

# Not quite the Flintstones

Outline plan – for adaptation as required by schools

Enquiry title                      What was it really like being a Stone Age cave man or woman in Torbay?

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Context and learning aims                      This enquiry provides an opportunity for children to consider the realities of what life would have been like for cave men and women living in and around Kent's Cavern in Torbay over 40,000 years ago. It begins with the children critically evaluating different ways in which the Stone Age of prehistoric times has been depicted in films and on the television. They learn what an anachronism is and how to identify them. They then move on to reflect upon the hardships of life in Torbay 40,000 years ago for anyone who was a nomadic hunter and took refuge from time to time in Kent's Cavern. Finally the children produce a piece of extended non-fiction recount writing in the form of a diary by a cave man or woman found at Kent's Cavern. They revisit the conventions of diary text type and have an opportunity to read examples from other diarists. The investigation can be extended to consider the historical diaries of Samuel Pepys – the most famous diarist in the world.

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Learning and teaching activities and curriculum progression

**Key Question 1: In history why is seeing anachronisms important?**

Kent's Cavern is the most important prehistoric cave dwelling in Britain. Amongst other things a 40,000 year old human jaw bone with teeth has been found within the cave system. This was the time known as the Stone Age which began 2 million years ago and ended 10,000 years ago at the end of the last Ice Age. But what was life like for cave people in Torbay all that time ago?

Show the children the cartoon film in **Resource 1**. Although they might not know what this is, explain that the *Flintstones* was a very popular television series in the 1960s and 1970s. It was about a family of cave men and their neighbours and all of the antics they got up to. As the children watch the programme (Episode 1 of Season 1 first screened in 1960) ask them to make a note of all the *anachronisms* they can see. An *anachronism* in history is something not in its correct time order and that could not have been there at that particular time. Remember in Torbay we are talking about 40,000 years ago. After the film encourage discussion about what the children identified and make a list. In addition to things that were clearly inaccurate, such as there not being dinosaurs in the Stone Age, what about how life in general was portrayed? How easy would life have been in reality? To emphasise how Hollywood has often portrayed the Stone Age in an inaccurate way show the children the Charlie Chapman silent film from 1912 called *His Prehistoric Life* in **Resource 2**. This was a very popular comedy film from over 100 years ago. Why is it funny? How is the film depicting life? What are people doing and wearing? Where did the idea come from that perhaps people looked like this? What message is the film trying to give, do the children think?

### *Key Question 2: What was the 'reality' of the Stone Age?*

The early humans of the Stone Age would probably have looked rather more like the artist's representation of the person in **Resource 3**. For a more accurate representation of life in the Stone Age the children can be shown extracts of the film about Neanderthals who lived in the Stone Age in Britain between 900,000 and 40,000 years ago in **Resource 4**. Show the children the first 7 minutes and 30 seconds of the film up to 'violent and unexplained death'. How different is the representation of the life of cave men and women in this film compared with the first two? In what ways was the cave the centre of the world of the family unit in the film? Who made up the family unit of seven people?

### *Key Question 3: What would a Torbay cave man's diary entry have read like?*

Although we know that prehistoric man used the caves at Kent's Cavern, it would have been unlikely that the caves would have been a permanent dwelling. More likely the caves were temporary homes over thousands of years for early man who were nomadic hunters and took refuge in them perhaps during the worst seasonal weather or for protection or during illness. This exercise involves the children imagining what day to day life might have been like for cave men and women over 40,000 years ago. If a diary was found from a cave man or woman in an undiscovered part of Kent's Cavern what might it say? Obviously this is hypothetical as Stone Age people could not write and maybe didn't even have a common language. But just imagine...?

Each of the children is going to write a diary entry for a Torbay cave man or woman. It will be for just one day in their lives. Here are some starting points to choose from or the children can make up their own:

- *The day we met a Smilodon face to face;*
- *The day the roof of the cave collapsed;*
- *The day a new baby was born;*
- *The day the Sun disappeared (eclipse);*
- *The day the sea rose up and flooded the land;*
- *The day the snow came;*
- *The day a stranger arrived;*

Once the children have decided upon their focus for the day and before drafting the piece of extended writing itself, it is important to revisit the language conventions of recounting events through diary writing with them. A selection of diary entries can be modelled at this stage such as *The Diary of a Wimpey Kid* by Jeff Kinney at

<http://www.keystage2literacy.co.uk/studying-diaries.html>

*Sophie's Diary* at

[http://www.iisresource.org/Documents/0A1\\_WWII\\_Sophie\\_A4\\_Sheets.pdf](http://www.iisresource.org/Documents/0A1_WWII_Sophie_A4_Sheets.pdf)

and examples of Second War diaries at

<http://resources.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/y6/wardiary.html>

The most important writing conventions to identify in the examples and

for the children to apply to their own cave man or woman diary entry are:

- writing in a chronological order starting with events that happened early in the day, and end with events that took place last thing in the evening;
- writing the entries in the first person. Use 'I', 'we', 'us', 'we're', 'they', etc.
- making your entries detailed, but avoid over describing what is not needed;
- talking about events that involved you, or your family, or close friends
  - avoid talking about strangers, and events you were not involved in.
- if you are feeling sad, explain what is making you feel sad. If you are happy, write down why. Include your emotions in your diary. Do not be afraid to write about how you feel.
- use the past tense and irregular verbs
- use a 'chatty' or informal familiar style that will appeal to readers
- include comments (asides) to self and don't be afraid to include some amusing things;
- use connectives effectively to keep the entry flowing e.g. *Then unfortunately/fortunately; After that happened; Finally; Later on; After that had happened; The first thing I did was; Eventually;*

If some of the children feel able to read their entries to the rest of the group (remembering that personal diaries are not intended for publication), then this would be a positive starting point for a wider discussion about diarists in general. Why not consider reading with the children some entries from the diaries of Samuel Pepys (probably the most famous historical diaries ever written) such as his descriptions of the Great Plague in London in 1665 followed by the Great Fire in 1666.