

# Star Carr: Life after the ice

Teachers Exhibition Pack



**Chronology: Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age)**

**Yorkshire  
Museum**

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# Section One: How to use this resource

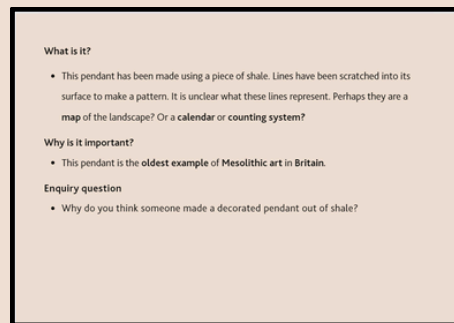
This resource will help you get the most out of a visit to our **Star Carr: Life after the ice** exhibition at the Yorkshire Museum. It contains:

- 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 with your pupils when visiting.

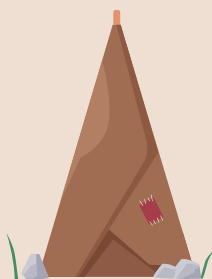
You can use this resource to familiarise yourself with the exhibition **before your visit**. You may also find it helpful to **share** these notes with the other **adults** who will be accompanying the class on your visit to the museum.

## 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.



Each Star Object corresponds to one of the themes that can be found in the exhibition:



Settling



Creating



Eating



Believing

## 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:

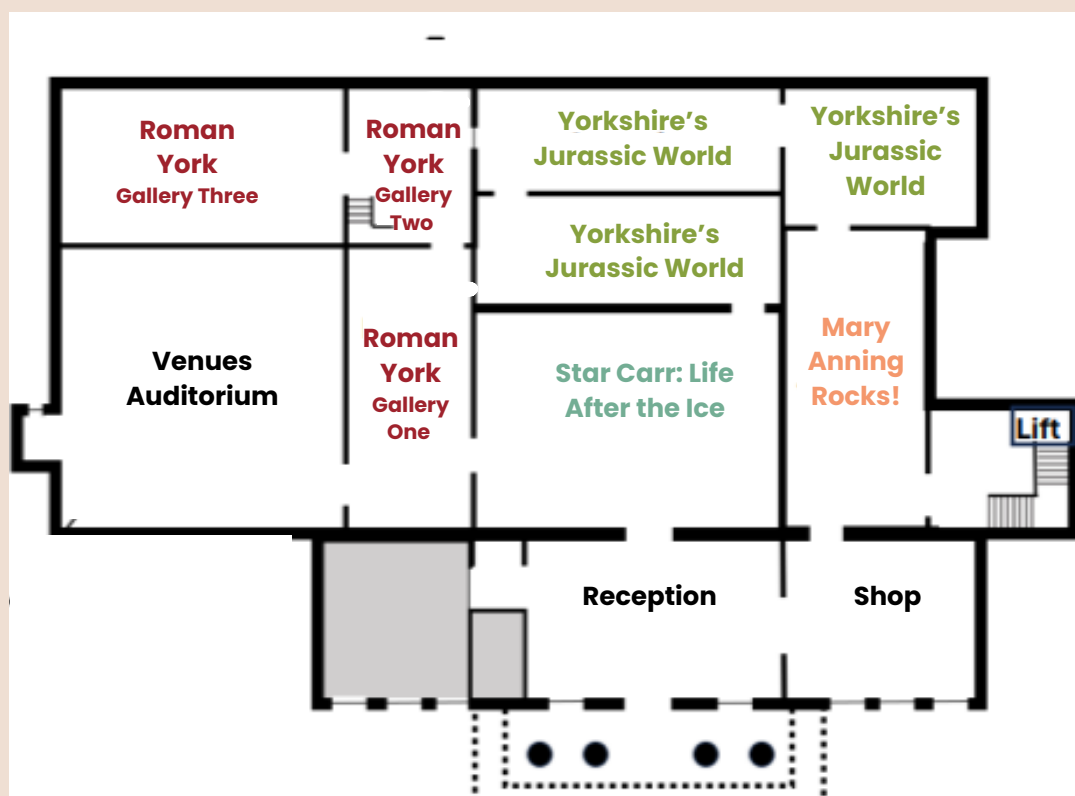
- Changes in Britain from the Stone Age to the Iron Age

Or

- A local history study

## Gallery Map

The *Star Carr: Life after the ice* exhibition is in one main room. There are also displays relating to the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages on the first floor of the museum.



## Section Two: Introduction to 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**.

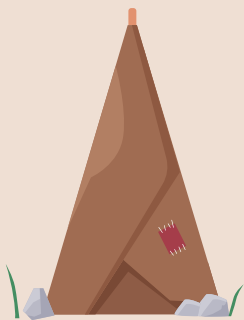
## Section Three: Star Objects

The **Star Objects** listed below have been chosen because they can offer pupils an intriguing insight into life during the Mesolithic.

Each Star Object comes with:

- A brief **description** of the object, the **materials** used to make it, and an explanation for 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.

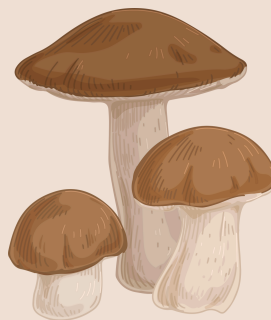
In addition, each Star Object links to one of four themes in the *Star Carr: Life after the ice* exhibition. These are:



**Settling**



**Creating**



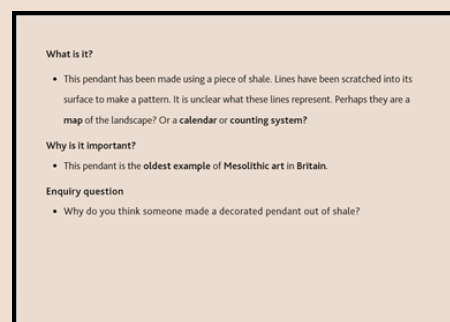
**Eating**



**Believing**

### Flash cards

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# Star Object One: Wooden Platforms

**Material:** Wood; **Theme:** Settling

## What is it?

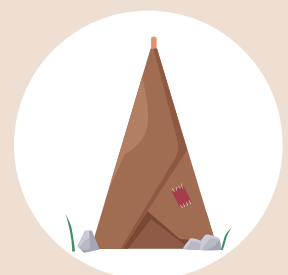
- The community at Star Carr built three large, wooden **platforms** along the shore of the **lake** they lived next to. The platforms **stabilised** the **mud** at the edge of the lake and may have allowed people to easily get into boats for **fishing**.

## 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 people 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 that lived near the lake.

## 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 **willow** 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?

