ICEMAN FOUND!

On Thursday, September 19, 1991, two hikers in the Alps made a remarkable discovery. Erika and Helmut Simon had been hiking on the border between Italy and Austria. When they roamed off the traditional path, they discovered a small head and shoulders emerging from the ice. They wondered if this man had just made his way off the path and froze to death in a storm or if someone had murdered him. The people named the body Otzi because he died near the Otztal valley.

An archaeologist named Dr Konrad Spindler arrived to examine Otzi. He inspected the body, but he also looked at the tools found with the body. He was particularly interested in Otzi’s axe; he believed that the body was around 4000 years old, since bronze first came into use then. Dr Spindler knew that Otzi was a magnificent discovery. It was the oldest mummy ever found! When the axe blade was tested, something even more amazing was found out. Instead of being bronze, it proved to be pure copper. Copper was a metal used by blacksmiths 2000 years before bronze. Otzi belonged to the Copper Age and was somewhere between 5000 and 5500 years old. The first metal that prehistoric man used was copper. They found it in rocks, and it was in the rocks at the base where Otzi was found.

Archaeologists had already discovered Copper Age villages across the middle part of Europe. They knew that the people there lived in wood-and-mud huts that were built on stilts along the muddy shores of the lakes. These people had carts with wheels and farmed barley, peas, and flax using plows. Besides farming, they hunted and fished for their other food. Animals like pigs, sheep, goats, cattle and dogs were raised on their farms. They used the barley to make bread and made butter from the milk their cows produced. They were also traders who bartered limestone jewellery for herbs like parsley and peppermint.

Otzi’s bones told them that he was a short man, about 163cm tall. His hair had not been preserved, but hairs were found in his clothes. These hairs were curly and brown and had been evenly snipped. Based on this evidence, scientists knew he had curly brown hair and had received a haircut before he died. He was about 45 years old, which was very old for people of that time. Otzi also had some mysterious tattoos on his ankle, kneecap, and on his lower back near his spine. Because these were in places which would have been hidden by his clothing, scientists knew they were not for decoration. Some have thought they were religious symbols or some sort of superstitious belief used to ward off pain.

His teeth showed wear, which showed that he ate grains probably made into bread. Scientists were also able to reconstruct what Otzi ate as his last meal, just eight hours before his death: traces of wheat bread, a green herb or vegetable, and meat, were found in his colon. Near his body lay frozen berries, ibex meat, and two mushrooms strung on a piece of leather. These may have been his snacks. But the mushrooms were known as a type of medicine that fought sickness, so he could have been ill. He had a flint-bladed knife inside a grass sheath, which could be used for cutting up small animals or leather. There were also two strips of felt, which could have been used for starting fires. A birch-bark container was used to carry the pieces of felt. Otzi had a bow that had not been strung and a dozen arrows, but only two of the arrows were complete with flint tips and feather.

Otzi wore leather pants along with a jacket made from animal hides. His clothing was stitched together using grass thread. Tied around his neck was a cape made of braided grass. He also had a fur cap. His feet were covered with soft leather shoes stuffed with hay to keep his feet warm. A strange leather string with fringes connected to a small white stone disk was found near his body, which leads scientists to believe he could have worn a necklace. Otzi also wore a heavy backpack on a wooden frame and a soft leather pouch around his waist with the contents still inside. He carried around two flint pieces, a 10cm stick that looked like a fat pencil with a pointed edge, a grass string, and a needle-pointed awl.

The question that everyone is asking is, ‘How did he die?’ Was he a shepherd who froze to death? Was he killed in an accident? Was he murdered?

- Hawker Brownlow 2006
Exercise B: Comprehension questions

1. According to the article, on what date was Otzi discovered? _____________________________________

2. Who was the first archaeologist to examine the body? _____________________________________

3. What evidence is there that Otzi belonged to the Copper Age? _________________________________

4. What is unusual about Otzi’s tattoos? ___________________________________________________

5. How do scientists know what Otzi ate? ____________________________________________________

6. Why would Otzi have stuffed his shoes with hay? ____________________________________________

7. What are three theories that could explain his death?
   a. ______________________________________________________________________________
   b. ______________________________________________________________________________
   c. ______________________________________________________________________________

8. Match the following words with the correct definition.

   Archaeologist • To maintain something in its original state
   Awl • To exchange objects through agreement
   Barter • Sources of information used to support a theory
   Copper Age • A long pointed spike
   Evidence • A rock used to make knives, arrow heads and spear points
   Flint • A person who studies human activity from the past
   Preserve • The belief that some events are caused by otherworldly powers
   Superstition • A period of time identified by the most common metal used in tools at the time.
Exercise C: Cloze exercise

**The Ice Man**

In 1991, two German ________ made an accidental discovery that gave __________ a firsthand look at the ________ of early humans. Near the border of Austria and Italy, they spotted the mummified body of a prehistoric traveler, __________ in ice for some 5,000 years.

Nicknamed the “Ice Man,” this early ________ was not empty-handed. The tool kit found near him included a six-foot bow and a deerskin case with arrows. It also contained a stick with an antler tip for sharpening flint blades, a small ________ dagger in a woven sheath, a ________ ax, and a medicine bag.

Scientific ________ on the body concluded that the Ice Man was in his 40s when he died in the late spring or early summer from an ________ wound. Scientists also determined that in the hours before his death, he ate wild goat, red deer, and grains. The Ice Man is housed in a special ________ in Bolzano, Italy.


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**Word Bank**

- copper
- flint
- hikers
- archaeologists
- research
- preserved
- museum
- arrow
- human
- technology

Exercise D: Cross Curricular

Using the information from the ICEMAN FOUND article. Draw a typical village from Copper Age Europe. Make sure you label important features.
Exercise E: Crossword

Across
1. person who studies ancient sites and objects to learn about the past
2. headwear
3. type of wheat
4. freezing to death
5. tribal religious leader
6. religious ceremony
7. container for arrows
8. fur used to make Otzi's boots
9. another word for murder
10. person who hunts for animals

Down
1. Mountain range where Otzi was found
2. name given to the iceman
3. used to remove the corpse from the ice
4. metal used in the axe head
5. animal skin
6. goat-like animal
7. used for hunting
8. tool used for cutting
9. leader of a tribal group or village
10. type of rock that can be made sharp for cutting tools
11. horns from a deer
12. object from the past
13. archaeological area
14. person who swaps objects for other objects