

## THE STAR CARR ANTLER HEADDRESS



<b>What is it?</b>	A headdress for wearing on top of a person's head.
<b>What was it made from?</b>	The top of the skull of a red deer.
<b>When was it made?</b>	During the Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age), around 11,000 years ago.
<b>Where was it found?</b>	At the archaeological excavation at Star Carr, in the Vale of Pickering, North Yorkshire.
<b>How many were found?</b>	Around 30 have been found at Star Carr. More than anywhere else in the world.
<b>Why was it made?</b>	<p>We are not sure! There are two main ideas that archaeologists have put forward, that it was worn -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• by a <i>shaman</i> as part of a ceremony to speak to the spirits of the deer and keep them friendly towards people;</li><li>• by hunters as a disguise to help them get closer to the deer when hunting them.</li></ul> <p>A shaman is a kind of 'priest' who can speak with the spirit world on behalf of people to help in hunting, keep nature kind towards humans or to cure illnesses.</p>

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?



**Write below why you agree or disagree with these answers.**

The headdresses were used by shamans

The headdresses were used by hunters.

**Can you think of another answer yourself? Write it down and say why.**

## **WHAT ANIMAL WOULD YOU BE?**

Mesolithic people lived very close to nature. Wild animals were very important to them. They provided meat for food, skins for clothing and leather, and their bones, horns and antlers could be made into tools.

Different animals had different characters. Some were fierce and dangerous. Some lived alone, while some lived in family herds. Some paired for life like humans getting married.

A Mesolithic person or clan might have had a close relationship with one particular kind of animal. Some hunter-gatherers believed that the animals and humans were one in a mythical past, united as a special kind of human-animal. Only later did humans and animals become different.

Shamans would go into a trance and have visions, and return to the original state of human-animal to talk to the spirits of nature. Some would have a favourite animal spirit they became or talked to. Sometimes when children became adults, they would get an animal spirit helper who would guide them in their life.

So – what animal would you see as your spirit helper, or as the spirit friend of your clan or class?

Choose one of the animals shown, or add your own animal to the list. Then write down what it is about that animal that you like and why you chose it. You can also write down why you did not choose the other animals.

What part of the animal would you wear? Write down why? Now draw a picture of yourself wearing that part of the animal.

**Animal****Which is it?****Why is this your spirit animal? Or not?**

wild boar

hedgehog

dog



salmon

cod

pike



lizard

adder

worm



buzzard

eagle

seagull



reindeer

cow

red deer



frog

toad

mouse



eagle

heron

white stork

**Animal****Which is it?****Why is this your spirit animal? Or not?**

- dog  
wild cat  
weasel



- salmon  
cod  
pike



- bison  
dog  
brown bear



- porcupine  
hedgehog  
cat



- duck  
goose  
swan



- wolf  
lion  
dog



- rat  
beaver  
otter

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The photographs of the antler headdress are from the Scarborough Collections, courtesy of Scarborough Museums Trust; photo by David Chalmers.

The illustration of the shaman is by a Dutch explorer, Nicolaes Witsen, published in 1692. It shows a shaman of the Tungus people in eastern Siberia.

The illustration of the hunter is by Alan Sorrell and is from -  
Green, B & Sorrell, A 1968 *Prehistoric Britain*, Guildford: Lutterworth Press.

The animals shown are taken from Wikimedia Commons, by courtesy of the following authors:

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wild cat	Schorle
wolf	Gunnar Ries