

The Bronze Age

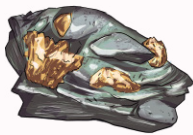
COMPREHENSION
CRUSHER

This fascinating era of prehistory is known as the Bronze Age and it sits between the Stone Age and Iron Age. We call it this because people started using metals like copper, tin and bronze. Because of this, their lives changed forever.

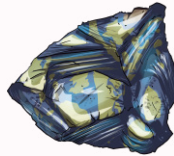
Innovation and inventions

Bronze is actually an alloy metal made by melting copper and tin and mixing them together.

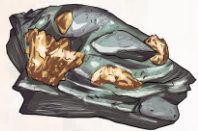
copper ore



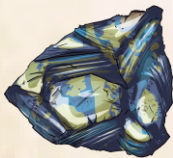
tin ore



copper (88%)



tin (12%)



alloy



bronze



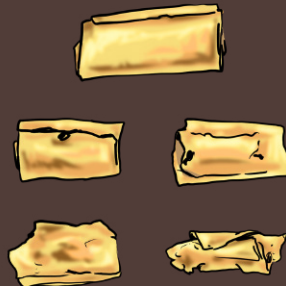
People learned to weave, craft jewellery and even invented the wheel, but not everyone was this skilled. Therefore, the talented craftworkers produced items to trade with their neighbours. Of course, this made some people very rich!



typical Bronze Age clothing

gold beads

from: southern
England or Ireland



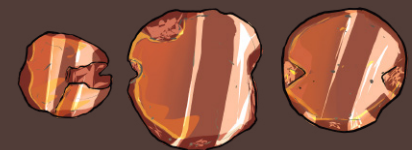
large

decorated beaker
from: Wessex



amber beads

from: Eastern
England/Baltic



gold-plated rings



Farming and food

In the Neolithic period (late Stone Age), humans were already growing their own crops. Additionally, they had even begun to tame wild animals so that they could be bred for their meat. Unfortunately, with only stone and bone tools, farming was very difficult before the Bronze Age.

Here are some of the improvements that were made:

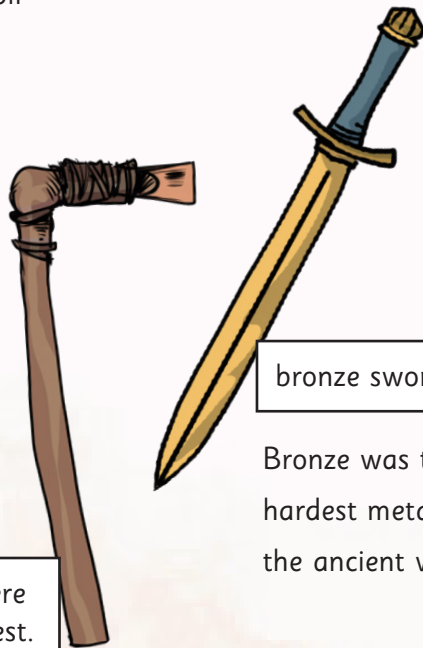
- stronger longer-lasting tools
- bronze ploughs to turn the soil
- irrigation to water crops

What is irrigation?

supplying land with water

How did they do it?

by building channels to divert water into ditches or canals



Bronze axe heads were used to clear the forest.

bronze sword

Bronze was the hardest metal of the ancient world.

2.4 million BCE

Timeline & key dates:

The Stone Age begins!



