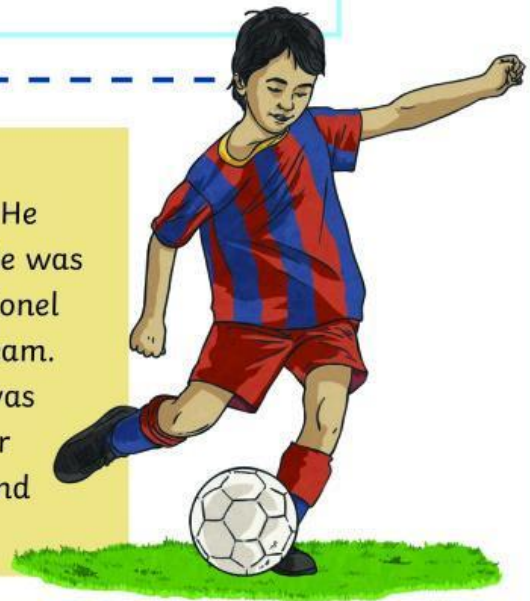


Lionel Messi

Lionel Messi is a professional footballer from Argentina. He is a respected sportsperson and works with charities that support children around the world.

Childhood

Lionel was born on 24th June 1987 in Argentina. He started playing football when he was a child. He was a talented young player and at the age of 13, Lionel moved to Barcelona to train with their youth team. Although Lionel settled in quickly in Spain, it was harder for his family to adapt. While his mother and **siblings** moved back to Argentina, Lionel and his father stayed in Barcelona.



Sporting Career

At the age of 16, Lionel played his first game for FC Barcelona. In the 2004-2005 season, he made history as the youngest player and goalscorer in the highest division of football in Spain. Although Lionel was shorter than most of the other players at 5 feet 7 inches, he didn't let that overcome him. He gained many fans with his pace and football skills.

An important time during Lionel's career was between 2008-2009. During this football season, Barcelona achieved three major European championship titles. This treble championship win was also repeated during the 2014-2015 season. Lionel played for Barcelona for an incredible 21 years.

Alongside playing for Barcelona, Lionel continued to represent Argentina in national competitions. Amazingly, they achieved the gold medal in the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. Additionally, Lionel represented Argentina in a tournament which is played among national teams from South America. They won this tournament in 2021 and Lionel was the captain.

In August 2021, Lionel left Barcelona and moved to a French football club called Paris Saint-Germain. Lionel left Barcelona as the leading goalscorer in the league's history with an impressive 474 goals. He also broke records as being one of the highest-paid footballers in the world.

Each year, an award called the Ballon d'Or is given to a professional player who is thought to have played the best football in the world. Lionel has achieved this award seven times.



Charity Work

Throughout his career, Lionel has been involved with a number of charities. He founded his own organisation in 2007 in order to help **vulnerable** children. In 2010, Lionel began to represent a children's charity called UNICEF and he travelled to Haiti to raise awareness of people suffering there after an earthquake. In 2020, Lionel donated a large amount of money to Argentinian and Spanish hospitals so that they could help treat coronavirus patients.

Glossary

siblings: Brothers and sisters.

vulnerable: Someone who needs special care or is at risk.

Questions

1. Which city was the Olympics in when Messi won a gold medal with Argentina? Tick one.

- ☐ Barcelona
- ☐ Beijing
- ☐ Paris
- ☐ Tokyo

2. Draw **four** lines and complete the sentences.

He is a respected
sports person...

when he was a child.

He started
playing football...

Lionel continued to
represent Argentina in
national competitions.

Alongside playing for
Barcelona,...

who is thought to have
played the best football in
the world.

Each year, an award
called the Ballon
d'Or is given to a
professional player...

and works with charities
that support children
around the world.

3. He gained many fans with his pace and football skills. Which word has the closest meaning to the word **pace**? Tick one.

- ☐ speed
- ☐ personality
- ☐ tricks
- ☐ goals

4. When did Lionel win a tournament with Argentina that was played against other South American countries? Tick one.
- ☐ 2005
- ☐ 2008
- ☐ 2014
- ☐ 2021
5. Look at the section **Childhood**. Find and copy one word which means the same as 'adjust' or 'change'.

6. Fill in the missing word.

Barcelona achieved three major European _____ titles.

7. Why do you think Lionel continued to stay in Barcelona when most of his family moved back to Argentina?

8. **Although Lionel was shorter than most of the other players at 5 feet 7 inches, he didn't let that overcome him.** What does the phrase '**he didn't let that overcome him**' show us about Lionel's personality? _____
