

# Teacher's Guide for DIG: *Mysteries of Early Ireland*

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This guide provides practical classroom activities teachers may wish to use to supplement the reading passages appearing in this issue. Discussion questions and activities are suggested, many which address a range of learning styles, integrate other curriculum areas, and are suitable for independent or group work as well as for homework.

**Objectives** – To supplement the reading and discussion of this magazine, students will:

- Become familiar with some of the archaeological discoveries of Early Ireland.
- Recognize how the archaeological discoveries from this region have strengthened our understanding of peoples, places, and events from long ago.
- Gain an awareness and historical understanding of people and times of long ago.

**Introduction:** This issue of DIG spotlights Ireland as an overflowing treasure trove of archaeological discovery. Students may wish to keep an on-going "Tracking Discoveries Chart" as they read each article. Categories such as: Human Remains, Animal Remains (nonhuman), and Artifacts could be appropriate categories for classification. Also including a column to record "Dating Techniques Used," could also be included. For each article, students could record in the appropriate column what was found and how it was dated (when provided). Students might also be encouraged to send questions to Dr. Dig and/or to refer to the ArchNet Web site and other resources listed on page 5 for further study.

## **Stones and Bones (pages 5-6)**

### **1. Cemetery Finds**

Discussion question: What was found in Africa's Tenere Desert, and what do the discoveries reveal?

Activity: Create a venn diagram and record similarities and differences between the Keffians and Tenerians.

### **2. Caves as Concert Halls**

Discussion question: How is the cave of Niaux in Ariège (France) like a concert hall?

Activity: Perform a rendition of what might have been seen (through hand-drawn representations of cave art) and heard (through humming or other vocalizations) in the caves. Student may also wish to use technology such as a slideshow or I-movie to prepare and present their rendition.

### **3. Ancient Chariot**

Discussion question: Where was an ancient chariot discovered and why was this significant?

Activity: Consider the importance of the chariot, the horses, and the harnesses as gift offerings to the deceased and write a paragraph describing why you think these items may have been so highly valued.

## **Tomb of Knowth (pages 8-9)**

Discussion questions:

- What was the Tomb of Knowth and what new insights are revealed through its discovery?
- Why were the inhabitants who superseded the Neolithic people referred to as "the Passage Tomb people?"

**Activity:** Consider the following sentence from the article and explain/support its meaning using details from the article: "In order to create such elaborate burial sites, the people must have been highly organized and efficient, with enough resources to support the designers, builders, and artists." Students may wish to share their idea through an oral or written presentation.

### **Bog (pages 10 – 11)**

**Discussion question:** Although Clonycavan Man and Oldcroghan Man each met a gruesome death, the study of their remains provides researchers with new insights about the life and times of these ancients. Why would it be important to study human remains in the context of their historical times?

**Activity:** Students can assume the role of an archaeologist and, with teacher guidance, explain their ability to 'study beyond' what was referred to in the article as 'gruesome' treatment in their pursuit of research and study. Students may wish to use a mock interview format and/or present their opinions orally or through a variety of written formats.

### **Rings of Earth and Stone (pages 12 –14)**

**Discussion questions:**

- What are ringforts and cashels?
- How were they built?
- What were they named?
- Why were they abandoned?

(You might wish to have groups of students jig-saw these questions (which are based on the headings used in the article) and present their answers.

**Activity:** Encourage students to write a fictitious Irish folktale incorporating their knowledge of ringforts together with elements of fantasy described in the article.

### **Giant Deer (page 15)**

**Discussion questions:**

- What led to the demise of the Giant Irish Deer?
- What evidence supports that the first hunter-gatherers and farmers in Ireland were aware that these deer had once existed?

**Activities:** (1) Students might want to make a life-size model of the deer head and antlers to grasp the concept of size; (2.) Students might also wish to make a list of items that are the equivalent to the width of the antlers and/or the weight of the deer .

### **A Setting Fit for a King (pages 16 – 18)**

**Discussion questions:**

- What was the importance of the Rock of Cashel to early Irish civilizations?
- What documents were referenced in the article that helped scientists piece together their understanding of the forts and earthworks at Cashel?

**Activities:** (1.) Using a map or other research sources, review the geography and topography of Ireland to gain an understanding of how these natural features influenced events of ancient times; (2.) Consider the location and design of your home or school and describe how environment and/or geographical features may have influenced its construction.

### **Digging in Wetlands (pages 19 – 20)**

**Discussion questions:**

- What is wetland archaeology and how does it differ from other types of archaeology?
- What are some ways in which wetland archaeology has aided researchers?

**Activity:** Using ideas from the article, write a persuasive 'Help Wanted' advertisement for an archaeologist who might specialize in wetland research and study. Include the benefits of

working in a wetland and what types of discoveries have and/or could be uncovered in them.

### **The Fulacht Fiadh (pages 20 – 21)**

Discussion questions:

- What is a fulacht fiadh?
- What do researchers speculate was their purpose?

Activities: (1.) Consider how geographic features influenced the purpose and function of the activities that took place in the fulacht fiadhs. Students might wish to draw other comparisons to “Digging in Wetlands” and “A Setting Fit for a King.” As is stated in the article, the “true purpose of the fulacht fiadh remains a mystery.”; (2.) Consider another explanation for their function and purpose and write an ancient “How-to article” or explanation describing their use.

### **Viking Graves (pages 22 – 24)**

Discussion questions:

- What is the significance of the findings unearthed at Woodstown?
- What insights into the life in a Viking settlement do the Woodstown artifacts provide?

Activity: Visit the museum website (page 23) and research more information about the artifacts unearthed at Woodstown. Then list other inferences you can make about the Vikings. Students can be organized into groups and assume the role of docents, explaining the importance of the findings.

### **Tower Houses (pages 24 – 26)**

Discussion questions:

- What type of construction predated the tower house?
- What was a tower house and what design features clearly supported their function?

Activities: (1.) Construct a model of a tower house using paper or other materials and guidance from the diagram on page 2; (2.) Using the diagram on page 24, draw and label your own tower house and explain the function of the many components found in the houses; (3.) Draw and label the features of your home and explain their function.

### **What Happened at Clare Abbey? (pages 27 – 29)**

Discussion questions:

- What changes occurred to Clare Abbey over time and why?
- What activities took place at Clare Abbey when it was used as a military stronghold?
- What artifacts were found at Clare Abbey?

Activity: Using information from the article, students might want to create an illustrated flipbook depicting the changes that took place at Clare Abbey over time.