

**Year 3/4**

**The Historical Association's  
Scheme of Work for Primary History**

**Unit XX: Changes in Britain from the Stone Age to the Iron Age**

© Historical Association 2015 (updated 2020)



**The  
Historical Association**  
The voice for history

**About this unit**

Children can be introduced to the idea that people have been living in Britain for a very long time. They can learn about the changes that occurred between the middle Stone Age [Mesolithic Times] to the Iron Age – a period of over 10,000 years! Pupils should be encouraged to recognise the continuities too. For example there is very little change in houses, house-building or settlement size until well into the Iron Age. For most of the period there is no written evidence, so the archaeological record is very important. There is a strong emphasis on children investigating issues and solving valid historical questions recognising the nature of the evidence on which their judgements and knowledge are based.

## Unit Structure

This unit is structured around 4 sequential history enquiries:

1. What was 'new' about the New Stone Age?
2. Which was better, bronze or iron?
3. If you were Julius Caesar, would you have invaded Britain in 55BC?
4. When do you think it was better to live – Stone Age, Bronze Age or Iron Age?

## How this unit links to the new national curriculum for primary history

- Changes in Britain from the Stone Age to the Iron Age
- The Maya – one of the options for studying a non-European society – were a Stone Age culture too. Parallels can be drawn, and differences explored, between the Stone Age in Britain and the Stone Age in Mesoamerica.
- The Indus Valley – one of the options for studying an Ancient Civilisation. The Indus Valley Civilisation, 2600-1900 BC, was contemporary to much of the Stonehenge era. Both stone technology (flint/chert for blades) and bronze, for tools and/or weapons, as well as other items for specific purposes (craft production, woodworking) were used. Parallels can be drawn on how societies used available technology and developed it to meet needs and (new) demands.

## Enquiry 1: What was 'new' about the New Stone Age?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	KEY CONTENT AND SUGGESTED LESSON IDEAS	SUGGESTED RESOURCES	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
<b>Children should learn:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What Britain was like after the last Ice Age</li> <li>• How few people lived in Britain at the time</li> <li>• How they fed and clothed themselves</li> <li>• Why they were nomadic</li> <li>• To draw conclusions using the evidence we have</li> <li>• To realise that for some questions there are no clear answers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who lived in Britain in the 'old' Stone Age? How did they survive? How do we know?</li> <li>• What do they already know about the Stone Age?</li> <li>• Does Fred Flintstone help us understand life 8,000 years ago?</li> <li>• If we met an old stone age family what questions would we want to ask them?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cresswell Crags is an Ice Age site, showing life from 55,000 to 10,000 years ago.</li> <li>• Your local museum will have artefacts and may have loan boxes for you to borrow</li> <li>• Humans Sped to UK After Ice Age, Study Says:  <a href="http://www.howcomyoucom.com/selfnews/viewnews.cgi?newsid1067869401,20578,.shtml">http://www.howcomyoucom.com/selfnews/viewnews.cgi?newsid1067869401,20578,.shtml</a> </li> <li>• Collins Primary History: Stone Age to Iron Age</li> </ul>	<p>Can the children talk about how people lived in the 'old' stone age?</p>

<p><b>Children should learn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immigrants brought new animals and crops to Britain</li> <li>What impact this had on settlement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>In what ways did things change around 4000BC?</b></li> <li><b>Who were the first farmers?</b></li> <li><b>How big a change was it from hunter-gatherers to farming?</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary History 66: 'Stone Age to Iron Age' <a href="https://www.history.org.uk/publications/categories/299/resource/7190/primary-history-66">https://www.history.org.uk/publications/categories/299/resource/7190/primary-history-66</a></li> <li>BBC: overview of British prehistory: <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/british_prehistory/">http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/british_prehistory/</a></li> </ul>	<p>Can the children work out what changed, as well as what stayed the same?</p>
<p><b>Children should learn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most of our evidence for the Stone Age comes from archaeologists</li> <li>Archaeologists disagree with each other</li> <li>Some recent discoveries that are changing the way we think about the Stone Age</li> </ul>	<p><b>How are our ideas about life in the Stone Age changing?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Howick House, in Northumberland, a recently discovered Mesolithic house – how has it changed our views of hunter-gatherers? See <i>Britain's Oldest House?</i> <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/archaeology/oldest_house_01.shtml">https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/archaeology/oldest_house_01.shtml</a></li> <li>Cheddar Man is the oldest skeleton found in Britain. What does that tell us about people's lives at the time? See Cheddar Man: Fact or opinion? [TTS Group Ltd] <a href="https://www.tts-group.co.uk/fact-or-opinion-classroom-game/1006921.html">https://www.tts-group.co.uk/fact-or-opinion-classroom-game/1006921.html</a></li> <li>'Who invented clothes?' (<i>Guardian</i>) <a href="http://www.theguardian.com/science/sifting-the-evidence/2013/may/20/who-invented-clothes-palaeolithic-archaeologist">http://www.theguardian.com/science/sifting-the-evidence/2013/may/20/who-invented-clothes-palaeolithic-archaeologist</a></li> </ul>	<p>Using one of the examples given, can your children explain how a recent discovery by archaeologists has changed the way we think about the Stone Age?</p>

