



Dig into Ancient Ireland

Key Stage 2

Introducing Dig into Ancient Ireland

This resource for teachers explores the story of Ireland's ancient past.

The key focus is the Neolithic period (c.4000 – 2500 BC), a time when the transition from hunting and gathering to farming changed how people lived, worked and buried their dead. Children can discover how people had to adapt and learn new skills in response to the introduction of new ideas, technologies and environmental challenges, much like we do today.

There are nine key areas of enquiry:

1. **What is 'prehistory'?**
2. **How do we know about life in Ancient Ireland?**
3. **Who lived in Ireland before Neolithic times?**
4. **Who lived in Ireland during the Neolithic?**
5. **What were the main technologies?**
6. **What did people eat and how did they get their food?**
7. **Where did people live?**
8. **How did people view death and burial?**
9. **What did the landscape look like?**

The resource provides information concentrating on Ireland and is illustrated by artefacts from National Museums NI collection. A list of accessible archaeological sites in Northern Ireland is also included to enable teachers to find out if there are any sites close to their school. Each section makes connections between the Neolithic period, history, geography and science and technology, and provides suggested activities for the classroom aligned to the five thinking skills and personal capabilities in the NI curriculum.

A bespoke Minecraft learning tool for **Ancient Ireland** has been created to accompany this resource, using Minecraft: Education Edition. The Minecraft world contains custom textures and characters to replicate the Neolithic period, creating an exciting and immersive learning experience where pupils can live in a Neolithic village using technologies of the time and exploring how to use the landscape and resources around them. Go to www.nmni.com/learn to find out more.

To explore the subject further, teachers and pupils can visit the 'Early Peoples' gallery at the Ulster Museum, and participate in the 'Ancient Ireland' workshop for school groups, where pupils have the opportunity to handle real stone age objects and investigate life in Ancient Ireland.

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A study of Ancient Ireland fits within the four connected strands of **The World Around Us (TWAU)**. This table indicates ways in which this resource can be used to meet the Statutory Requirements for **TWAU**:

	Interdependence	Place	Movement and Energy	Change Over Time
Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neolithic people were dependent on their environment having good sources of raw materials. • Neolithic people changed the local vegetation by planting crops and introduced new domesticated animals, e.g. cattle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils learn about the landscape features of their surroundings by drawing maps. • Neolithic people had to live in areas with lots of resources. • Pupils can learn about directions and routes on maps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neolithic people gathered resources from across the landscape. • Neolithic people moved around the landscape in different ways, using natural routeways along rivers and through valleys. They used canoes on water, but otherwise travelled on foot. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The change of the seasons could have a major impact on crops – a year of bad weather could cause a famine. • Travel might be much more difficult during the winter, so people may have had to stockpile their resources. • What effect would the clearing of forests have on Neolithic people and future generations?
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world as we know it today was shaped by our ancestors in the past, e.g. Ireland is an agricultural country, and this started around 6000 years ago. • People came to Ireland from other lands, out-competing the Mesolithic hunter-gatherers who already lived there. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils learn about Neolithic sites in their local area. • Pupils learn how their lives differ from Neolithic people who used to live in their area. • Pupils can compare their houses to those in the past. What things are similar? What is different? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils learn about how resource gathering differs from today (e.g. being able to get ingredients from a shop). • Pupils learn how travel is different now. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils have to question why change happens, why people became farmers. What benefits did this bring? What negative impacts did it bring? Would they like to live during the Neolithic? • Archaeological evidence is buried under the surface of the ground which accumulates with time.
Science and Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neolithic people changed the appearance and behaviour of wild animals. • Neolithic people cleared areas of forest and grew new crops, changing the biodiversity of areas. • The life cycle of growing crops became more relevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The location of natural resources used by Neolithic people varied. Pupils can think about their closest flint resources • Pupils can think about the best place to grow plants and keep animals. • Pupils can discuss knowledge of agriculture. This may vary depending if the school is in the city or the countryside. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would Neolithic people have used for light and fuel? What kind of differences would this have made to life? • How were the huge stones of the Neolithic tombs moved? How might a tomb have been constructed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compared to today, Neolithic people used different skills in the way they made pots, stone tools and wooden objects. • There are a wider range of artefacts surviving from the Neolithic period when compared to earlier Mesolithic times. • Some materials decay and others do not (inorganic vs organic) – this affects what is found by archaeologists.