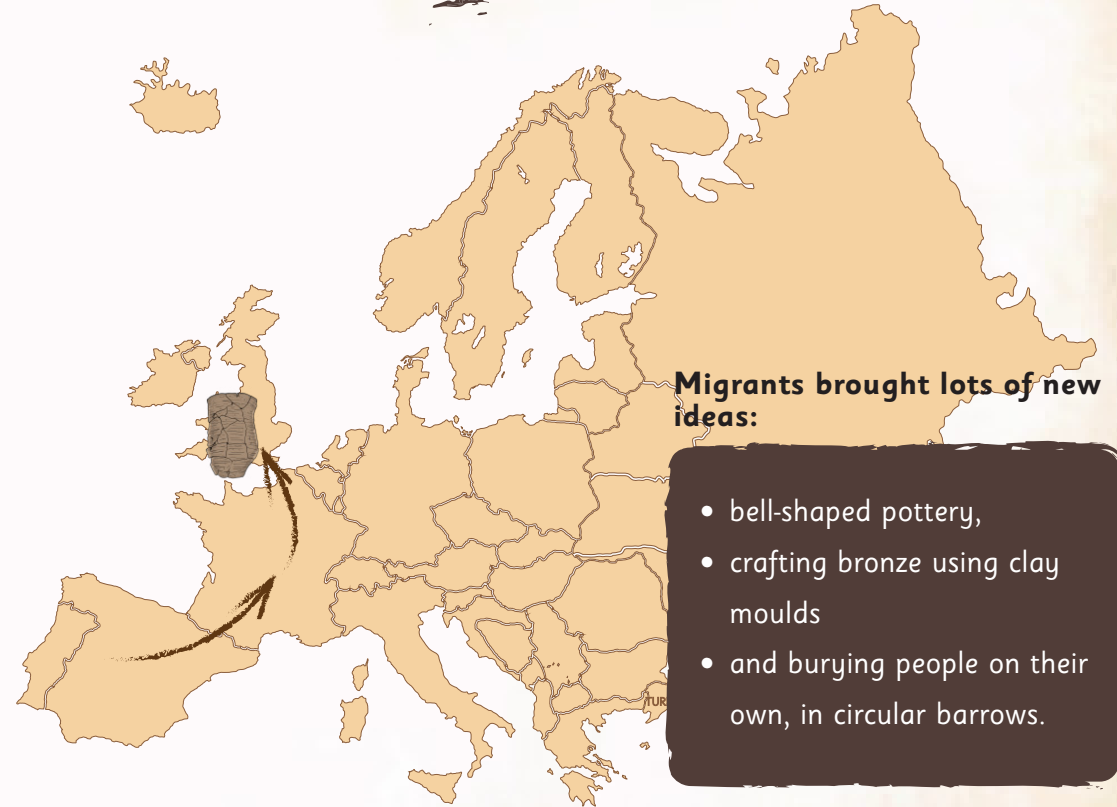
2500 BCE

The Bronze Age begins!

2400 BCE

The Beaker people arrive

Migration



Migrants brought lots of new ideas:

- bell-shaped pottery,
- crafting bronze using clay moulds
- and burying people on their own, in circular barrows.

Archaeological evidence suggests that people migrated to Britain at this time. Incredibly, historians can tell that people moved from Switzerland to England at this time based on their tooth enamel! It was settlers who brought the wisdom about creating alloys in the first place. The Beaker people were a famous group who migrated from Spain. They were skilled potters and craftsmen who shared their knowledge and ideas with the people they met.

Homes and holy places

We can learn a lot from archaeological sites. In Dartmoor, partial remains of a settlement have been found. There was a large stone wall surrounding 24 circular huts and space for farming. As people had not yet formed tribes, most settlements would have been for large family groups to live together.

Estimated population:

Early Bronze Age: 20,000

Late Bronze Age: 100,000

Flag Fen in Peterborough



3,000
years old

60,000+
wooden posts
and planks

Here is how Dartmoor might have looked.

The over 3,000-year-old remains of Flag Fen show an enormous roundhouse, although experts are not certain what it was used for. Amazingly, over 60,000 wooden posts and planks cut from oak trees were used. Historians noticed that there were no oak trees growing nearby, so they must have carried the wood from far away. Because of this, we know that this was a very special type of building and that it was perhaps used for worshipping ancient gods.

2100 BCE

Mining for metals begins

1500 BCE

The Flag Fen causeway is built

1000 BCE

The wheel is first used for transport

800 BCE

The Iron Age begins!