



# Tales of Ancient Worlds

## The Farmers of the Neolithic



Eleven thousand years ago, Earth's climate became warmer.

At the same time, human society underwent one of the greatest technological shifts in our entire history, with the arrival of farming.

I know what you're thinking: "FARMING?!" But you'll see – farming changed society forever! Archaeologists call this period the Neolithic.





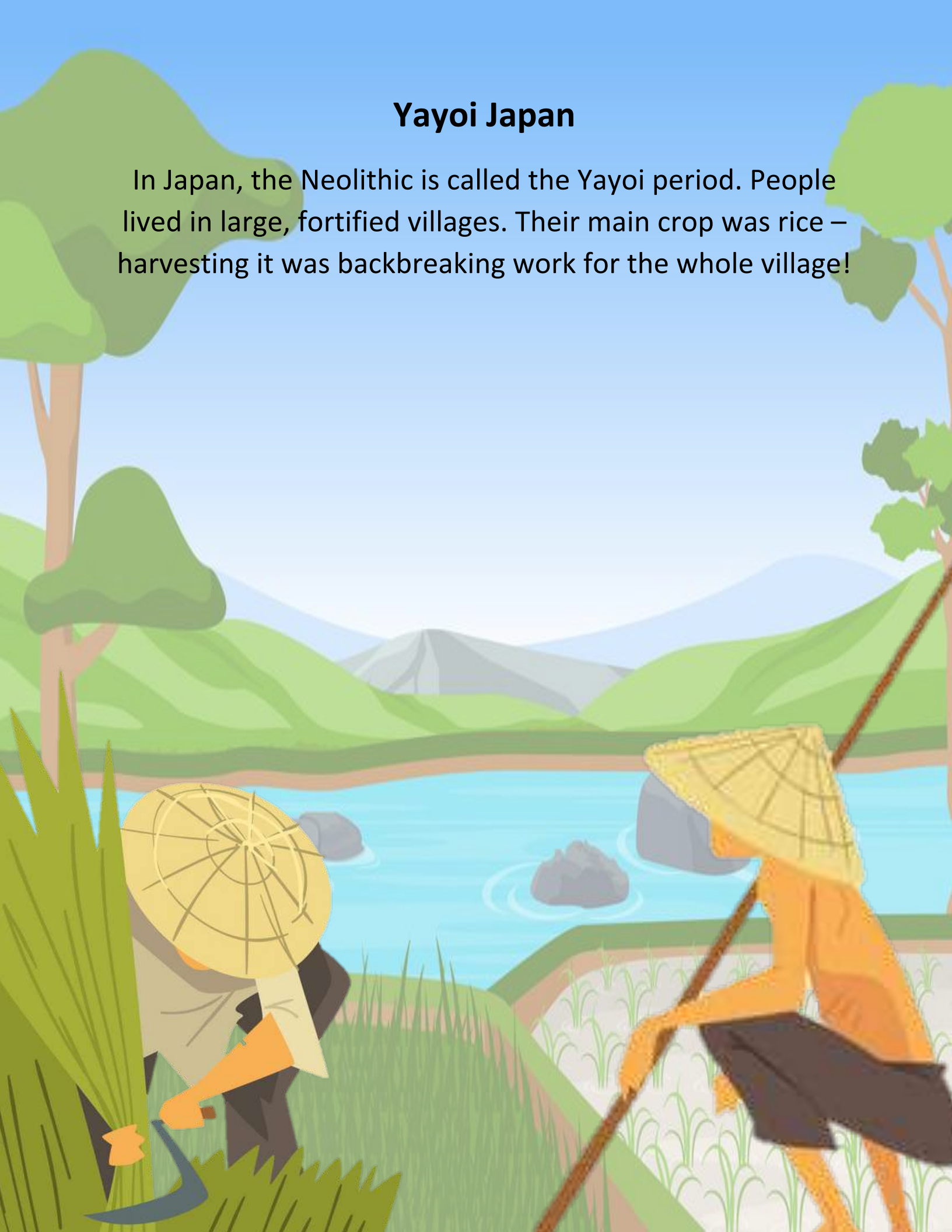
## Sedentism

Developing farming meant people didn't have to follow herds of animals all year anymore but could settle in one place. This is called "sedentism". Now we were able to spend our time developing new inventions.



## Yayoi Japan

In Japan, the Neolithic is called the Yayoi period. People lived in large, fortified villages. Their main crop was rice – harvesting it was backbreaking work for the whole village!





## All Over the World

Farming started in different places at different times. Across the world, from the mountains of Peru to the fertile river valleys of Asia, people began working the earth. This warm, stable climate allowed people to grow the same crops year after year.



## Crops

Without the Neolithic, humans wouldn't farm wheat, potatoes, rice or tomatoes. To put that another way – no wheat or tomatoes means no pizza!





