

Hillforts



Aim

- I can understand how and why hillforts were developed in the Iron Age.

Success Criteria

- I can explain how homes changed from the Stone Age to the Iron Age.
- I can name two reasons why Iron age people wanted to protect their homes.
- I can explain how hillforts were designed to protect Iron Age tribes.

Prehistoric Homes

Sort these homes into chronological (time) order.



Prehistoric Homes

Answers

Stone Age



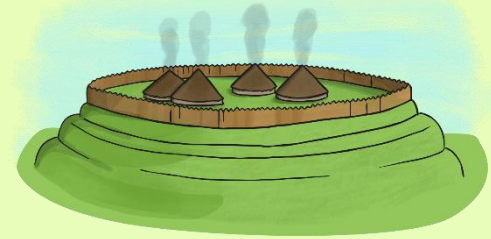
Stone Age people lived in rock caves, but also may have lived in huts made of wood or covered in animal skins, with a fire in the middle. The Stone Age people usually moved home. This started to change at the end of the Stone Age.

Bronze Age



Bronze Age people settled in one place and had farms. They built roundhouses, which had a pole in the middle to hold up the roof. The roofs were made of animal hide, thatch or turf (grass). Their walls were covered with a muddy mixture.

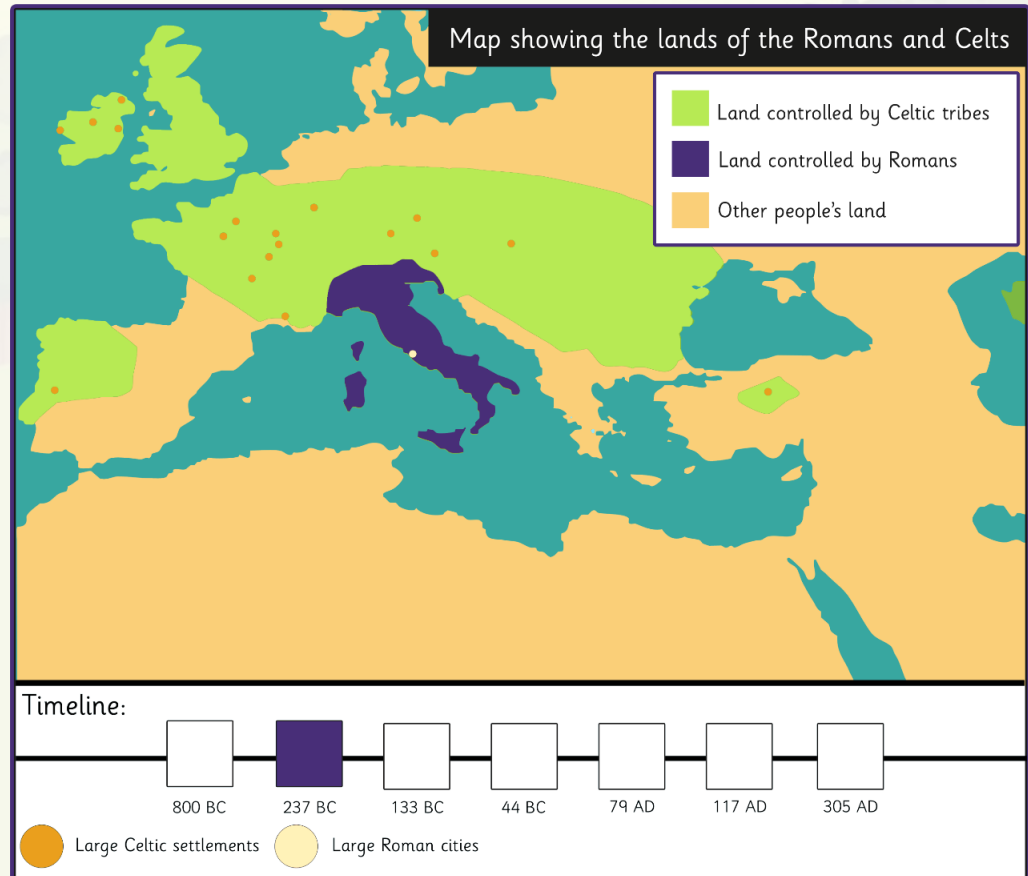
Iron Age



Iron Age people also often lived in roundhouses, although sometimes they were rectangular. What was different about the Iron Age houses was that the houses were gathered in communities on hills called 'hillforts'.

What Was the Iron Age?

The Iron Age followed the Bronze Age. The Iron Age took its name from the iron that was being used for tools, weapons and technology at the time. The people living in Britain during the Iron Age were called Celts. This map shows (in green) where the Celts could be found during the Iron Age. The Celts were made up of many tribes, such as the Britons and the Picts.



