Life in an Iron Age Hillfort

Learning objective: To understand daily life and housing during the Iron Age in Britain.

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

Ellie the elephant has travelled back in time to visit an Iron Age hillfort. During this period, which began around 800 BC, people lived in circular homes called roundhouses. These were built using wattle and daub, a mixture of woven sticks and mud, topped with a thick, waterproof thatched roof. The walls were kept warm by a central fire, which also provided light for cooking stews and mending clothes.

People in the Iron Age were clever farmers who used iron tools to clear forests and plough the land. This was a big improvement from the softer bronze tools used before. To stay safe, they built their homes on high hills, surrounded by deep ditches and high wooden fences. These hillforts protected their families and their precious livestock from intruders. Life was busy, with everyone helping to spin wool, grind grain for bread, or craft beautiful jewellery from bronze and gold. Ellie noticed that even though they didn't have shops like we do today, the Iron Age people worked together to create everything they needed to survive, from strong iron swords to warm woollen tunics.

Word bank: hillfort · roundhouse · thatch · fortification · wattle and daub · iron

1. What materials were used to make the walls of a roundhouse? (2 marks)

2. Why did people choose to build their homes on the tops of hills? (2 marks)

3. Why was the discovery of iron an improvement for the people living at this time? (2 marks)

4. Looking at the text, what does the word 'livestock' refer to? (2 marks)

5. Do you think life in an Iron Age hillfort was difficult? Explain your answer using evidence from the text. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a picture of an Iron Age roundhouse, including the thatched roof and the surrounding landscape.

Extension challenge: Research what people in the Iron Age ate. Create a simple menu for an Iron Age dinner party.