

Showdown

TIME

Olympic Spirit



Ben Nussbaum

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Olympic Ideals

Can sports make the world a better place? Pierre de Coubertin (duh koo-behr-TEHN) thought so. The French educator had big dreams—and a very specific plan. Inspired by ancient Greek sporting events that brought together rival cities, he wanted to create an athletic festival that would bring together the whole world.

In 1896, his vision gave birth to the first modern Olympics. They were held in Athens, Greece.

De Coubertin did not organize the Olympics just to find out who could run the fastest or who could jump the farthest. In a poem, de Coubertin captured the spirit he wanted for the Olympics. “O sport, you are peace! You **forge** happy bonds between people,” he wrote.

For over one hundred years, the Olympics have brought people together, proving that competition can create community.

Olympic Art?

From 1912 to 1948, the Olympics included an art competition. Mixing art and sports was part of de Coubertin’s unique vision. De Coubertin even won a gold medal for his poem “Ode to Sport.”

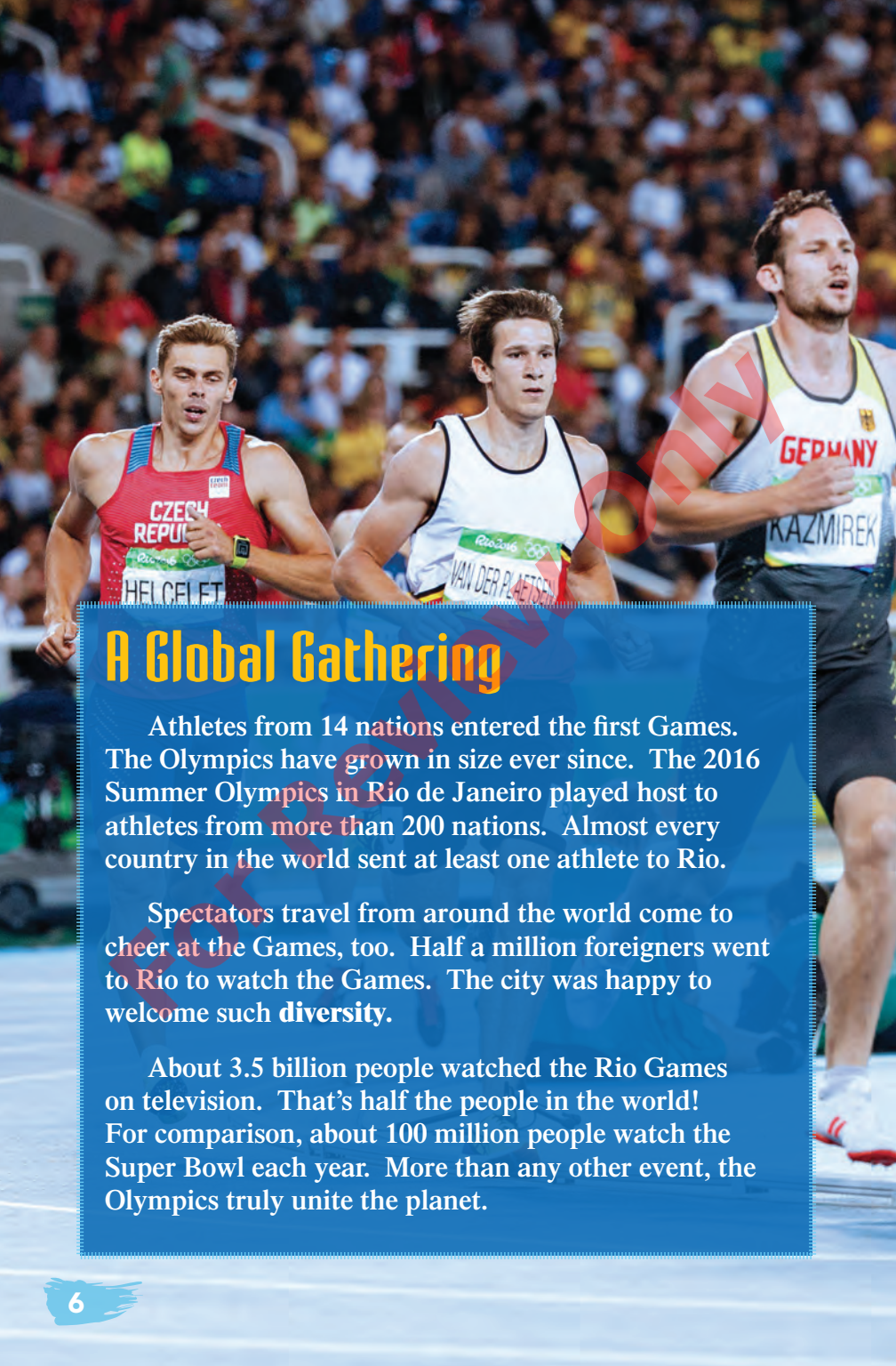


A portrait of Pierre de Coubertin, an elderly man with a grey mustache, wearing a brown suit and a brown fedora hat. The background is a gradient of yellow and green. A large red watermark "Editorial Review Only" is diagonally across the image. A yellow geometric graphic is in the bottom left corner.

