

Skara Brae Stone Age village



Comprehension

Skara Brae: Stone Age village

Around 5,000 years ago, Stone Age people built a village on the largest of the Orkney Islands, which are to the north of Scotland. The village is called Skara Brae, and it was made up of ten or more stone houses joined by underground passages. Here is a story about one of the villagers:

"I had been searching the beach for an hour before I found what I was looking for. There on the sand was a strong, light piece of driftwood. Hardly any trees grow on this island, so a piece of wood that had come over the wide ocean was a good find.

"I looked up at the sky, which was a menacing grey, and I felt the wind picking up. It was stirring up waves further out to sea. Rain was on its way. I had to get home before the storm hit. But I didn't want to return empty-handed, so I grabbed the driftwood and lifted it onto my shoulder. I ran away from the sea and towards home. The wind tried its best to stop me, but I hurried on.

"Before long, I could see the domed tops of the houses in the village. It was not a moment too soon, as big drops of rain were beginning to fall. Just as the heavens opened, and cold, heavy rain poured from the sky, I ducked into the underground passageway to my house. It was a relief to be out of the wind. I left the driftwood in the passageway and crawled into the house.

"Inside, it was lovely and warm from the fire. I could hear the rain and wind battering the house, but it would not get through the thick stone walls and turf roof. I could use the driftwood I had collected to make the frame of the roof even stronger. There was no place like home, I thought."

Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'driftwood'.

b From that sentence, suggest what 'driftwood' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word 'driftwood'.

d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'driftwood'.

e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'driftwood' means.

Try this for other words, too. 2

Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: menacing	threatening

Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.

The house was well-sheltered from the bad weather.

I picked up the driftwood and hurried home.

After an hour of searching, I found some driftwood.

The wind was picking up and it looked like it was about to rain.

Inside the house it was lovely and warm from the fire.

Just as the rain began to pour, I ducked into the entrance to my house.

Get to the facts

1 How long ago was Skara Brae built?

2 Where was the village built?

3 Where did the villager leave the driftwood?

4 What could he hear battering the house?

5 What could the driftwood be used for?

Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.

In the village

Imagine you are a relative of the villager in the story, waiting in the house for him to come home. You hear the weather turning bad, and wonder where he's got to... (now complete the story)

Below is a plain text version for printing:

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For example:

Key word – menacing

Synonym – threatening

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