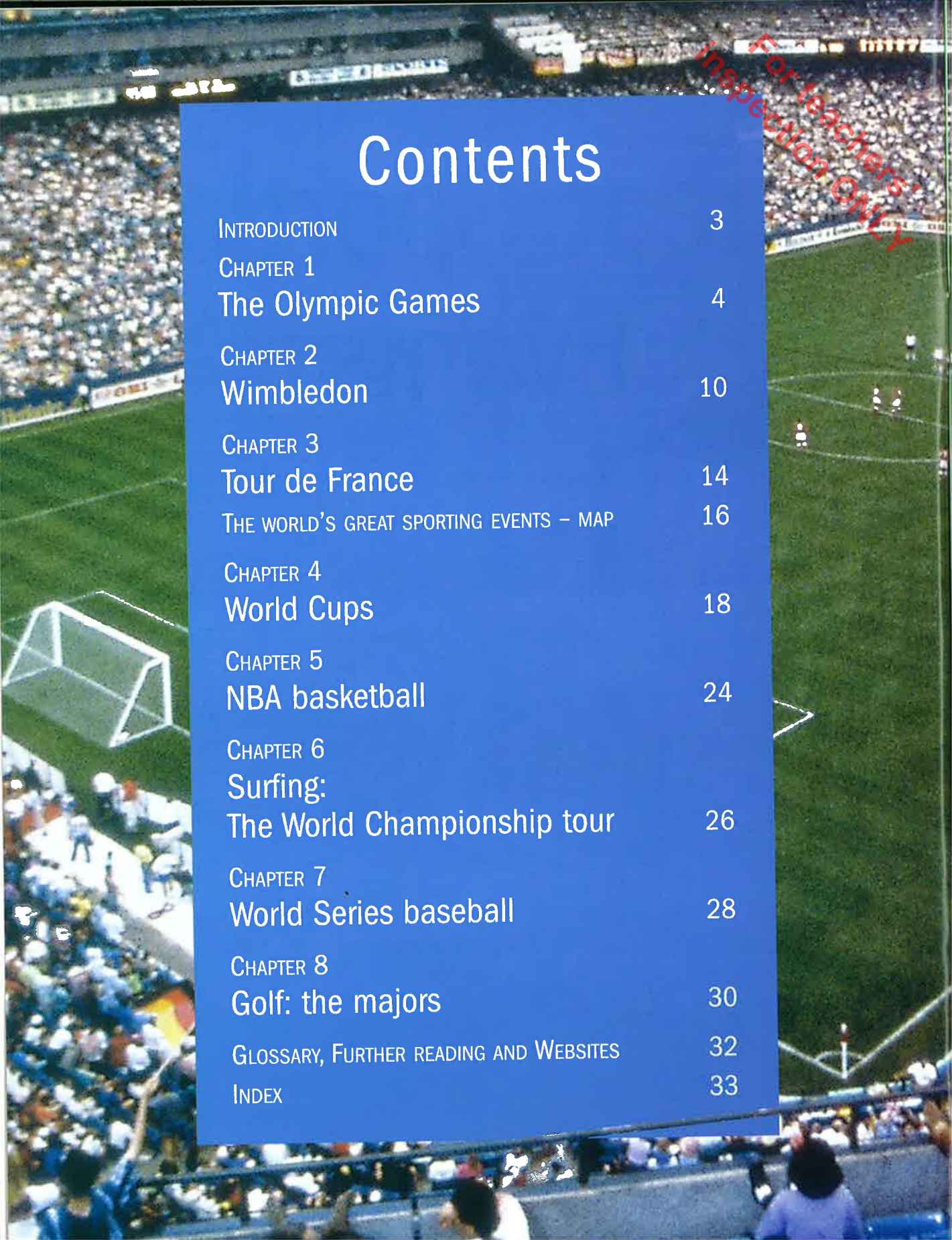
Great Sporting Events



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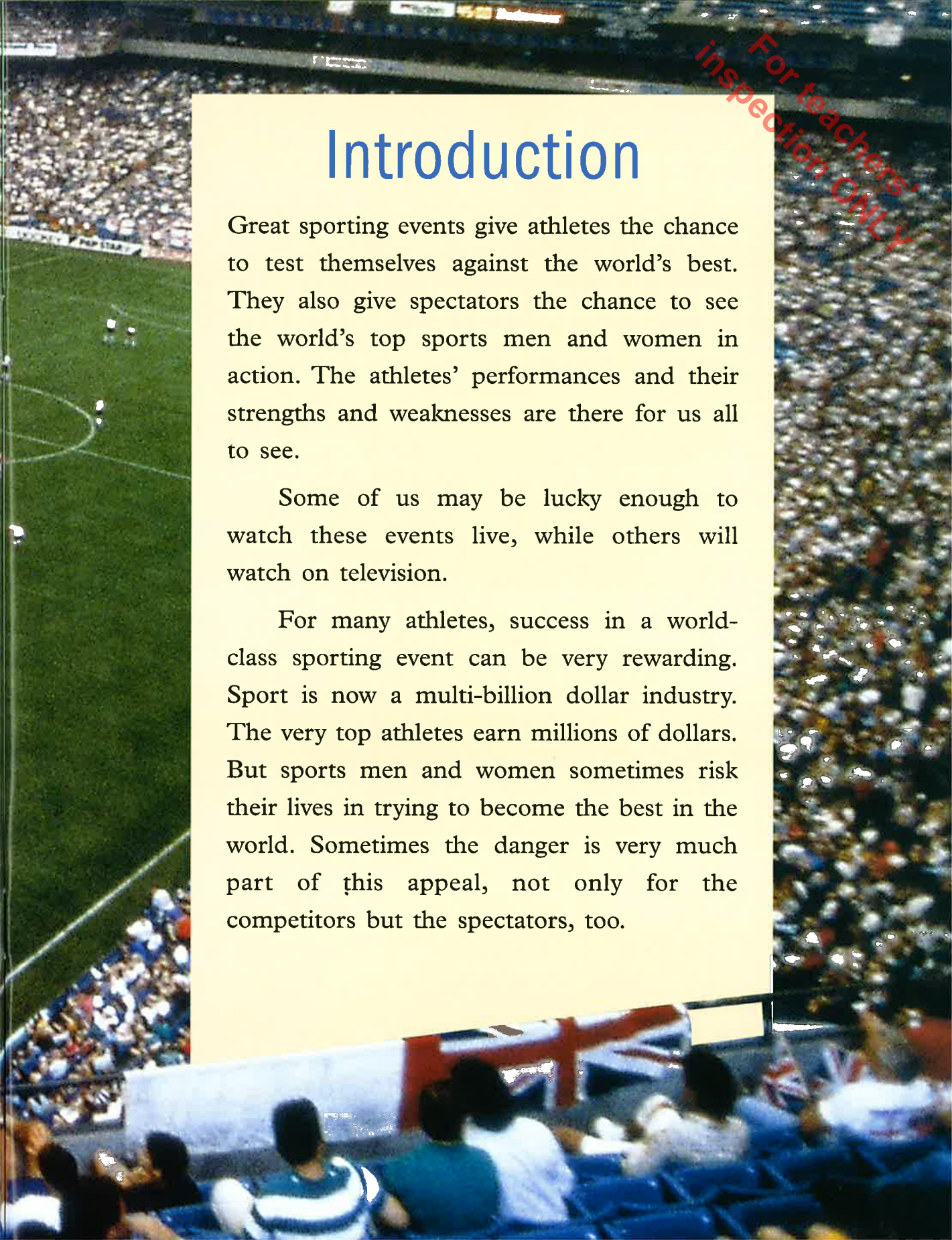
