



The Stone Age

The different periods of prehistoric human history were named after the main material they used for tools and weapons. The Stone Age was one of the longest periods of this time. Scientists think that it began before 300,000BCE and continued until 3,000BCE. Items from this time are very hard to find, so these are just educated guesses.

The name Stone Age means that most of the tools and weapons humans used were made of stone. They didn't use metal much at all. It seems that they used small amounts of gold and copper to make ornaments and jewellery but not a lot else. Humans had started to use copper to make bronze by the end of the Stone Age. This is why the next period is called the Bronze Age.

Scientists have found evidence of early humans from nearly 4 million years ago. They don't know what they were using for tools that far back. That's why we say the Stone Age began before 300,000BCE. Humans had spread across the globe by the time they started using bronze. This means that the Bronze Age would have started at different times in different places.

There were three different periods of the Stone Age. The first section was called the Palaeolithic period. Palaeolithic means Old Stone Age. This lasted until about 10,000BCE. The next era was called the Mesolithic period. That means Middle Stone Age. This lasted until about 8,000BCE. The final period was called the Neolithic age. This means New Stone Age. It lasted until roughly 3,000BCE.

People living in the Palaeolithic period hunted for their food. They moved around and didn't have permanent houses. This is called being nomadic. Lots of the items from this time have been found in caves. They lived at the same time as woolly mammoths and sabre-toothed tigers. There were several ice ages during this time. The people who survived had to live through extreme conditions.

The Mesolithic period was much warmer. Britain was separated from Europe by the rising sea. These people were still nomadic, but



they did have certain areas that they returned to. This might have been for religious reasons or celebrations. Humans started to make more advanced tools at this time by attaching rocks to sticks. It was in this period that the first evidence of houses has been found.

Stonehenge and Skara Brae were built during the Neolithic period. There is evidence that this was when humans started to build permanent villages and towns. They also began to farm animals and crops. Some of the first animals they farmed were cattle, sheep and pigs. This is the first time that humans seem to have deliberately planted crops to be harvested.



RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. Which metals did Stone Age people use to make jewellery?
2. Which period began in roughly 10,000BCE?
3. How old is the earliest evidence of humans?
4. True or false: Nomadic people stayed in one place.
5. In which period did humans start to build houses?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

I

How do we know that Palaeolithic people used caves as shelter?

V

Which words tell you that people did something on purpose?

S

Why was the period called the Stone Age?

S

Why do scientists say the Stone Age began before 300,000BCE?

P

Why was it easier to stay in a permanent place once people started to farm animals?

Answers:

1. Gold and copper
2. Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age)
3. 4 million years ago
4. False
5. Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age)

I: Items have been found in caves

V: Deliberately

S: People used stone to make tools and weapons

S: They don't know exactly when people started using stone tools

P: It would have been very hard to take their animals with them if they kept moving on