<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Bronze Age Essex</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended Resources</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended Additional Learning</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze Age Objects</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Examples</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overview of Bronze Age Essex

From 2500BC new metalworking technologies arrived in Britain. This coincided with the arrival of Beaker culture, which in addition to metalworking brought new ways of making pottery. Copper weapons and tools were introduced and it wasn’t long before communities started to make bronze by adding tin to copper. Britain was rich in tin ore, particularly in the southwest where large mining centres developed.

Essex was at the forefront of social and economic developments in the Bronze Age due to its proximity to, and connection with continental Europe. New groups emerged at this time and gathered wealth and power by controlling commodities. Evidence of this diversity and richness is seen in the objects discovered in the ground.

The majority of archaeological evidence for the Bronze Age comes from burials and religious sites. Some of the important Bronze Age sites in Essex include:

**Ardleigh** – The pottery discovered at this Middle Bronze Age cemetery site is of national importance. 37 graves were excavated here between 1960 and 1974.

**Sheepen** – Middle to Late Bronze Age objects found here in 1932 included a large bronze cauldron found in a pit 1.67m deep. The Sheepen Cauldron has been dated to the 1100 BC and is one of the earliest found in Britain. The Sheepen Cauldron is on display at Colchester Castle.

**Gosbecks Archaeological Park** – At this site a Late Bronze Age pit was found at this site which contained pottery and burnt flint. Soil evidence suggests that this area was farmed during the Late Bronze Age.

**Southchurch** – A Beaker cemetery was located at this site indicating the presence of Beaker culture in Essex.

**Orsett** – A oval ditch is now all that remains of a Bronze Age barrow tomb which contained three cremated burials and Deverel-Rimbury pottery.

**Strumer** – This barrow tomb measuring 2m high and 120m across dates to the Early-Mid Bronze Age.
Springfield Lyons, Chemsford – This is the site of a circular earthwork consisting of a bank and ditch. Evidence of a timber rampart, large central roundhouse, two other houses, and a clay mold from which bronze swords had been cast was found at the site and dates to 900-800BC. The site also showed evidence of weaving industry and crop cultivation. The site was reused as a Saxon cemetery.

(Recommended Resource: Essex from the Air by David Strachan (Essex County Council, 1998))

Frog Hall Farm and Fingringhoe – This site is a Late Bronze Age settlement including an oval shaped structure formed of posts inside an irregular ring-ditch. Finds from Frog Hall and Fingringhoe include pottery, spindlewhorls, flints, and metalwork hoards.

Other settlement sites and material remains have been found at Kirkee McMunn barracks, the Gillberd School, St John’s Abbey, Butt Road and St Mary’s Hospital to name just a few.

Further details on sites can be found in the recommended resources (3) below. For other significant British Bronze Age sites please see timeline (2) below.
Bronze Age Timeline

This is a basic overview of the Bronze Age in Britain. Your class could add additional dates when investigating objects or sites.

2500-1500 BC
Early Bronze Age

2500 BC
First copper metalwork in British Isles used in south-west Ireland.

2500 BC
First sarsen stones are raised at Stonehenge. This site was in use from the Mesolithic. [More information.]

2400-2200 BC
Arrival of Beaker culture in Britain. Beaker culture influenced pottery styles and metalworking in Britain. Some of the earliest copper and bronze objects in Britain can be connected to the arrival of the Beaker culture.

2300 BC
'Amesbury Archer' dies near Stonehenge. This male burial is nicknamed ‘the Archer’ because of the arrow heads and archery equipment found buried with him at Amesbury, Wiltshire.

April - June 2049 BC
'Seahenge' was originally constructed on the Norfolk coast during the Early Bronze Age. This henge at Holme-next-the-Sea is a timber circle with an upturned tree in the centre. Similar to other henges in Britain ‘Seahenge’ was most likely used for ritual purposes. ‘Seahenge’ is now in Lynn Museum. King’s Ly. [More information.]

Bronze Age Beakers

Seahenge in original location on Norfolk coast
2000 BC
Lockington Gold Hoard is buried. This hoard of Beaker pots, a dagger and two gold sheet armlets was discovered in Leicestershire in 1994.

2000 – 1800 BC
Industrial-scale copper mines are dug at Mount Gabriel in County Cork, Ireland, and Great Orme, North Wales.