An Introduction to the Iron Age

The Iron Age refers to the period of time in Britain (from around 800 BC until the Roman conquest in 43 AD) when iron and steel began to be used to make tools and weapons instead of bronze. Iron was a stronger, harder metal than the bronze previously used. It was worked into shape by hammering it against an anvil – a process known as smithing – and was used to make objects such as ploughs, armour and coins (which were used for the first time in the Iron Age around 100 BC). Significant changes in farming techniques and technology also occurred during this period in history and led to a significant population increase.



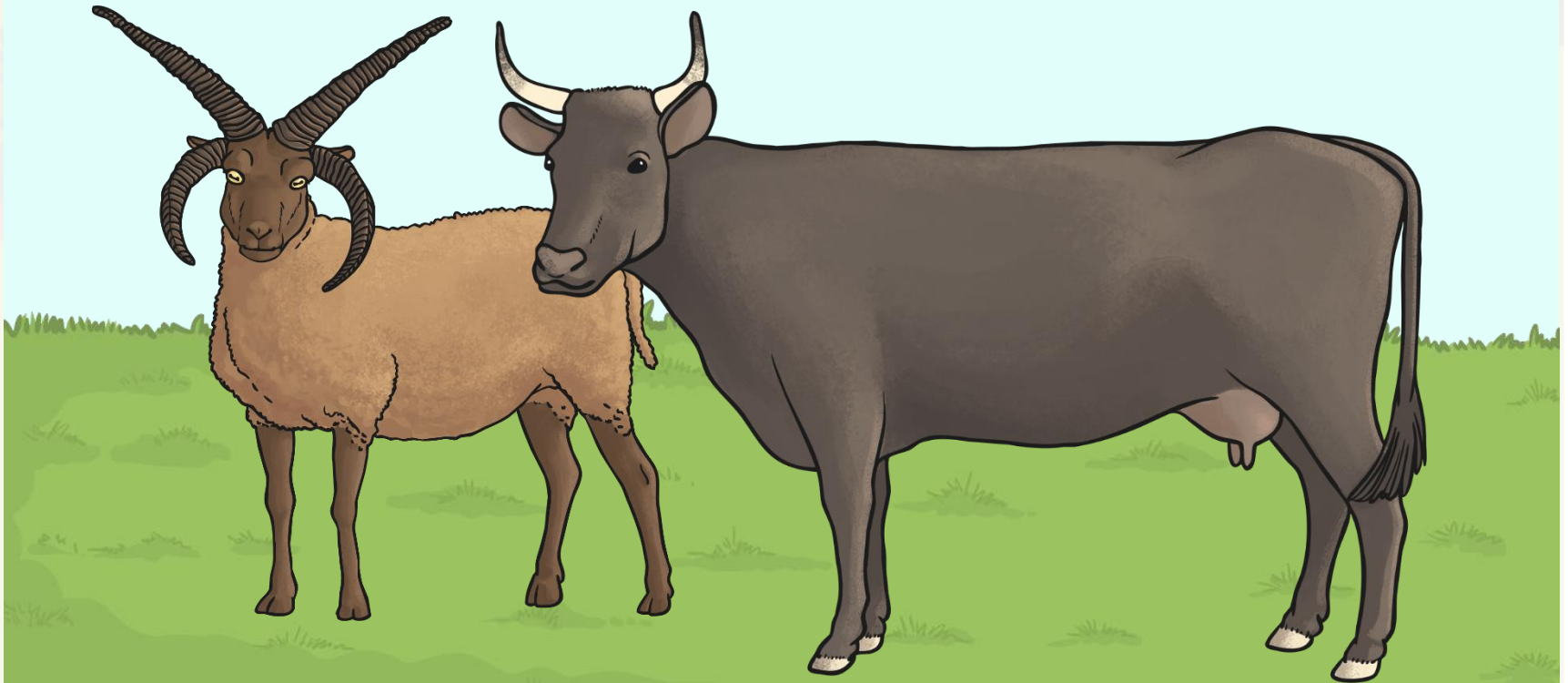
Who Are the Celts?

The people living in Europe during the Iron Age are referred to as Celts, although this term was not used until the eighteenth century and so would not have been what the Celtic people actually named themselves at the time. The Celtic people living in Britain were actually referred to as 'Britons' by the Romans. The word Celt, which means 'barbarian' comes from the Greek word 'Keltoi'.



