

BBC

HANDS ON HISTORY

THE ANCIENTS



Get into the mind of our ancient ancestors

Step outside and stand quietly and still.
Switch off your phone.
Breathe slowly and deeply.
Gradually clear your mind.
Try to forget the modern world.
Feel all of your senses.
Use your imagination to fall back through time to ancient Britain.

It's 2500BC, the large stone circle at Stonehenge has just been completed. You are a farmer living in a small, ancient tribe.



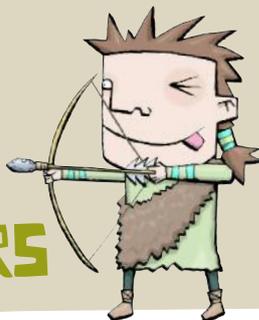
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GET INTO THE MIND OF OUR ANCIENT ANCESTORS



What can you see?

Turn a full circle on the spot and look around you. Ignore anything modern, like buildings, pylons or vehicles. Replace them in your mind with grassland, trees, scrubland, rocks and rivers. Imagine you are standing on this spot thousands of years ago.

Now look up. Wherever you are, and whatever time of day, look up and think like an ancient. How do you feel when you see the sun, the clouds, the moon, the stars? Imagine you are seeing them for



the first time, what would you think the lights in the sky are? spirits... gods... ancestors...

Our ancient ancestors would have known the sky well. They would have understood the clouds and patterns of weather. The night sky would have been brighter and clearer than we see it today, with no pollution of the air and no light pollution from electric lights. Think about what the sky might tell you about the time of day, and the weather to come.

What can you smell?

Can you cut through the modern smells to the timeless, natural scents? – the earth, plants and foliage, clean air carried on the wind. This world of smells would have been very familiar to ancient people with no modern chemicals, car exhaust, soap, shampoo or deodorant to get in the way.

If it's hard to ignore the modern smells, put your nose close to the ground or scoop up some earth to smell (you could wear a glove for this). Do the same with the foliage around you, smelling leaves, flowers, bark and grass.

Think about the other smells they might have known: wood smoke, raw and roasting meat, berries and fruit.

How would you have lived?

Now you've familiarised yourself with the ancient world around you, look for what would have been important to your way of life –

- Is this a good spot to settle your family?
- Are there trees nearby for you to use to build a shelter?
- Is there undergrowth to hide in while you hunt?
- Is there a river or lake near for drinking water?
- Can you see flint to make tools?
- Is there some flat land to grow crops and graze your herds?
- Are there stones and rocks to make a stone circle for worship?



What can you hear?

Close your eyes. Ignore any modern sounds such as cars and planes. What natural sounds do you hear? Listen for the wind, the trees moving, animals, insects or flowing water. If it's noisy where you are, cup your hands over your ears to create the muffled sound of wind in the air.

Think about the other sounds our ancient ancestors may have heard – the crackling flames from a fire... the grating sound of wheat being ground... the sharp chipping noise of tools being made and sharpened.

