

Prehistory to Primary Schools:

Teaching the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age at Key Stage 2

Resource pack introduction

If your school is in the Manchester area, we may be able to arrange a visit by our Archaeology student ambassadors to run the introductory workshop. Email prehistorytoprimary@manchester.ac.uk to discuss.

What are these resources and how do use them?

These resources have been designed by a team of archaeologists at the University of Manchester who are passionate about prehistory, and want to make others equally interested in it. However, they understand that whilst they are experts in studying prehistory, they are not experts in teaching Key Stage 2. Therefore, these resources have been designed to give you, the teacher, the knowledge and confidence to teach British prehistory, and the materials you need to create flexible lessons that can inspire your pupils. This pack contains:

Introductory Workshop: A set of activity cards and an overview of the lesson plan which will give your students an introduction to the four prehistoric periods they will study in more detail. We may be able to send our student ambassadors to run this at your school (Manchester area only). Please email prehistorytoprimary@manchester.ac.uk to discuss in more detail.

Information Booklets: 4 Prehistoric periods are covered in this pack: the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age. Each period is explained in a booklet, which is divided into five main themes: When was it? Where did people live? How did people live? What technology did they use? What did people believe? In this resource pack, there is a teacher and pupil version of this booklet for each of the four periods, to give you, and your pupils the background understanding they need.

PowerPoints: Each period has a PowerPoint, structured by the same questions that the information booklets are structured by (When was it? Where did people live? How did people live? What technology did they use? What did people believe?). Each of these main sections has three slides; one asking 2-3 questions, and two further slides providing the answers. These PowerPoints are available as digital downloads, and are editable, so you can change them to your requirements.

3D printed artefacts: Each period has a 3D printed artefact. These are replicas of real archaeological artefacts that have been laser scanned and printed, so you and your pupils can experience artefacts thousands of years old. We have a limited supply of these and are happy to post a set out to schools as long as stocks last. Please email prehistorytoprimary@manchester.ac.uk to arrange. If you have access to 3D printing, we can also share the data with you so you can print your own.

Comics: Each period has a 4 page comic, which combines a range of information, themes and artefacts presented in the information booklets, PowerPoints and activities within a narrative.

Activities: Each period has suggested activities which tie into key ideas, themes or artefacts within the booklets and comics. Activity sheets and instructions are available as digital downloads (see digital resources below). The PowerPoints are also designed so that they can be used as activities: the answers to the questions posed in the PowerPoints for each of the five key themes can be found in the booklets and comics, and the pupil booklets have been written to allow pupils to research the periods and find the answers to these questions themselves.

'How do we know that?' videos: The booklets and PowerPoints present lots of facts, but how do archaeologists know all of this? To help your pupils understand this, we have produced a series of short videos with archaeologists, who explain some of the ways we analyse archaeological evidence. These cover archaeological excavation, finding out how old archaeological remains are (radiocarbon dating), zooarchaeology (animal bones), stone tools and ceramics (pottery). The PowerPoints contain 'How do we know that' prompts for when particular videos might be especially helpful.

What is Prehistory?

This pack covers the Prehistoric periods in Britain from the end of the last Ice Age in 9,600 BC to the arrival of the Romans in 43AD. These are the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age. This was a time of huge changes: people moved from hunting and gathering to farming, people began using pottery and metals, huge monuments were built, population increases, and people's belief systems, social structure and identity changed. But, there are no written records, archaeologists have to use the evidence we dig up to understand the people in Britain thousands of years ago.

The Mesolithic (9600-400 BC): At the end of the last Ice Age (9,600 BC) the people that lived in Britain were hunter-gatherers, relying on wild resources for food. They used tools made of stone, bone and antler, but did not have any pottery or metal. They lived in small groups, making structures out of wood, skins and turf, and groups moved around the landscape, living in different places at different times of the year, probably to help them hunt or gather certain resources. The Mesolithic was the first time dogs are present in Britain, and people probably used them to hunt with. People formed important relationships with some animals, and there is evidence that species like red deer may have been important in Mesolithic belief systems.

The Neolithic (4000-2400 BC): The start of the Neolithic brought huge changes to Britain. People started farming, keeping domestic animals like cows, sheep and pigs, and growing domestic plants like wheat and barley. Stone, bone and antler continued to be used for tools, but people also started using pottery for the first time. People start making larger buildings and more permanent settlements, however, many people would be looking after their animal herds, so would be moving around the landscape quite a lot. Neolithic communities also began building big monuments, including long stone, wood and earthen tombs for the dead, and big earthen enclosures, often on hills, called causewayed enclosures and henges. Archaeologists think that ancestors and past communities were really important in Neolithic belief systems.

The Bronze Age (2400-800 BC): At the start of the Bronze Age people started making tools from copper and bronze (a mixture of copper and tin) and decorative and impressive artefacts from gold. These were the first metals in Britain. These metals were only found naturally in certain places in Britain, so Bronze Age people had to trade far and wide to get these ingredients. People lived in bigger farming communities, which may have had a leader or chief. Farms and field systems became larger, but towards the end of the Bronze Age, there was more competition for land and resources, which may have led to conflict. People though family and ancestors were important, and buried their dead in groups, which archaeologists think are a bit like 'family trees', showing the relationships between people.

The Iron Age (800 BC-43 AD):

In the Iron Age, people begin making tools and weapons out of Iron, which was stronger and harder than bronze. However, it was also more difficult to work with and to take care of, so people also continued to use bronze. In the Iron Age people lived in big farming communities, making massive enclosures on the top of hills, which were sometimes used as forts, and sometimes used for huge community gatherings at important religious occasions. The Iron Age is famous for the incredible and elaborate artefacts and artwork people produced; many burials contained rich grave goods, including chariot burials, which included a chariot and horses.

Who are the Prehistory to Primary School team?

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3D printed artefacts made by Chris Eaton at MACE 3D print lab: mace.3dprint@manchester.ac.uk