

The Stone Age

The Stone Age spans an astonishing period of human prehistory, beginning approximately 3 million years ago and ending in Britain around 4,000 years ago. It is divided into three distinct phases: the Palaeolithic, the Mesolithic and the Neolithic.

During the Palaeolithic, or Old Stone Age, early humans were hunter-gatherers. They roamed in small groups, hunting large animals including woolly mammoths, wild horses and bison using carefully crafted flint tools. They sheltered in caves, wore animal skins for clothing and created remarkable cave paintings, such as those found in Lascaux, France.

The Mesolithic, or Middle Stone Age, followed the end of the last Ice Age roughly 10,000 years ago. As temperatures rose, forests spread and people adapted their way of life. Tools became smaller and more precise, and people began forming more settled communities near water sources.

The most significant changes came during the Neolithic, or New Stone Age, around 6,000 years ago. People became farmers, cultivating crops and domesticating animals. Permanent settlements were established, and communities cooperated to build extraordinary structures. Stonehenge, constructed in stages over thousands of years, stands as the most famous Neolithic monument in Britain today.

Questions

1. Approximately when did the Stone Age begin?
2. What are the three phases of the Stone Age?
3. What does "hunter-gatherer" mean?
4. Name two animals hunted during the Palaeolithic period.
5. What material were many Palaeolithic tools made from?
6. Where are some famous examples of cave paintings found?
7. Why did people's way of life change at the start of the Mesolithic period?
8. How did tools change during the Mesolithic?
9. What does "domesticating animals" mean?
10. What does the fact that it took thousands of years to build Stonehenge tell us about Neolithic people?



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