

# XX Winter Olympics

## • Keep 'em Reading •

by | Rebecca Hogue Wojahn

The XX Winter Olympics begin on February 10 in Turin, Italy. Soon, we'll be watching bobsledders rocket down icy slopes, figure skaters leap, twist and spin and cross-country skiers endure the cold and distance. Bring the Winter Olympics to your library with some of these activities.

### Research Skills

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The Olympics are a great opportunity for older students to learn about or apply their research skills. Take this opportunity to introduce them to reference materials like print and online encyclopedias, online databases and almanacs, or have them evaluate and use the information from Web sites such as [www.torino2006.org](http://www.torino2006.org) (Torino is Italian for Turin) or [www.nbcolympics.com](http://www.nbcolympics.com). Assign each student (or pair of students) a topic from the list below, then have them research and report on their findings. This can be expanded into a writing exercise by having them complete an I-Search paper on their topic using [www.literacymatters.org/content/isearch/intro.htm](http://www.literacymatters.org/content/isearch/intro.htm).

#### The Sports

- Alpine Skiing
- Biathlon
- Bobsleigh
- Cross-country Skiing
- Curling
- Figure Skating
- Freestyle Skiing
- Ice Hockey
- Luge
- Nordic Combined
- Short Track Speed Skating
- Skeleton
- Ski Jumping
- Snowboard
- Speed Skating

#### The U.S. Olympic Team

- Individual U.S. Olympic Team members, [www.usolympicteam.com/19.htm](http://www.usolympicteam.com/19.htm)

#### The Countries

- Australia
- Austria
- Belarus
- Bulgaria
- Canada
- China
- Croatia
- Czech Republic
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Great Britain
- Italy
- Japan
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Poland
- Russia
- Slovenia
- South Korea
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- United States



### Reading Olympics

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Hold your own reading Olympics! Challenge your students to become familiar with the Dewey decimal classifications by reading nonfiction books for a school-wide Olympic competition (if you prefer fiction, encourage your students to read different genres). To introduce the activity, talk about the Olympics. Then tell them this Olympics has a team competition as well

## Keep 'em Reading

as an individual one, but both involve reading non-fiction books.

### The Opening Ceremony

Hold an opening ceremony by parading students through the shelves, talking about the different Dewey classifications and what types of books can be found in each one. An Olympic torch can be purchased from Highsmith at [www.highsmith.com](http://www.highsmith.com).

### Team Competition

Explain the team competition to your students. Copy, enlarge and display the Reading Olympics Team Medal Count chart from page 4 in the library. Assign each class a country (they can draw out of a hat). If you want to encourage a sense of community, have students decorate their classroom doors or have them design symbols of their country that they can wear during their library time.

Share the medals list from the last winter Olympics at [www.nbcolympics.com/medals/1599000/detail.html](http://www.nbcolympics.com/medals/1599000/detail.html) and explain that many people keep track of their country's medal totals. Tell the students that in this competition, when they finish reading a book from a Dewey category, they'll earn a medal tally for their "country." However, for this Olympics, the color of the medal is determined by chance—when students have finished reading a book that would qualify, have them spin a dial, throw a dice or draw a slip of paper that lets them know what color medal they earned. Then mark it on the chart. The "country" with the highest total of "medals" at the end of the challenge earns a class celebration or free time in the library or computer lab. While the real Olympics last just over two weeks, six weeks might work better for this type of competition.

### Individual Competition

Include an individual competition in your Olympics. During the competition, challenge the students to read at least five books from five different Dewey categories to earn an individual gold medal, four for a silver and three for a bronze (of course, these numbers can be adjusted to fit your groups' abilities). As they finish each book, have them record it on the Olympic rings sheets on page 5—enlarge and photocopy on blue, red, yellow, green and white (the real color is black) paper to

use the Olympics ring colors. As students turn in the pages, display them as they construct their own Olympics rings.

Tell the students they can also enter their books into the "Additional Medal Categories" below. To encourage them to read more widely, tell them a book can only be entered into one category. The winners of these medals will be revealed at the closing ceremonies.

#### Additional Medal Categories

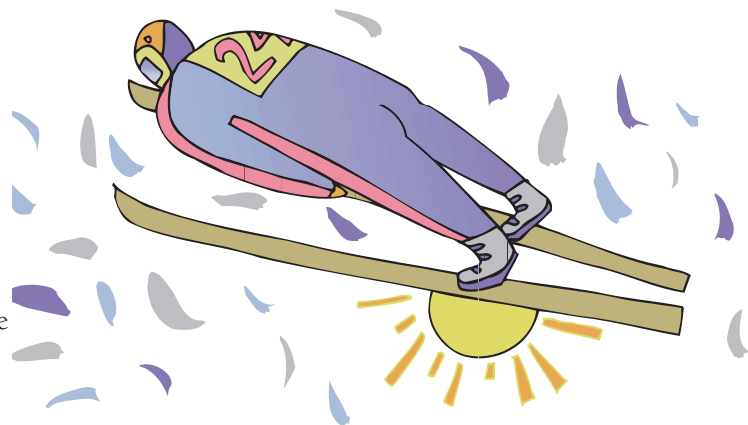
*For books that have been read in the Reading Olympics.*

- The longest book (pages)
- The thickest book (measurement)
- The most books read
- The longest title
- The longest word in a book
- The oldest book
- The book with the most illustrations
- The books with the most chapters

### Closing Ceremony

Invite all students who medaled to a closing ceremonies celebration. At the celebration, award the winners their medals—purchase medals or stickers or create them out of construction paper for the occasion. Then award the "Additional Medal Categories" winners.