1500-1200 BC
Middle Bronze Age
A smaller form of axe, socketed spearheads, advanced weaponry, bronze pins and bracelets start to appear. Mounds in which bodies are buried are replaced by cremation. Metalwork hoards become common, particularly where there would have been water, as possible offerings to the Gods.

1300 BC
Flag Fen timber causeway near Peterborough is constructed. Ceremonial offerings such as swords, spearheads, daggers and pins were deposited in the river.

1200-1100 BC
Sheepen Cauldron in use.

1200-800 BC
Late Bronze Age
Types and quantities of metalwork increase. Ardleigh and Gosbecks sites in use.

Around 1000-800 BC
The Burnham-on-Crouch hoard was buried. This hoard includes 214 objects and 2 or 3 pottery vessels buried by a metalworker.

900-800 BC
Springfield Lyons site in use. See further details in the outline of Bronze Age Essex pg. 3.

800-400 BC
Early Iron Age
Development of iron-working technology.

Sheepen Cauldron on display at Colchester Castle
Recommended Resources

Online

- **English Heritage Resources:**
  www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/story-of-england/prehistory/
- **BBC History Resources:**
  www.bbc.co.uk/history/handsonhistory/ancient-britain.shtml
  www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01zfx8k
  www.bbc.co.uk/education/topics/z82hsbk
- **British Museum Resources:**
  www.britishmuseum.org/learning/schools_and_teachers/resources/cultures/prehistoric_britain.aspx
- **Teaching History with 100 Objects:**
  www.teachinghistory100.org/
- **Museum of London Resources:**
  www.museumoflondon.org.uk/schools/classroom-homework-resources/prehistoric-london-resources/

Books

*Relevant to sites in Essex*

- Prehistoric and Roman Essex by James Kemble (Tempus Publishing, 2001)*
- Essex from the Air by David Strachan (Essex County Council, 1998)*
- From Ice Age to Essex: A History of the People and Landscape of East London (Museum of London, 2006)*
- The Archeology of South Essex by Nigel Brown and Roger Massey-Ryan (Essex County Council, 2004)*
- **British Barrows: A Matter of Life and Death** by A. Woodward (Stroud, 2000)
- **Prehistoric Britain (British Museum Activity Books)** by Mike Corbishley (British Museum Press, 1999)
- Bronze Age Britain by Mike Parker Pearson (English Heritage, 1993)
- The Dawn of History: An Introduction to Pre-Historic Study by C.F. Jeary (BiblioBazaar, 2009)
- The Significance of Monuments: On the Shaping of Human Experience in Neolithic and Bronze Age Europe by Richard Bradley (Routledge, 1998)

Children’s picture books

- Stone Age Sentinel – Available from Essex Libraries
- The Cave Painter of Lascaux
- Children’s History of Britain
- Life in the Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age (A Child’s History of Britain)
- The Boy with the Bronze Axe
- Warrior Scarlet
- The History Detective Investigates: Stone Age to Iron Age

Colchester and Ipswich Museums have object loan boxes available to hire. For further information please see our [website](#).
Recommend Additional Learning

Below are topics we recommend you and your students have some understanding of before investigating the Bronze Age.

Basic timeline of Stone Age
◆ BBC History Resource:
   www.bbc.co.uk/history/handsonhistory/ancient-britain.shtml

How stone tools were made?
◆ Museum of London Resources:
   www.museumoflondon.org.uk/files/1314/2747/2982/
   Prehistory_archaeology_activity_pack.pdf
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdkqNXWluiw

Neolithic farming and the development of structure communities
◆ BBC History Resources:
   www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01zfxgg
   www.bbc.co.uk/education/topics/z82hsbk
◆ Understanding the Neolithic by Julian Thomas (Routledge, London, 1999)

Mesolithic Handaxe
# Bronze Age objects in the collections of Colchester and Ipswich Museums

