

The Runners by Robert Delaunay is a cubist oil painting depicting several runners in various colored uniforms (yellow, blue, pink, green) running. The style uses bold, flat colors and geometric shapes, characteristic of the De Stijl movement.

# OLYMPICS PAST AND PRESENT COMPETITION

*The Runners*, About 1924, Robert Delaunay (1885–1941), Oil on canvas, The National Museum of Serbia

## Further Information

Our annual competition is back for 2024 but this time with a difference. We are partnering with the Fitzwilliam Museum's exhibition *Paris 1924: Sport, Art and the Body* to host a competition all about the Olympic Games. With its roots in the ancient world, the Olympics is an amazing sporting and cultural event that never fails to inspire people.

In the 1924 games, there were medals on offer to artists and writers as well as sports people so this year we want you to get inspired to create either a piece of art or creative writing on the topic of **The Olympics Past and Present**.

We are looking for creative and exciting entries that explore any aspect of the Olympics: ancient, modern, or a mixture of the two.

To help inspire you we have included some items from the museum exhibition below as examples of how you might engage with the theme and encourage you to visit the exhibition if you can but, above all, we are excited to see your unique take on the topic.

### Who is eligible?

The competition is open to all students in school years 9-13.

This year we are asking for individual entries.

You may enter both the art and writing competitions.

### The Art Competition

Choose the artistic medium that you think would work best to present your topic. Make sure that your piece looks thought-provoking and appealing. Remember that you want to interest and intrigue your audience – and the judges!

You will also have the opportunity to submit a short description of your work in 500 words or less, which explains its link to the theme. If you are exploring ideas from academic works or translations you have read, please include references to these works. You do not have to count references towards your word count.

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**Struggling for inspiration?** Perhaps you want to draw classical comparisons like this drawing of an athlete that reminds us of the dying Gaul sculpture:



Figure 1. (left) *The Strong Man*, About 1923, Marsden Hartley (1877–1943) Oil on canvas, The Jan T. and Marica Vilcek Collection, Promised gift to The Vilcek Foundation  
Figure 2. (right) *Dying Gaul*, plaster cast. Cast no. 377, Museum of Classical Archaeology, University of Cambridge. Original: Rome, Capitoline Museums, inv. no. S 747.

Or maybe you just want to depict your favourite sport in your own style like these two quite different images of tennis:



Figure 3. (left) *A Game of Tennis*, dressmaking fabric from the *Americana* series, 1926, Designed by Helen Wills (1905–1998) for Stehli Silks Corporation, Printed silk crepe, Allentown Art Museum, Gift of Kate Fowler Merle-Smith, 1978. (1978.26.165).

Figure 4. (right) *The Tennis Party*, 1900, Charles March Gere (1869–1957), Oil on canvas, The Wilson collection © the artist's estate

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## The Writing Competition

You can choose any creative writing style, prose or poetry, that you think would work best to present your topic. We are not looking for academic essays, but rather something creative and interesting that will draw in the reader and make them feel something.

The maximum word count is 2,000 words. There is no minimum length.

**Struggling for inspiration?** Perhaps a poem from the 1928 gold medal-winning poet, Kazimierz Wierzynski, will give you an idea:

Nurmi

My step is a dance march,  
My step, like a heart, beats,  
I am a clock of breath,  
I am floating in the air like a tower.

My rhythm merges with the earth,  
Beats on it with a resounding foot,  
I am running around the world,  
Through America and Europe.

My movement after movement comes,  
It turns into a moving wheel,  
I am a clock of effort,  
I am a record of inspiration.

I jump over the stands,  
I pass screaming stadiums,  
The wind of my wings carries me,  
The wind great and inexhaustible.

I chant the pace and increase it,  
I am just moving to the finish line,  
Tell these crowds of people –  
Let them be silent, let them be quiet.

I don't want any victory,  
I don't want their applause or screaming,  
I want to break the tape and rest  
On an old Greek monument.

Translation by Ludwik Kryzanowski in Mills and Kryzanowski p.30

Or perhaps a real letter from an athlete to his family ahead of the 1924 games will help you imagine what you would say to your family if you were competing in Paris 2024:

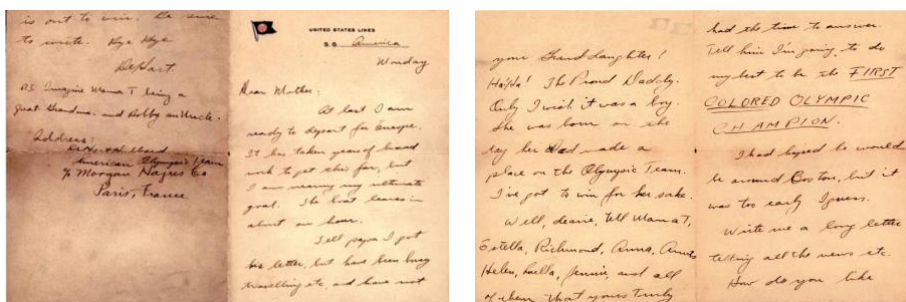


Figure 5. Letter written by William DeHart Hubbard (1903–1976) to his mother on board the SS America before sailing to Paris with the US Olympic team, 16 June 1924, Pen and ink on paper with printed letterhead, DeHart Hubbard Collection, Mss 1067, Cincinnati Museum Center

An abstract painting by Robert Delaunay titled 'The Runners', depicting several figures in motion with bold, vibrant colors like yellow, blue, pink, and green against a grey background. The figures are stylized with rounded forms and are captured in various running poses.

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## **The Prize(s)**

There will be two prizes awarded in each category of the competition- one for the best creative response and another for the best academic engagement.

The prize for each winner will be £250 and publication on our website and social media pages for all to see.

## **How to Enter**

To enter please send us a digital copy of your work via email (you can use WeTransfer for free if your file is too large) to [access@classics.cam.ac.uk](mailto:access@classics.cam.ac.uk) and complete [this form](#).

**\*Please do not post the original of any artwork to us\***

You will also need parental permission to enter. The form you need your parent/guardian to sign is below. Please attach this to your email submission.

**Please ensure the subject line of your email is 'Olympic Competition [Your Name]'**

**Closing date: 20th September 2024**

Good Luck!!

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## ***Parent/Guardian Consent***

***I declare that I give permission for [student name here] to take part in the Classics Olympic Competition. I declare that the work submitted is the work of the aforementioned student.***

***Signed:***

***Print name:***

***Email Address:***

***Date:***



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***Please scan this document and email it to [access@classics.cam.ac.uk](mailto:access@classics.cam.ac.uk) with your entry before the deadline.***

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