## First Livestock

Why spend all day hunting when you can just keep animals next to your house? Pigs, cows, chickens, sheep, and goats all started to be farmed in the Neolithic.



## Amazing Pottery

Pottery often appears alongside the development of farming. Although we take plates and cups for granted now, back then they were life changing. Humans used pottery for cooking, eating, storage and producing new goods like alcohol.



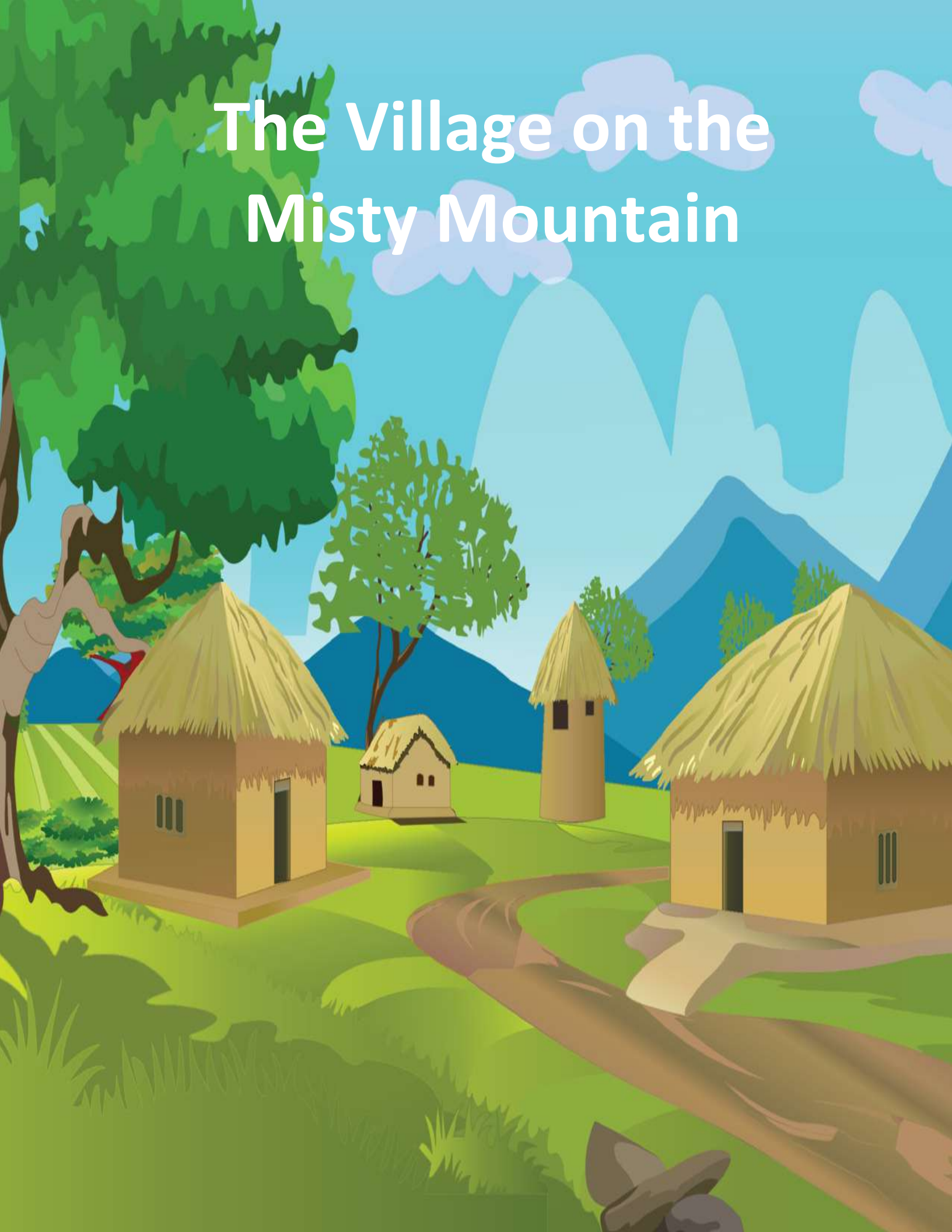


## Village Life

One big advantage of farming is that you can produce more food than you need and store it for later. This meant families got bigger and stayed in the same place. It was important to protect your crops! This led to the first villages appearing in the archaeological record (and probably the first nosy neighbours, too).



# The Village on the Misty Mountain





In 2019, Ben Show and his team of Australian and Papua New Guinean archaeologists were working in an extremely remote part of the world. Literally on top of a mountain, in the heart of Papua New Guinea's defence rainforest. They were searching for ancient Neolithic villages.

It had been known for a few ears that agriculture in Papua New Guinea started around 10,000 years ago. Just as a farming sprang up around the rest of the world, the ancient inhabitants of Papua New Guinea started experimenting with farming yams and nuts.



However, many of the other achievements of the Neolithic – like permanent villages, sophisticated stone tools and textiles – had never been found. Was Papua New Guinea really so different to the rest of the world, or were archaeologists looking in the wrong place?





