

ART PACK: Stone Age to Iron Age

Personal Adornment

Background Information for Teachers:

What is Jewellery?

The earliest jewellery was made from found objects: feathers, shells, seed heads, teeth and bones. Stones with a natural hole (sometimes called hag or Odin stones) would also have been used. The earliest known example of jewellery was made from seashells 82,000 years ago. The seashell necklace was found in Grotte des Pigeons at Taforalt in eastern Morocco. The tiny shells were pierced and covered in red ochre (a natural mineral pigment).

Later, people started to create their own beads. Many beads that have been found at archaeological sites have been carved from bone, chalk, jet or amber. During the Bronze and Iron Ages beads were cast from precious and semi-precious metals (gold, silver, tin and copper). Clay beads are not common finds but there are instances of clay beads being found. In 2011, 110 chunky clay beads were found as part of a necklace at a 4,000-year-old burial site at Whitehorse Hill, Chagford, Dartmoor.

Why do People Wear Jewellery?

People have worn jewellery for thousands of years. We don't know why people first started to adorn themselves with jewellery. The jewellery may have had religious or tribal significance. It might have denoted status or people might just have enjoyed wearing it!



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Where can We See Originals?

There are some fine examples of Iron and Bronze Age jewellery on display at the British Museum

Women's and girls' Iron Age Jewellery

britishmuseum.org/explore/online_tours/britain/people_in_iron_age_britain/womens_and_girls_jewellery.aspx

The Morvah Hoard – a collection of six gold bracelets found in Cornwall

britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/pe_prb/t/the_morvah_hoard.aspx

Beaver tooth amulet from: a barrow at Wigber Low, Derbyshire, 7th century

britishmuseum.org/explore/young_explorers/discover/museum_explorer/anglo-saxon_england/birds_and_beasts/beaver_tooth_amulet.aspx



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Activity 1: Why do We Wear Jewellery?

You will need:

- Pictures of jewellery from different ages and different cultures. There are some included in the pack
- Pieces of 'costume' jewellery (not your finest diamond rings!!!)

Introduction:

This is an investigation into the nature of jewellery and is designed to encourage pupils to think about why we wear jewellery and to consider why our ancestors wore jewellery.

Ask pupils to think of different types of jewellery and to suggest reasons about when and why it is worn. Make a list on the board.

Encourage pupils to notice that some jewellery is purely decorative and some has a special meaning. Discuss these meanings with pupils:

Personal or social status – wedding/engagement rings, chains of office

Religious, ethnic or group affiliation – many Christians wear a crucifix and many Jews, a Star of David

Support for a cause – a badge, wrist band, or button hole such as a pink ribbon for breast cancer awareness, Help for Heroes wrist band or a poppy for Remembrance Day)

Amulet or devotional medal – for luck or protection such as the Hamsa or Hand of Fatima

Functional – a watch or hair clip

Provide pupils with jewellery examples and/or pictures of different sorts of jewellery. Ask pupils to sort the examples or pictures into groups based on why the piece is worn.



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Discuss the sorts of materials that have been used (gold, silver, precious stones, plastic, wood, rubber, tin...). Regroup the jewellery according to material.

Is there a correlation between the purpose of the jewellery and the material it is made from? (Charity bands are made from fairly cheap materials, status related jewellery (e.g. a wedding ring) is made from precious materials. Religious jewellery is often made from precious materials.



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Activity 2: Design a Prehistoric Necklace

You will need:

Pictures of Prehistoric jewellery

Seashells

Interesting shaped and coloured stones

Drawing materials

Introduction:

Tell pupils that in another lesson they are going to make some jewellery. They are going to make a brooch based on an Iron Age shield design (there are examples in this pack) and a bead necklace.

In this lesson they are going to design a necklace.

Show pupils pictures of Prehistoric jewellery. (There are images included in this pack but you might like to supplement these with images that you have found on the Internet.)

Ask pupils to identify types of jewellery (rings, brooches, necklaces) and the types of materials used.

Discuss what the purpose might be and what the jewellery might tell us about the wearer.

Remember to emphasise that prehistoric jewellery was worn by men and women and that jewellery was probably worn to show status or as talismanic/totemic objects. Iron and Bronze Age brooches, for example, were worn by men and women and were used much like a safety pin to hold a piece of clothing in place.

Consider the value of the materials used.

Remember that, during Prehistoric times, if you lived 70 miles from the sea seashells were very precious!



