

## Let's imagine: polished axe

Each week the Museum is going to publish a 'Let's Imagine' activity sheet. This activity sheet will include a picture of an object in the Museum. It will tell you about the object and then it will be up to you to imagine a story, poem and/or picture inspired by this object. The sheet will include at least three questions or statements to help get you started and inspired.

This week's object is a Neolithic polished axe that can be found in the permanent exhibition. Read the information in blue below to find out more about this type of axe.



Imagine you're an archaeologist who has dug up this axe, describe the axe in detail.

Draw a picture of the whole axe (with a wooden handle). You can research Neolithic axes.

Write a story or poem about being transported back to Neolithic Britain. Imagine you meet a family who have a small farm. Describe their life.

This is a polished axe from the Neolithic period, the end of the Stone Age. It is made from flint, as most Stone Age tools were in Britain. It was found in peat at Cookham Manor, Cookham (Thatcham), in the late 1860s, whilst they were digging to make a withy bed (willow tree bed). It is currently on display in the Museum's permanent exhibition, Lives and Landscapes.

Neolithic people made flint axes in a different way to earlier Stone Age people. After using hammer stones to knap a flint nodule and produce a rough axe shape, the axes were ground or polished to produce a sharp edge and the smooth shape that you can see in the example here. These axes were then mounted onto wooden handles and could be used for chopping and cutting. They may also have been used for rituals and as decorative objects.

The Neolithic period saw a shift away from hunter-gathering to farming. People began to settle down in one place and build permanent homes, although they still went hunting occasionally for nuts and berries. These early farmers cut down trees – the polished axe would have been essential to this task – so they could grow crops and vegetables. Common crops were wheat and barley to make flour, flax to make linen cloth, and peas and beans. They also kept domesticated cattle, pigs, goats and sheep, which provided meat, milk, cheese and wool. Dogs helped on the farms to herd the animals and act as watchdogs (as wolves were around at that time). They were probably also a treasured pet as they are today.