<p><b>Children should learn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The main features regarding the chronology of the Stone Age</li> <li>▪ The main changes throughout the period</li> <li>▪ There is much that we don't know about the Stone Age!</li> </ul>	<p><b>Final activity</b></p> <p>This final activity provides the children with the opportunity to reflect on the enquiry question and show what they have learnt throughout the enquiry.</p> <p>Particular focus ought to be on the chronology – this enquiry covers a period of around 6,000 years - and on the concept of continuity and change. They might do this by making a timeline around the classroom highlighting the [few] fixed dates we know, or with a 'put these events in sequence' activity.</p> <p>They might try the following activity as a conclusion: <b>If you were to meet a family from 7,000 years ago, what would you want to ask them? Make a list of questions, and then see if you can find out some of the answers.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ BBC series [Autumn 2014], <i>The Story of Britain</i> has episodes based on life during the Stone Age: <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/history-ks2-the-story-of-britain/zj4r7nb">https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/history-ks2-the-story-of-britain/zj4r7nb</a></li> <li>▪ Stonehenge: Fact or opinion? [TTS Group Ltd] <a href="https://www.tts-group.co.uk/fact-or-opinion-classroom-game/1006921.html">https://www.tts-group.co.uk/fact-or-opinion-classroom-game/1006921.html</a></li> </ul>	<p>Can children construct a simple timeline showing some of the changes throughout the Stone Age?</p>
---	---	--	---

### How will this enquiry help children to make progress in history?

As so much of this topic is contested histories, pupils will begin to realise that conclusions must be based on evidence, and that new evidence, like the discoveries at Howick House and the Salcombe Shipwreck, can change the way we look at the past.

## Enquiry 2: Which was better, bronze or iron?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	KEY CONTENT AND SUGGESTED LESSON IDEAS	SUGGESTED RESOURCES	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
<p><b>Children should learn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How bronze was made</li> <li>• Where copper and tin come from</li> <li>• How bronze tools and weapons were made.</li> </ul>	<p>Is bronze better than stone?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PH71: Who's afraid of the big bad Bronze Age? <a href="https://www.history.org.uk/primary/resource/8685/whos-afraid-of-the-big-bad-bronze-age">https://www.history.org.uk/primary/resource/8685/whos-afraid-of-the-big-bad-bronze-age</a></li> <li>• PH82: What was so special about copper and tin? <a href="https://www.history.org.uk/primary/resource/9637/the-bronze-age-what-was-so-special-about-copper-a">https://www.history.org.uk/primary/resource/9637/the-bronze-age-what-was-so-special-about-copper-a</a></li> <li>• Making a bronze sword: <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00z597g/clips">http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00z597g/clips</a></li> <li>• Bronze Age homes and domestic life: <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/news/bronze-age-domestic-life-revealed/">https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/news/bronze-age-domestic-life-revealed/</a></li> <li>• What was life like in Bronze Age Cambridgeshire? <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/education/teaching-activities/must-farm-life-in-bronze-age-cambridgeshire/">https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/education/teaching-activities/must-farm-life-in-bronze-age-cambridgeshire/</a></li> <li>• Great Orme mines <a href="https://www.greatormemines.info/schools/">https://www.greatormemines.info/schools/</a></li> <li>• Bronze Age Britain <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z82hsbk/articles/z874kqt">https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z82hsbk/articles/z874kqt</a></li> </ul>	<p>Can children explain where bronze comes from, and how it is made?</p>

