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On and off the field

SAMPLE

Learning objectives

Upon completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- analyze the importance of finding focus and purpose in a seemingly pointless task;
- know why diverse sports teams can succeed, and apply the knowledge to other fields;
- talk about what sports can bring us and how to promote the development of sports culture.



Champions aren't made in the gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them — a desire, a dream, a vision.
— Muhammad Ali (1942–2016, professional boxer)

Warm-up

Step **Talking about the pictures**

- ① Look at the following pictures, and discuss the different roles an individual plays in team sports and in individual sports.



Step **Sharing your ideas**

- ② The value of sports is that they teach us to recognize the difference between winning and striving for excellence or for a better but much harder achievement. If you know you are very likely to lose a game, will you still take part in it? Share your reasons in small groups.

Baseball and **Sisyphus**: Repetition brings focus and purpose



Sisyphus 西西弗斯（古希腊神话中的科林斯国王）
pointless /'pɔɪntləs/
a. 无意义的；无目标的

mythology /mɪ'thɒlədʒi/
n. （统称）神话

- 1 Why play baseball? Why study? Why do anything? Many tasks can seem **pointless**, but focus, efforts, and perfecting how we complete a task can give meaning to the things we choose to do in life.
- 2 In Greek **mythology**, Sisyphus was a clever king. He was too clever for his own good, and also too greedy, which finally led Zeus, the king of the gods, to punish him. The punishment was for Sisyphus to be bound in chains by Thanatos — the god of death. Alas, Sisyphus was again too clever, and managed to escape.

3 Zeus therefore **devised** another punishment, forcing Sisyphus to endlessly roll a large stone up a **steep** hill. The purpose was to make him perform a meaningless and endless task, thus making him suffer great **misery**.

devise /dɪ'vaɪz/

vt. 想出; 设计出

steep /sti:p/

a. 陡峭的

misery /'mɪzəri/

n. 痛苦; 苦难

4 There is, however, another way to view Sisyphus' situation. Instead of punishing him, it gives him focus and purpose. No longer free to choose from any number of activities, he can now put all of his energy into a single task. Even if it is not the task he would have chosen for himself, it is what he has.

5 As Albert Camus concludes in his essay "The Myth of Sisyphus," "The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy." In other words, it is the **pursuit** of a goal that brings meaning and joy, not the goal itself.

pursuit /pə'sju:t/

n. 追求; 寻求

6 Viewed in this way, Sisyphus' struggle is no different from the struggle of baseball players on a **diamond** — even the best in the world, like Nolan Ryan or Tom Seaver; these players may or may not always succeed in their efforts, but they will nevertheless continue to try to reach a common goal. After all, what is the meaning of baseball? It's only a game, with a set of rules that have been summarized over time and passed from generation to generation. Without those rules, there is no order to this activity, no point to this task. Yet we fill the game with meaning, and in its playing, we find focus.

diamond /'daɪəmənd/

n. (棒球场的)内场

7 When we find our focus, we find our purpose. The act itself becomes its own **justification**, its own reward. Why does Sisyphus push a large stone up a steep hill? Because he has a large stone and a steep hill, and this is his task.

justification /,dʒʌstɪfɪ'keɪʃn/

n. 正当的理由

8 Will the task ever be completed? No, but over the course of time Sisyphus will see improvements in his technique and in the stone's shining color, polished as it is by endless friction that smooths its **rough** edges and changes it into something more beautiful.

rough /rʌf/

a. 粗糙的; 不平的

9 Picking up a small ball and trying to throw it past someone waving a long stick is no different. Like pushing a large stone up a steep hill, it is not



framework /'freɪmwɜ:k/
n. 准则; 框架

nobility /nəʊ'bɪləti/
n. 崇高; 高贵

mastery /'mɑ:stəri/
n. 精通; 熟练

dedication /,dedɪ'keɪʃn/
n. 奉献; 全身心投入

regardless of 不管; 不顾

define /drɪ'faɪn/
vt. 给...下定义; 解释

excel at 擅长

exert /ɪg'zɜ:t/
vt. 运用; 施加

punishment. Both are just actions without meaning until we decide to make rules, play by those rules, and do the best we can within that **framework**.

10 There is **nobility** and grace in an effort to achieve a goal. Our goals, whether to bring a large stone to its final resting place or to achieve **mastery** of a seemingly simple game like baseball, may lie forever beyond our grasp. What does lie within our grasp is the ability to bring joy to our task and become better us in performing that task.