Pierre de Coubertin

All-Around Sportsman

De Coubertin was passionate about rugby. He was inducted into the World Rugby Hall of Fame for his work promoting the sport.

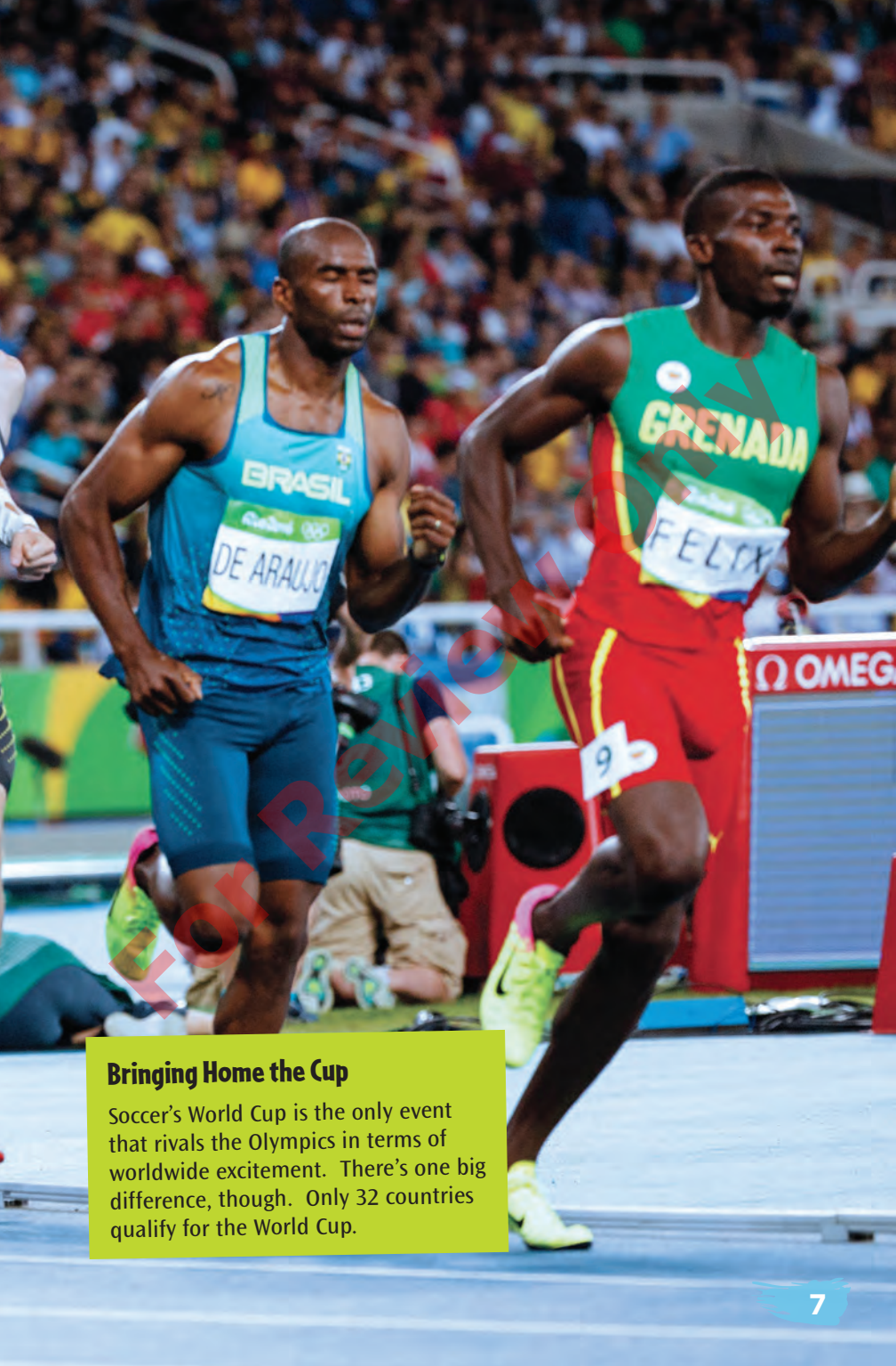


A Global Gathering

Athletes from 14 **nations** entered the first Games. The Olympics have **grown** in size ever since. The 2016 Summer Olympics in **Rio de Janeiro** played host to athletes from **more than 200 nations**. Almost every country in the **world** sent at least one athlete to Rio.