Well at Waim, on top of the mountain, they found their answer: in this most remote of places, they found the remains of a 5,000-year-old Neolithic village!

It was full of incredible discoveries. The first were holes in the ground left by ancient wooden beams. This showed that the farmers here were constructing solid buildings, which meant they were staying in one place for a long time.



They found stone axes and tools made from obsidian (obsidian is a super sharp rock made when volcanoes explode – it's even sharper than a surgical scalpel!). This obsidian had come all the way from New Britain, an island to the east of Papua New Guinea. This shows that the village had extensive trade networks!





The team found red rocks, called ochre, that were probably used to dye fabrics. And finally, a brilliant carved stone face. Another perfect example of the creativity that was unleashed once human had developed farming.

There's something so special about finding a carving of a face, there are so many questions that spring to mind. Who were they? Was it a self-portrait? Was it someone that artist loved? Was it their child? Was it their god?



The discoveries at Waim have completely rewritten our understanding of Neolithic Papua New Guinea.





# The Tower of Jericho



The town of Jericho sits on a small hill overlooking the Jordan River in Palestine. This small hill is not natural, though. It wasn't made by any earthquakes, or volcanoes, or anything like that. It is what archaeologists call a "tell".

As a result of people living in the same place for thousands of years the town has literally been lifted up, as each generation built on top of the last. This has created a small hill full to the brim with archaeology! At the bottom of Jericho's tell was a particularly incredible find - one of the oldest buildings in the entire world.





In 1952, British archaeologist, Kathleen Kenyon and her team of local experts were excavating along an old city wall deep inside the tell. Before Kathleen excavated, archaeologists thought these walls dated to around 1000 BCE.

As Kathleen made her way along the wall, she uncovered evidence that it was much, much older than that. The town dated back to the very earliest days of the Neolithic, around 8000 BCE. This meant Jericho was probably the oldest town that has been continuously inhabited in the world!



Kathleen continued to excavate the wall when she made a jaw-dropping discovery, a huge ancient tower. Archaeologists have long debated what it was used for. Some wondered if it was used to store grain, but it turned out the tower was solid, with just one small staircase rising through the middle.





The great tower of Jericho was not the only fantastic discovery made by Kathleen. One day her team were digging in the remains of a Neolithic building when they unearthed something much grislier. Peter Parr, one of Kathleen's students, moved a rock. Underneath lay not just one human skull, but seven!



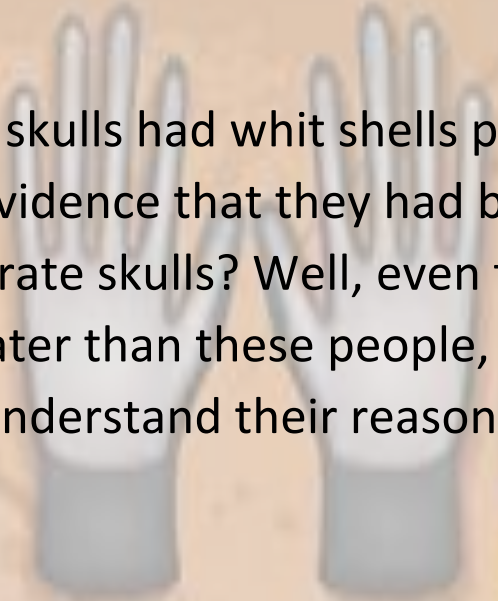
Skulls can be quite common in archaeological sites, but there was something really special about these ones. They weren't buried with their bodies and, fascinatingly, they were decorated. Each of the skulls was covered in plaster. It was applied to recreate the appearance of human skin and make the skulls look alive.



