

Iron Age Architect: Designing a Hillfort with Ellie

Learning objective: To understand the structure and strategic purpose of Iron Age hillforts and how society was organised.

Ellie the elephant is studying how Iron Age people protected their homes. Imagine you are an Iron Age chief. Use the information in the word bank to complete the 'Hillfort Planning' task. You must place the correct features onto your map and justify why each one was chosen for defence or daily life.

Word bank: Ramparts · Roundhouse · Ditch · Palisade · Grain store · Gatehouse

1. Ellie wants to know: Why did Iron Age people choose to build their settlements on top of high hills rather than in the flat valleys? Justify your answer. (2 marks)

2. Explain why the 'ditch' and 'ramparts' were built in a series of layers around the edge of the fort. (2 marks)

3. Compare and contrast a typical Iron Age 'roundhouse' with a modern-day house. What are the main differences in construction materials? (2 marks)

4. If a trader arrived at the fort with £5 worth of iron tools, where would they be inspected before entering? Explain your reasoning. (2 marks)

5. What might happen to the community if the central 'grain store' was not built on raised stilts? Explain the potential consequences. (2 marks)

6. If you were designing this fort, how would you organise the layout to ensure the community could survive a long siege? Justify your choices. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a bird's-eye view of your own Iron Age hillfort. Include the ramparts, a cluster of roundhouses, and a central grain store. Add arrows to show where you would place sentries to watch for visitors.



Extension challenge: Write a short, persuasive speech as a tribal leader convincing your people why it is time to move from the open farmland to a fortified hillfort. Use sophisticated vocabulary to describe the safety and security this new home will provide.