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>How this can be used by your class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Socketed Axe**| A bronze socketed axe head. This is a common type of axe found across Britain and Europe during the Bronze Age. It would have been used for a variety of tasks including hunting, food preparation, and construction. A wooden handle would have been attached to this object. | Ask your students to investigate what this object was used for. Ask the following questions:  
- What is missing from this object? (wooden handle)  
- Why is the handle missing? (organic material does not survive)  
Compare this object with a Neolithic stone axe. Why did bronze take over? (strength, versatility, production time)  
Connect to themes of technology and industry. |
| **Flanged Axe** | A flanged axe head made from bronze. A wooden forked handle would have been attached to the end and held in place with twine. The raised edges developed from flat-sided axes to strengthen the handle (and in turn the axe). | Similar questions and themes as above. Compare this object with the socketed axe above. Why was a socket added? (strength and ability to attached wood) |

**Socketed Axe**  
Late Bronze Age  
900-700BC  
This object was found at Shoebury Essex in 1891.

**Flanged Axe**  
Middle Bronze Age  
1500-1200BC  
This object was found at Shoeburyness Essex in 1907.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artifact</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socked Axe head mould</td>
<td>Half of a metal mold used to make socketed axe heads. About 50 casting could be made from a mold of this type. Part of a founder’s hoard which included other items used for smelting and casting.</td>
<td>Use this object to investigate how some of the bronze axe head on the previous page were made. Ask the following questions: ♦ What is this object made of? (Bronze) ♦ What was this object used for?</td>
<td>Compare the production method of Bronze Age axes heads with that of Neolithic axes. Neolithic axes were made by hand individually while this one mold would have made up to 50 axes. Connect to themes of technology and industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold and Shale Bead</td>
<td>Gold-covered shale bead, decorated with engraved parallel lines. Luxury items, such as jewellery, indicate that certain members of society have the ability to control commodities. By controlling commodities, local chieftains can amass wealth. One of the ways this wealth is displayed is through personal adornment, such as gold beads. These types of items are commonly found in burials, taken to the grave as treasured personal items.</td>
<td>Use as evidence of status and wealth. Compare these to modern jewellery. Why do people wear jewellery today? Is this similar or different to people in the Bronze Age? If an archaeologist finds objects of this type in a grave what can they tell about the person? (Person of some importance in local area, the items had economic as well as personal value)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Bucket Urn
**Late Bronze Age**
1200-800BC
From a Bronze Age Cemetery, White Colne, Essex. Found in 1925.

A Bronze Age bucket urn containing cremated bone. Coarse reddish-brown ware with smooth exterior. Pattern of stabbed decorations around a single fingertip impression. These types of pots are hand made.

Compare this pot with a modern wheel made pot.
Ask your class to investigate how this pot was made. What clues can you find on the pot? (finger print).
Your class could make their own pots out of clay to compare with modern wheel made pots.
Can connect to themes of technology, industry, or death and burial.

### Loomweight
**Middle Bronze Age**
1500-1200BC
This object was found at Wivenhoe, Essex in 1934.

A loomweight for textile working
Loomweights are hanging weights, used in the weaving processes to keep bundles of thread tight, by tying the weight to the end of the thread, and the top to a horizontal bar.

Give students a list of the object characteristics: *Heavy, hole in centre for something to be tied, would have been one of set.* See if the students can identify it as a weight.
Use a mind map to connect the dots. From the object ask students to draw lines to words like weight and weaving. Other objects can be added to this activity. See below left.

Have a picture of a top bar and bottom bar with loose threads hanging. Ask students to place the object in the correct location on the loom. See below right.

---

**What is this object used for?**

Draw a line from the object to the correct word.

- Eating
- Weight
- Burial
- Weaving
- Ceremony
- Making Cloths

**Where might this object fit?**

- Eating
- Weight
- Burial
- Weaving
- Ceremony
- Making Cloths
| **Sheepen Cauldron**  
| Late Bronze Age  
| c. 1100BC  
| This object was found at Sheepen Hill, Colchester, Essex in 1932.  
| The Sheepen cauldron is the earliest known bronze cauldron from Britain. This late Bronze Age cauldron is formed from riveted bronze plates with cast bronze ring handles dating from around 1100 B.C.  
| It was buried on its side in a pit on the Hilly Fields at Sheepen, Colchester at some point between 1275 BC and 1140 BC, possibly as a religious offering.  
| Cauldrons like this were used for feasts which played an important part in the social life of Bronze Age and Iron Age communities.  
| Ask students why a large cooking pot would be used? What does this mean in their home? (celebration, visiting guests)  
| What would the object mean in a Bronze Age community?  
| If there was only one of these cauldrons for an entire village what can that tell us about the people? (close-knit, subsistence, supporting each other, communal festivals)  
| Connect to themes of family, ritual, and dining  

