



ATHLETE STORIES

Meryeta O'Dine





TEACHING GUIDE

TEACHING VALUES THROUGH OLYMPIC STORIES

The Olympic philosophy of education is about a balance of intellectual instruction, cultural development and physical education. It is about participation, effort, and knowing you have given your all in the pursuit of excellence.

Olympic stories of triumph and disappointment can engage learners in discussions about important value issues. Through the stories and challenges of Olympic athletes, children and youth can explore and connect values to their lives, and perhaps begin to see their world in new and different ways.

TEACHING GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

Current curriculum theory emphasizes the importance of reinforcing values education messages through narratives, storytelling, art, posters, drama, and physical movement, activities based on the stories, events, ceremonies and symbols of the Olympic Games stories have school-wide relevance.

THE OLYMPIC VALUES

The core Olympic Values are identified as Excellence, Respect and Friendship. The narratives which follow highlight these values. When you engage your learners with these narratives you will be expanding their moral and physical understanding and capabilities.

PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

The following principles of learning are highlighted in order to engage students actively in the values education process:

1. Learning is an active and not a passive activity. Students need to be actively engaged in discussion, sharing their ideas in small groups and exploring differing points of view.
2. People learn in different ways. Some people learn best by reading; some people learn best by listening; some people learn best by moving around. The activities associated with these narratives' present different ways of learning.
3. Learning is both an individual and a cooperative activity. Young people need opportunities to work together as well as independently. They also need to practice cooperative behaviours in order to learn competitive behaviours.

STAGES OF THE LEARNING SEQUENCE

Successful learning is built upon a carefully scaffolded series of steps that **connect** to students' prior understanding, actively **process** or practice new information, and finally **transform** their understandings into powerful demonstrations of learning.

Each values story is presented at three reading levels: Grades 3-4, and Grades 5-6. The accompanying activities are sufficiently open-ended to address a diverse range of learning styles and proficiencies. They focus on six main facets of understanding:

Explaining, Interpreting, Applying, Taking Perspective, Empathizing, and Developing Self-Knowledge. These critical thinking skills are woven into all three stages of the learning sequence in order to promote deep understanding of the values and concepts.

“Olympism is a philosophy of life; exalting and combining in a balanced whole quality of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example, and respect for universal, fundamental ethical principles.”

— Olympic Charter, Fundamental principles, Paragraph 2





MERYETA O'DINE

The Courage to Try Something New

Meryeta O'Dine was 12 when she tried snowboarding for the first time. At first, she didn't like it. The falls hurt, the moves were hard, and it felt scary. But she had one lesson each week, and there was no way to quit. So, she kept going back to the hill, even when every run felt tough.

Learning was not easy. She chose to practice at night when the hill was quiet. Few people were around to see her fall, and she didn't worry about running into anyone. While most kids were at home doing homework or watching TV, Meryeta was out riding under the lights. The mountain felt calm, like it belonged just to her.

Of course, she fell a lot. But few people saw her, and that made her brave enough to keep trying. Little by little, she learned. She figured out how to turn, how to balance, and soon how to race. Snowboarding was no longer scary—it was fun and exciting! Soon, she was ready to try racing snowboard cross.

As she got older, her skills grew stronger. She raced faster and started winning contests in her province, then across Canada. But her journey was not always smooth. She faced injuries and setbacks. At times, she even thought about quitting. But she remembered the lesson from her early nights: falling is not failing—it is practice.

In 2022, Meryeta was no longer the shy girl who practiced in the dark. She was now part of Team Canada at the Winter Olympics in Beijing. She raced with focus and courage. In the end, she won two bronze medals—one in snowboard cross and one in the mixed team race.

Think about that. The girl who once snowboarded on quiet hills at night was now standing on the Olympic podium for the whole world to see.

Meryeta's story teaches us something important. When you try something new, it's okay to be scared. It's okay to fall. It's even okay to feel embarrassed. What matters most is not giving up. Every fall is just practice for the moment when you finally fly.





