

Legacy or lunacy?

Comprehension

Answer the following questions:

1. It was supposed to be different because the main idea was austerity, spending less and being less showy than the Beijing Olympics four years previously.
- 2 This was widely believed after so much money was spent on such spectacular structures for the Beijing Olympics. There was widespread agreement that designing and leaving behind something useful and attractive for the future would be far better than exaggerated flamboyant structures.
- 3 It means it is more important to build lasting permanent useful structures and sports complexes for the future and future generations than just conspicuous flashy buildings and complexes for particular occasions as in the case of Beijing 2008.
- 4 They became nervous as preparations progressed because originally they had wanted something simpler and less visible than the flamboyant Beijing 2008 Games but were afraid of appearing too mean and unwilling to spend money on building new sports facilities for the London 2012 Olympics.
- 5 It has tripled or gone up 300% from the initial cost of three billion pounds.
- 6 This refers to a building or structure designed by a world famous or star architect like Zaha Hadid and it is often an incredible or spectacular design.
- 7 According to the author, the new stadium was not really necessary as London already has many excellent stadiums and it cost so much it seems a terrible waste of money. Then as regards the new aquatics centre, although he believes it will be a very useful municipal swimming pool for east London it will be extremely costly to run in the future.
- 8 He's complaining about too much architecture and too many new sports buildings because during the present economic crisis they are closing down many existing sports facilities which cost too much in maintenance.

Summarize the content of the article in 150 words

This article begins by stating that the 2012 London Olympics were supposed to be simpler, more modest and less costly than the exaggerated, costly Beijing Olympics. But this is not what is happening. There was fear of being seen as mean and stingy so far more was spent than originally planned, three times the original sum in fact. Some of the facilities built were an aquatics park with

a wonderful Olympic size pool all designed by the renowned architect Zaha Hadid. London already has a number of excellent stadiums so there is criticism of building yet another large stadium. An expensive equestrian events centre is being built in Greenwich park which will cause a lot of damage once the event is over and nothing of significance is left behind for the future. Although the writer claims the new velodrome is a welcome addition, though costly too, he is far more critical of the maintenance costs for all these facilities in the future. Finally he is worried many of these new structures will end up creating a rusty wasteland as happened for some previous Olympic games.

Composition:

Comment on the title of the article and express your views on the topic. Why do you think the Olympic Games appeals to people so much? What do you think it represents today?

Write a 300-word essay

The title of this article “Legacy or lunacy” refers to the importance of creating sports buildings, complexes and facilities for future use after the Olympics are over and not just create something costly for the duration of the Games. I entirely agree that since so much money is spent it is certainly far better to think of the utility of the structure or facility later on and who can benefit from it. It should be designed with the local community in mind since they contribute to it with their taxes. The ideal choice is something that does not cost too much for maintenance, that is beautiful and modern with the latest energy-saving devices and that could have a dual or multiple function.

The Olympic Games appeal to many different people for many different reasons. For some it's a way to showcase the beauty and splendid architecture of their city or country so it's important to create new designs which are more eye-catching than what has been seen before. For the majority, I believe, it's the excitement and challenge of the world's greatest athletes competing against each other. It's breaking records – swimming faster, jumping higher and covering longer distances than anyone else has ever done before. It's cheering for your favourite sportsperson or national team. When they win a gold, silver or bronze medal you feel a sense of pride, when they fail to win you are disappointed too.

The Olympic Games today are very different from the first ones nearly three thousand years ago in ancient Greece. They are no longer just for men and many participants are sponsored by big companies and paid millions. They have become a big business which produce famous stars and multi-million deals. However, the spirit of competition and national pride is still there and it has the power to unite when people of different ethnic origins compete on the same national team or when tragedy strikes a young talented sportsperson. We are there on the sidelines cheering them on. The Olympic Games have the power to hold our attention and distract us from our everyday worries and routine for a wonderful month or so every four years. It's certainly something to look forward to.