Farming

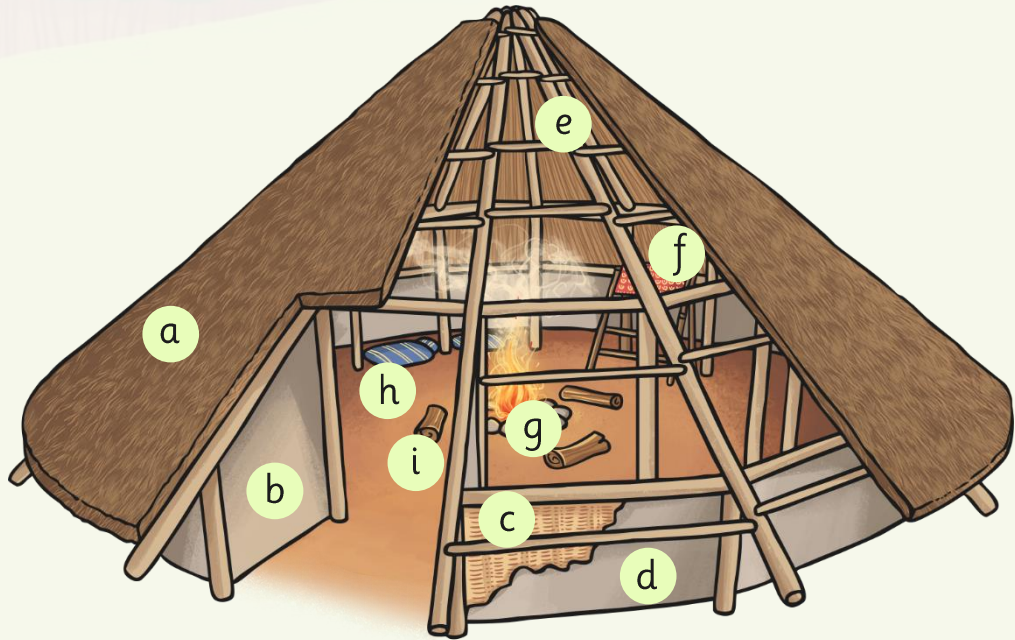
During the Iron Age, Britain consisted almost entirely of settled farming communities. This meant that nearly everyone would have lived on a farm. The people worked together in small communities, tending their livestock and growing crops.



Roundhouses

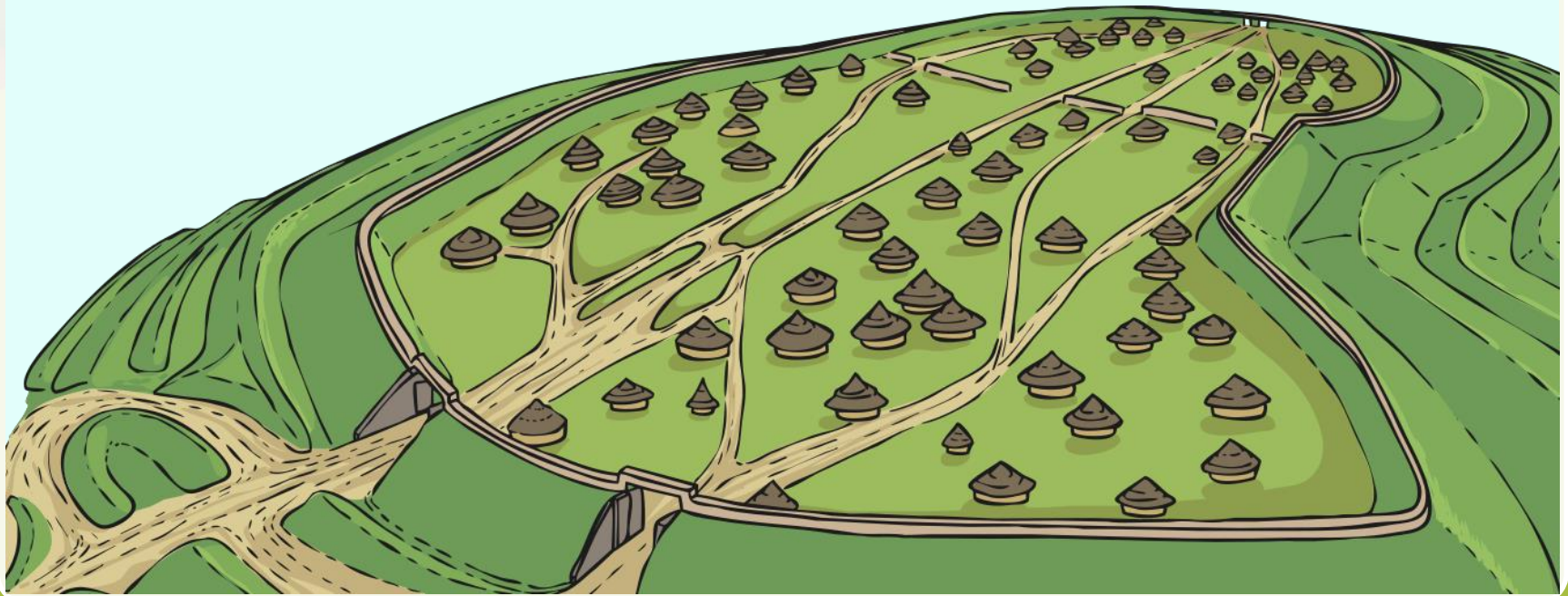
Archaeological evidence shows that the roundhouse was the typical Iron Age home. Some of these were very large and would have housed many people. The frame of the house was constructed out of large timbers and the walls were made out of wattle and daub. In the centre of the roundhouse would have been a fire for cooking and providing light and warmth. Beds may have had hay or feather mattresses and placed on top of a wooden frame and animal skins or woollen blankets would be used to keep the people warm. The roundhouse may also have contained an oven for baking bread and a loom for weaving wool.