11 I play baseball because it is there, and it is my task. I study for the same reasons. My **dedication** to the pursuit of goals, **regardless of** how realistic they might be, is what **defines** me. My desire to improve myself — even when there is no obvious external advantage to doing so — is what keeps me going every day. It is why I could **excel at** baseball and study.

12 Like Sisyphus, I will never stop trying to improve, to struggle toward a higher level. Whether it be on the baseball field or in the field of life, I will never be satisfied with anything. Having the opportunity to **exert** such effort is my reward.

Culture notes

Albert Camus (1913–1960)

He is a French philosopher, writer, and journalist, best known for his absurdist works, including *The Stranger* and *The Plague*. He won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1957. The essay "The Myth of Sisyphus" explains Camus' notion of the absurd (荒诞).



Language focus

Complete the sentences with suitable words or phrases from the box. Change the form where necessary.

dedication	define	devise	excel at	exert
misery	my hology	pointless	pursuit	regardless of

1. Having an unpleasant member in a sports team sometimes can make other players suffer total _____.
2. A sport is usually _____ as an organized, competitive and skillful physical activity which asks for devotion and fair play.
3. They urged the administration to _____ a plan to promote the development of sports activities.
4. In _____ of their common goals, players develop cooperative and united relations with one another.
5. In classical _____, Cupid is the god of desire, love, attraction and affection.
6. Sports bring people together from all over the world, _____ their nationality, race, or religion.
7. Sports _____ a positive influence on our society on a daily basis.
8. Although Thomas _____ baseball at school, he decided to become an actor after graduation.
9. Habit, passion, motivation, and _____ provide a solid foundation for future success in sporting events.
10. He exercises every day because he thinks a life without exercising and sweating is _____.

Global understanding

Read the passage and complete the outline with information from the passage.

Viewpoint

Many tasks seem pointless, but focus, 1) _____, and perfecting how we complete a task can give meaning to the things we do.

Sisyphus' situation

- **Task:** To endlessly roll a large stone up a(n) 2) _____.
- **Interpretation:** Sisyphus may be happy because he got 3) _____ in pursuit of a goal.

Baseball playing on a diamond

- **Task:** To 4) _____ a small ball and try to throw it past someone 5) _____.
- **Interpretation:** Baseball playing becomes meaningful when we decide to 6) _____, obey them and do our best within that 7) _____.

Examples

Conclusions

- There is 8) _____ and grace in an effort to achieve a goal.
- Our 9) _____ to the pursuit of goals defines us; our desire to improve ourselves keeps us going.

Detailed understanding

Read the passage again and decide whether the statements are true (T) or false (F).

- ___ 1. In Greek mythology, the first punishment Sisyphus got was to be bound in chains.
- ___ 2. Thanks to the rules summarized over time and handed down from generation to generation, baseball playing has order, point and meaning.
- ___ 3. Over the course of time, Sisyphus will improve his technique and see the stone's shining color.
- ___ 4. Both playing baseball and pushing a large stone up a steep hill are actions without meaning even if we make rules, play by the rules and do our best to do these things.
- ___ 5. The ability to bring joy to our task and become better us in performing that task may lie beyond our grasp.
- ___ 6. The author's dedication to the pursuit of goals is the reason why he could excel at baseball and study.

