

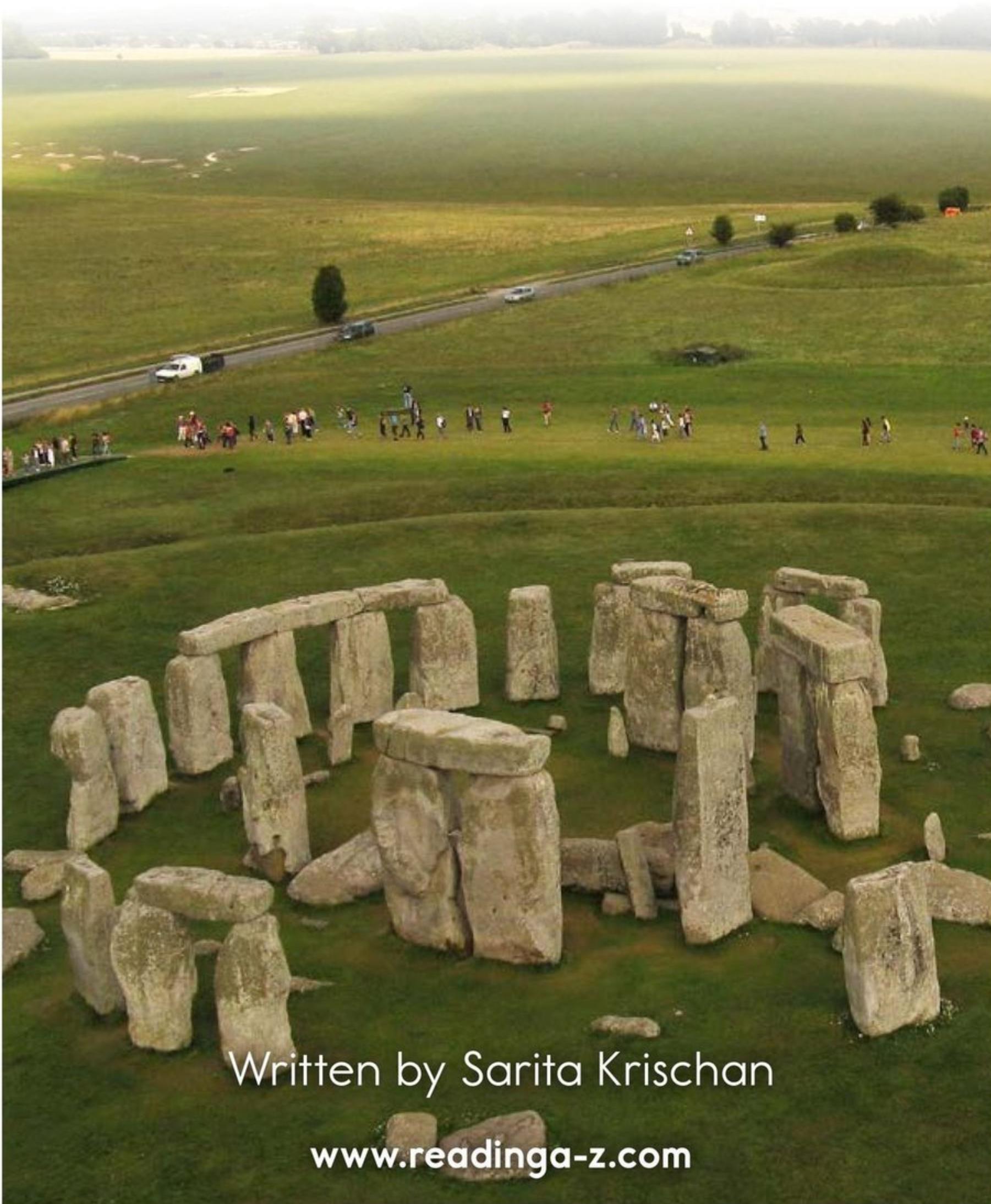
LEVELED BOOK • N

Stonehenge



Written by Sarita Krischan

Stonehenge



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Focus Question

What is Stonehenge, and why is it a mystery?

Words to Know

archaeologists

monument

ditch

radar

experts

sandstone

greased

temple

lintels

Front and back cover: The sun rises at Stonehenge as it has for thousands of years.