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Main Activity:

Designing a Prehistoric bead necklace

Explain that:

- the earliest necklaces were made from found objects – stones with natural holes, bone (either small bird bones which are hollow so are easy to thread or discs carved from larger bones), animal teeth and pierced seashells or carved stones
- during the Bronze and Iron Ages, beads were cast or forged using materials such as gold, silver, copper, bronze and tin. Prehistoric beads were often slightly flattened spheres or indeed thick disc shapes. These shapes can easily be emulated in clay and painted to mimic precious metals. A necklace might consist of a number of different types, shapes and colours of beads



Health and Safety precautions should be taken when using found objects. Ensure that the objects are clean and do not have sharp edges.

Provide pupils with a selection of shells and stones. Provide photographs of Prehistoric bead jewellery from this teaching pack. Using the objects and photographs as reference materials, pupils should sketch ideas for a necklace.



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Activity 3: Salt Dough or Air Dry Clay Beads

You will need:

- Enough salt dough or air dry clay for each pupil
- Something to make holes in the beads – large plastic straws are excellent for this
- Twine or cord to thread the finished beads on to
- Paint (optional)
- PVA glue (optional)

Introduction:

Before you start, talk to the pupils about the properties of the material they are going to use. (See Teachers' Tips)

Provide each pupil with a quantity of clay/salt dough

- Tear off lumps of clay/salt dough
- Using the palms of the hands roll it into a ball
- Use a plastic straw to form a hole through the ball
- Impress a pattern into the ball using the end of a pencil, the straw or other suitable instrument
- Repeat until the required number of beads have been created
- Leave beads to dry overnight

Decorating the beads

- Dry beads can be painted using powder or poster paint
- A shiny finish can be achieved by mixing the paint with a little PVA glue
- Once dry, thread the beads onto cord or twine

Teachers' Tip: if pupils are unused to using malleable materials they may need time to explore the properties of the salt dough/ clay before the start creating their beads.



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Other ideas for necklaces

- Use a mix of beads in different sizes, shapes and colours
- Make 'beads' into the shape of shells, teeth or bone
- Include found objects, such as feathers or hag stones, into the necklace
- Make ball shaped 'silver' beads by squashing and rolling aluminium foil to suggest tin or silver beads. Make cigar shaped beads by rolling up isosceles triangle shaped pieces of foil or paper – start at the base and roll towards the pointed end.



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Shield Brooches

Background Information:

Buttons to fasten clothes were unknown during the Bronze and Iron Ages. Both men and women used decorative pins or brooches to fasten cloaks and shawls. In this activity pupils are going to make simple brooches, with their designs based on those of Bronze and Iron Age ceremonial shields.

A bit about shields

Battle shields were utilitarian objects designed to provide protection in battle. They had to be strong enough to withstand an axe blow. Battle shields were made from wood. However, a number of highly decorated, thin metal shields have been found. These shields are shorter than battle shields and the thin metal would easily crumple under a blow from an axe. Therefore, it is thought that these shields were used for ceremonial purposes. There are several examples on display at the British Museum.

The Thames Shield:

Measuring 68cm in diameter this is one of the largest Iron Age shields ever found. It is a single piece of bronze which has been beaten into a sheet 0.7mm thick. To prevent the bronze from shattering during the hammering process, it would have been heated. It would have taken about 200 cycles of heating and beating to create a shield of this size.



The shield is decorated with 11 concentric circles interspersed with 11 rings of raised bosses (raised studs on a shield).

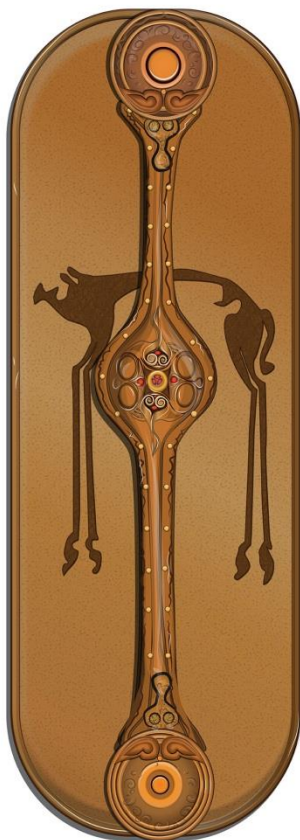


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The Battersea Shield:

Dating from 350-50 BC, the Battersea Shield is too short to be a defensive shield so was probably made for ceremonial purposes. Only the highly decorated bronze facing survives. Originally this facing would have been attached to a wooden backing. Scroll work is concentrated around three roundels. The central roundel has a high domed boss. The shield is made of bronze and has 27 red enamel studs.

