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Refer to the Focus Question on page 2 of this title to guide discussion and support additional learning connected to the text.

Organized cheerleading has roots that go back to the late 1880s. Cheerleaders have been helping people cheer on their favorite sports teams ever since. Today, in addition to cheering for many types of sports, cheerleaders of all ages entertain crowds with their amazing stunts and athletic displays. **Cheerleading** provides students a comprehensive look at how this sport has evolved over time. The book can also be used to teach students how to understand a sequence of events and the proper use of verbs.

Credits:

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Written by Jill Sherman

Glossary

athletes (*n.*) page 5
people trained in sports, games, or other activities that require strength, speed, and skill

chanting (*v.*) page 5
singing or saying something in a repeated, rhythmic way

choreography (*n.*) page 13
the sequence of movements in a dance or other performance, often set to music

competitions (*n.*) page 5
contests or other events where individuals or teams play against each other to win something

inspire (*v.*) page 4
to encourage a person to act

qualify (*v.*) page 10
to show enough skill to be allowed to compete in a difficult event

rally (*v.*) page 14
to inspire or encourage people during difficult circumstances

routines (*n.*) page 5
series of actions or other parts of performances created for an audience

squads (*n.*) page 5
small groups of people who participate in an activity together

stunts (*n.*) page 9
difficult or daring physical feats, often performed as entertainment

synchronized (*adj.*) page 4
performed or arranged to happen at the same time

unison (*n.*) page 6
the state of actions or spoken words happening at the same time

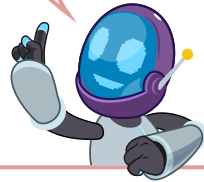
Cheerleading



Written by Jill Sherman

Focus Question

How and why has cheerleading changed over time?



Words to Know

athletes	rally
chanting	routines
choreography	squads
competitions	stunts
inspire	synchronized
qualify	unison

Connections

Writing

Would you encourage others to join a cheerleading squad? Write about why or why not using details from the book.

Art

Write your own cheer for your school or favorite sports team. Perform your cheer for your class.



School-age cheerleaders perform during the kick-off ceremony for a competition to design the mascot for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

The Future of Cheerleading

Cheerleaders are disciplined and skilled athletes as well as creative performers. They entertain fans and impress judges with dazzling displays of acrobatics, dance, and gymnastics. As more and more athletes decide to train in the sport, cheerleading continues to expand around the world.

In 2013, the international organization responsible for determining official sports named cheer as a sport. In 2016, the International Olympic Committee recognized the International Cheerleading Union. This is the groundwork needed for cheer to become a part of the Olympic Games. What's next for the sport of cheer?

For crowd-leading cheerleaders, it is important to understand the rules of the sport for which they are cheering. Cheerleaders must also have good timing. They need to respond right away to action on the field. Cheerleaders have different cheers depending on what is happening in the game. When their team is defending the ball, they rally the crowd to inspire confidence in players. During a time-out, cheerleaders entertain fans. After their team scores, cheerleaders lead short cheers in celebration. They often perform a longer routine set to music in the middle of a game.

Athletes often need to try out for high school, college, all-star, and professional-level cheerleading squads. The coach or squad captain will want to see their skills in action to decide if they will be a good fit for the team.

Executing challenging cheerleading routines takes training and practice, along with flexibility and strength. Precision, timing, and focus are all important for cheerleaders to master.



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University of Cincinnati cheerleaders and fans show support for a player shooting a basket.

Inspiring Spirit

Fifty thousand people sit together in an arena to watch their favorite basketball team. The score is tied. Only minutes remain in the game. As the ball soars through the air, a group of people encourage the players from the sidelines. At the same time, they perform **synchronized** movements. Their uniforms match the uniforms of the team playing on the court. They **inspire** fans to stand up and join them in supporting the players. As the ball completes its arc, suspense builds. The ball swooshes through the hoop! The people clapping, yelling, and jumping on the sidelines are cheerleaders.

Joining the Squad

Many schools have cheerleading squads, but other squads are formed just to take part in competitions. Youth leagues and recreation centers often have opportunities for young people to join squads. Children sometimes start cheering as young as age three.



Smiling and showing confidence are important parts of cheerleading.

Cheerleaders should have certain qualities to be successful. They must be skilled athletes. They often have to lift each other, so strong muscles are important. Many cheerleaders have a background in dance as well. Loud voices help the crowd hear them clearly. A good memory helps them remember difficult **choreography**.



A high school cheerleading squad performs a pyramid.

Pyramids are another important aspect of cheerleading. A pyramid is a series of connected stunts that ends with cheerleaders on the ground supporting other cheerleaders above them. Cheerleaders are constantly working to learn and perfect challenging moves.

STUNT

A new part of cheerleading is STUNT. In this sport, two teams play against each other by performing the same routines at the same time. Over the course of four quarters—including partner stunts, pyramids and tosses, jumps and tumbling, and team routine—athletes execute challenging technical moves for judges and fans.

Cheerleaders help unite large crowds at sporting events by performing simple motions while **chanting** short phrases. If fans can clearly see the motions from the stands, they can easily copy them. While jumping and clapping to celebrate a big play may come naturally to many fans, cheerleaders can help make them cheer louder. As players try to execute important plays, cheerleaders work to raise the energy of the crowd. In turn, the energy inspires players.



High school cheerleaders support their team during a game in Florida.

School-age to professional **athletes** participate in the sport of cheerleading. Some cheerleaders are members of **squads** that cheer for sports teams, such as American football or basketball teams. Other cheerleaders perform cheer **routines** in front of judges, as well as their own fans, at **competitions**.