| **Spearhead**  
| Bronze Age  
| 2500-800BC  
| Found in East Mersea parish before 1998 and donated to the museum.  
| Spearhead with side loops with wood in the socket.  
| As with the axe heads above this spear is missing its handle, which would have been made of wood. An object of this type would have been used for hunting or fishing.  
| If an axe is used for chopping what might a spear be for? (stabbing, throwing)  
| Why is the handle missing? (organic material does not survive)  

| **Knife**  
| Bronze Age  
| 2500-800BC  
| A leatherworking knife use to create clothing or accessories.  
| Ask the class to imagine that they had killed an animal and eaten the meat. They are left with the skin. They would need this tool to prepare the skin to make something to wear. What might this object be?  
| ...
### Ingot

**Late Bronze Age**  
1200 BC - 700 BC  
Found at Burnham-on-Crouch in 2010.

A Bronze ingot found in the Burnham-on-Crouch hoard.  
Ingots are pieces of metal which have been made to be transported, traded and later cast into objects.  
The Burnham-on-Crouch hoard was found in 2010 in a field near the village. It contains 214 objects and was buried by a metalworker. [More information](https://www.roman-objects.co.uk/).  
To make bronze both copper and tin are required. The main sources for tin and cooper in Britain were Devon and Cornwall.  
In order to trade and transport bronze it had to be formed into an ingot. In this way bronze became a form of wealth that could be traded for other goods.  
Ask your students to investigate the object by questioning its purpose. Let them know that it is a piece of bronze (tin and copper) prior to being made into an object. Ask them why it was put together in a bun shape rather than straight into an object? (travel and trade)

Think of bronze as play-doh. The mixture is made up and sold to you. You then take the play-doh and make an object out of it.

### Sword

**Late Bronze Age**  
900-700BC  
Found in Essex in 1872.

Bronze Ewart Park sword dated to the Late Bronze Age.  
A sword of this type was not used for warfare rather as a statement of wealth and status. Owning this sword meant you had the ability to acquire metal in large quantities.

Ask you students to think about the different uses of objects. Most objects are not only one thing – they mean many things to their owners and the people that come in contact with them.  
If you saw someone walking down the street with this sword what would you think?  
If this sword was not used in warfare why might someone carry it? (Status, power)

### Flint Knife

**Early Bronze Age**  
2500-1500BC  
Found on the Walton foreshore.

Flint knife dated to the Early Bronze Age.  
Flint was still used in the Early Bronze Age as metal was not produced in large quantities. This object sits in a transition phase between two forms of technology (stone and metal).

Ask you class to think about why this object might still be used in the Early Bronze Age? (availability of metal)

* Why might this type of technology have been replaced by metals? (strength, versatility, production time)  
* How was it made?

Connect to themes of technology and industry.
Activity Examples

Below are some activity ideas that incorporate critical thinking with object based active learning.

If you need further information on learning from objects please see our online resource.

Activity Ideas:

- Sort objects into families based on materials or use
- Download object investigation worksheets from our website.
- Use Pinterest to create a pin board museum. Students can research objects and write text. Example: http://pinterest.com/carolynhowitt/tudors/
- Print the images onto card, chop them up into pieces and then rebuild as jigsaws. Use as a starting point to talk about archaeology and reconstructing objects from the past.
- Object categories. Make theme labels (trade, dining, and warfare) ask students to match object images with themes creating a mind map. Objects can connect to more than one theme.
- Hot seating. Either a teacher or TA in role as the owner of the object. The class prepares questions to ask the owner about the object and how they used it. This could also work with students in pairs or small groups.
- Create an advert to try and sell the object. The advert should include: What it is used for? Why a person needs it? Where can you get it from/ how is it made?
- Create a documentary about the discovery of the object explaining what it was used for with demonstrations of how it was used.
- Act out one of the stories from children’s picture books above focusing on objects and their use and/or manufacture.
- A PowerPoint containing object images can be downloaded from our website.

Three gold bracelets that would have been used as part twisted torcs from the Woodham Walter hoard found in 1991.