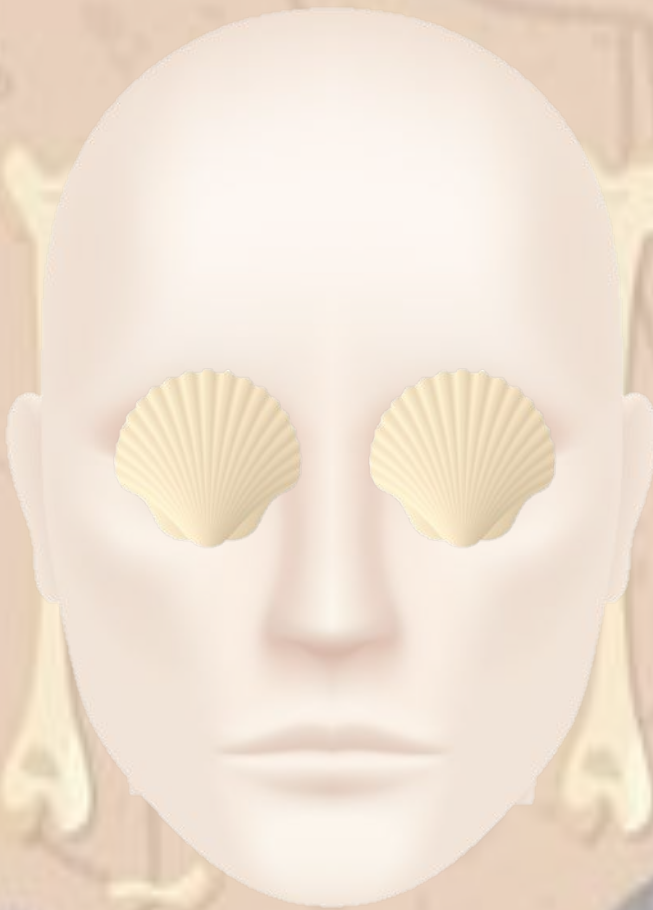


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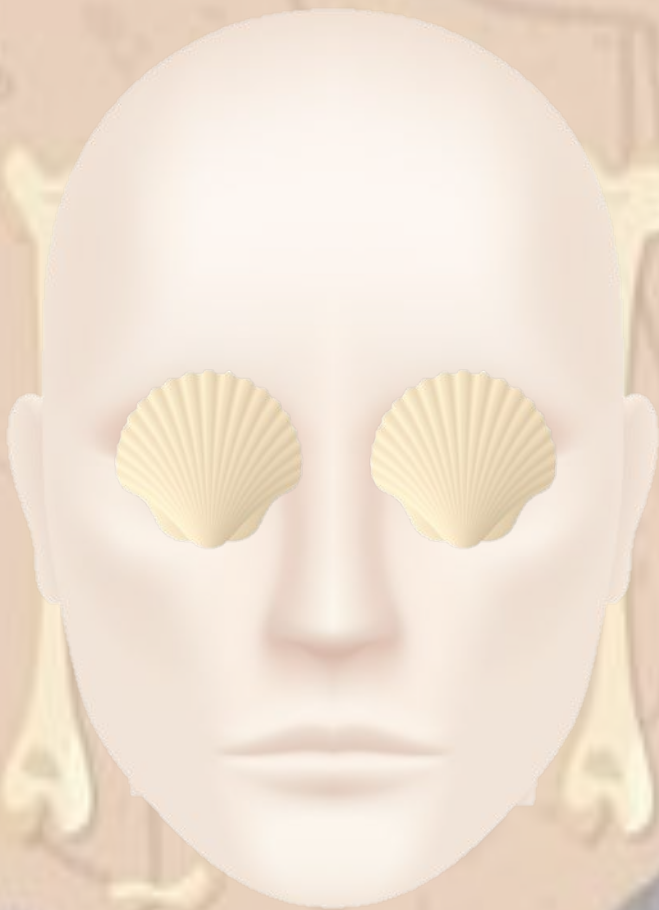


When someone we love dies, it can be an incredibly sad time. In order to process this loss, we have to mourn. The beautiful thing about humans is that there is no single way to express our feelings. Some cultures bury their dead, some cremate those they've lost, some preserve their dead as mummies. In Neolithic Jericho, they created plaster skulls of their loved ones.





Each plastered skull would have been known to the people that preserved it. They were real people who were sometimes happy and sometimes sad. Their lives were just as complicated as yours is today. Perhaps the seven skulls found by Kathleen's team made a family tree?



Thanks to Kathleen, we know so much more about people who lived in the Neolithic period. She also transformed archaeology in a more fundamental way. Together with Mortimer Wheeler, Kathleen developed a new system of excavation we still use today.

