme |

Up to you!

Tips for referee – Olympic Games are a waste of money

PROS

- High cost of infrastructure and organisation. Exceed predictions.
- Not paid off by visitors and tourists' expenses.
- Increase taxes for locals. Not the ones hired to build the premises.
- Disturbance and nuisance for locals (traffic, noise, pollution, overcrowded means of transportation...).
- More urgent needs: hospitals, schools, electricity, housing, salaries.
- Short-term impact and attractiveness; neglected premises afterwards.

CONS

- Infrastructures remain and benefit locals.
- Good for the image of the region and country; draw more tourists. International showcase.
- Create jobs, boost employment, help families. Incite to do sports.
- Enthusiasm and unity of a region and nation to support its athletes.
- Environmental investment.
- Increase tourists' spending (souvenirs, transport, hotels, restaurant).

Questions

- a. Who benefits from hosting the Games?
- b. What can be a lasting impact of hosting the Games?
- c. Why can it create a feel-good factor?
- d. Why are the Games blamed for infringing upon human rights?
- e. What is the Olympic spirit or philosophy?

Suggestions de réponses aux questions

- a. Hosting has a national and local impact; it involves hundreds of events, creates jobs, attracts tourists, provides an opportunity to show supremacy and offers local people the possibility to use the facilities after the Games.
- b. There are social, economic and cultural impacts. Economic growth, infrastructure legacies and image promotion are among the top benefits. It can also incite people to do sport, which is a good thing given increasing obesity.
- c. Not only can it unite a nation in the bidding process and during the Games but it can also boost national pride.
- d. Building new infrastructure in a city means destroying established urban areas. When that happens, local populations and communities are often dispersed and displaced forcibly.
- e. It is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practised without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play.

The Olympic Games are a waste of money

51 billion dollars. That was the cost of the most expensive Olympic Games. In 2014, Russia came far ahead of Beijing which had spent \$40 billion in 2008 to host the Games in China. Yet, the fallout may not always be as high as expected. So why do some countries desperately want to host the Games? Aren't they just a waste of money?

Hosting the Games requires a lot of money even before a country gets the right to hold them. Indeed the bidding process is long and costly; a lot of advertising and marketing needs to be done to show a country is the fittest to host the Games. Then, the host country needs to tie up funds for the infrastructures and organisation. It must rehabilitate all kinds of facilities, invest in transportation renovations and accommodation and set up the sports venues. With increased security fears Athens spent \$1.5b on security out of a total of \$12b in 2004. Therefore, the final budget often exceeds the initial predictions.

The organising countries had better spend this money on more urgent needs: hospitals, schools, electricity, housing and salaries. Moreover, these expenditures are rarely paid off by visitors

and tourists' expenses. This results in higher taxes for locals although they are rarely hired to build the premises.

Locals also have to undergo constant disturbance and nuisance like traffic, noise and pollution for several months.

Even if Olympic sports events are very popular and well-attended, they have short-term impact and attractiveness. The premises are usually neglected afterwards.

The economic spinoffs are not the most worrying. To make way for Beijing's 2008 Olympic infrastructure, 1.5 million people were forcibly evicted from their homes with minimal compensation. The neighbourhoods were destroyed and residents removed to the outskirts of the city far from friends, family and places of work. Rio de Janeiro's 2015 preparations for the OG were marred by bloody confrontations between police and residents who resisted attempts to forcibly remove them.

Thus, if the Games are not so profitable, why are some cities so eager to hold them?

The Olympic Games can be beneficial

First, it is beneficial for the image of the region and country; it draws more tourists and acts as an international showcase. As a result, it increases tourists' spending on souvenirs, transport, hotels and restaurants. Australia estimates it gained £2b extra tourist revenue in the 4 years after Sydney 2000.

Local inhabitants can continue benefiting from the infrastructures and environmental investment. For the 2012 London Olympics, Natural England, Essex County Council and the Salvation Army worked together to increase biodiversity through the design of the elite mountain biking course: this also provided an opportunity to expand investment in the long-term sporting and recreational facilities within the area.

The Games may create jobs, boost employment and help families.

They unite a nation behind a common cause and arouse enthusiasm for national athletes who can inspire people to do sports.

Hosting the Games is a real economic, financial, political, social and environmental challenge that can put a country in the limelight ... at least for a while.

Marking scheme: the referee takes away points out of a count of 15.

- **Each participant needs a catchphrase (2 points)**
- **Each participant needs 3 arguments minimum, illustrated with examples and/or references (6 points)**
- **Each participant needs a powerful conclusion (2 points)**
- **Each participant needs to use at least 6 words from the word bank (2 points), 3 expressions imposed by the referee (2 points) and make one attempt at complex grammar (1 point)**
- **Every time a student asks for help either from you, the teacher or AI; you need to take away a point ;-)**