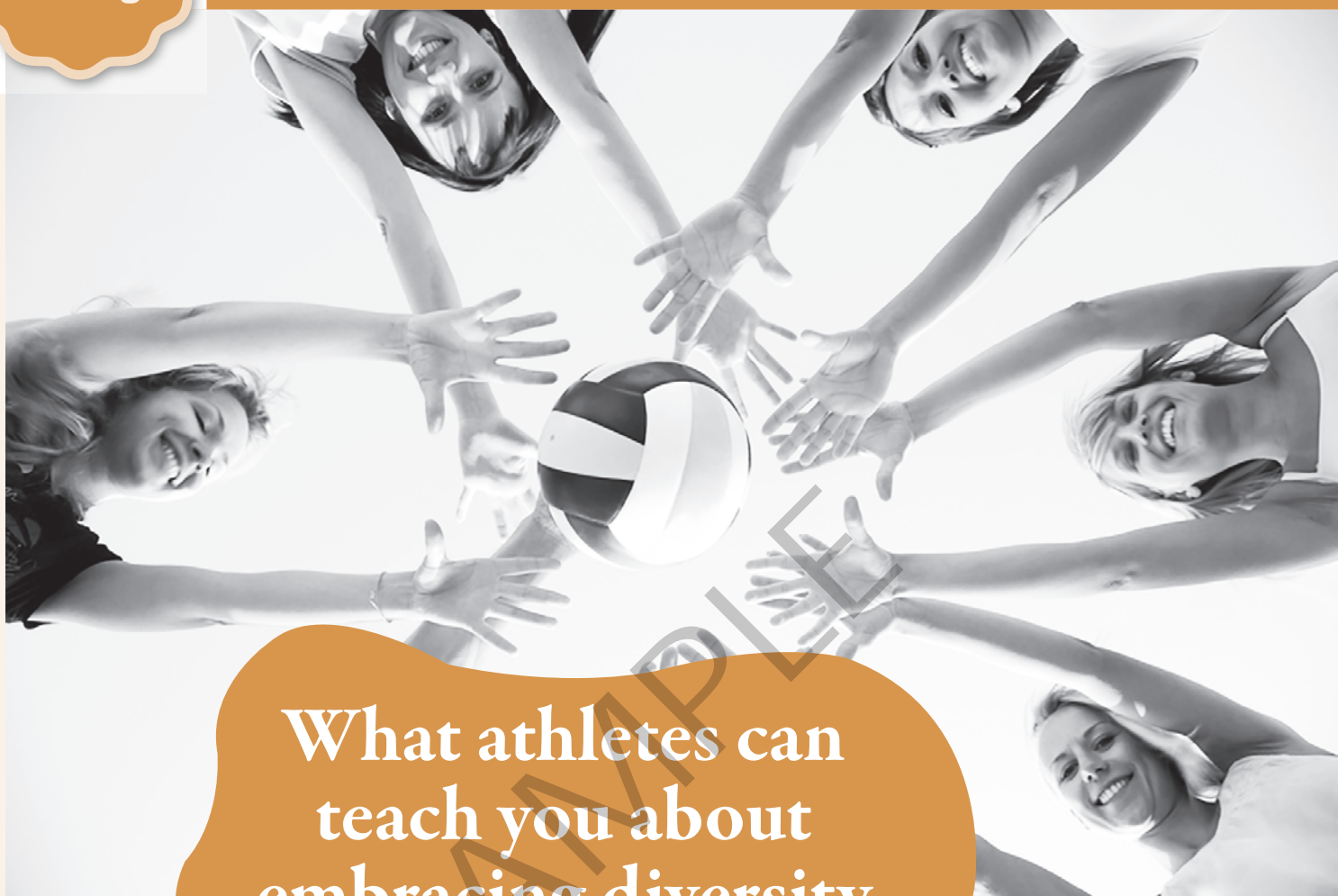
Cultural thinking

1. The following paragraph comes from the beginning of Albert Camus' essay "The Myth of Sisyphus." It says that the gods believe futile and hopeless labor is the most dreadful punishment. Both Camus and the author of this passage, however, interpret Sisyphus' situation in another way: "Instead of punishing him, it gives him focus and purpose." Do you think pushing a large stone up a steep hill endlessly is a punishment or a meaningful task? Give your reasons.

The gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight. They had thought with some reason that there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor.

2. From the perspectives of sporting and doing exercise, what could you learn from the myth of Sisyphus?

Reading 2



What athletes can teach you about embracing diversity

embrace /ɪmˈbreɪs/

v. 欣然接受; 乐意采纳

diversity /daɪˈvɜːsəti/

n. 多样性

boundary /ˈbaʊnd(ə)ri/

n. 分界线; 边界

blur /blɜː/

v. (使) 难以区分; 模糊

invisible /ɪnˈvɪzəbl/

a. 看不见的; 无形的

contribute to 促成; 造成

- 1 Because of technological innovation and global cooperation, the lines and **boundaries** that once separated us have been **blurred** on the global level.
- 2 However, it seems we are constructing **invisible** fences that separate us from our neighbors, colleagues and communities. Though these fences can't be seen with the eyes, they can be felt, and they're **contributing to** a cultural divide at a time when we should be coming together more than ever before.