Title page: People can take a shuttle bus or walk from Stonehenge to the nearby visitor center, where many exhibits inform the public about the site.

Page 3: More than nine hundred thousand tourists visit Stonehenge each year, making it one of the most popular prehistoric sites in the world.

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World Landmarks
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The stones at Stonehenge have been exposed to harsh weather for thousands of years.

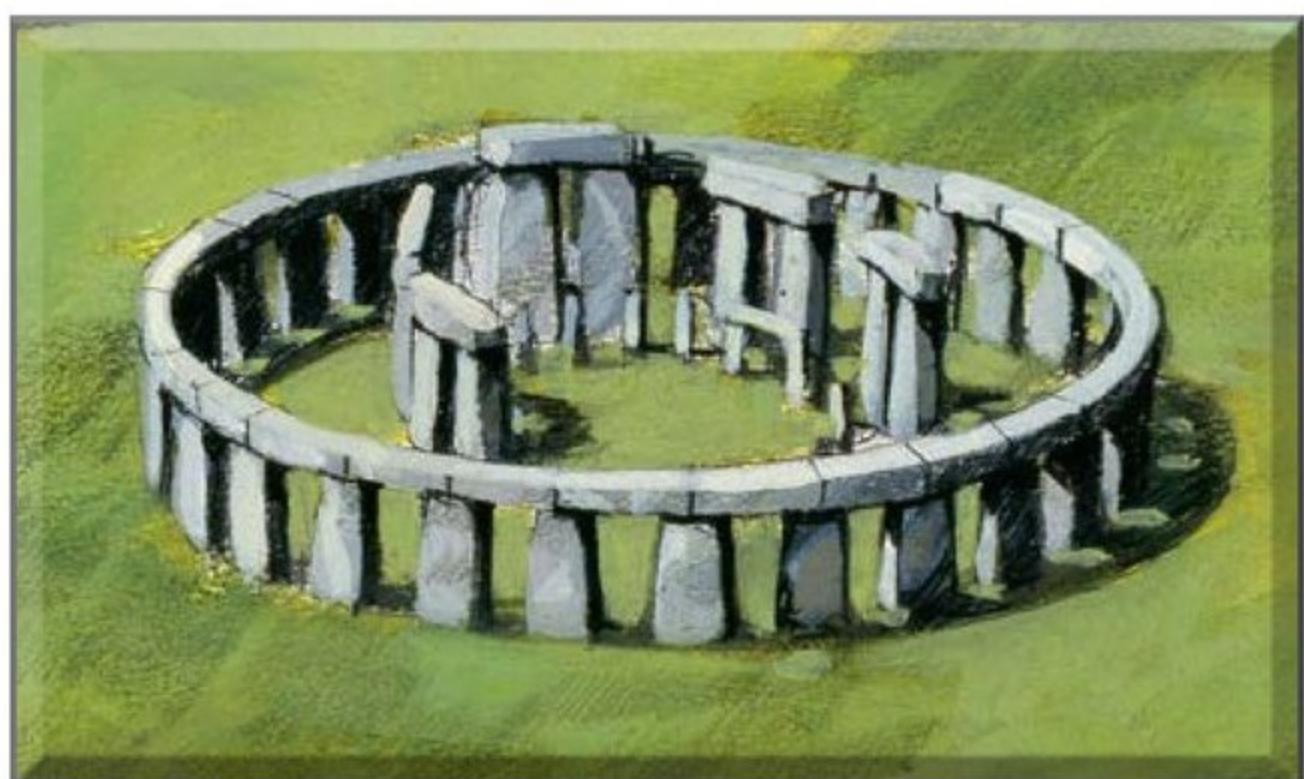
An Ancient Monument

Out in the countryside in southern England is a **monument** formed of dirt and giant stones. Built thousands of years ago, it is known as Stonehenge. Scientists called **archaeologists** have been studying it for a long time. They are trying to learn how and why it was built. They also want to know more about the people who built it. They search for clues about the mysteries of this ancient monument.