If there's time, hold a couple of impromptu relay race competitions by dividing the students into teams. Have a stack of index cards with call numbers. The first student in each team draws a card and races to the shelves to find the book. When he or she returns with it, the next team member gets a card. Whichever team finishes first is the winner. Or, present each team with a stack of



books and have them put the books in order on a table. If desired, award the relay winners with medals as well.

Finally, end the celebration with snacks and another parade through the library on the way out. As students leave, extinguish the Olympics flame ... until the next challenge.

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## Books to Read Aloud or Display

There are many great nonfiction books on the Olympics and the individual winter sports. Try looking for these:

- *Celebrate the Spirit: The Olympic Games* by Cleve Dheensaw. Orca Book Publishers, 1996.
- *Coubertin's Olympics: How the Games Began* by Davida Kristy. Lerner Publishing Group, 1995.
- *Olympics* by X. J. Kennedy. Philomel Books, 1999.
- *The Encyclopedia of the Winter Olympics* by John Wukovits. Scholastic Library Publishing, 2001.
- *Great Moments in the Olympics* by Michael Burgan. World Almanac Library, 2002.
- *Great Olympic Moments* by Haydn Middleton. Heinemann Library, 2000.
- *Modern Olympic Games* by Haydn Middleton. Heinemann Library, 2000.
- *Olympic Games* by Chris Oxlade. DK Publishing, 2000.
- *Olympics!* by B. G. Hennessy. Viking, 1996.
- *Olympic Series (Figure Skating, Skiing, Speed Skating, The Winter Olympics, Bobsledding and the Luge)* by Larry Dane Brimner. Children's Press, 1997.
- *The Story of the Olympics* by Dave Anderson. William Morrow & Co., 2000.
- *United States Olympic Committee Basic Guide series.* Gareth Stevens Pub. 2002.

In addition, check your biographies section; many former Olympic stars are often featured.

Finally, don't forget fiction or folktales as a great way to introduce children to the sports of the Winter Olympics in indirect or fun and silly ways. Here are some recent titles:

### Skiing

- *Bloomability* by Sharon Creech. HarperCollins, 1998.
- *Captain Duck* by Jez Alborough. HarperCollins, 2003.
- *The Darkest Evening* by William Durbin. Orchard Books, 2004.
- *The Raven's Gift: A True Story from Greenland* by Kelly Dupre. Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

- *The Race of the Birkebeiners* by Lise Lunge-Larsen. Houghton Mifflin, 2001.
- *Robert and the Great Escape* by Barbara Seuling. Cricket Books, 2003.
- *Two by Two by Two* by Jonathan Allen. Dial, 1995.

### Skating

- *The Best Figure Skater in the Whole Wide World* by Linda Bailey. Kids Can Press, 2003.
- *Geez Louise* by Susan Middleton Elya. Penguin, 2003.
- *Kate Skates* by Jane O'Connor. Penguin, 1995.
- *Omar on Ice* by Maryann Kovalski. Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1999.
- *Party on Ice* by Amy Hest. William Morrow & Co., 1995.
- *Pearl's New Skates* by Holly Keller. HarperCollins, 2004.
- *Polar Skater* by Sally Grindley. Lobster Press, 2004.
- *Skating with Bears* by Andrew Breakspear. Penguin, 2005.
- *Slip! Slide! Skate!* by Gail Herman. Scholastic, 2000.
- *Sophie Skates* by Rachel Isadora. Penguin, 2001.

### Hockey

- *Getting in the Game* by Dawn Fitzgerald. Brook Press, 2005.
- *The Hockey Card* by Avi Slodovnick. Lobster Press, 2002.
- *The Magic Hockey Stick* by Peter Maloney. Dial, 1999.
- *The Million Dollar Goal* by Dan Gutman. Hyperion, 2005.
- *Molly Gets Mad* by Suzy Kline. Penguin, 2000.

### Snowboarding

- *Rhinos Who Snowboard* by Julie Mammano. Chronicle Books, 2004.
- *Snowboarding on Monster Mountain* by Eve Bunting. Cricket Books, 2003.
- *Snowboard Twist* by Jean Craighead George. Katherine Tegen Books, 2004.

# Reading Olympics Team Medal Count



| Country        | Gold | Silver | Bronze | Total |
|----------------|------|--------|--------|-------|
| Australia      |      |        |        |       |
| Austria        |      |        |        |       |
| Belarus        |      |        |        |       |
| Bulgaria       |      |        |        |       |
| Canada         |      |        |        |       |
| China          |      |        |        |       |
| Croatia        |      |        |        |       |
| Czech Republic |      |        |        |       |
| Estonia        |      |        |        |       |
| Finland        |      |        |        |       |
| France         |      |        |        |       |
| Germany        |      |        |        |       |
| Great Britain  |      |        |        |       |
| Italy          |      |        |        |       |
| Japan          |      |        |        |       |
| Netherlands    |      |        |        |       |
| Norway         |      |        |        |       |
| Poland         |      |        |        |       |
| Russia         |      |        |        |       |
| Slovenia       |      |        |        |       |
| South Korea    |      |        |        |       |
| Sweden         |      |        |        |       |
| Switzerland    |      |        |        |       |
| United States  |      |        |        |       |

# Olympic Reading Rings

