

The Dawn of Metal: Life in the Bronze Age

Learning objective: To understand the transition from the Stone Age to the Bronze Age and the impact of new metalworking technologies.

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions below. Use your best handwriting and full sentences.

Ellie the elephant travels back in time to explore the mysterious Bronze Age, a period that followed the Stone Age. During this era, people discovered that mixing copper with tin created a strong, durable metal called bronze. This discovery changed everything. Instead of using sharp flint stones to make tools, craftspeople began smelting ores in hot furnaces to cast axe heads, swords, and jewellery. Life in the settlement became more efficient; farmers could clear land faster with bronze sickles, leading to larger harvests. Families lived in roundhouses with thatched roofs, often clustered together in small, fortified villages. Society became more organized, and people began trading precious goods across long distances. Although gold and silver were used for decoration, bronze was the backbone of daily survival. Archaeological finds, such as buried hoards of metalwork, show us that these people valued their possessions highly. By observing these ancient artefacts, we gain a fascinating glimpse into the ingenuity and craftsmanship of our ancestors who transitioned from simple stone tools to the brilliant age of metal.

Word bank: alloy · smelting · horde · bronze · settlement · craftsmanship

1. According to the text, what two metals are mixed together to create bronze? (2 marks)

2. List two items that were created using the new metalworking techniques mentioned in the passage. (2 marks)

3. Explain why the invention of bronze tools would have made life easier for farmers in the Bronze Age. (2 marks)

4. How can we tell that Bronze Age people valued their possessions based on the archaeological evidence mentioned? (2 marks)

5. Do you think the discovery of metal was the most important development in early history? Justify your answer. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a scene from a Bronze Age settlement. Include a roundhouse with a thatched roof, a farmer using a bronze sickle, and an artisan working near a small furnace.



Extension challenge: 1. Compare and contrast: How does the life of a person in the Bronze Age differ from someone in the Stone Age? 2. Justify why trade became more important once people started making bronze items. 3. What might happen if a settlement could not find copper or tin nearby? 4. Explain why archaeologists call it the 'Bronze Age' instead of the 'Gold Age' even though gold was used. 5. If you were a Bronze Age craftsperson, what tool would you invent to make life in the village better and why? 6. Research and describe the process of smelting: why was such high heat necessary?