

The Prehistoric Period: The Bronze Age

Introduction

The Bronze Age was a historical period that followed the Stone Age. In the Stone Age, civilisations used tools made out of stone. So, it's no surprise that in the Bronze Age, civilisations used tools made out of bronze. The Bronze Age period in Britain lasted from around 3,000 BC to 1,200 BC. Towards the end of the Stone Age, settlers from mainland Europe travelled over to Britain in long wooden boats. They brought metal with them and, most importantly, the skills to make bronze.

Discovering Bronze

Bronze is an alloy (a metal that is made by mixing two or more metals) made from copper and tin. It is 90% copper and 10% tin. Mixing the two metals creates a much harder metal. The bronze could be poured into moulds to create useful items that were very strong. People in Britain discovered that they could mine tin from Devon and Cornwall and copper from North Wales. They had everything they needed to make bronze and quickly learnt how to use it to make tools, weapons and many other objects, including decorative items and jewellery.

Bronze Age Agriculture

Ploughs made of metal helped to transform agriculture. Ploughs are used to turn over the soil on the surface of the field. This brings fresh nutrients to the top which is good for the new crops. Plough blades had previously been made out of stone or wood. The stone blades often shattered



when they hit rocks in the soil and wooden blades wore down easily. Bronze ploughs were much stronger. Ploughing became much easier, so farmers could farm much wider areas. Farmers also used axes made from bronze to cut down forests. When the forests had been cleared, they could use the land to grow more crops or graze their animals. In the Bronze Age, farmers also discovered how to irrigate their crops. This meant that crops could get the water they needed and grow better.

Trading

In the Bronze Age, people learnt to tame horses and make carts with wheels. This helped them to travel over long distances to trade. Trade in bronze meant that some people grew rich and powerful. Metal workers and those who traded metals were the most important and wealthiest people in Bronze Age society.

Pots

As well as making objects out of bronze, skilled craftsmen made lots of pots out of clay. The potter's wheel was invented in the Bronze Age which helped to speed up production. The pots were used as drinking vessels or storage containers.

A New Material

Before the Stone Age, people used to make clothes out of fur and leather. In the Bronze Age, things started to change. People learned how to make clothes and blankets out of wool.



Questions

03

- 1 During the Bronze Age, what material were tools made out of? (tick)

- ☐ stone
- ☐ iron
- ☐ steel
- ☐ bronze

- 2 Which historical period came before the Bronze Age? (tick)

- ☐ The Iron Age
- ☐ The Anglo-Saxons
- ☐ The Stone Age
- ☐ The Romans

- 3 Which of these metals is an alloy? (tick)

- ☐ tin
- ☐ bronze
- ☐ copper

- 4 Where was copper mined? (tick)

- ☐ North Wales
- ☐ Devon
- ☐ Cornwall
- ☐ East Anglia

- 5 Which word in the third paragraph is another word for farming?
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- 6 What did Bronze Age people use to cut down trees? (tick)

- ☐ saws
- ☐ daggers
- ☐ axes
- ☐ spears

- 7 'In the Bronze age farmers also discovered how to irrigate their crops.'

What does the word irrigate mean? (tick)

- ☐ grow crops in straight lines
- ☐ bring water to land for growing crops
- ☐ harvest crops using machinery
- ☐ stop pests from eating crops

- 8 Who were the wealthiest people in Bronze Age society? (tick)

- ☐ Farmers
- ☐ Potters
- ☐ Metal workers and traders
- ☐ Weavers

- 9 How did the potter's wheel help Bronze Age potters?

- ☐ It helped them to make bigger pots.
- ☐ It helped them to make pots out of bronze.
- ☐ It helped them to spin yarn.
- ☐ It helped them to make pots more quickly.

- 10 Which new material was discovered in the Bronze Age?

- ☐ wool
- ☐ fur
- ☐ cloth
- ☐ leather

Score:

Answers

A

- 1 During the Bronze Age, what material were tools made out of? ☒ bronze
- 2 Which historical period came before the Bronze Age? ☒ The Stone Age
- 3 Which of these metals is an alloy? ☒ bronze
- 4 Where was copper mined? ☒ North Wales
- 5 Which word in the third paragraph is another word for farming? agriculture
- 6 What did Bronze Age people use to cut down trees? ☒ axes
- 7 What does the word irrigate mean? ☒ bring water to land for growing crops
- 8 Who were the wealthiest people in Bronze Age society? ☒ Metal workers and traders
- 9 How did the potter's wheel help Bronze Age potters? ☒ It helped them to make pots more quickly.
- 10 Which new material was discovered in the Bronze Age? wool