The History of Cheerleading

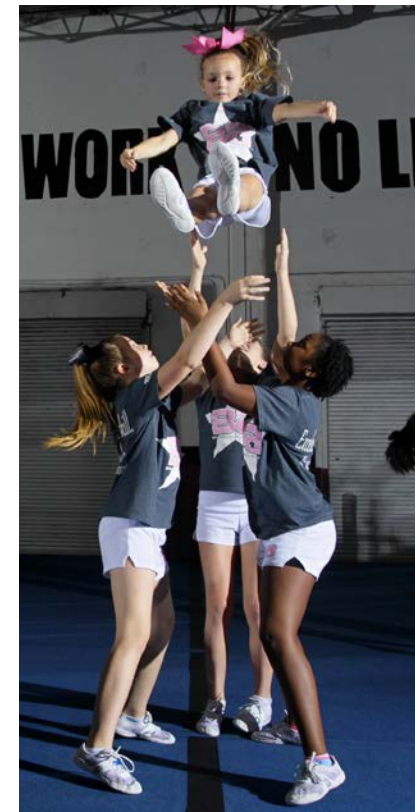
Fans have been cheering on their favorite athletes for as long as people have been playing sports. However, it wasn't until the 1880s that cheering began in an organized way. Football fans at one of the oldest universities in the United States—Princeton University in New Jersey—started it all. The words they chanted in **unison** to support their team became known as the “Princeton Cheer.” One Princeton graduate brought the concept of football-game cheers to the University of Minnesota, where cheers became very popular.

In 1898, a University of Minnesota student named Johnny Campbell led the crowd at a home game. His shouts of “Rah, rah, rah! Get together, hoo-rah! Hoo-rah! Varsity! Varsity! Varsity, Minn-e-so-ta!” gained him the title of the first-ever “cheer leader.” Soon after, six male students formed an official squad.

The cheers spread to fans of other teams. Schools across the country formed their own cheerleading squads.

All-star cheerleaders perform two-and-a-half-minute routines that include acrobatics, tumbling, dancing, gymnastics, and stunts. Judges score routines on difficulty, creativity, technique, and number of advanced moves. Cheerleading squads perform many aspects in unison. Judges take off points if cheerleaders fall out of sync.

One common cheerleading stunt is the basket toss. Two athletes at the bottom, called *bases*, lock arms. They lift up and toss another squad member, called the *flyer*. The flyer does a toe-touch, herkie, or other move. The bases make a cradle to catch the flyer on the way down. Spotters stand in front of or behind the bases. If something goes wrong, they help catch the flyer.



A youth all-star team practices a basket toss.

From the Sidelines to Center Stage

Although cheerleading may have started as a way to rouse fans during American football games, it has become a sport in its own right. Today, the United States All Star Federation (USASF) oversees many cheerleading and dance competitions across the country.

All-star cheerleading continues to grow in popularity around the world. In 2004, the USASF began hosting the annual Cheerleading and Dance World Championship, also known as “Worlds.” Around

eleven thousand cheerleaders on top teams from more than forty countries competed at the 2018 Worlds. To **qualify**, cheerleading teams must first win national competitions.



High school cheerleaders perform a pyramid in the Japan Cup in 2008.

At first, only men were permitted to join the cheer squads, which were often called “yell squads.”



Columbia University cheerleaders pose with their mascot in New York in 1924.

Cheerleaders

would scream chants to the fans, who then repeated them.

In the 1920s, women in the United States gained many important rights, including the right to vote. In 1923, women were allowed to join cheerleading teams.



In 1925, Marion Draper, one of the first female cheerleaders, led fans in cheering at Tulane University in Louisiana.



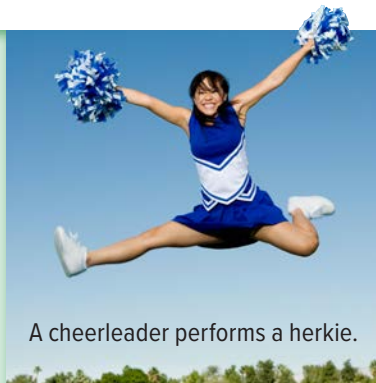
In the 1940s, cheerleaders wore matching uniforms—long poodle skirts, a sweater with a block letter that stood for their school name, and black-and-white saddle shoes.

During the 1930s, cheerleaders began to use pom-poms—sticks with lengths of colorful paper attached to one end. Cheerleaders waved them to attract the attention of the crowd.

In the 1940s, when many men were fighting overseas in World War II, cheerleading transitioned from “yell squads” to mostly women doing organized routines with clapping and dancing. In time, women came to dominate cheerleading.

Do You Know?

Lawrence R. Herkimer, a leader in cheerleading education, invented the herkie in 1948. To do this classic move, cheerleaders thrust one leg parallel to the ground and bend the other knee backward toward the ground.



A cheerleader performs a herkie.

By the 1960s, cheerleading squads were a familiar sight at schools and colleges across the United States. In the 1970s and 1980s, cheerleaders began adding more complex **stunts** and dances to their routines. They also began setting them to music. Soon, cheerleading teams were competing against each other in official competitions.



Many cheerleading squads formed during the 1990s in Germany.

During the 1980s and 1990s, cheerleading expanded internationally. In countries such as Norway, Germany, Japan, and Chile, cheerleaders began entertaining fans and supporting teams. Today, the International Cheer Union (ICU) has more than 3.5 million athletes who work to foster the growth of cheerleading worldwide. The ICU plans championship events and promotes cheerleading education.