

Prehistory to Primary Schools: Introductory Workshop (1hr)

Introduce yourself as an archaeologist! In particular, explain what makes archaeology (study of things, stories of everyday life) different from the history they might have studied before.

Step 1-Introducing Prehistory on a timeline (ca 20 minutes)

The session begins with the student ambassadors unfurling a 12m long tape, which will presumably snake around the classroom, or go around a large part of the edge of the classroom. It is then explained that the tape represents a timeline-every meter is 1000 years, every 10cm is 100 years, and every cm is 10 years (so the tape in total is 12,000 years long). To put this into perspective, the leader will ask students to put certain things on the timeline:

- When they were born (this will be within the first 2cm)
- A number of key historical events/figures:
 - When were the pupils born?
 - World War II (1939-45)
 - The Moon Landings (first people on the moon) (1969)
 - First Car (1893-Benz 4 wheel *Motorwagen*)
 - Henry VIII (monarch 1509-1547)
 - The Vikings (First Viking attack 793. Spans until 1066)
 - The Romans (AD43-AD410)

Give the students time to consider this in pairs (flashcards, ppt and handout with timeline to help the students visualise this) – 1 minute per event

Then: leader will have a set of cards with pictures of these events - they can then pick a student to take the card, and stand where they think it goes (and the leader can correct them if necessary)

TIPS:




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- Get familiar with using the timeline – make sure to practice beforehand!
- Don't be afraid to get theatrical as you're setting out the tape, and talk through the measurements as you go.
- The children will have their own mini timelines to practice on before you ask anyone to come to the big timeline.
- Show one card at a time and get them to write the event on their own timeline with their partner – around 1 minute per event.

- Ultimately, this will cluster points in the first 2m of the tape. Then, the children will be asked a few questions:
 - When did farming start in Britain?
 - When did we use metals in Britain for the first time?
 - When were coins first used in Britain?
 - When was all of our food from hunted wild animals and wild plants?

TIPS:



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- These are increasingly difficult concepts, especially the last point. Examples will be useful, i.e. before people started growing grains for bread, before people kept chickens or cows.
- Give children time to discuss with a partner, then ask for suggestions.
- The timeline task should take around 20 minutes.


- The assumption is that they will not know this-answering these questions become the aim of the rest of the lesson!

Step 2-Introducing the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age (20 minutes for group work)

Without revealing the answers to the questions above, you can say that all of them happen in prehistory, between 12000 and 2000 years ago (use the tape to show this visually), and in this period of time, we have 4 key time periods: The Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age. The class then needs to be split into 4 equally sized groups, and each group is given one of these periods. They then have to do a short exercise (below), and they have some key aims:

- To be able to say what their period is
- To be able to say when their period is (dates, on the time line)
- To be able to tell the class about their period, based on what they have learnt in their exercise (1-2 key facts)

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- Teacher should have groups in mind already.
- If possible, one adult per group to help with instructions and hand out resources.
- Once groups are ready, introduce task on next slide.

- Remind the groups they will be presenting their findings at the end of the session.
- Suggest each group nominate a scribe.
- Ask the teacher to set a timer for 20 minutes.
- If there are four adults, have one ambassador and one member of staff with the Mesolithic and Neolithic activities, and the same with the Bronze and Iron Age activities.
- If you have less than four, combine Meso and Neo, and Bronze and Iron to explain the concept of how the activities work.
- Get involved!

Mesolithic Exercise

Begins by the students reading a short introduction to the period (on the exercise instructions)

This exercise is to get the students to start thinking about life as hunter-gatherers. The group of students will be split into pairs, and each given a set of cards which have a range of plant and animal foods on them. Some were present in the Mesolithic, others were not. The aim of the exercise is for the students to split the cards up into those they think they could have hunted and gathered as a Mesolithic person, and those that they could not have. The answers will be on the back of the cards (so don't let them turn them over straight away!)

After this, there is an extension activity on the instruction sheet: they need to write a list of what they ate for their evening meal last night, and identify if they would have had any of it if they lived in the Mesolithic. If there are any things, get them to think about where they might have to have got them from (encourages them to think about hunting and gathering practice).

Other extensions if there is time: Get them to think about where the food came from-how would this affect people moving around their landscapes? Would it take people to different types of places? You can also get them to consider when (times of year) these foods might be available, and what this meant in terms of having food all year round? It could encourage discussions of storage, preserving, or ideas of diets changing throughout the year.

