

# 18 – The Stone Age

## ❁ The Stone Age

People who lived in the Stone Age had a very hard life. They moved around in small groups searching for food. They hunted, fished and gathered berries, nuts and anything that could be eaten. They lived in the trees, bushes and, in bad weather, in caves. They often painted pictures on the walls of the caves. That is how we know so much about them. When the weather was hot they did not wear any clothes. When it was cold they wore animal skins to keep warm. The animals provided them with food to eat, skins to wear and they also made fish hooks and needles from animal bones. They made weapons from bones and hard stone called flint.

## ❁ Onya

Onya lived in Mayo about 5,000 years ago. Her father was a

farmer and they had tame sheep and goats. Her father worked hard, growing barley, wheat and oats. Onya's house had a low stone wall with a gap for the door. There was a pole in the middle and the roof was made from tufts of grass.

Onya's mother cooked on a flat stone over the fire, in the middle of the floor. The smoke from the fire went out through a hole in the roof. Onya's mother taught her to spin and weave the wool they got from the sheep.

"This is so much better," said her mother, "making clothes from wool."

"How did they make them before?" asked Onya.

"When the men killed wild animals, the women would scrape the inside of the skins with a flint scraper. It was a dirty job," explained her mother. "Then they wrapped the skins around them to stay warm."

"I like this better," said Onya.

"Tomorrow, I will show you how to make clay pots," said her mother.

"Oh great!" said Onya.



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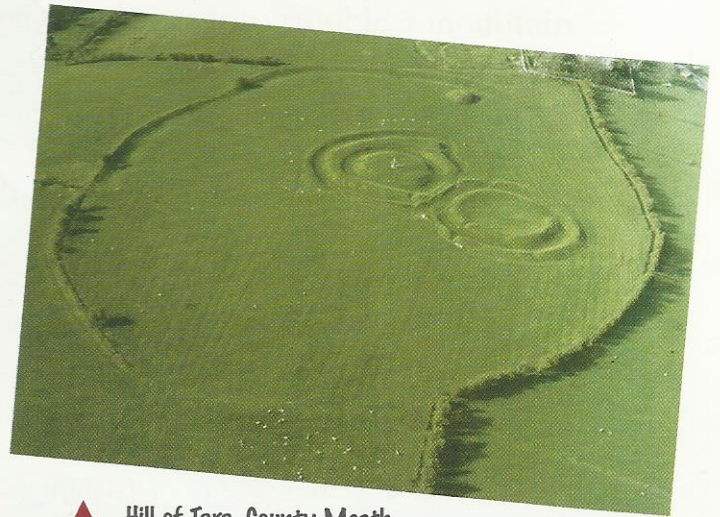
Onya had often watched her mother doing this but had not been allowed to try it. The pots they made were round. The pots could not stand because people did not know how to make flat bottoms.

“Let us stop now,” said Onya’s mother. “Your father and brothers have gone to bring the animals inside the fence for the night. They will soon be home.”

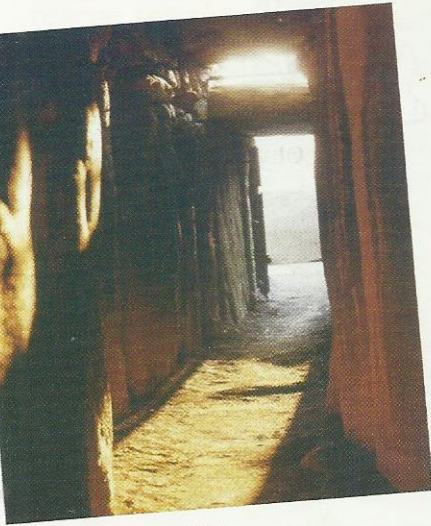
Newgrange, County Meath ▼

### 🌸 Newgrange

There is a large tomb at Newgrange, County Meath, that is older than the Great Pyramids of Egypt. It probably took 300 workers



▲ Hill of Tara, County Meath



▼ A dolmen

around 20 years to build the tomb. When the sun rises on the shortest day of the year, sunlight travels down a passage in the tomb into a small room. It seems that the Stone Age people of Ireland were very clever and studied the sun, moon and stars closely. Newgrange was the burial place of the High Kings of Tara.

### 🌸 Dolmens

A dolmen is made of three huge stones with a flat stone resting on top. Dolmens were built in Ireland as graves for very important people. The stone on top is called a capstone and weighs many, many tonnes. Scientists are still trying to find out how Stone Age people put it in place without using a crane or any machinery.

### Exercises

1. Where did Stone Age people live?
2. What did they eat? How did they dress?
3. What did Stone Age people get from animals?
4. What was flint?
5. Where did Onya live?
6. What job had Onya’s father?
7. What jobs did Onya do?
8. Where did the animals stay at night?
9. In which county will you find Newgrange?
10. What is a dolmen?