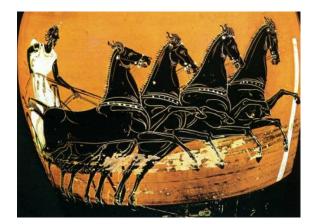


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Four-horse chariot races, running 12 rounds (about 14 km), became part of the Olympics circa 680 B.C. It was the first equestrian event of the ancient games. Because turns were to the left, the right-outer horse had to be fastest of the team. This image depicts an amphora, c. 420-400 B.C., showing a four-horse chariot in a turning maneuver. The owner of the horses, not the charioteer, was the official Olympics participant (and, if the team won, was declared the victor). Image online via <u>KU Leuven</u> (Belgium's largest university).

<u>Oinomaos</u> (Oenomaus) was a legendary king of <u>Pisa</u> (an <u>area</u> not far from <u>Elis</u> in the western part of Greece). His daughter <u>Hippodameia</u>, of marriageable age, had many suitors with whom Oinomaos was not always pleased.

He had reason to worry. An oracle had <u>warned Oinomaos</u> that he would die at the hand of his son-in-law.

Boastful of his chariot-racing skills, <u>Oinomaos</u> issued a legendary challenge. He would determine the worth of any potential son-in-law by testing his racing skills.

If the king failed to overtake any of his daughter's suitors in a <u>chariot race</u> between <u>Olympia</u> to the <u>Isthmus of</u> <u>Corinth</u> (where ships were moved <u>overland</u> in ancient times but now travel through the man-made <u>Corinthian</u> <u>Canal</u>), the victorious racer could <u>marry Hippodameia</u>.

However ... if any suitor lost the race, he would die.

Many erstwhile suitors had already lost their heads to the sword of Oinomaos. The king, an expert charioteer, thought he would never lose a race. Then love interfered.

Desiring to marry a handsome man named <u>Pelops</u>, Hippodameia approached her father's charioteer, Myrtilus (Myrsilos), with a devious plan. If her father's chariot were missing a linchpin from one of its wheels, <u>she</u> could fix the outcome of the race between her father and her suitor.

Myrtilus, also in love with Hippodameia, agreed to betray the king. He loosened the linchpin so the wheel would break free from the axle. (Note that some of the legends say it was Pelops who concocted the plan.)

With Oinomaos holding the reins of his horses, attempting to overtake the <u>speeding chariot</u> in front of him, his <u>chariot wheels fell away</u>. According to <u>one version</u> of the story, the king was caught in the reins and was dragged to death. Another version says that Pelops killed him.

In either event, Oinomaos lost both control and his life.

Pelops won the <u>day</u> and the <u>bride</u>. He also became king and, after conquering nearby Apia and Pelasgiotis, named the entire region after himself. The southern part of the Greek mainland is called the Peloponnese (or Peloponnesus, meaning Island of Pelops) to this day.

To honor <u>Zeus</u> (whose <u>statue</u> at <u>Olympia</u>, later sculpted by Pheidias, was one of the <u>seven wonders</u> of the ancient world) and to celebrate the life of Oinomaos (after his death), <u>Pelops</u> organized commemorative games to be held in <u>Olympia</u>. It was the beginning of a thousand-year tradition in the ancient Greek world. According to legend, it was also the beginning of a curse on Pelops' family.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-LEGEND-BEHIND-THE-GAMES-Ancient-Olympics

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-LEGEND-BEHIND-THE-GAMES-Ancient-Olympics

Media Stream













# Oinomaos - Expert Charioteer and King of Pisa

Cast-image replica of Oinomaos - from the East Pediment, Temple of Zeus - online, courtesy Hellenica.de (a German-language website). View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Oinomaos-Expert-Charioteer-and-King-of-Pisa

### Map of Ancient Greece

Image online, courtesy Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin. PD

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Map-of-Ancient-Greece

## Map Depicting the Location of Elis on the Peloponnesus Image online, courtesy Bryn Mawr College. PD View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Map-Depicting-the-Location-of-Elis-on-the-Peloponnesus-

# Statue of Hippodameia

Image online, courtesy the Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Theology at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg (known as FAU), located in the cities of Erlangen and Nuremberg (in Bavaria, Germany).

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#### Chariot Race - Ancient Greece

Athenian red-clay vase, described above, maintained by <u>Museo Nazionale Archeologico</u> in <u>Arezzo,</u> <u>Italy</u>. Image online, courtesy <u>Oxford University</u>.

View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Chariot-Race-Ancient-Greece</u>

<u>Map Depicting Location of Olympia</u> Map image online, courtesy <u>Tokyo University of Science</u>. PD

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# Pelops Statue

Image online, courtesy the Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Theology at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg (known as FAU), located in the cities of Erlangen and Nuremberg (in Bavaria, Germany).

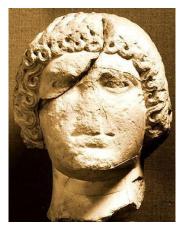
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#### Map of the Corinthian Canal

Image online, courtesy the United Methodist Church website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Map-of-the-Corinthian-Canal</u>

## Isthmus of Corinth

Image online, courtesy NASA. PD View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/lsthmus-of-Corinth</u>

# Chariot Race Scene - Ancient Greek Vase

This image depicts the detail of a late-classical Greek vase telling the story of Pelops and Hippodameia.

They are in a chariot race during which, according to the tale, Pelops defeats Hippodameia's father, King Oinomaos.

The prize for the victor was the hand of the King's daughter, Hippodameia.

Click on the image for a better view. Image, described above, online via the University of Texas, at Austin. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Chariot-Race-Scene-Ancient-Greek-Vase

### **Hippodameia**

Image online, courtesy the Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Theology at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg (known as FAU), located in the cities of Erlangen and Nuremberg (in Bavaria, Germany).

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View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Hippodameia

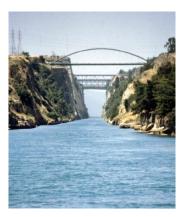












# Hippodameia Statue

Image online, courtesy the Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Theology at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg (known as FAU), located in the cities of Erlangen and Nuremberg (in Bavaria, Germany).

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<u>Map of Southern Europe</u> Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Map-of-Southern-Europe</u>

Path Used to Move Ships Over Land Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. PD View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Path-Used-to-Move-Ships-Over-Land-</u>

<u>Pelops, Namesake of the Peloponnese</u> Image online via Wikimedia Commons. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Pelops-Namesake-of-the-Peloponnese</u>

Pelops and Hippodameia in a Chariot Race Image online via Wikimedia Commons. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Pelops-and-Hippodameia-in-a-Chariot-Race

<u>Corinthian Canal Cutting Through Isthmus of Corinth</u> Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Corinthian-Canal-Cutting-Through-Isthmus-of-Corinth



<u>View of Ancient Olympia</u> Image online, courtesy allexperts.com website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/View-of-Ancient-Olympia</u>



# THE LEGEND BEHIND THE GAMES

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