<p><b>Children should learn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where does iron come from?</li> <li>• How iron tools and weapons were made?</li> <li>• Why did it take so long for iron to reach Britain?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is iron made?</li> <li>• What was it used for?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life in an iron age village</li> </ul> <p><a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z82hsbk/articles/z8bkwmn">https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z82hsbk/articles/z8bkwmn</a></p>	<p>Can your pupils identify some of the similarities and differences between an Iron Age village and a village or town they know about today?</p>
<p><b>Children should learn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did bronze tools change life?</li> <li>• How did iron tools and weapons change life?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was the impact of bronze and iron tools on the way people in Britain lived?</li> <li>• Did it make farming easier?</li> <li>• Did it make life easier for craftsmen?</li> <li>• Did it make life more secure?</li> <li>• Did it make life safer?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flag Fen Bronze Age village <a href="http://www.landscapebritain.co.uk/section/6455/flag-fen-ancient-settlement/">http://www.landscapebritain.co.uk/section/6455/flag-fen-ancient-settlement/</a></li> <li>• PH83: Turning technology: Making life better in Iron Age Britain <a href="https://www.history.org.uk/primary/resource/9700/turning-technology-making-life-better-in-iron-age">https://www.history.org.uk/primary/resource/9700/turning-technology-making-life-better-in-iron-age</a></li> <li>• Butser Iron Age Farm <a href="http://www.butserancientfarm.co.uk/">http://www.butserancientfarm.co.uk/</a></li> <li>• Maiden Hill Fort <a href="https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/maiden-castle/history/">https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/maiden-castle/history/</a></li> <li>• What can we learn about the Bronze Age from the Amesbury Archer? <a href="https://www.wessexarch.co.uk/our-work/amesbury-archer">https://www.wessexarch.co.uk/our-work/amesbury-archer</a></li> <li>• What can we learn about the Bronze Age from the Salcombe shipwreck? <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/devon/8515627.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/devon/8515627.stm</a></li> </ul>	<p>Can your children explain the impact bronze and iron tools had on life at the time?</p>

<p><b>Children should learn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The main changes brought about by bronze and iron</li> <li>• To make a judgement based on the evidence available to them</li> </ul>	<p><b>Final activity</b></p> <p>This final activity provides the children with the opportunity to reflect on the enquiry question and show what they have learnt throughout the enquiry. Particular focus ought to be on the concept of change. There is the opportunity to focus on the technology of bronze and iron making, but the best focus is on the changes brought about by these new technologies. They might try the following question as a conclusion:</p> <p><b>Which had the biggest impact, bronze or iron?</b></p>	<p>BBC series [Autumn 2014], <i>The Story of Britain</i> has episodes based on life during the Bronze Age and Iron Age:</p> <p><a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/history-ks2-the-story-of-britain/zj4r7nb">https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/history-ks2-the-story-of-britain/zj4r7nb</a></p>	<p>Can your pupils identify the biggest changes between Stone Age life and Iron Age life?</p> <p>Can they identify any continuities [things that haven't changed, or not changed very much?]</p>
---	---	--	--

### How will this enquiry help children to make progress in history?

They will begin to realise that new inventions can have dramatic impacts on the way people live and work, but that also, as in the case of houses, sometimes the continuities are as important as the changes.



### Enquiry 3: If you were Julius Caesar, would you have invaded Britain in 55BC?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	KEY CONTENT AND SUGGESTED LESSON IDEAS	SUGGESTED RESOURCES	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
<p><b>Children should learn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do buried hoards tell us about Britain at the time?</li> <li>• What do bog bodies tell us about life at the time?</li> <li>• What do the written sources from the time tell us about Britain?</li> </ul>	<p><b>How do we know what Britain was like in 55BC?</b></p> <p>What can we tell about Iron Age Britain from the Snettisham Hoard of gold and silver torcs? Does it show a rich society? Why might Iron Age people bury treasure?</p> <p>Use the list of Iron Age Hoards to find one near you. Research that hoard – what was found? What can it tell us about life in the Iron Age?</p> <p>How did Lindow Man die? Why is his body so preserved? What does he tell us about Iron Age food? Health? Beliefs?</p> <p>Herodotus, the ‘father of history’ wrote about Britain as the ‘Tin Isles’ in the 5th Century BC. Pytheas, a Greek, is said to have sailed around Britain and described the geography around 330BC. Diodorus Siculus, a Phoenician from Sicily, wrote about travelling to and trading with Britain around 60BC. And of course the Gauls, from Northern France, traded regularly with Britain. Can you find out what these people said about Britain?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Museum: The Snettisham Hoard</li> <li>• <b>Wikipedia: Iron Age Hoards:</b> <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Iron_Age_hoards_in_Great_Britain">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Iron_Age_hoards_in_Great_Britain</a></li> <li>• Lindow Man: Fact or opinion? [TTS Group Ltd] <a href="https://www.tts-group.co.uk/fact-or-opinion-classroom-game/1006921.html">https://www.tts-group.co.uk/fact-or-opinion-classroom-game/1006921.html</a></li> <li>• British Museum: Lindow Man</li> </ul>	<p>Can your children reach any conclusions about Britain at this time by exploring <i>one</i> of the buried hoards?</p>