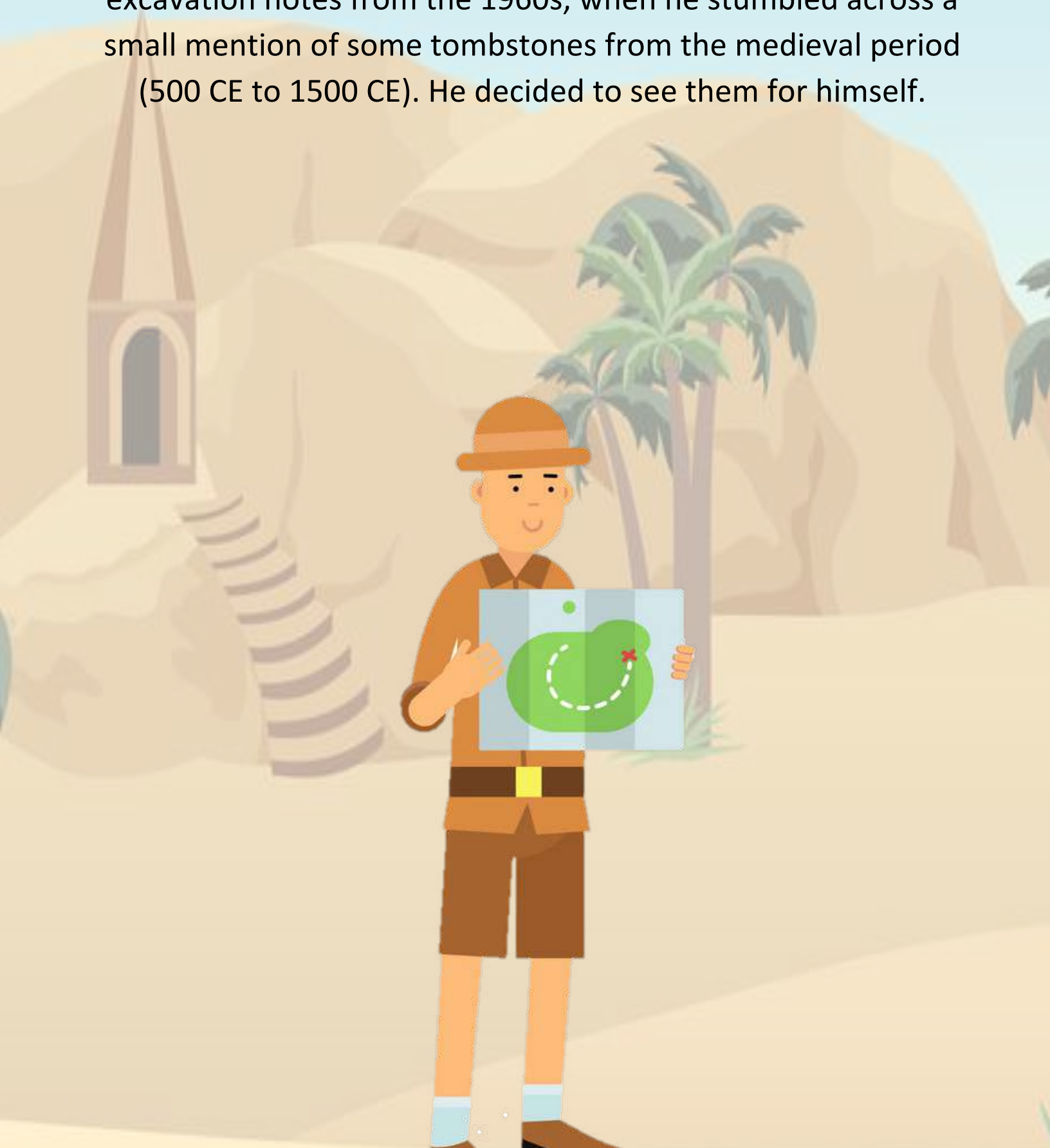




Archaeology is all about context. An artefact on its own tells us little, but if we know exactly where it came from and what it was found with, we can learn so much more! Kathleen and Mortimer decided to excavate in a grid system. The walls of the grid would be kept intact and never excavated. That way you could use them as a map to understand and date everything that you discovered. This simple but ingenious idea has provided us with so much knowledge about the ancient world!



In 1994, German archaeologist, Klaus Schmidt, was looking for prehistoric sites in Turkey. He was reading through old excavation notes from the 1960s, when he stumbled across a small mention of some tombstones from the medieval period (500 CE to 1500 CE). He decided to see them for himself.





As he unearthed the dirt around the tombstones, he realized the notes has been seriously wrong ... in front of him wasn't the ruins of something from the medieval period, but a 11,000-year-old prehistoric site.

Klaus Schmidt was amused at what he uncovered: huge T-shaped pillars decorated with arms, animals and strange symbols. Gobekli Tepe, which means "Belly Hill" in Turkish, sits at the top of a large hill overlooking the vast plains below. Teams of German and Turkish archaeologists worked hard to unearth as much of the site as possible.



Each year of excavations revealed more giant T-shaped statues, all arranged in circles. Archaeologists believe these statues represent people. Can you see their arms and the belts around their waists? Many of the statues also have small animals on them. Archaeologists think they could signify different tribes or groups of people. What animal would you pick to represent your family? A lion or a bear? A slug?



