



## Secrets of the Dead (The Origin and Design of Stonehenge)

By: Shelly Turk

**Grade Level:** 9-10

**Time Allotment:** Two-three 45 minute class periods



**Overview:** One of Britain's greatest mysteries is the origin of Stonehenge and why it was built. In this lesson, students will explore theories surrounding Stonehenge, and chart its physical properties.

**Subject Matter:** Social Studies

### **Learning Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Describe poetic images of Stonehenge.
- Draw the physical layout of Stonehenge.
- Theorize on Stonehenge's origin and purpose.
- Locate Stonehenge on a megalith map.
- Build an astronomical calendar based on Stonehenge.

### **Standards:**

From the Montana State Standards for Social Studies:

(Available on-line at [www.opi.state.mt.us/standards/index.html](http://www.opi.state.mt.us/standards/index.html))

Standard 1: Students access, synthesize and evaluate information to communicate and apply social studies knowledge to real world situations.

Standard 4: Students demonstrate an understanding of the effects of time, continuity, and change on historical and future perspectives and relationships.

Standard 6: Students demonstrate an understanding of the impact of human interaction and cultural diversity on societies.

## **Media Components:**

### **VIDEO**

*The Enduring Mystery of Stonehenge* Narr. By Arthur Kent. History's Mysteries, 2000.

Available at [www.historychannel.com](http://www.historychannel.com)

### **WEB SITES**

*Build Your Own Stonehenge* Imagination Station. <http://familyeducation.com>

Use the search option on the homepage to locate this title. This web site provides instructions for building your own Stonehenge outdoors.

*The Megalith Map* Aubrey Burl. <http://www.megalith.ukf.net/bigmap.htm>

This interactive map allows students to identify and view megaliths and stone circles in the United Kingdom.

*Poetry About Stonehenge* <http://www.amherst.edu/~ermace/sth/poetry.html>

This site features several poems about Stonehenge.

*Secrets of the Dead: Murder at Stonehenge* PBS.

[http://www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/case\\_stonehenge/clues.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/case_stonehenge/clues.html)

This site offers background, clues and evidence, and an interview concerning the origin of Stonehenge. One of the best features is the interactive "Explore Stonehenge" section.

### **Materials:**

For each student:

1 sheet white computer paper (8 ½" x 11")

Colored pencils

For each class:

Center stake

50 feet of rope

20-30 marker stones or small stakes

A compass

### **Prep for Teachers:**

Prior to teaching this lesson, bookmark the sites used in the lesson on each computer in your classroom. (You may wish to utilize [Trackstar.com](http://Trackstar.com) or [Portaportal.com](http://Portaportal.com) for this task instead.)

Prep the video so that it is at the desired location for the video portion of the lesson.

Prepare the hands-on elements of the lesson by:

1. Gathering materials for the exercise.

2. Scouting a level piece of ground on campus with a view of the horizon, if possible, and placing stones or stakes at the site.
3. Printing a copy of the Imagination Station site for use in the culminating activity.

When using media, provide students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, a specific task to complete and/or information to identify during or after viewing of video segments, web sites, or other multimedia elements.

### **Introductory Activity:**

Step 1. Tell the students that you will be exploring the mystery surrounding the origin and purpose of Stonehenge. Ask students what they think Stonehenge was built for. (*Answers will vary and may include a calendar, sacrificial rituals, religion, a monument, or meeting place.*)

Step 2. Ask students to go to their computers and log on to *Poetry About Stonehenge* at <http://www.amherst.edu/~ermace/sth/poetry.html> Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking the students to note descriptive words or phrases the poets used to describe Stonehenge. Have the students specifically read three poems on the site by Thomas Stokes Salmon, Emily Mace, and J.R.R. Tolkien. After students have completed this task, have students write one descriptive word or phrase each on the board. (*Answers may include forms dancing at midnight, hollow sighs, mystery, green weeds and small, white flowers, leaning pillars, buried memories, bone, stone, cold, stony bed, sun/moon, black wind.*) Discuss the pictures these images bring to mind, and then tell the students that they are now going to examine what Stonehenge physically looks like.