- 3 During my freshman year, I roomed with four other football players. All of us came from very different backgrounds. We represented three religions, two races, and a wide range of political views. Things were difficult at the beginning, but we learned to respect each other and finally grew to appreciate each other.
- 4 If five college guys could overcome their differences, why is it so hard for society to do the same? I believe the answer is simple: We shared a common goal that we could not achieve as individuals.
- 5 **Likewise**, **athletics** teaches you to make the best use of your strengths, while also asking you to **compensate for** your weaknesses by relying on the strengths of others. It asks you to embrace and respect the unique skills and talent of your teammates and how what they bring to the table contributes to the overall success of the team.
- 6 As it turns out, the same lessons that lead themselves to succeed on the field can also help build better leaders off the field. Here is what athletes can teach you about embracing diversity.

likewise /'laɪkwaɪz/
ad. 同样地；相似地
athletics /æθ'letɪks/
n. 体育运动
compensate for 弥补

Success is a “WE” thing, not a “ME” thing

- 7 No matter how good you are at what you do, no single player can do it all. When you build a diverse team of talent, you create a force that can do something powerful and meaningful by working together. Differences don't matter on the field, but what you bring to the table as both an individual and part of the overall team does.
- 8 Winning is a result of how willing you are to work, how much heart you bring to the game, and how **smoothly** you **integrate** with those you're working with.

smoothly /'smuːðli/
ad. 顺畅地；顺利地
integrate /'ɪntɪɡreɪt/
v. 融入

Nobody wants to work with a brilliant fool

- 9 Talent will take you places, but **arrogance**, close-mindedness and big **ego** won't get you anywhere. In athletics, if you can't get along with everyone on your team, you'll be replaced by someone who can.

arrogance /'ærəɡəns/
n. 傲慢
ego /'iːɡəʊ/
n. 自尊；自我评价



- 10 It's unavoidable that there will always be people with viewpoints that differ from your own. You don't have to be best friends with every person who crosses your path, but you do have to respect them. When we're all working toward a common goal, we need each other to succeed. Nobody wants to work for, with or alongside a fool — so don't be that guy.

A diverse team is a better team

- 11 Good teams are made up of individual players who have developed the strengths and skills required to excel at their role. Great teams are made up of players who not only have the strengths and skills they need to do their job, but also an understanding of the strengths of every other player on their team.

foster /'fɒstə/

v. 培养; 促进

come at

考虑; 处理(问题)

perspective /pə'spektɪv/

n. 角度; 观点

- 12 Whether you're trying to **foster** a stronger company culture or trying hard to better understand the market, building a diverse internal team provides a broader view of the bigger picture. When you're able to **come at** a problem or question from a variety of backgrounds and **perspectives**, you're given the power to develop better solutions.

trophy /'trɒfi/

n. 奖杯; 奖牌

accomplishment

/ə'kʌmplɪʃmənt/

n. 成就; 成绩

- 13 I learned many of my greatest life lessons by involving myself in athletics. Over time, I came to realize that winning isn't just about final scores and **trophies**; it's the sense of **accomplishment** that comes from cooperating with others to achieve a common goal.

- 14 We all bring something unique to our team, on and off the field. There is strength in our differences. It's time to step up and embrace a better way — by embracing each other.

Language focus

Replace the underlined parts in the sentences with the right form of the words or phrases from the box. You may need to make other relevant changes.