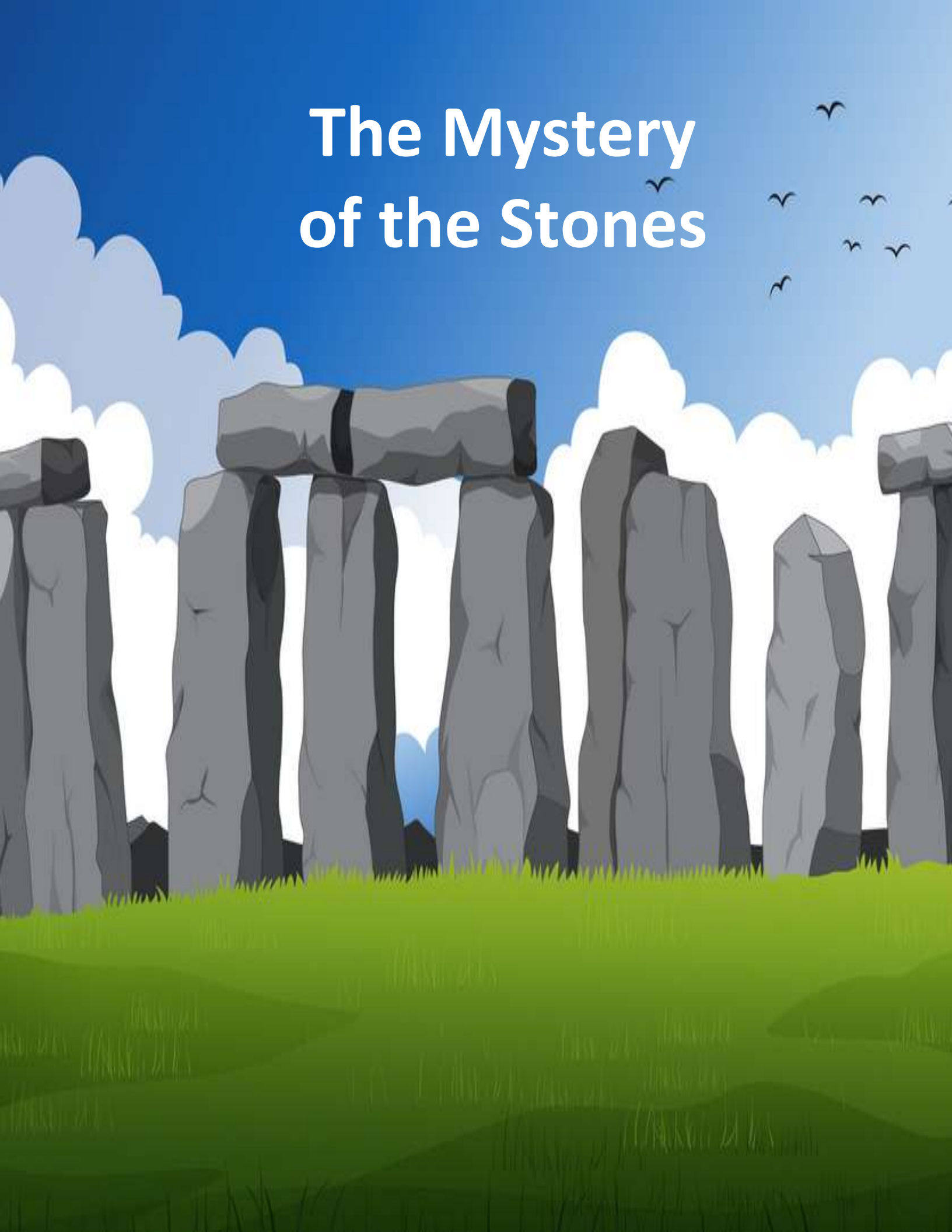


Gobekli Tepe is about the same size as 13 football pitches. It's so big that it hasn't all been excavated – that will take another 50 years. Why did these people gather here to build it?

Well, judging from the plants and animals found at the site, groups of people that were usually spread out across the landscape probably ventured to Gobekli Tepe at specific times of year to feast, drink exchange information and maybe even to find someone to fall in love with. With so much still to unearth, we will definitely be discovering incredible secrets from Gobekli Tepe for a long time to come.



# The Mystery of the Stones





In Southwest England, sits one of most famous Neolithic monuments in the whole world – Stonehenge. At the height of its use, a whopping 4.500 years ago, 30 bus-sized stone structures called trilithons formed a circle inside an earthen bank. A trilithon is formed of two upright stones with another, a capstone, placed across the top. Inside this ring of trilithons, bluestones, each bigger than a person, formed a U-shape. This incredible monument still stands today.



Imagine how much effort it must have been to quarry the stones, shape them, carve joints in them to keep them in place and then lift them up! Why would Neolithic people do this? In medieval times some people thought Melrin the wizard had built it for King Arthur, but we now know Stonehenge is thousands of years older than the legend of Merlin.





Digging in the centre of Stonehenge archaeologists have found 64 pits containing the cremated remains of ancient people. As many as 150 people were buried here. Perhaps Neolithic people gathered here to burn the dead and say goodbye to their loved ones? Stonehenge could also be a giant calendar!



At midsummer the sun rises over the largest stone at the site, the heel stone. While at midwinter the sun sets between two of the large farmers and knowing when the seasons changed was very important. Maybe they gathered here at these important times of year to throw large parties? Archaeologists have found lots of butchered animals that were probably part of a prehistoric barbecue.





The only thing we know for certain is that these prehistoric people, even with simple tools, were brilliant engineers. Assembling Stonehenge was impressive, but there was another mystery that needed to be solved. How on earth did prehistoric people move the gigantic stones to the sacred site?