Step 3. Ask students to log on to *Secrets of the Dead: Murder at Stonehenge* at [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/case\\_stonehenge/index.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/case_stonehenge/index.html) Hand out the white printer paper and distribute colored pencils. Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking the students to draw a physical drawing of Stonehenge, labeling the diagram and using a different color for each phase. Students should click on the link titled "Explore Stonehenge/Interactive". Tell the students to pay particular attention to the location in Britain where Stonehenge is located as the computer zeroes in on the site. Instruct the students that they should use each computer phase as a model for their drawings. Caution students that when they get to Phase 3, they should click on *all* of the Phase 3 sections before finishing their drawings. Students should create a color key on the bottom of their drawings to indicate various phases. Ask the students to turn their drawings in to you.

### **Learning Activity:**

Step 1. Insert the video *The Enduring Mystery of Stonehenge*. Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking the students to name three theories pertaining to why Stonehenge was built. START the tape at the very beginning. STOP

the tape during moving shots of Stonehenge when the narrator says, “The renowned archaeologist Jacquetta Hawkes once quipped, ‘Every age gets the Stonehenge it desires—or deserves.’” Check for comprehension by asking for the theories. (*Answers should include an altar for bloody sacrifices, a place of religious ritual, a celestial computer, and a temple of the gods.*)

Step 2. Ask the students to log back on to *Secrets of the Dead: Murder at Stonehenge* at [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/case\\_stonehenge/index.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/case_stonehenge/index.html) Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking the students to examine the theories they have presented for validity. Tell the students to read the articles under the sections “Background” and “Clues and Evidence”, looking for theories and evidence. Tell them after they have read, they will write their findings on the board under these headings: (Write on the board)

Theory One: A Place of Ritual and/or Religion

(*Answers should include rituals involving death are supported.*)

Theory Two: A Place of Sacrifice

(*Answers should include that there was one beheaded skeleton found there. Evidence of murder was not common in the skeletons found at Stonehenge over all.*)

Theory Three: A temple of the gods

(*Answers should include there was no evidence to support this theory.*)

Theory Four: A Celestial Computer or Calendar

(*Answers should include that the alignment of Stonehenge with the skies is considered by scholars to be symbolic, not precise. Death was tied with the position of the sun and moon.*)

Theory Five: A Place of Burial

(*Answers should include that Stonehenge was a cremation cemetery; hundreds of bodies are buried there.*)

Other:

(*Answers may vary, but should include that medieval stories mention Stonehenge as the burial place of a legendary king.*)

After students write their findings, ask them which theory or theories they find most valid due to the evidence. (*Answers will vary, but probably will include a place of ritual and/or religion and a place of burial. As scientists and historians haven't figured it out either, there is no one correct answer.*)

Step 3. Ask students to log onto *The Megalith Map* at

<http://www.megalith.ukf.net/bigmap.htm> Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking them to locate the area on the grid where Stonehenge is located. Tell the students to note the numerous stone circle sites across the United Kingdom. (*Answer is second row from bottom, far right square.*) When they find it, have students click on “Stonehenge” for links, then click on “View the latest on this site in our new Megalith Portal” on the top of the page. Students can scroll downward to view excellent pictures of Stonehenge, many of which can be clicked on for enlargements.

### **Culminating Activity:**

Step 1. Tell the students that they are going to design the foundation for their own “Stonehenge” outside and proceed to the site. Don’t forget the rope, compass, and hard copy of the instructions. Other materials should already be at this site.

Step 2. Follow the steps outlined on the “Build Your Own Stonehenge!” site at <http://familyeducation.com> Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION, asking them to build the site according to the directions.

Step 3. Periodically check your Stonehenge according to the sunset, and over time your class will have a working astronomical calendar.

### **Assessment:**

Evaluate the students’ Stonehenge maps, discussion, and physical Stonehenge as an assessment of this lesson.

### **Cross Curriculum Extensions:**

#### **ENGLISH**

Write your own poems about Stonehenge.

Read the legend of King Arthur and discuss the possibility of his being buried at Stonehenge.

#### **ART**

Paint pictures of Stonehenge.

Design a miniature Stonehenge model in clay.

#### **SCIENCE**

Study the difference in bluestones, sarsen stones, and megaliths—all stones used in Stonehenge.

Study the constellations and movements of the sun and moon over the course of a year.

#### **MATH**

Calculate the total weight of the stones used in Stonehenge.

### **Community Connections:**

- Invite a speaker to class that has been to Stonehenge. Ideally, this person could bring video or slides.
- Invite a geologist to class to discuss the stones used in Stonehenge.

**Helpful Resources:**

WEB SITE

“The Complete Stonehenge: Maps of Stonehenge” at

<http://www.amherst.edu/~ermace/sth/maps.html> This site offers detailed maps of Stonehenge and pertinent links.