Earth and Giant Stones

From the sky, Stonehenge looks like a small circle inside a big circle. The bigger circle is a **ditch** around a raised mound of dirt. The giant sarsen stones in the outer stone circle are made of a type of **sandstone**. Stones called **lintels** once lay atop the sarsen stones, connecting them all together. The inner stones form a horseshoe shape. They are sarsen stones called *trilithons*, which means they're made of three parts. Two stones stand upright and one lintel lies across them. Other rocks in the circle are made of **bluestone**.

An artist shows how Stonehenge might have looked when the circle was complete and no stones had fallen over.



Stonehenge



- The whole monument of Stonehenge is about the length of a football field.
- Today, seventeen upright sarsen stones form the Sarsen Circle at Stonehenge. Experts think there used to be thirty.
- The sarsen stones are very tall and heavy. Some of them weigh more than a school bus—22,680 kilograms (50,000 lb.)!

United Kingdom



Where Is Stonehenge?

Stonehenge sits in an open field in southern England. Experts say people have been living in that area for about ten thousand years. The settlement may have been one of the biggest in England at one time. Long ago, the area was covered in trees. People cut them down to clear land for farming.

Building Stonehenge

Experts believe that people started building Stonehenge about five thousand years ago. Back then, people only had simple stone tools like deer antlers and animal bones, not powerful machines. They did almost everything with their clever minds and muscles.

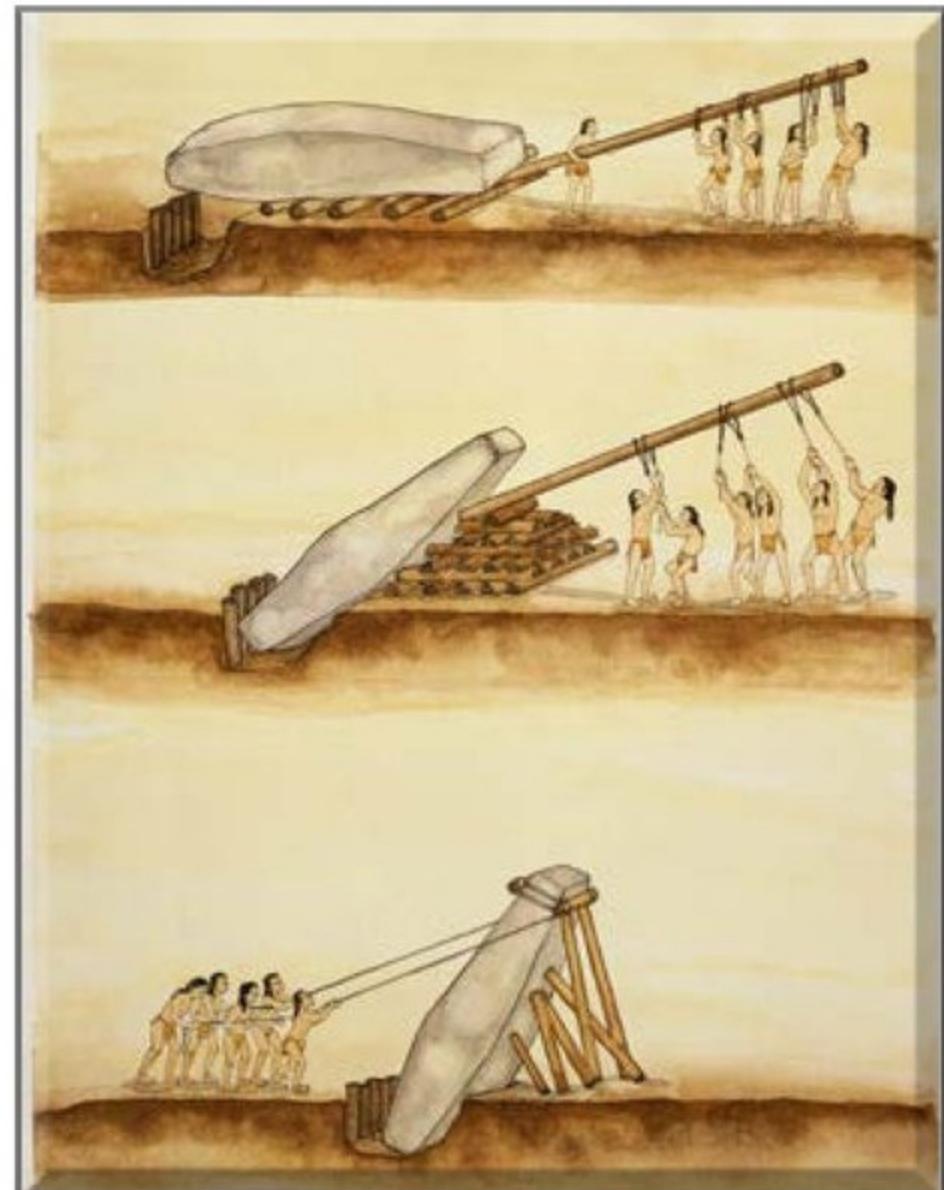
The stones must have been brought to Stonehenge from far away. Researchers have done tests to prove it was possible to move the stones to Stonehenge. They put huge stones on wooden sleds and dragged them on wooden rails **greased with animal fat.**