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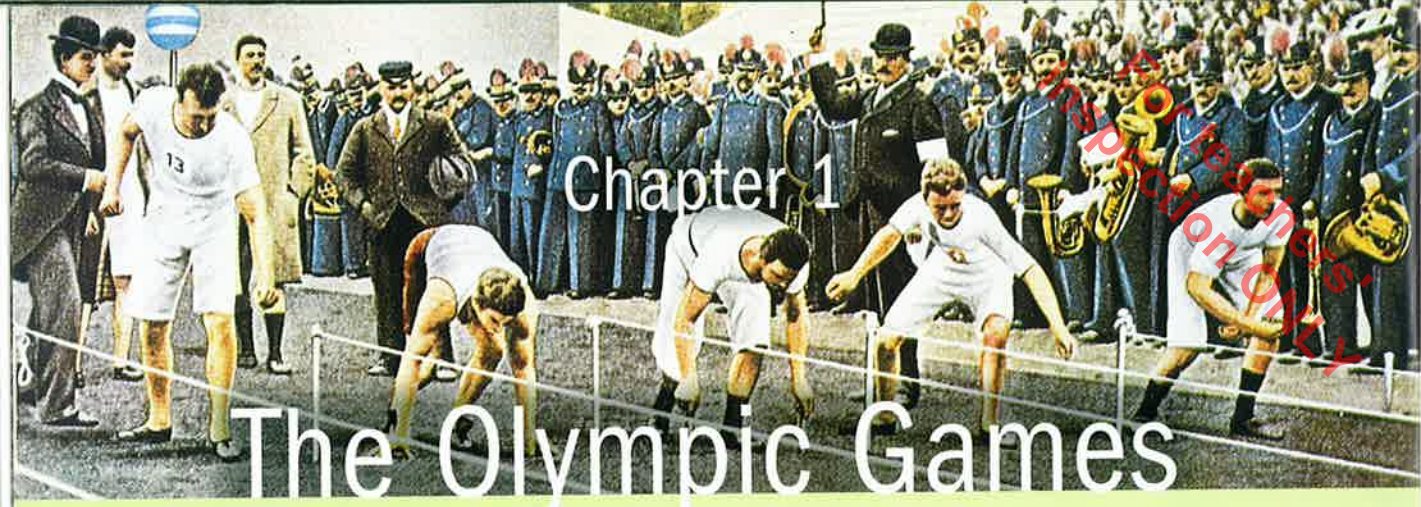
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Introduction

