

Star Carr: Life after the ice

Time Odyssey Teachers Pack



Chronology: Mesolithic (Middle Stone-Age)

**Yorkshire
Museum**

Contents

Section One: How to use this resource -----	3
Section Two: Introduction to Star Carr -----	5
Section Three: Star Objects -----	6

Section One: How to use this resource

This resource will help you get the most out of a visit to our Star Carr exhibition when completing a **Time Odyssey** activity at the Yorkshire Museum. It contains:

- An introduction to the **Star Carr: Life after the ice exhibition** at the Yorkshire Museum.
- Information about nine **Star Objects** in the exhibition, which you **may wish** to look at when completing your Time Odyssey adventure.

The Star Carr exhibition is particularly suited to the following Time Odyssey **missions**:

The Cloak of Safekeeping (Materials)	This activity requires pupils to collect natural materials to make a magical cloak
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More information about The Cloak of Safekeeping and other Time Odyssey missions can be found in the **Time Odyssey Guidelines for Teachers**, which you will be sent when booking your visit to the Yorkshire Museum.

You can share the information in this resource with your pupils whilst they are **completing a Time Odyssey mission**. Alternatively, you can use these notes to lead a **reflective discussion** with your pupils after they have finished an activity.

You may find it helpful to share these notes with the other adults who will be accompanying the class on your visit to the Yorkshire Museum.

Flash cards

A condensed version of these notes is available to borrow on the day of your visit. These come as a set of **flash cards**, which you can use to guide your pupils around the Star Objects in the Star Carr: Life after the ice exhibition.

Curriculum Links

A visit to our Star Carr: Life after the ice exhibition can be used to cover the following curriculum areas:

Key Stage Two

Pupils should be taught about:

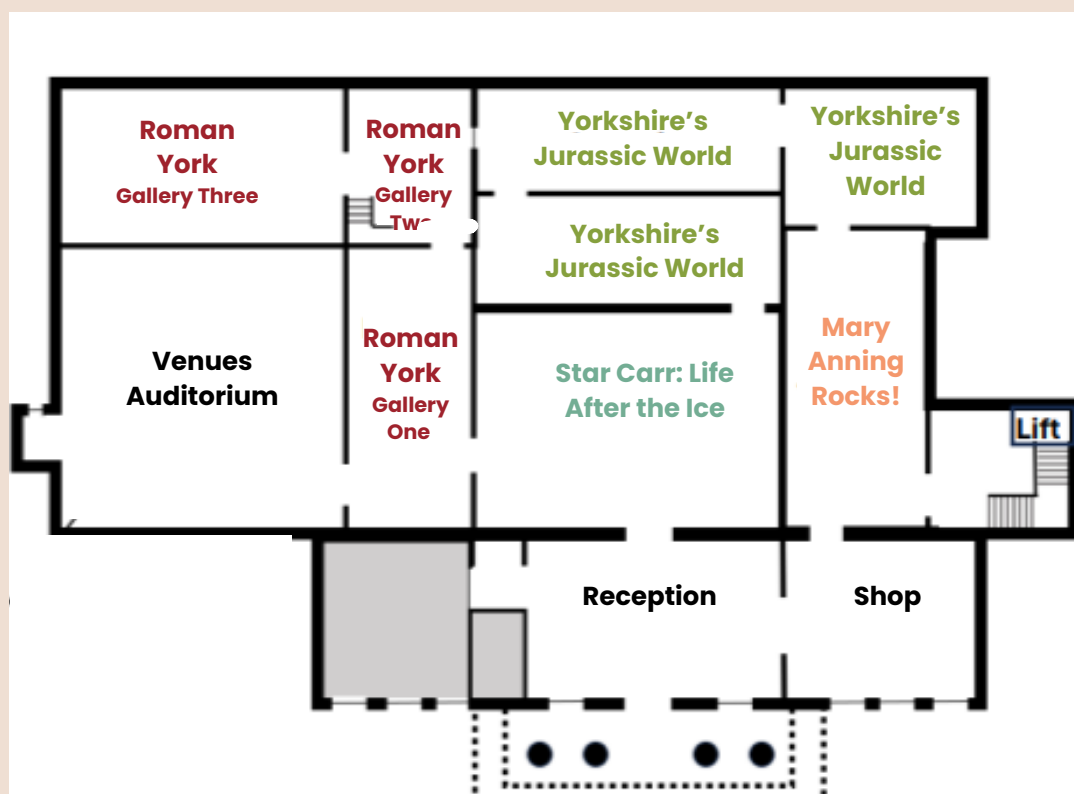
- Changes in Britain from the Stone Age to the Iron Age

Or

- A local history study

Gallery Map

The **Star Carr: Life after the ice** exhibition is in one main room. A full map of the Yorkshire Museum can be downloaded from our [website](#).