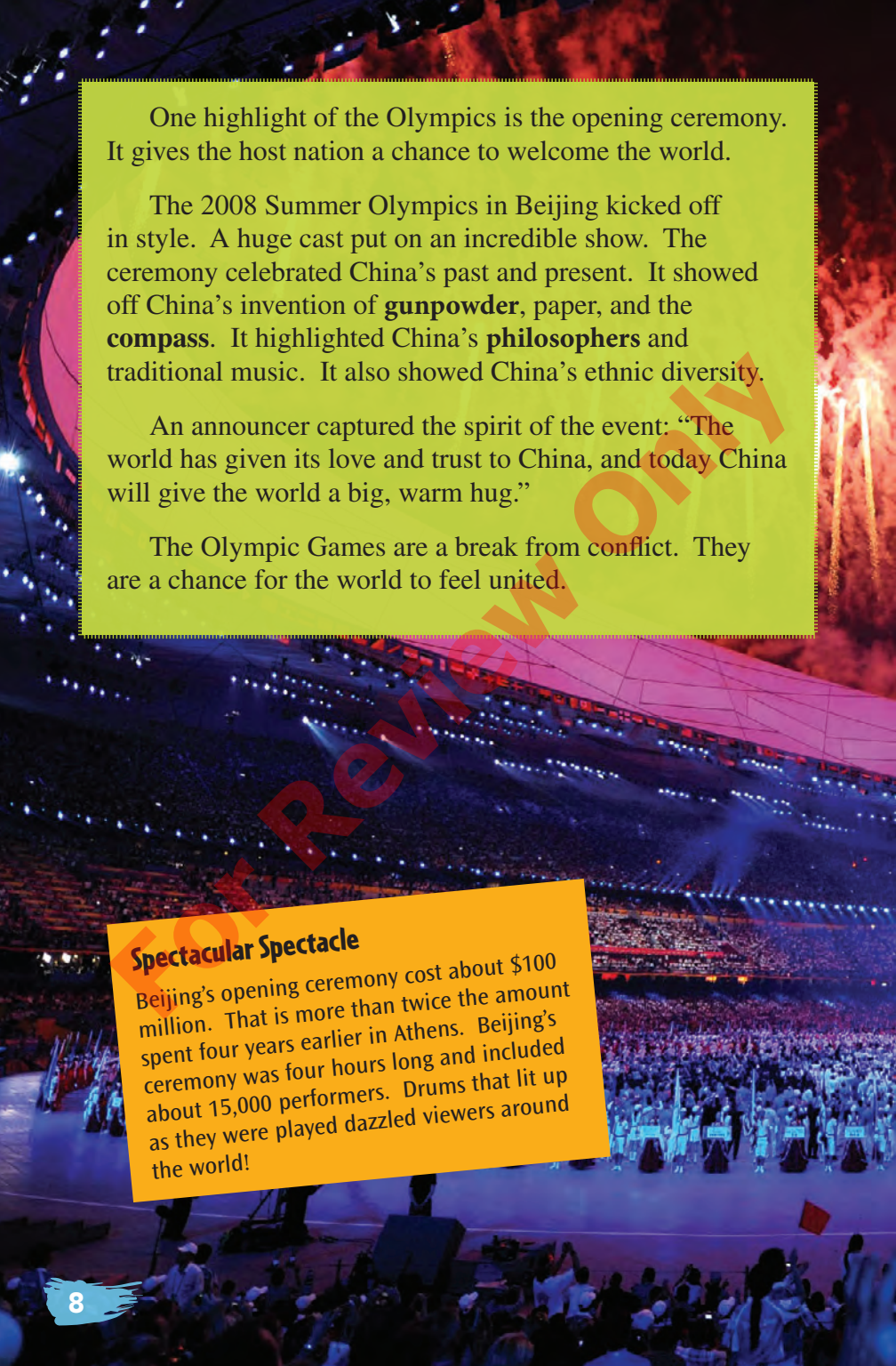
Spectators travel from around the world come to **cheer at the Games**, too. Half a million foreigners went to **Rio** to watch the Games. The city was happy to **welcome such diversity**.

About 3.5 billion people watched the Rio Games on television. That's half the people in the world! For comparison, about 100 million people watch the Super Bowl each year. More than any other event, the Olympics truly unite the planet.



Bringing Home the Cup

Soccer's World Cup is the only event that rivals the Olympics in terms of worldwide excitement. There's one big difference, though. Only 32 countries qualify for the World Cup.



One highlight of the Olympics is the opening ceremony. It gives the host nation a chance to welcome the world.

The 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing kicked off in style. A huge cast put on an incredible show. The ceremony celebrated China's past and present. It showed off China's invention of **gunpowder**, paper, and the **compass**. It highlighted China's **philosophers** and traditional music. It also showed China's ethnic diversity.

An announcer captured the spirit of the event: "The world has given its love and trust to China, and today China will give the world a big, warm hug."

The Olympic Games are a break from **conflict**. They are a chance for the world to feel united.

Spectacular Spectacle

Beijing's opening ceremony cost about \$100 million. That is more than twice the amount spent four years earlier in Athens. Beijing's ceremony was four hours long and included about 15,000 performers. Drums that lit up as they were played dazzled viewers around the world!



2008 Opening Ceremony
in Beijing