Great sporting events give athletes the chance to test themselves against the world's best. They also give spectators the chance to see the world's top sports men and women in action. The athletes' performances and their strengths and weaknesses are there for us all to see.

Some of us may be lucky enough to watch these events live, while others will watch on television.

For many athletes, success in a world-class sporting event can be very rewarding. Sport is now a multi-billion dollar industry. The very top athletes earn millions of dollars. But sports men and women sometimes risk their lives in trying to become the best in the world. Sometimes the danger is very much part of this appeal, not only for the competitors but the spectators, too.



Chapter 1

The Olympic Games

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It's hard to imagine that a sporting event that was first held thousands of years ago still has such a lasting impact today. Back in ancient Greece, only men were allowed to take part, and the winners were given an olive branch. Things have changed since then, but the name is still the same: the Olympic Games.

The 'modern' Olympics began in Greece in 1896, and today they are held every four years in a different city around the world. At the first modern Olympics, there were 311 competitors from 13 countries, and women were not allowed to compete. In Sydney, Australia, for the 2000 Games, more than 11,000 athletes from 199 countries competed in 33 different sports.



The closing ceremony at the Olympic Games in Sydney, 2000.

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Did You Know?

The youngest medallist at the Olympic Games was an unknown French boy aged between seven and ten years. He was a *cox* for one of the Dutch rowing crews, in 1900. The oldest medal winner was a Swedish shooter, Oscar Swahn. In 1920 he won a silver medal aged 72!



The athletes from each country parade around the stadium at the opening ceremony of each Olympic Games.

