Life in the Iron Age with Ellie the Elephant

Learning objective: To understand the social structure, daily life, and technological advancements of Iron Age Britain.

Read each question carefully and use your knowledge of the Iron Age to provide detailed answers. Ellie the Elephant has remembered some important facts, but she needs you to explain them!

Ellie the Elephant has been travelling through time to learn about how people lived in Britain from around 800 BC until the Roman invasion. During this period, people moved from using bronze tools to stronger iron tools, which changed how they farmed and defended their homes. They lived in circular houses made of wattle and daub, often protected by high banks and ditches on hillsides.

Word bank: Hillfort · Roundhouse · Iron · Trade · Agriculture · Celts · Barter · Weaving

1. Explain why the discovery of iron was such a significant turning point for people living in Britain compared to the previous Bronze Age. (2 marks)

2. Describe the typical design of an Iron Age roundhouse. What materials were used to construct the walls and the roof? (2 marks)

3. Iron Age people often lived in hillforts. Why do you think they chose to build their settlements on high ground? (2 marks)

4. Before modern currency, Iron Age communities used a system of 'barter'. Define what this means and give an example of how it might have worked in a local market. (2 marks)

5. Identify two types of jobs or skills that an Iron Age person might have performed to help their community survive. (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a cross-section of an Iron Age hillfort. Include the high defensive ramparts, the ditch at the bottom, and a few roundhouses inside the enclosure.

Extension challenge: Research what archaeologists have found in 'bog bodies' or 'hoards' from the Iron Age. Write a short paragraph explaining what these items tell us about the religious beliefs or daily lives of the people.