Orta: the Italian lake tourists haven't discovered

Comprehension

Answer the following questions:

- 1 They call this lake Cinderella because although it's less well known and attracts fewer people they think it's better than the bigger lakes of Como and Maggiore and it has a less commercialized image.
- 2 The writer of the article thinks this lake is special because it has an atmosphere of mystery and the supernatural almost as if it's not of this world.
- 3 This refers to the way it's constantly changing. The mountains, weather and light reflect in different ways on the surface of the lake and create different atmospheres. At times fog covers the island and distant shore or heavy snow covers everything. At other times the wind causes strong waves on the surface of the water.
- 4 The light changes throughout the day. First there is mist in the morning that clears up around midday and finally in the late afternoon there's a "brooding romanticism" or gradually spreading darkness as the light fades.
- 5 Two of the most impressive buildings in Orta San Giulio are the 16th century town hall at one end of the square and further up the hill the 15th century peach-coloured parish church.
- 6 The good news is that there are about twelve places which offer reasonably priced accommodation to visitors. The bad news is that they tend to be simple family-run places and perhaps don't have the better services, facilities and staff available in the better quality hotels.
- 7 There are wonderful sculptures and art inside the basilica but perhaps the most outstanding feature is a marble pulpit dating back to the 12th century. The marble comes from a nearby quarry and the carved figures are believed to have been inspired and influenced by Saxon carvings.
- 8 You can get a wonderful view of the lake and surrounding area from the top of the Sacro Monte as it is 360 metres above sea level.

Summarize the content of the article in about 150 words

This passage is about Lake Orta in northern Italy. It's not as well known as the more famous lake Como or lake Maggiore which have more developed tourist industries. The Milanese think lake Orta is superior to the other nearby lakes while the writer feels it's not just beautiful but also mystical in some ways. Its dramatic setting with the mountains in the background and changing

weather that reflects and changes the surface of the water is very much appreciated. It's described very poetically here.

Orto San Giulio is on a hill overlooking the lake and has charming, elegant, narrow streets. Its church and town hall are attractive buildings from the 15th and 16th centuries. Accommodation is available in small, fairly cheap, family-run places with basic facilities. The pleasant island of San Giulio can be easily reached by boat throughout the year. Other important sights worth a visit are the monastery and basilica with interesting works of art in the interior. Finally from the top of the Sacro Monte with its 20 chapels and national park you can get a splendid view of your surroundings.

Composition

Use the information given in the article to organize a catchy, one-day excursion to Lake Orta for a group of British visitors.

Enjoy a tour of unique Lake Orta

Pick up from your hotel in Milan at 8AM. We travel by coach to Lake Orta and expect to arrive for 9.30 where you will meet your guide and explore the hidden sights of this unique lake in the shadow of Italy's more famous Lake Como and Maggiore. You will have the chance to appreciate the beauty of the landscape and its fascinating art treasures.

We start our walking tour from Orta San Giulio on the slopes of the hill. Its elegant charming streets are full of interesting old buildings like the Town Hall. It dates back to the 16th century. Admire its graceful columns and beautifully coloured old walls. Further along and we come to the famous parish church of the Assumption. Its delicately painted peach coloured walls have survived the ravages of history over the centuries. There are many magnificent examples of the best of Italian Romanesque and Baroque in the nearby monastery and basilica. Of particular interest to art lovers is the 12th century pulpit carved out of marble mined in that quarry over there. Experts believe it was inspired by a Saxon carving. It's one of few known to survive.

Finally our boat trip out to the island of San Giulio. There are many interesting connected with this island which we will talk about later on as we walk around admiring its splendid architectural sights

Over there we have the Sacro Monte of Orta which is located within a historical park and nowadays it's also a nature reserve. There are over 20 chapels dating back to the end of the 16th and 17th. Many have frescoes and sculptures of terra cotta narrating the life of San Francesco of Assisi. Sacro Monte is today recognized as a UNESCO world heritage site

We hope you have enjoyed your tour today and will come back again to this enchanting place.