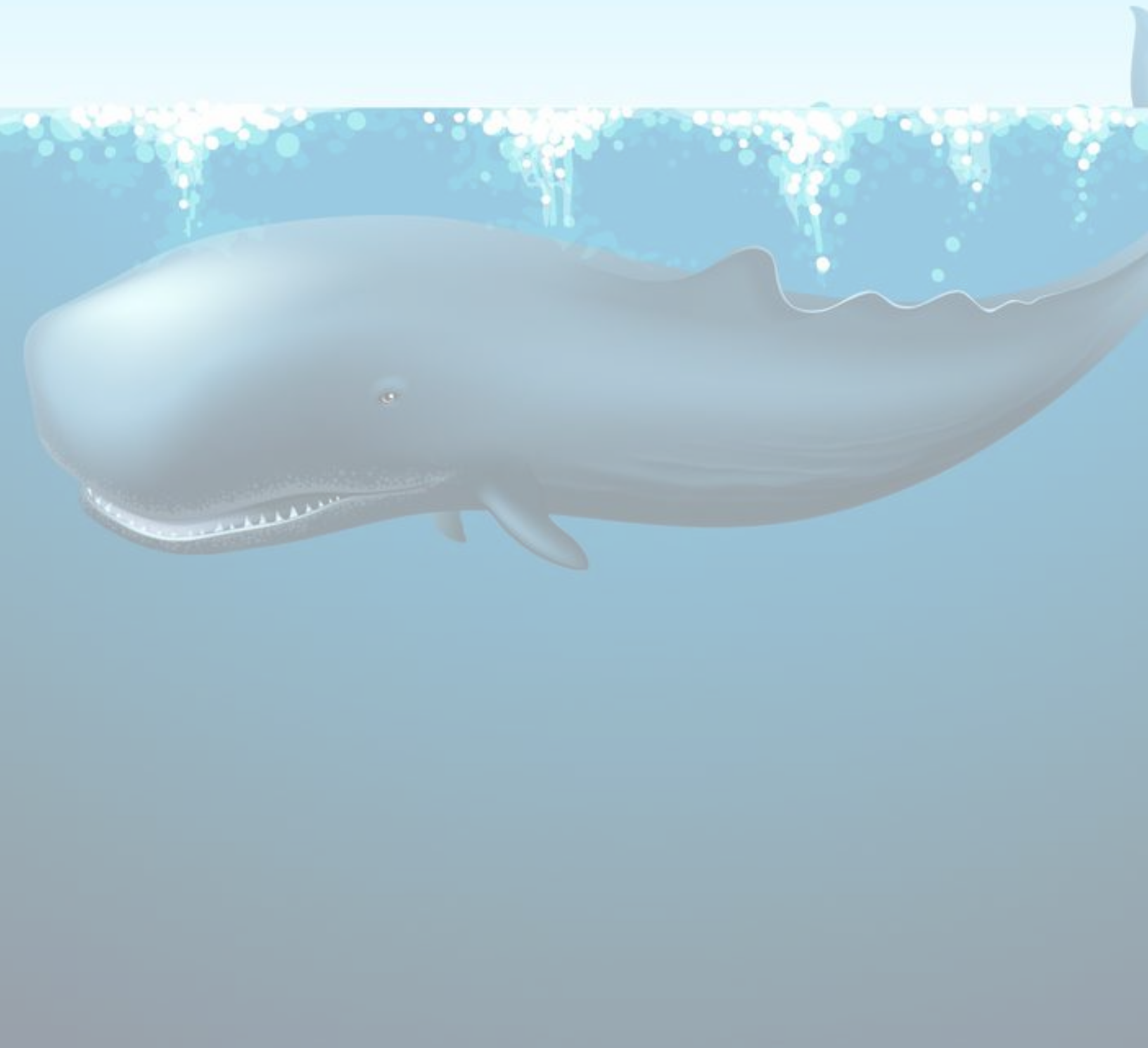


The large trilithons weigh as much as 45 tonnes (50 tons) ...





To put is in context, that's about the weight of a blue whale! It would have taken many people and a lot of careful thought and planning to carve and lift them.



However, the trilithons were taken from a quarry next to Stonehenge, so they didn't have too far to travel.

The smaller bluestones in the middle of Stonehenge on the other hand didn't look like any stone in the area. So where did they come from?





In 1923, a British geologist (that's someone who studies the Earth and the rocks found in it) called Henry Herbert Thomas was trying to answer that very question.

He searched the region around Stonehenge but none of the rocks in the area had the distinctive blue colour.



As he explored around Britain, he finally found a match to the bluestones. The only problem was it was in the Preseli Mountains of western Wales – about 140 miles (225 km) from Stonehenge!





When Henry first suggested this idea, he was laughed at, as people didn't believe Neolithic farmers could have moved the stones so far. But modern geology and archaeology have proved Henry correct! We still don't know whether they moved the stones over land using logs or over the sea. Maybe that's a mystery you can solve. Which do you think is more likely?



