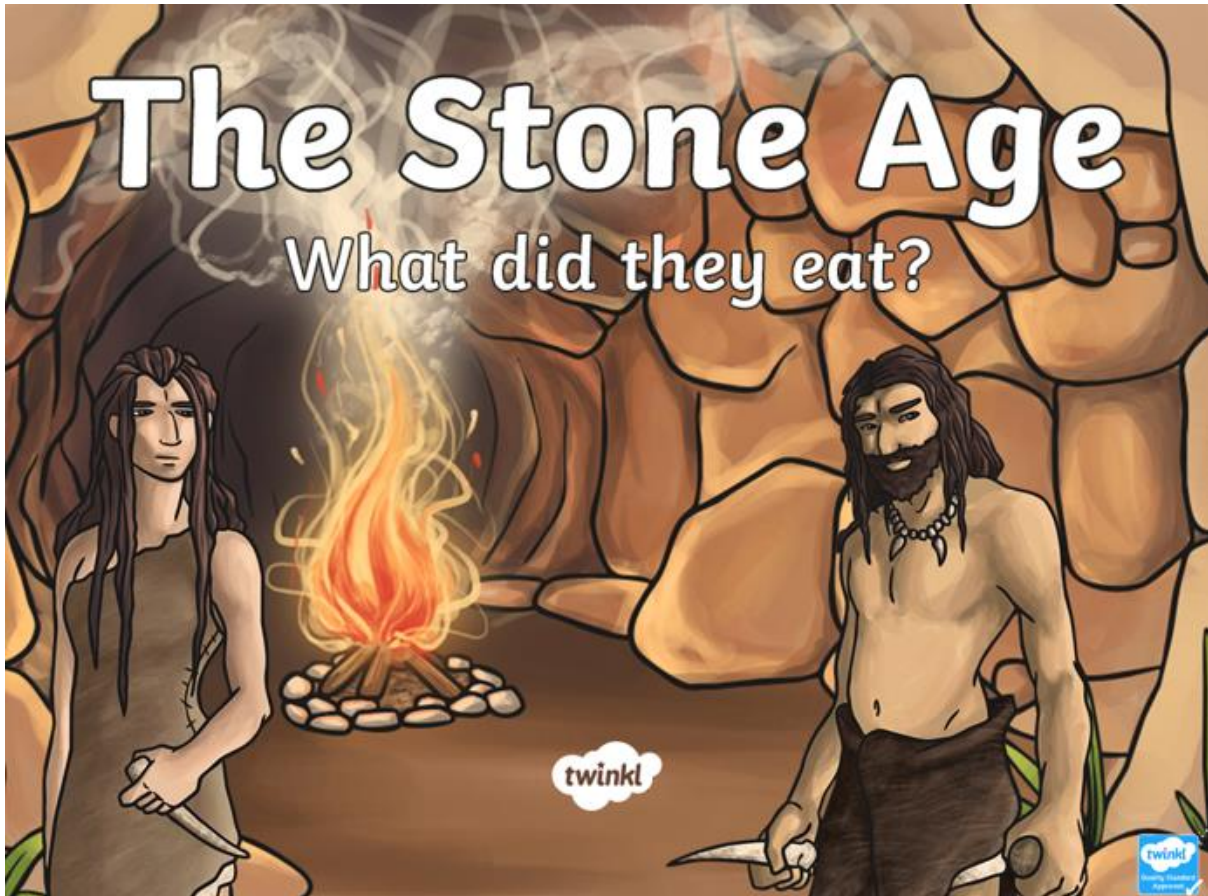


The Stone Age

What did they eat?



Hunter-gatherers

For early humans, their survival depended on finding food.

We call them hunter-gatherers because they had to hunt animals and fish and gather wild food.

It wasn't until the Neolithic period that they grew and raised their own food.

They would hunt whatever animals they could find.

In Britain during the Stone Age this could have been horses, deer, mammoth, hares, rhino and hyena.

Also, from rivers and the sea they would hunt seals, seabirds and fish.



Weapons

The hunters used different weapons to kill their food.

These could be made from bone, ivory, wood, antlers, stone or flint.

The first early humans used stone axes, rocks and wooden spears that were hardened at the tips with fire.

Later, spears were developed that had sharp bone or flint tips.

Spear throwers meant that spears could be thrown further and with more force, making it possible to kill or wound an animal from a safer distance.



Weapons

For spearing fish, hunters would carve barbs into antlers to make a harpoon that would stick in the flesh of the fish.

These would be attached to the end of spears.



Weapons

Smaller forest animals were hunted with bow and arrows.

By around 12,000 BC hunters were using dogs to help in the chase.



The Hunt

To catch animals that were larger and quicker than them, hunters had to be clever.

They found out where the animals went to drink, or where they crossed rivers, so they could attack when they were most vulnerable. They would pick out the animals that looked weaker.

Animals could also be caught in snares or carefully set out traps.



The Hunt

Often, hunters would work together to stampede a herd of animals into a ravine, or a swamp, where they were easier to attack.

They used stones to build walls in a funnel shape that led to a cliff edge and then stampeded the animals between the walls and straight over the cliff.

Skeletons of over 10,000 wild horses have been found at the bottom of a cliff in France. Hunters probably crept up and scared the animals, who ran to their deaths.



Weapons

One big kill could feed a family for months.
Every part of a kill was used.

- The meat was cooked for food or dried to preserve it for eating later.
- They would eat absolutely everything including the blood, feet and brain.
- Bones would be made into tools and weapons.
- Bones could also be smashed so the marrow could be eaten from the inside. Marrow is high in fat and would have been a good energy source.
- Animal hides were made into clothes.
- The fat could be used in lamps.
- Antlers were also made into tools and weapons.



Did you know? Some archaeologists believe that early humans would have cut open the stomach of an animal and eaten their last meal!

Cooking

There is evidence that early humans started using fire in Britain up to 400,000 thousand years ago.

Today we have many different ways to cook food, and different appliances to use.

They still managed some variety back then.

The meat was grilled or roasted on a spit.

Meat was wrapped in straw or leather and secured with a twig or straw rope.

This was put into a pot of water that was heated by dropping in red hot stones that had been heated in a fire.

A trough or pit would be heated with fire and lined with hot stones. The meat would be put inside and covered with more hot stones.

Gathering

- The Stone Age diet would have varied according to what was locally available.
- They had access to a wide variety of natural foods like seeds, berries, nuts and roots and knew which plants were safe to eat.
- They would gather eggs as well as insects, snails and caterpillars.
- Herbs were used to flavour food as they are today.

Sunflower seeds



Nettle leaves



Hazelnuts



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Gathering



Juniper Berries



Mussels

The Woods

Wild nuts and berries were available in great quantities in the woods. Nuts were particularly good because they could be easily stored.

The Seashore

Mussels, cockles, whelks, crabs, oysters, lobsters and other seafood provided a source of food all year round.

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Gathering

Around 4000 BC people in Britain started growing their own crops such as barley and wheat.

This was possible because the climate had changed and there was more rain. They also kept sheep and goats.

It was the first time they had controlled their food sources and it meant that they could stay in one place and form settlements.

Tools

Early cave paintings show animals being used to pull ploughs to turn over the earth ready for planting.

Axes and sickles were made from flint to clear ground and harvest crops.

Grain was put on the flat surface of the quern and a stone called a 'rubber' was used to grind the grain into flour.



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Stewed Fruit

Early humans would cook fruit to preserve it.

Why don't you try cooking up some fruits and nuts?
Hazelnuts with any kind of berries would work.

Stir them together, add honey and slowly bring to the boil.
Simmer for 20 minutes then leave to cool.



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