Volunteers help pull a heavy stone like those used at Stonehenge during an experiment in May 2016.



Lifting the standing stones must have been very difficult.

Experts think the builders might have dug holes and then tipped the bottoms of the stones into the holes. Then they could be pulled upright using ropes. Workers might have slid the tops of the arches up ramps built of dirt and wood. Then the tops could be set on the standing stones.



The builders of Stonehenge might have built wood platforms beneath stones as they were pulled into place.

No one knows exactly how the builders built Stonehenge. They did not leave pictures or writing to explain how they did it. That is why Stonehenge remains a big mystery.



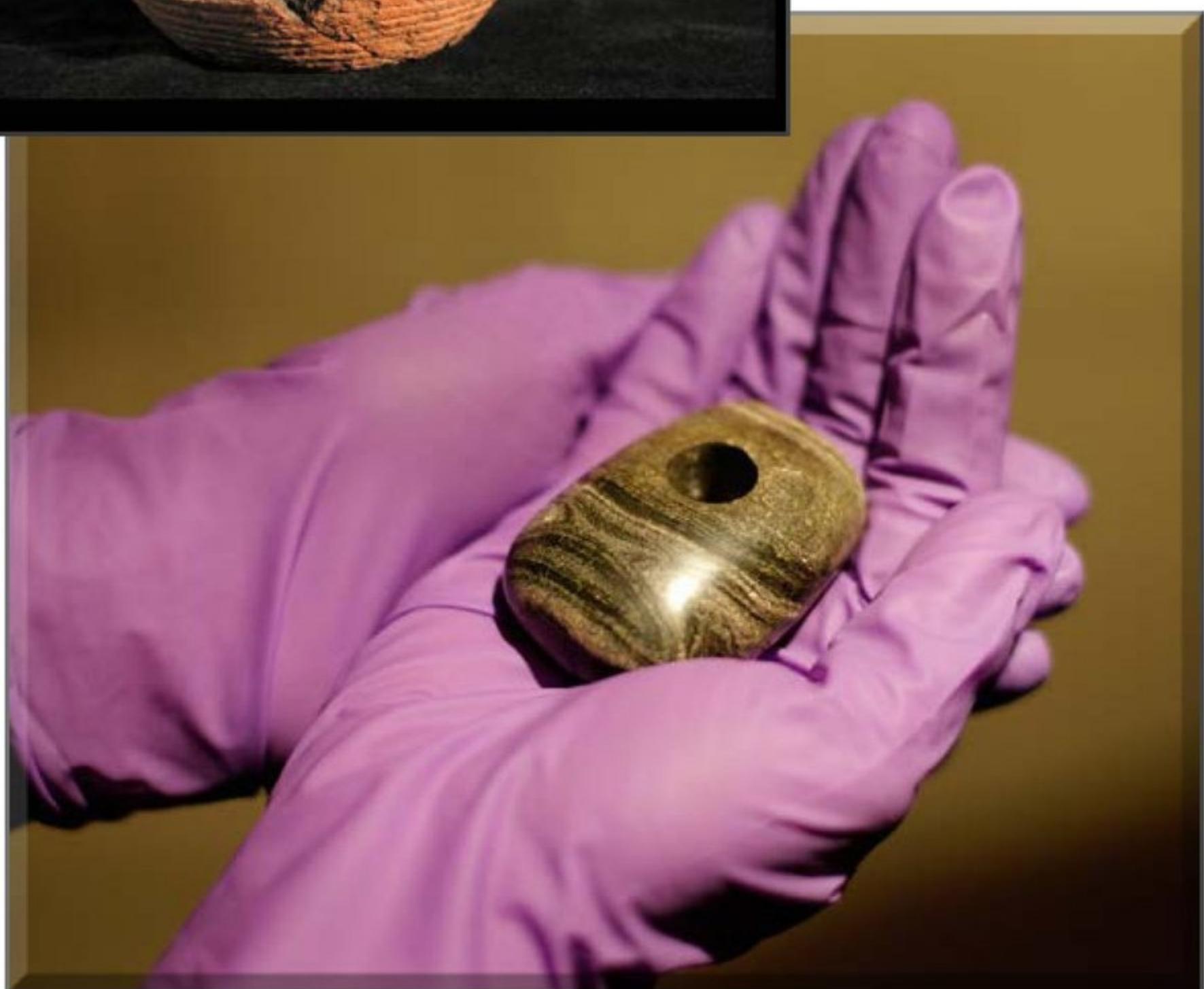
An Outdoor Temple

Why was Stonehenge built? Archaeologists continue to look and dig for clues about its purpose. One clue is that it was built away from where most people lived. Experts think Stonehenge was a **temple** of some kind. People probably came there for special events like crowning a king. They might have visited to remember dead relatives.

Stonehenge was also a graveyard. Archaeologists have found the bodies of about 240 people nearby. Some are skeletons, while others were burned.



A pot (left) and a stone used on a type of weapon called a *mace* (bottom) were found buried near Stonehenge.





Thousands of people gathered on June 21, 2014, to watch the sun shine through the stones of Stonehenge at sunrise.

Another idea about Stonehenge is that it lines up with the sun's movements. The sun shines through certain parts of the monument when the seasons change. This was important information for farmers long ago. It helped them figure out the best time to plant their crops.

Stonehenge Today

Today, Stonehenge is a popular site for visitors. More than nine hundred thousand people go there each year. The visitor center has stone tools and other ancient objects. There are huts to show what life was like long ago. Volunteers show visitors ancient skills such as pottery and rope making.



