



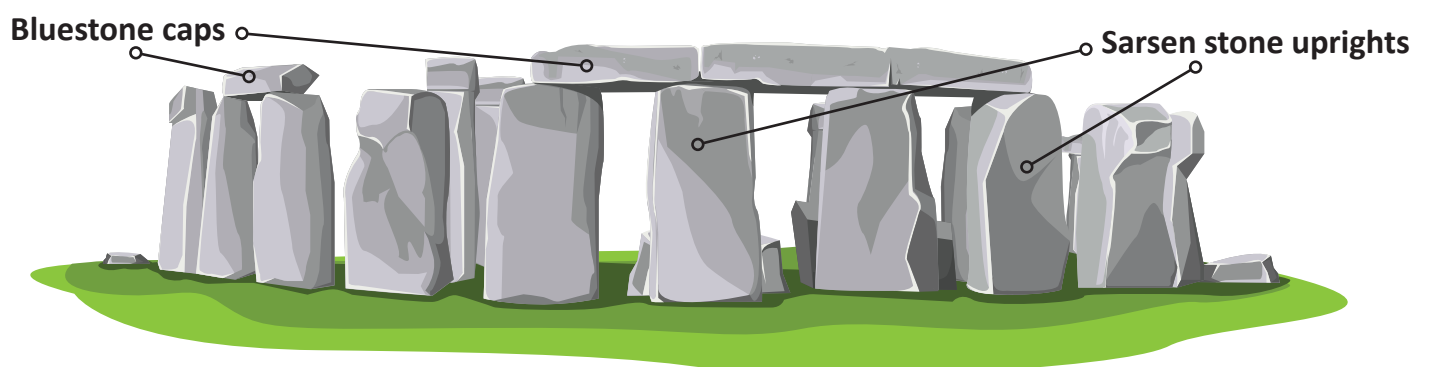
STONEHENGE

Stonehenge is perhaps one of the most iconic monuments in the world. It is a vast, man-made ring of stones that sits on the Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, England. It is believed that work started on the site around 5,000 years ago, in the concluding centuries of the Stone Age. It took over 1,000 years to build; it was finished in roughly 1,500 BC. This was around the same time the Ancient Egyptians were at their strongest and Tutankhamen was becoming Pharaoh.

One of the most amazing things about Stonehenge is the distance the stones had to travel to the site. The structures are made of two types of stone: the larger, more robust sarsen stones which stand upright and the smaller, lighter bluestones that lay across them. The bluestones are heavy enough and weight about 3,600kgs each, which is the same as two cars. The sarsen stones are heavier still and weight nearly 22 tonnes each, the same as four African elephants!

What makes this even more fascinating is that the bluestones had to be transported from a mountain in Wales nearly 140 miles away. To this day, we have no idea how the stones were moved. How did the people who built it have any idea that the rocks were even there? Don't forget, the stones had to be carved into shape once they arrived using nothing more than small flint axes and hammers.

Archaeologists are still unsure what Stonehenge was used for. The sun always rises over Heel Stone on the longest day of the year and sets over it on the shortest. This has led some people to believe that it was some form of primitive calendar. The truth is, we just don't know. One thing we do know for sure is that people were buried there. There are an estimated 200 people buried in the grounds.



VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. What does the word “iconic” tell you about Stonehenge?
2. Find a word or phrase that tells you the sarsen stones were stronger.
3. What does the phrase “concluding centuries” mean?
4. Find a word that means “moved”.
5. Find a phrase that suggests the author is excited by how far the stones travelled.

VIPERS QUESTIONS

R

When did work start on Stonehenge?

S

List three fascinating facts about the bluestones.

R

Which type of stone weighs as much as four elephants?

I

Why might Stonehenge have worked as a calendar?

P

For what other reason might Stone Age people have built Stonehenge?

Answers:

1. It is recognisable to most people/most people know what it is/looks like
2. (More) robust
3. The final/last few hundred years
4. Transported
5. One of the most amazing things...

R: 5,000 years ago

S: They travelled a long way, we have no idea how people knew they were there, they had to be carved with basic tools

R: Sarsen

R: (Nearly) 22 tonnes

I: It would tell them when the shortest and longest days of the year were, and they could then work out when in the year it was

P: Look for an understanding of why historical sites were built - mysticism, religion, sacrifice, a communal meeting place etc