MERYETA O'DINE

The Courage to Try Something New

Meryeta O'Dine first tried snowboarding at 12 years old. At first she hated it, but she was signed up for one lesson a week, and there was no easy way out. She struggled at first to learn the new skills and chose to practice at night. The mountain wasn't crowded then, so few would see her wipe out. Also, her chances of crashing into someone were lower when the hill was nearly empty.

While most kids were at home doing homework or watching TV, Meryeta was out on the snowy hills under the lights. The mountain was quiet, and it felt like it belonged just to her. Of course, she fell—a lot. But few people saw, and that gave her courage to keep trying.

Little by little, night after night, she got better. She learned how to turn, how to balance, and eventually, how to race. Snowboarding wasn't scary anymore—it was exciting! It wasn't too long before she found the courage to try racing at snowboard cross.

As she grew older, Meryeta's skills grew too. She started racing, zipping down the hill with speed and focus. She won competitions in her province and then in Canada. But her journey wasn't easy. She faced injuries, setbacks, and even moments when she wondered if she should quit. Still, she remembered the lesson from those first nights: falling isn't failure—it's practice.

Fast forward to 2022. Meryeta was no longer the shy girl snowboarding at night. She was a proud member of Team Canada, racing against the best snowboarders in the world. At the Winter Olympics in Beijing, she soared down the course, fearless and determined. And when the snow settled, she had done it—she won two bronze medals in snowboard cross and the mixed team event.

Think about that. The girl who once boarded at night because she was afraid of being seen was now standing on the Olympic podium in front of the entire world.

Meryeta's story teaches us something big. When learning something new, it's okay to be a little scared. It's okay to fall. It's even okay to feel embarrassed. What matters is that you keep going. Every wipeout is just practice for the moment when you finally fly.





LEARNING ACTIVITIES

CONNECTING

Building a foundation for new learning

START ACTIVE (ALL GRADES)

Snowboarding requires excellent balance and coordination skills, the ability to use the core muscle groups to control and direct the board.

In a wide open and safe space, use your school's balance board for this activity. If your school doesn't have a balance board, place a 2"x4" board flat on the floor and a boogie board or skim board on top of it in a perpendicular fashion. The board should be balanced across the 2"x4". If boogie/skim boards are not available, use two lengths of 2"x4" wood boards.

Taking turns, each student stands on top of the balance board (or alternative). They balance the board by shifting their body weight. Encourage the students to stay balanced as long as possible. Is it harder or easier if you move your feet wider or closer?

Tell the students to "get tall" and "crouch low." Encourage them to note the difference in their balance. Getting low keeps center of mass over the base of support (feet and board) and is a much better position for snowboarding.

CLASS DEBRIEF:

Ask the students to describe their experience. Try these prompts to get the discussion going:

- Did you find the activity difficult or easy?
- What prior experience might have made it easier for you? (e.g., snowboarding, skateboarding, gymnastics, etc.)
- Were any of you a bit nervous to try it out at first? What made you nervous?
- Sometimes we can feel self-conscious when trying a new activity. How might that affect your enjoyment of trying a new activity?

PROCESSING

Using strategies to acquire and use knowledge

Ask the students to read the story silently on their own.

Reread the story with the students.

GRADE 3-4

CLASS DISCUSSION

What did Meryeta do when snowboarding was hard at first? What does it mean to keep trying, even when you fall?

How is trying something that is difficult courageous?

FALL AND TRY AGAIN ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)

Give each student a blank sheet of paper.

On the top half, ask them to draw a time they tried something hard (learning to ride a bike, doing math homework, playing a sport, etc.). On the bottom half, ask them to draw or write what happened when they kept practicing and didn't give up. (For example: "I got better at shooting basketballs" or "I learned the song on piano.")

Share as a class.

GRADE 5-6

Working in pairs and using the Internet, ask the students to research how two other Canadian Olympians competing at the 2026 Milano Cortina Olympics got started in their sport.

Have student pairs report back to the class how their Olympians got started and what obstacles they needed to overcome.

As you discuss this with the class, emphasize that trying something new is often challenging. Make a list of some of the challenges that these athletes had in getting started or in pursuing their sport.

something that is difficult courageous?