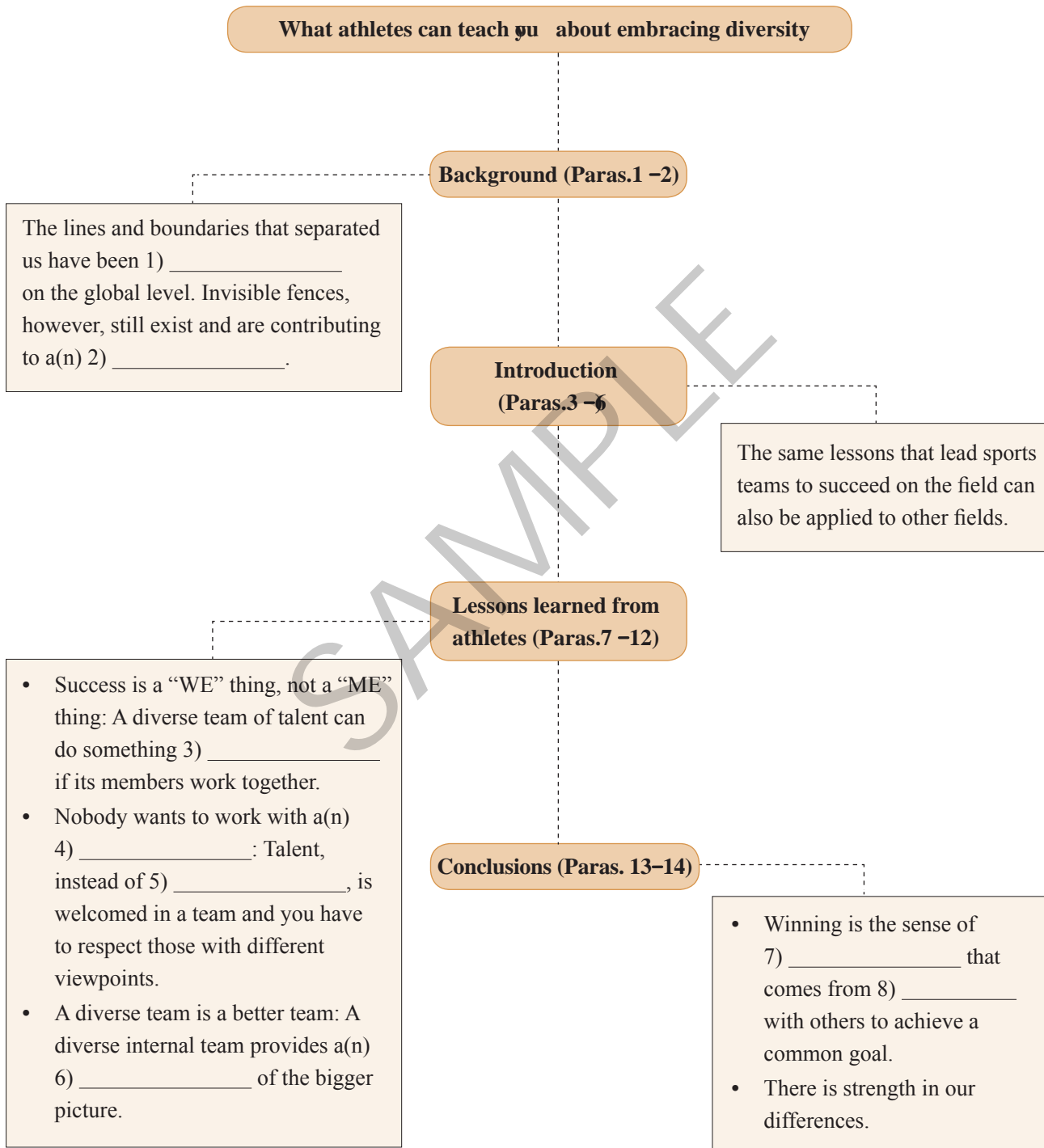
accomplishment	arrogance	blur	compensate for	contribute to
diversity	ego	embrace	foster	invisible

1. The leader says that sports promote dialogue between participants and form an atmosphere of understanding.
2. Guo Jingjing's talent for diving and her trophies never lead her into feeling too proud of herself.
3. The ultimate goals of the Olympic Games are to cultivate human beings, and lead to a peaceful society.
4. Winning the silver medal in this game boosted her feeling of her own worth, so she was confident of performing better in the next round.
5. The more fans learn about the football player's achievements, the more admiration they show for him.
6. Besides improving muscle tone (肌肉结实度) and controlling weight, exercise has many other hidden benefits. For example, it makes you feel better and increases your energy.
7. If you want to improve your fitness through more exercise, you will need to eat enough to make up for the extra calories burned.
8. Athletes are taught to willingly accept their failures and to learn from them.
9. After he practiced football for hours in the playground, his eyes became less clear with sweat.
10. Variety in sports not only means players have different sets of skills but also means players have differences in beliefs, opinions, and experience.



Global understanding

Read the passage and complete the outline with information from the passage.



Detailed understanding

Read the passage again and choose the best answer to the questions.