<p><b>Children should learn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did Roman people say about Britain?</li> <li>• What did Romans trade with Britain?</li> <li>• What did Britons think about Rome?</li> </ul>	<p><b>How did the Romans know what Britain was like in 55BC?</b></p> <p>What does Julius Caesar's tell us about Britain? Where do you think he has got this information from? Does he make it sound like a good land to add to the Roman Empire?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julius Caesar's 'Description of Britain.' <i>[attached as Word version to be edited as appropriate for your pupils.]</i></li> </ul>	<p>Can your children make any conclusions about how accurate Julius Caesar's description of Britain is?</p>
<p><b>Children should learn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using different pieces of evidence will lead to different conclusions – children will build their own interpretation of Iron Age Britain</li> <li>• Sometimes in history there is no clear answer</li> </ul>	<p><b>Final activity</b></p> <p>This final activity provides the children with the opportunity to reflect on the enquiry question and show what they have learnt throughout the enquiry.</p> <p>Particular focus ought to be on the skill of enquiry – history is all about investigation. They might try the following question as a conclusion:</p> <p><b>'Julius Caesar came to Britain in 55BC because it was a very rich country.' Do you agree?</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can your children produce a 'holiday brochure' advertising Britain in 55BC?</li> <li>• What evidence would you use to describe Britain in 55BC?</li> <li>• How would you make Britain seem attractive?</li> <li>• What parts of life would you stress? What parts would you miss out?</li> </ul>
<p><b>How will this enquiry help children to make progress in history?</b></p> <p>Children will begin to question the significance of events – why Julius Caesar came to Britain – and how they are portrayed. By using a wide range of evidence – archaeology, written, autobiography – they will appreciate the way historians put together arguments and ideas. They might begin to think about caus and consequence, and that events – like Caesar's trips to Britain – do not happen in a vacuum.</p>			

## Enquiry 4: When do you think it was better to live – Stone Age, Bronze Age or Iron Age?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	KEY CONTENT AND SUGGESTED LESSON IDEAS	SUGGESTED RESOURCES	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
Children should revisit their learning on the Stone Age:	What were the most important aspects of living in the Stone Age?		Can your children produce a 'living graph' showing the attractions and difficulties of the Stone Age?
Children should revisit their learning on the Bronze Age:	What were the most important aspects of living in the Bronze Age?		Can your children produce a 'living graph' showing the attractions and difficulties of the Bronze Age?
Children should revisit their learning on the Iron Age:	What were the most important aspects of living in the Iron Age?		Can your children produce a 'living graph' showing the attractions and difficulties of the Iron Age?

<p><b>Children should learn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to make comparisons</li> <li>• How to reach a conclusion</li> <li>• How to present their conclusions most effectively.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Final activity</b></p> <p>This final activity provides the children with the opportunity to reflect on the enquiry question and show what they have learnt throughout the enquiry. They could focus on characteristic features – how we recognise the defining features of a period or event through physical features, such as dress, architecture, transport, and the ideas that shape the period – when trying to answer this enquiry question:</p> <p><b>When was it better to live – Stone Age, Bronze Age or Iron Age?</b></p>		<p>Can your children reach a reasoned conclusion in answer to the enquiry question?</p>
---	--	--	---

### How will this enquiry help children to make progress in history?

By revisiting the previous three enquiries the children will learn to draw together work from different activities in order to reach a conclusion. They might also begin to consider the provisionality of conclusions in history as, no doubt, they will need to rethink previous answers in the light of further work.