Section Two: Introduction to Star Carr

What is Star Carr?

- **Star Carr** is the name given to an ancient settlement that was built on the edge of a **prehistoric lake** near Scarborough, North Yorkshire. It is one of the world's most important archaeological sites.
- The site was first occupied 11,000 years ago in a period known as the **Mesolithic**, or **Middle Stone Age** (Meso = Middle, Lithic = Stone).
- The **earliest known houses in Britain** were built at Star Carr. The community also constructed **wooden platforms** at the edge of the lake, which must have made it easier to get in and out of the water, perhaps by boat. These platforms are the **earliest evidence we have of carpentry** in Europe.
- People at Star Carr gathered plants, hunted animals and birds, and fished in the lake to feed themselves. The **oldest hunting bow in northern Europe** was found at Star Carr and was probably used to hunt fish in shallow water.
- The community created tools and artistic objects using materials from the local environment – stone, bone, antler, wood and plants.
- One of the most important materials used by the people of Star Carr was **flint**. Sharp flint tools were made using a technique called **knapping**, which involved striking a stone against a piece of flint to create an edge. Flint tools were used in lots of ways, from felling trees to cutting animal meat from bone.
- Normally **organic materials** such as antler, wood and bone rarely survive to be discovered by archaeologists. This is because they usually decay and **rot away** as they are eaten by bacteria. However, at Star Carr, many objects that fell into the lake were covered up with mud and leaves. This then turned into a dark, brown, waterlogged sediment called **peat**. Because bacteria doesn't survive in peat, many objects made from antler, wood and bone remained well-preserved.
- As a result, some important and rare objects have been discovered at Star Carr. Perhaps the most famous are the mysterious **headdresses** made from the skulls of **red deer** and **roe deer**. These may have been worn during important **rituals** or used by hunters as a **disguise**.

Section Three: Star Objects

You will complete the following Time Odyssey mission in our Star Carr: Life after the ice exhibition:

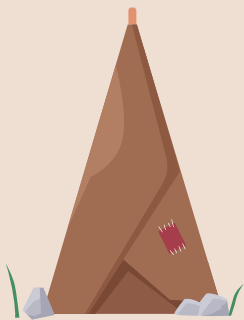
The Cloak of Safekeeping

The Cloak of Safekeeping mission encourages pupils to reflect on their relationship with the natural world, and think about how humans have used natural materials across time. During the mission, pupils must find objects made from natural materials to make a magical cloak. The mission is particularly suited to the **Star Carr: Life after the ice** exhibition, which contains a range of objects made from natural materials.

Star Objects

The Star Objects listed below have been chosen because they are made from a range of natural materials and can offer pupils an intriguing insight into life during the Mesolithic.

Each **Star Object** links to one of four themes in the **Star Carr: Life after the ice** exhibition. These are:



Settling



Creating



Eating



Believing

Each Star Object comes with:

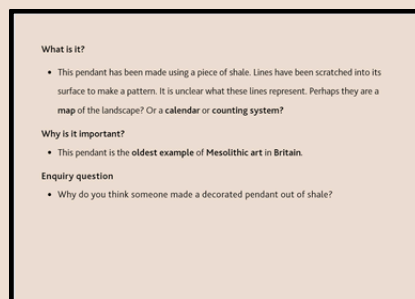
- A brief **description** of the object, the **materials** used to make it, and why we think it is **important**.
- Suggested **enquiry questions** which you can use to lead a discussion with your pupils. Some of these are designed to be shared with pupils **before** the object information.

You can share the information in this resource with your pupils whilst they are completing a Time Odyssey mission. Alternatively, you can use these notes to lead a reflective discussion with your pupils after they have finished an activity.

Note: these are just suggestions for objects pupils might wish to look at during their Time Odyssey adventure. There are plenty of other excellent examples to find in the museum, and we encourage pupils to explore for themselves and discover what interests them.

Flash cards

A condensed version of these notes is available to borrow on the day of your visit. These come as a set of **flash cards**, which you can use to guide your pupils around the Star Objects in our Star Carr exhibition.



Star Object One: Wooden Platforms

Material: Wood; **Theme:** Settling

What is it?

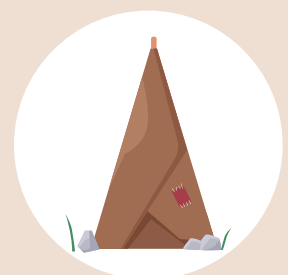
- The community at Star Carr built three large, wooden platforms along the shore of the lake they lived next to. The platforms stabilised the mud at the edge of the lake and may have allowed people to easily get into boats for fishing.