- Which of the following statements is true about the “invisible fences” in Para. 2?
 - They still widely exist on the global level.
 - They separate us from our neighbors and colleagues.
 - They can’t be seen and felt.
 - They lead to a cultural divide when we need to separate from others.
- The author and his roommates could overcome their differences because of their _____.
 - common interest in playing football
 - dedication
 - common goal that they could achieve only as a team
 - strengths and weaknesses
- In the author’s view, what really matters on the field?
 - A diverse team with all talented players.
 - A united team with everyone getting along well with each other.
 - Willingness to be successful in the game.
 - A combination of individual work and teamwork.
- What kind of person is called “a brilliant fool?”
 - A person who is clever but doesn’t respect others.
 - A person who has talent but enjoys being alone.
 - A person who makes friends with everyone.
 - A person who is arrogant and close-minded.
- What is the difference between great teams and good teams?
 - Players of great teams have strengths and skills.
 - Great teams are made up of members respecting each other.
 - Players of great teams have an understanding of the strengths of every player.
 - Players of great teams excel at their role.

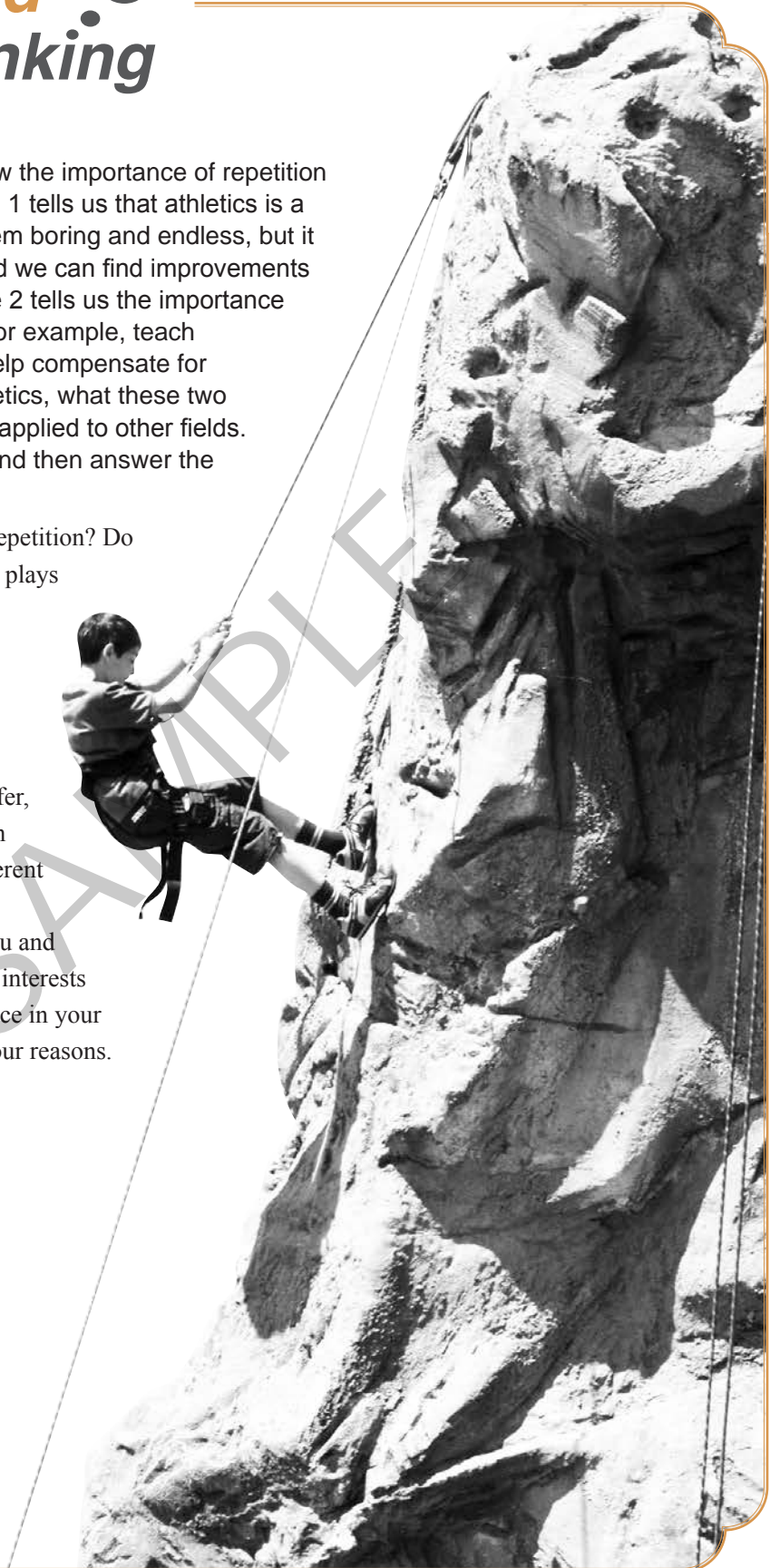
Cultural thinking

- According to the passage, “winning isn’t just about final scores and trophies; it’s the sense of accomplishment that comes from cooperating with others to achieve a common goal.” Where do you think the sense of accomplishment in sports comes from, final scores, trophies, or others? Please share your ideas.
- What will you do if your team members have different viewpoints from yours?