# The Amesbury Archer





The area around Stonehenge is full of interesting prehistoric sites, including ceremonial roads, feasting sites and burials.



In 2002, builders were working on a housing development when they uncovered a skeleton in a grassy mound.





At first the archaeologists thought the man found might have died in the Roman period. But as the team uncovered more of the body, they found flint arrowheads, distinctive beaker-like bowls, boar tusks and most importantly metal objects such as copper knives and gold hair ties. This grave was 4,300 years old – it was from the Bronze Age!



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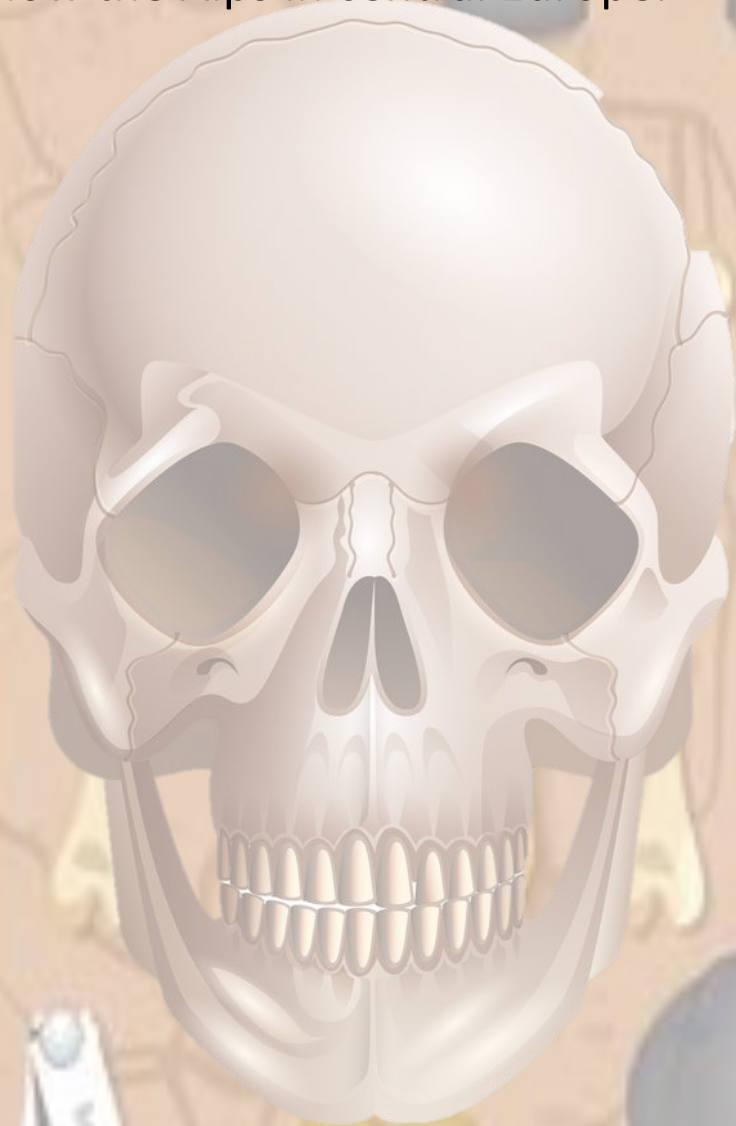




Being an archer was probably not his job, though. Hidden next to the boar tusks the team found a cushion stone. This is a small stone used as an anvil by the first metal workers, who would bash their metal on it. In the early days of metal working, the people who could produce metallic goods were held in high regard. They might even have been thought of as magicians.



The body hid one more secret though. Have you ever heard the phrase “you are what you eat”? Well, in the food and water we consume are millions of different minerals. Minerals enter water as it runs along rocks, so each river has a unique signature depending on the rocks in the area. Analysis of the minerals in the Amesbury Archer’s teeth shows he came from what is now the Alps in central Europe.





Who knows how he ended up by Stonehenge, but this archery-loving, metal-working magician was certainly loved by his friends and family, because they gave him a king's burial!



The background is a stylized landscape. The sky is light blue with several white, fluffy clouds. In the center of the sky is a lightbulb logo. The bulb is a circle with a spiral base, and the entire logo is colored with a rainbow gradient. Below the lightbulb, the word "THINK" is written in large, blue, sans-serif capital letters. The letter "I" in "THINK" is replaced by the rainbow-colored spiral base of the lightbulb. Below "THINK", the words "DIGITAL ACADEMY" are written in a smaller, grey, sans-serif font. The landscape below the text features rolling hills. The foreground has brown, wavy lines representing tilled soil. There are green plants with long, pointed leaves growing from the soil. In the middle ground, there are yellow and green fields, a wooden fence, and a few trees, including a large yellow tree on the left and several smaller green trees on the right.

# THINK

DIGITAL ACADEMY