Neolithic Exercise

Begins by the students reading a short introduction to the period (on the exercise instructions)

This exercise is similar to the Mesolithic one, but this one is to get them into the mind-set of the Neolithic farmer! The group of students will be split into pairs, and each given a set of cards which have a range of plant and animal foods on them. Some were things Neolithic farmers would have kept and grown, others will either be domestic plants and animals that were not present in the Neolithic, or wild resources that people might have eaten, but did not grow or keep. The aim of the exercise is for the students to split the cards up into those they think they would have kept/grown as a Neolithic farmer, and those that they could not have, and those foods they think they could still get from wild resources. The answers will be on the back of the cards (so don't let them turn them over straight away!)

After this, an extension activity they can do (if there is time) is to write a list of what they ate for their evening meal last night, and identify if they would have been able to keep and grow the ingredients in the Neolithic.

Other extensions if there is time: Get them to think about where the food came from-how would this affect people moving around their landscapes? Would it take people to different types of places? You can also get them to consider when (times of year) these foods might be available, and what this meant in terms of having food all year round? It could encourage discussions of storage, preserving, or ideas of diets changing throughout the year.

Bronze Age Exercise

Begins by the students reading a short introduction to the period (on the exercise instructions)

This exercise is aimed at getting the students to think about the first use of metals in Britain (Copper), where metal comes from, and how many different people, and different types of skill and knowledge are involved in making metal objects. For this exercise, every student will be given a card, which is about a particular character in the process of making a metal object. Every card has a short description of who they are, and what they do. They will then have one thing they need, and one thing they can provide. All 8 cards join together in a chain, so each character provides the necessary material/item/skill for another character. This chain goes from the mining of Copper ore, all the way to the friends and family of a farmer who has promised to throw a big feast (but who needs an axe to fell trees for more grazing).

The first part of the exercise is for the students to look at their card, understand who they are, what they can do, and what they need. They then need to introduce themselves to everyone else in the group, and find out what they all can do/can provide. Once everyone has met everyone else, they need to link themselves together.

An extension to this exercise (if there is time) would be to get the students to draw a picture of themselves as their character, showing their role in the manufacture of the axe.

Iron Age Exercise

Begins by the students reading a short introduction to the period (on the exercise instructions)

This exercise is aimed at getting the students to think about craft production in the Iron Age, and the arrival of new types of trade, including money! The basic format is similar to that of the Bronze Age task- every student will be given a card, which is about a particular character in the process of making and trading textiles and clothing. Every card has a short description of who they are, and what they do. They will then have one thing they need, and one thing they can provide. All 8 cards join together in a chain, so each character provides the necessary material/item/skill for another character. This chain goes from the keeping of and shearing of sheep, all the way to a child who needs some new warm clothes.

The first part of the exercise is for the students to look at their card, understand who they are, what they can do, and what they need. They then need to introduce themselves to everyone else in the group, and find out what they all can do/can provide. Once everyone has met everyone else, they need to link themselves together.

An extension to this exercise would be to get the students to draw a picture of themselves as their character, showing their role in manufacture and trading of the wool, textiles or clothing.

Step 3-Putting Prehistoric Knowledge into Practice!

From the exercises, the four groups should now know the name of their period, the date, and should all have learnt some facts (eg, Mesolithic people were hunter-gatherers, and would have eaten X, Y or Z). In turn, two students need to come up to the tape, one stand at the start, and one at the end of their period, saying the dates. Then the rest of the group need to tell the class 1-2 important facts about their period.

Once all 4 groups have done that, the leader can introduce our resource packs-showing the children the comics, booklets, 3D prints, and telling them that they have everything they need there to learn all about these periods!

Rough guide to working with KS2 children

- Give them “thinking time” – not everyone responds well to being put on the spot.
- During activities or anytime they are working with a partner, walk around the classroom, check in on them, listen to what they’re saying. Engage with them!
- Practice all the activities beforehand – get comfortable with everything you expect the children to do.
- Repetition is key! Children like repeating things and feeling confident when they know the answer, so find ways to ask them the same questions throughout, even if it’s as simple as remembering and repeating the names of the prehistoric periods.
- Before you start the session, ask the teacher how they manage the classroom – how do they select children to answer questions, how to they get their attention, etc.