Integrated [?] thinking

From the two passages we know the importance of repetition and diversity in sports. Passage 1 tells us that athletics is a process of repetition. It may seem boring and endless, but it gives us focus and purpose, and we can find improvements in ourselves over time. Passage 2 tells us the importance of diversity in athletics. It may, for example, teach players to respect others and help compensate for their weaknesses. Besides athletics, what these two passages teach us can also be applied to other fields. Read the two passages again and then answer the following questions.

1. What's your understanding of repetition? Do you think it is meaningless or it plays a role in the course of success? Please share your opinions.
2. Which do you think is more important, the process or the outcome?
3. Which kind of team do you prefer, a diverse team in which you can meet teammates from very different backgrounds and hear different opinions, or a team in which you and your teammates share common interests and have no significant difference in your talent and skills? Please give your reasons.



Culture mosaic

1

Modern sports played in ancient China

Some modern sports have their origins in ancient China. Here are some examples.

Football

In 2004, FIFA identified China's Linzi District in Zibo, Shandong Province, as the cradle of the earliest form of football. In ancient China, playing football or soccer was known as *cuju*, which means to "kick the ball." Originally it was widely played for entertainment in states Qi and Chu as early as the Warring States Period. Later, in the Han Dynasty, the game became popular among the army, the royal court and the ordinary people.

Golf

Golf is another sport that the Chinese have played since ancient times. The game was known as *chuiwan*, which had striking similarities to modern-day golf, such as hitting balls toward holes with complex rules and gentlemanly etiquette. It originated from the Tang Dynasty, and in the Song, Liao and Jin dynasties, it became a favorite pastime among the general public. People liked to play it at the Hanshi Festival.

Polo

The Chinese were ardent horse riders. Polo, also called *jiju* in Chinese, was a popular pastime during the Tang, Song and Yuan dynasties. Like modern polo, the ancient game was also played by two teams. The winner was claimed by the side with the higher score which was recorded with colored flags erected on both sides of the two goals. The game was also actively practiced by women.

Task What other modern sports do you know were also played in ancient times?



Unusual sports played around the world



Ostrich racing

Ostrich racing originated in Africa and eventually made its way over to the US. Ostriches can reach a surprising speed of 70 kilometers an hour, and their legs can reach up to three to five meters in a single stride. During a game of ostrich racing, people sit on ostriches and race them around a track.



Elephant polo

Elephant polo is just like regular polo, except on an elephant — it even requires the same equipment. This sport is popular in Nepal, India, and Thailand.



Wife carrying

Wife carrying originated in Finland and becomes an international sport now. The sport involves a man carrying a woman — who are not required to be legally married — on his back, running through obstacles along the way. If the man drops his partner, their team must add five seconds to their time. The team who finishes the course with the shortest time wins.

Task What unusual sports have you ever seen or participated in? What is the significance of these unusual sports to their culture? Please share your ideas with your classmates.

3

A new sport at the Paris Olympic Games

Competitive breakdancing will be the sparkling new attraction at the 2024 Olympics in Paris, which was confirmed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as part of plans by the president, Thomas Bach, to make the Games “more gender balanced, more youthful and more urban.”

Breakdancing — or breaking as it is known — is a street dance style that evolved in New York City during the 1970s. It made its Olympic debut at the 2018 Summer Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires. The IOC has confirmed it will be staged at a prestigious downtown venue, joining sport climbing and 3-on-3 basketball at Place de la Concorde.

The news was greeted with delight by the British breakdancer Karam Singh. “It’s going to be great for breaking as it gives us more recognition as a sport,” he said. “And for the Olympics, it will attract young people who may not follow some of the traditional sports.”

While many involved in breaking were happy, some expressed concerns that the sport — which is influenced by a variety of sources such as gymnastics, tap dance, and kung fu — may lose its authenticity by becoming part of the Olympic movement.

Task What sports do you know have been newly included in or excluded from the Olympics? What are the reasons?