Tourists can visit huts made to look like those in which the builders of Stonehenge lived long ago.

Archaeologists continue to explore the Stonehenge site. They use new tools such as **radar** that can find objects underground. This helps them make more discoveries faster.



In June 2005, archaeologists research a place in Wales where bluestones, rare stones used at Stonehenge, might have been taken from.



A gorgeous sunset colors the sky above Stonehenge.

Ancient Wonder

No one knows for sure why
ancient people built Stonehenge.
How they did it is also a mystery.
Still, Stonehenge continues to fill
people with wonder thousands
of years after it was built.

Glossary

archaeologists (<i>n.</i>)	scientists who study the remains of ancient cultures (p. 4)
ditch (<i>n.</i>)	a low, narrow area on the side of a road or field (p. 5)
experts (<i>n.</i>)	people who have a lot of knowledge about a subject (p. 7)
greased (<i>adj.</i>)	covered with a thin layer of an oily or fatty substance (p. 8)
lintels (<i>n.</i>)	pieces of stone or wood lying across the top of an opening, such as a window or door (p. 5)
monument (<i>n.</i>)	a building, statue, or other structure built as a memorial to a person or event (p. 4)
radar (<i>n.</i>)	a device that finds or monitors objects by sending out radio waves and picking them up again when they reflect off the object (p. 14)
sandstone (<i>n.</i>)	a type of soft rock made up of small pieces of sand and minerals that are stuck together (p. 5)
temple (<i>n.</i>)	a building that is a place of worship (p. 10)

Stonehenge

A Reading A-Z Level N Leveled Book

Word Count: 625

Connections

Writing

Why do you think Stonehenge was built? Write some sentences about it using details from the book to support your answer.

Social Studies

Make a poster about Stonehenge. Include a picture, a map that shows its location in England, and at least five facts about the landmark. Share your poster with your class.



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