Why is it important?

- The wooden platforms at Star Carr are the **earliest known evidence of carpentry in Europe.**

Enquiry questions

- Why do you think the people of Star Carr lived next to a lake?
- Why do you think they built these platforms? Do they remind you of anything you might see today at the coast?



Star Object Two: Fire-making Kit

Material: Flint, iron pyrite, birch bark and hoof fungus; **Theme:** Settling

What is it?

- This is a Mesolithic portable **fire-making kit**. A spark would be created by striking **flint** against iron **pyrite**. This was used to light flammable **hoof fungus**. This burned slowly and the shape of the hoof fungus allowed a person to carry their fire wherever they needed it.

Why is it important?

- Fire in the Mesolithic was used for **warmth**, **cooking** and **protection** from animals. Smoke could also drive away annoying insects.

Enquiry questions

- What do you think the people of Star Carr used fire for?
- Look closely at the piece of flint. Can you see the grooves on the surface? What do you think created these?



Star Object Three: Hunting Bow

Material: Willow; **Theme:** Eating

What is it?

- This **bow** was carved from a larger piece of wood using a stone tool. Archaeologists made a copy of the bow to test. Experiments showed it wouldn't have been powerful enough to hunt large animals. We think it was used to hunt **fish** in the lake.

Why is it important?

- This is the **oldest hunting bow** to be found in **northern Europe** and one of the oldest in the world.

Enquiry question

- Can you find any other tools that people at Star Carr used to hunt animals? What materials are they made from?



Star Object Four: Digging Stick

Material: Wood; **Theme:** Eating

What is it?

- The people of Star Carr used a tool called a **digging stick** to gather **plants** and **roots** to eat. One hand held the wider end of the stick, whilst the other held the shaft. The pointed end was used to dig in the ground.

Why is it important?

- People all over the world have used digging sticks to gather food. The digging sticks at Star Carr are the **oldest ever found**.

Enquiry questions

- At Star Carr, archaeologists found a digging stick in the shallow waters of the lake. It was lying tip to tip with the hunting bow. Why do you think it was left like this?
- What types of food do you think people used a digging stick to gather?



Star Object Five: Pendant

Material: Shale; **Theme:** Creating

What is it?

- This pendant has been made using a piece of **shale**. Lines have been scratched into its surface to make a **pattern**. It is unclear what these lines represent. Perhaps they are a **map** of the landscape? Or a **calendar** or **counting system**?

Why is it important?

- This pendant is the **oldest example** of **Mesolithic art** in **Britain**.

Enquiry questions

- Why do you think someone made a decorated pendant out of shale?
- Take a close look at the pattern that has been scratched into the pendant. What do you think the lines represent?



Star Object Six: Flint Tools

Material: Shale; **Theme:** Creating

What is it?

- This group of **flint tools** were placed between the roots of a tree. Sharp flint tools were made using a technique called **knapping**. This involved striking a stone against a piece of flint to create a sharp edge. Flint was used in the Mesolithic to cut softer materials like wood or shale.

Why is it important?

- Flint was an important material in the Mesolithic. As well as cutting tools, pieces of flint were used to make **arrow heads** and to start **fires**.

Enquiry question

- Why do you think this group of flint tools were placed between the roots of a tree?



Star Object Seven: Deer Burial

Material: Bone; **Theme:** Believing

What is it?

- People at Star Carr gathered the body parts of **several different deer** and placed them together in the **lake**. We believe people at Star Carr carried out **rituals**, which involved placing important objects in the lake. Perhaps objects placed in the lake were **offerings** to **gods** or **spirits**?

Why is it important?

- The fact that people at Star Carr practised **rituals** shows that life for people in the Mesolithic was not only focused on survival, but also **belief**.

Enquiry question

- Why do you think people at Star Carr placed these deer parts in the lake?



Star Object Eight: Red Deer Headdress

Material: Bone and antler; **Theme:** Believing

What is it?

- The most famous objects from Star Carr are the **headdresses** made from the **skulls of deer**. The headdress may have been worn as part of a **ritual**. Perhaps wearing the headdress as a symbol of an important **food source** connected people to the natural world?

Why is it important?

- Deer headdresses from the Mesolithic period are **rare**. Archaeologists discovered **33** at **Star Carr**, but no others are known from Britain and only a handful have been found in Germany.

Enquiry question

- What uses do you think these headdresses had?