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Olympic traditions

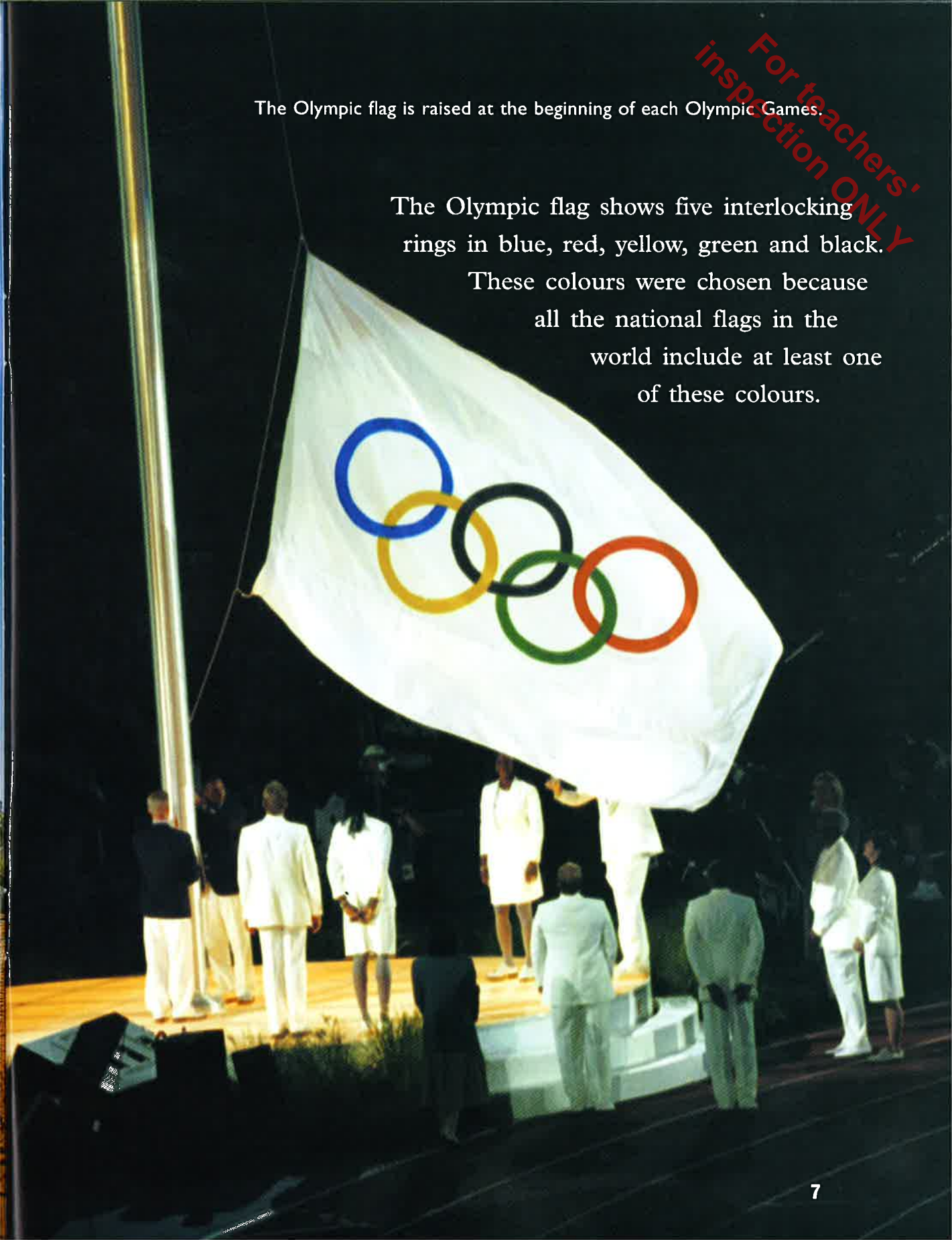
There are a number of *symbols* and traditions associated with the Olympic Games.

The Olympic *motto* is written in Latin and means: Swifter, Higher, Stronger. The Olympic flame stays alight throughout the Games and is only put out at the closing ceremony. Before the start of each Olympics, a torch is lit in Greece at the site of the ancient Olympics. The torch is then carried by many runners, in a relay, to the host city. If there are very large distances to cover, the torch is taken by aeroplane.



In 2000, the Olympic torch was carried all around Australia before arriving in the host city, Sydney. After arriving from Greece, it began its Australian journey in Uluru, Central Australia.

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The Olympic flag is raised at the beginning of each Olympic Games.

The Olympic flag shows five interlocking rings in blue, red, yellow, green and black. These colours were chosen because all the national flags in the world include at least one of these colours.