

# The Stone Age

Spanning over 3 million years, the Stone Age started when the first human-like animals came into existence. These early humans first arrived in Britain more than 800,000 years ago. During this time, stone was predominantly used for making tools and weapons with a sharp edge or point.

The Stone Age is split into three time periods:

- Palaeolithic – around 3,000,000BC

The earliest hominids (humans or close relatives of humans) used simple tools. Britain was connected by land to France and Denmark.

- Mesolithic – around 10,000BC

People led nomadic lives as hunter-gatherers, meaning they travelled from place to place with no permanent home. Britain became an island.

- Neolithic – around 4500BC to 2400BC

Farming began, pottery was developed and villages were built.



## Where Did Stone Age People Live?

During the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic eras, Stone Age people were nomadic and some lived in caves. Evidence of humans sheltering in caves has been found by archaeologists, who discovered cave paintings of ancient animals. However, most Stone Age people are thought to have lived in tents made with wood or animal bones and animal skins. There is evidence that the floor was covered with a layer of moss, reeds and other soft plant materials.

It was only in the Neolithic era when Stone Age people began to settle in villages. There is evidence of settlements, such as the one at Skara Brae, often made up of simple roundhouses built from stone. They were built into mounds of rubbish known as midden (small stones, shells, mud and animal bones), which would provide stability and insulation. These houses had beds, storage shelves and a hearth (fireplace) in the middle.

### What Did Stone Age People Eat?

Stone Age people were initially hunter-gatherers. Their diet consisted of nuts, berries and fruits that they had gathered and meat and fish that they had hunted using the weapons that they crafted out of stone and wood.

Animals (such as mammoths) were much bigger during this time, making hunting them difficult but the reward would be worth it.

During the Neolithic era, Stone Age people became farmers which meant that they grew much of the food they needed for their village. They even domesticated (tamed) some of the animals to help on their farms.

### What Did Stone Age People Wear?

Due to changing weather, Stone Age clothing had to keep people warm. After animals were hunted, their skins would be removed before the meat was eaten. These would be cleaned using stone tools and then washed. There is evidence that needles, made from bone, and thread were invented during the Stone Age.

Men, women and children wore similar clothing:

- a tunic made from two pieces of rectangular animal skin bound (or later sewn) together with a hole for the head;
- a belt possibly made from grasses;
- simple leather moccasin shoes, which are soft leather shoes with the sole turned up on all sides and sewn at the top in a simple gathered seam;
- decorative jewellery might be added – many bone and shell bracelets and necklaces have been uncovered by archaeologists.



# Questions

1. What was stone used to make? Tick all that apply.

- ☐ tools
- ☐ weapons
- ☐ homes
- ☐ needles

2. Tick **all** statements which are true.

- ☐ Stone Age people wore a tunic.
- ☐ Animals were much smaller during the Stone Age.
- ☐ People settled in villages during the Mesolithic era.
- ☐ Farming began during the Neolithic era.

3. Find and copy **two** things that Stone Age people wore.

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4. Find and copy an adjective from the text which is used to describe the jewellery.

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5. Find and copy **two** different ways that animals were used during the Stone Age.

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6. Would you rather be a hunter or a gatherer? Give reasons to explain.

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7. During which era of the Stone Age would you rather live? Give reasons to explain.

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# Questions

**8. ...but the reward would be worth it.**

Why do you think that this was the case?

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# Answers

1. What was stone used to make? Tick **all** that apply.

- ☒ **tools**
- ☒ **weapons**
- ☒ **homes**
- ☐ needles

2. Tick **all** statements which are true.

- ☒ **Stone Age people wore a tunic.**
- ☐ Animals were much smaller during the Stone Age.
- ☐ People settled in villages during the Mesolithic era.
- ☒ **Farming began during the Neolithic era.**

3. Find and copy **two** things that Stone Age people wore.

**Accept any two of the following: a tunic; a belt; simple moccasin shoes, jewellery.**

4. Find and copy an adjective from the text which is used to describe the jewellery.

**decorative**

5. Find and copy **two** different ways that animals were used during the Stone Age.

**Accept any two of the following: for food; for clothing; for housing; for farming.**

6. Would you rather be a hunter or a gatherer? Give reasons to explain.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I would rather be a gatherer because I would be scared of the large animals, such as mammoths and I enjoy foraging for wild food.**

7. During which era of the Stone Age would you rather live? Give reasons to explain.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I would rather live during the Neolithic era because I think it would be less hard work being settled in a village than travelling all the time. It would be fun to have some tame animals helping on the farm rather than feeling scared of them all.**

8. ...but the reward would be worth it.

Why do you think that this was the case?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the reward of catching a mammoth would have been worth it because it was so huge that it would feed a whole village and the skin would make a lot of clothing.**