- a. thick thatch
- b. door
- c. wattle
- d. daub
- e. timber frame
- f. upright loom
- g. hearth (fire)
- h. beds
- i. logs for sitting on



Hillforts

The first hillforts were constructed around 800 BC. These were defended settlements that made use of natural rises in the landscape for defensive advantage. Between 500 and 100 BC, many parts of Britain were dominated by hillforts with settlements providing a home for hundreds, and later thousands of people. The remains of some very large hillforts, which made complex changes to the landscape, have been discovered. One example is Maiden Castle in Dorset, which was one of the biggest hillforts in Europe.



Why Were Hillforts So Popular?

Farming

Iron Age people had become really good at growing food quickly and easily. Hillforts were a way of enclosing a piece of land so that farming could be protected and controlled for *even better* farming.

Attack!

Why do you think hillforts were built on a hill? The Celts could see their enemies coming from a hillfort. Some hillforts were built without houses inside so that they could be used as a place of shelter after battle.

Let us pray...

Archaeologists have found evidence of sacrifices and offerings in the ditches surrounding the hillforts.

Food

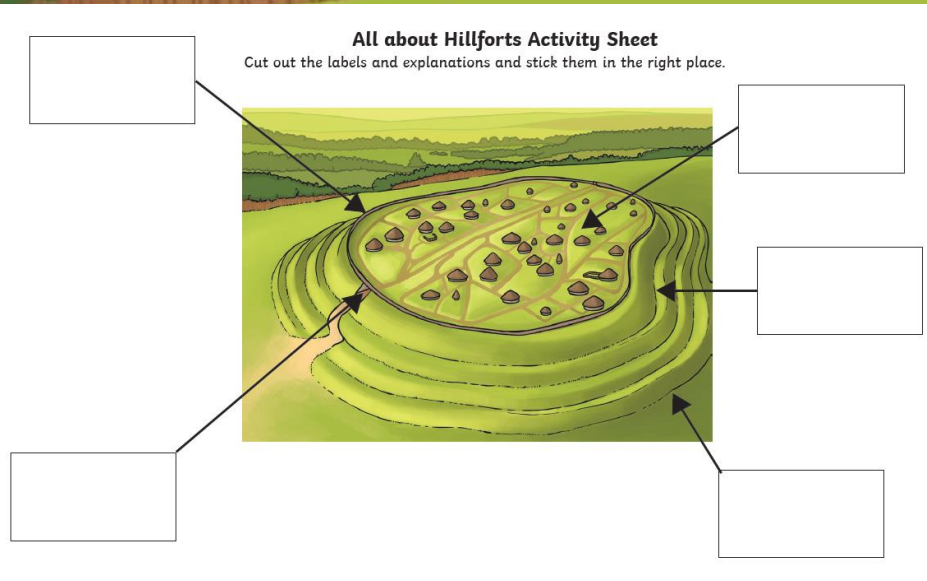
The Celts were so good at farming and preserving their food, that they needed somewhere safe to keep it. Some hillforts were used specifically for this job. They had a deep well (hole) in the floor to store the grain.

History Task

Choose one task from the following two options:

1. Draw and label the inside of a round house.
2. Complete the Hillfort Activity Sheet attached.

All about Hillforts Activity Sheet
Cut out the labels and explanations and stick them in the right place.



The diagram shows a hillfort with multiple concentric earthen ramparts. There are several empty boxes with arrows pointing to various parts of the hillfort, including the outer ramparts, the inner ramparts, and the central area. The boxes are intended for students to write labels and explanations for these parts.

