

 This text is adapted from *The Usborne History of Britain* by Ruth Brocklehurst.

# Prehistoric Britain

The story of life in Britain goes back to a time before people knew how to read and write, in an era known as prehistory. Although Britain's earliest inhabitants didn't write anything down, they did leave other clues behind. Traces of their houses, their tools and ornaments, and sometimes even their bodies, have survived down the ages. They help to build up a picture of how people lived in Britain from around 700,000 years ago.

## The Ice Age

When early people first set foot in Britain, things were very different from today. It was a period when temperatures swung between extremes. For thousands of years at a time it was bitterly cold. The sea that now divides Britain from the continent of Europe wasn't there, as much of the water was frozen into ice. Rivers of ice criss-crossed the land, and people, animals and plants just couldn't survive.

But, every hundred thousand years or so, the weather grew warmer and the ice melted. Plants grew, attracting herds of animals, such as mammoths, deer and wild horses, cattle and pigs. They walked to Britain on the dry land that connected it to Europe.

## Hunting and gathering

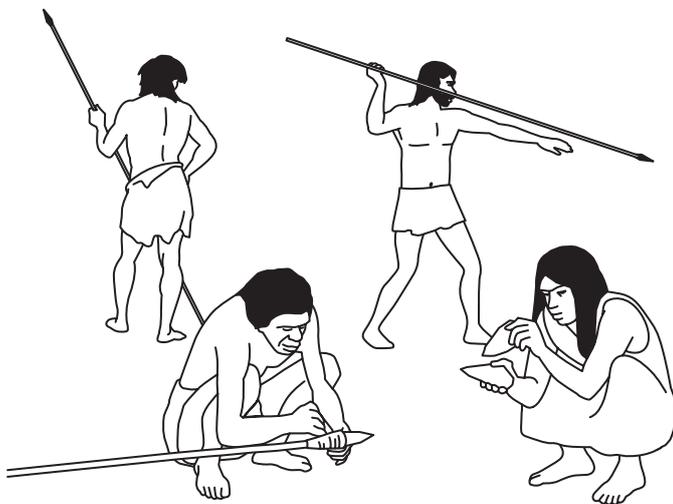
The first people arrived in Britain on foot, following the animals. They needed animals to survive – they ate their meat and used their skins for clothes. But many animals were huge and fierce, and people only had simple hunting tools, such as pointed wooden spears. So they chased animals for long distances to tire them out, or scared them off cliffs or into bogs (areas of wet, spongy ground), to make killing them easier.



They also made use of any animals they found that were already dead. This saved the effort of hunting. But the hunters of the Ice Age didn't just eat meat. They also caught fish and gathered shellfish, wild nuts, fruits and roots. They twisted plant stems and leaves to make rope and twine. And, to help with all these tasks, they made themselves tools from wood, bone and stone.

### On the move

Because they relied so much on wild animals, Ice Age hunters didn't have fixed homes. They moved around, following herds as they migrated in search of the best grass. At night, people slept in caves – if any were handy – or in shelters made of things they found nearby. But, every hundred thousand years or so, the cold weather returned again, the ice expanded to cover more of the land, and people and animals had to leave once more.



### Getting warmer

During the Ice Age, the weather kept swinging from very cold to warm – though this happened very slowly, about every 100,000 years. Plants, animals and people could only survive in Britain in the warm periods.

In 2003, archaeologists discovered rare Ice Age art in caves at Creswell Crags in Nottinghamshire. Outlines of deer, wild cattle and bird-like creatures survive, carved into the cave walls.

Name:	Class:	Date:
-------	--------	-------

# Prehistoric Britain

1 When did people first arrive in Britain?

2b  
1 mark

2 Draw lines to match the objects used by the earliest inhabitants of Britain to the materials they used to make them. One has been done for you.

Objects	Materials
spears	plant stems and leaves
rope	animal skins
tools	things found nearby
clothes	wood
shelters	wood, bone and stone

2b  
1 mark

3 Tick to show whether the following sentences about the first inhabitants of Britain are **true** or **false**. The first one has been done for you.

	True	False
They could not read or write.	✓	
They relied heavily on the tools they made.		
They built permanent settlements.		
They stayed in Britain throughout the Ice Age.		
They used clever hunting techniques.		

2d  
2 marks

/ 4  
Total for this page

4 Why would chasing a large animal into a bog make it easier to kill?

\_\_\_\_\_

2d  
1 mark

5 Look at the paragraph headed *On the move*.  
What do you find out about Ice Age people? Write **two** things.

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

2b  
2 marks

6 Which of the following descriptions best fits this text? Tick **one**.

- explanation
- persuasion
- recount
- report

2f  
1 mark

/ 4  
Total for this page

7 Think about the whole text. What is it **mainly** about? Tick the **best** answer.

The people who lived in Britain during the Ice Age

The weather in Britain during the Ice Age

The animals in Britain during the Ice Age

The geography of Britain during the Ice Age

2c  
1 mark

8 Where would you expect to find this text? Tick the **best** answer.

in a newsletter

in a textbook

in a catalogue

in a magazine

2f  
1 mark

/ 10  
Total for this test