This shield was found in the River Thames at Battersea and was probably a votive offering.



The Witham Shield:

This shield was found in the River Witham in Lincolnshire. It is not a complete shield but the decorative front that would have been fixed to a wooden back. The wooden back has rotted away. The red colour on the shield's boss is small pieces of red coral from the Mediterranean. The roundels are inspired by the heads of birds, supported by horses with wings for ears.



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The Chertsey Shield:

This is the only British Iron Age shield made completely of bronze. All the other ones found were metal fascia designed to fit on top of a wooden shield. Like the other shields it was deliberately placed in the river as a votive offering.



The Wandsworth Shield boss:

This is the central boss of a Bronze Age shield. It was found in the River Thames at Wandsworth. The boss is 33cm in diameter. There is a depression in the centre which would have held an enamel stud. The scroll work pattern represents two birds with outstretched wings and long trailing tail features. There is a depression for each bird's eye which would have contained enamel studs or Mediterranean coral.



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Activity 4: Design and Make a Shield Brooch

The design and making part of the activity would probably work best spread across at least two or three lessons of approx. 60 minutes each.

Designing a Shield Brooch

You will need:

- Shield templates
- Drawing materials

Introduction:

Show pupils pictures of Iron Age and Bronze Age shields. There are some in the pack but you could supplement these by displaying images from the British Museum website. Draw pupils' attention to the shape of the shields and the ways in which they have been decorated. (See 'A bit about Shields' above.) Discuss the use of materials: iron, bronze and enamel.

Main Activity:

Ask pupils to design a brooch based on a shield design. You might wish to provide pupils with template shield shapes as included in the pack. As the scroll work will be made from string or wire encourage pupils to keep the design simple! The design should include a central boss, some scroll work and some small 'enamel' studs. Most pupils should be able to come up with several different designs.

Plenary:

Encourage pupils to share their design ideas with each other and to discuss their ideas for translating their design into a three dimensional object.



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Making a Shield Brooch

You will need:

- Brooch design from previous activity
- Stiff card
- Shield templates
- String
- PVA glue
- Small beads, sequins, rhinestones or even Jelly Tots ®
- Gold or silver paint or spray paint
- Small wooden clothes pegs can be used to 'pin' or peg brooches to clothes (optional)

Introduction:

You might wish to model the making of a shield brooch for the class demonstrating for example how to coil string on to a lightly glued disc of card.

Discuss the sorts of material that you have provided and how they can be used.

Remind pupils that these were ceremonial shields and were probably votive offerings so would have been made to a very high standard. However, they are not heavily encrusted with jewels so pupils should exercise restraint when applying rhinestones and other sparkly things!

Main Activity:

Using their design ideas from the previous activity, pupils create their own shield brooches. Alternatively pupils could follow the instructions on the next few pages.



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Ideas and instructions for creating Shield Brooches

The Thames Shield

- Cut the shield shape out of card
- Cover in a THIN layer of PVA glue
- Starting at the centre, coil the string out to the edge
- Add a plain boss (a googly eye or one half of a press-stud)
- Once the glue has dried, paint with bronze coloured paint
- or:
- After coiling the string, allow the glue to dry
- Paint with bronze coloured paint
- Then add a coloured boss (a sequin or hemi spherical jewel-like bead; Jelly Tots ® work well!)
- Depending on the age of the pupils, and only if this does not breach the school's Healthy and Safety policy, add a brooch clip or safety pin to the back of the brooch with a piece of masking tape



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The Wandsworth Boss 1

- Cut out a number of card circles of descending size
- Working from the biggest to the smallest and, keeping the centres lined up, glue the circles on top of each other
- Put a THIN layer of glue on the outer circle
- Add pieces of string to create a scroll work design
- When the glue is dry, paint the shield
- Finally add a boss (see previous suggestions)



Teachers' Tip: The central boss is one half of a press-stud!



The Wandsworth Boss 2

This brooch is made of two circles of card, string, two small rhinestones and a Jelly Tot ®!



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The Battersea Shield

Thin garden wire is a good alternative to string for the scroll work. It is flexible but maintains its shape. Here the central ring is made of wire.



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Shield Templates

