

The Standing Stone

Using either a presentation on a large screen/interactive whiteboard or on shared iPads/tablets, using the NearPod app, present the following story to the children.



Tom, Sarah and Sam were the best of friends. For weeks, the three had been looking forward to the residential visit to North Wales that they and the rest of Y6 at Erewhon Primary School had been promised at the end of the dreaded SATs tests. And now they were here – at Coed-y-Pri Outdoor Education Centre: a rambling old hall on the edge of Snowdonia National Park. When they arrived, after a tortuous journey in a Happy Al's coach, they were shown to the dormitories on the top floor of the old house – one for the boys and one for the girls. 'It's just like Hogwarts', said Sarah, breathlessly, as they made their way down for their tea.

After their meal, Chris, the warden of Coed-y-Pri gave a briefing about their three-day stay and then said that he would take the class on an evening tour of the hall, its grounds and facilities. As it was June, it would be light enough to take a walk up to the moors at the far side of the hall's grounds where they would meet Llech Idris. Tom, Sarah and Sam exchanged glances – who or what is Llech Idris?

After a boring little lecture on health and safety, the class were shown the computer lab, the canoes and the high ropes course; the climbing wall, the croquet lawn and the cookery kitchen – Coed-y-Pri had cornered the market in all sorts of activities for school groups, especially ones with a 'c' in the name! Then, they set off on the long walk to edge of Coed-y-Pri's grounds. As the class and their teacher, Miss Slow, climbed through the woods above the hall, some children started to complain, but the three friends didn't. No, they wanted to know who or what Llech Idris is!



Soon, the woods began to thin out and Chris led the way up a track between hawthorn bushes. Then they were out on the open moorland. Tom, Sarah and Same could see for miles – across miles of moor, with random sheep scrunching grass, to distant blue hills and mountains (one of which was Snowdon, Chris assured them). The class followed Chris across the, sometimes boggy, moor. Soon an object came into view – a grey, mossy stone standing alone near a crumbling wall.



As they got closer, Chris announced, in his most momentous voice, that this stone was Llech Idris! Tom, Sarah and Sam were a bit disappointed that Llech Idris was just a stone, but as they got closer they were impressed! Llech Idris was over three metres high and stuck in the ground at an angle that made it look like it had been hurled down by a giant hand. And it had! Or at least, Chris told the class the legend of Idris, the Giant. He lived atop a nearby mountain called Cadair Idris (Idris's Chair) and one day, when he felt particularly grumpy, he threw a rock off the mountaintop and it travelled miles to land in the ground in this boggy moorland.



Everybody took it in turns to have his or her photo taken next to the huge standing stone. Chris reminded them that the stone stood at the edge of Coed-y-Pri's grounds, so they musn't venture further than here at any time. After a short while, Chris told the class to follow him back

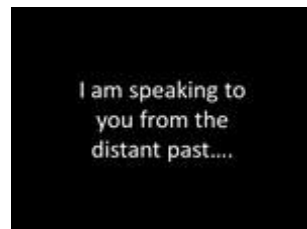
across the moorland to Coed-y-Pri. Reluctantly, the classmates turned from the stone and began the walk back to their new temporary home. All except the three friends – they were fascinated by the stone and didn't want to leave!



As the rest of the class began to slowly tramp away across the moor, Tom, Sarah and Sam slowly circled around the stone in silence – the now setting sun disappeared behind a cloud and brought a chill wind with a gloomy shadow across the landscape. Sam touched the stone and Sarah leaned closer to its mossy surface. "It's strange that the stone has moss on one side and none on the other," said Tom as he ran his hand across the rough surface.



As all three moved around the stone, they slowly became aware of mist that seemed to be rising around them. 'I think we should head back with the others now,' murmured Sam. The friends nodded to each other and turned to walk back. "I wonder who put this stone here," said Tom as he turned. In an instant, a voice came from behind them – 'I put this stone here!' it said in a way that was both a shout and a whisper. The three friends turned to look back at the stone, their eyes wide in amazement. It seemed unchanged, except for a strange glow that came from within.



'I am speaking to you from the distant past ...' said the voice from deep inside and beyond and around the stone. The three friends looked at

each other and they ran! They ran faster than they had ever run before – across the boggy moor dodging stumbling sheep and soon overtaking the rest of the class.



‘Hey!’, shouted Chris, the warden, as they ran past him, ‘why are you running?’ For a moment, Chris appeared to think about telling them to stop. Then, he stopped walking (causing a couple of the children in the class to bump into him) and looked back across the moorland towards Lech Idris. He shielded his eyes from the setting sun and for a moment sensed a glow coming from the distant stone.

‘Is there a problem?’, asked Miss Slow, ‘Should we stop those children from running ahead?’

‘No,’ said Chris deep in thought, ‘They should be fine. I think I know why they are running ...’

Miss Slow was puzzled, but couldn’t ask any more questions as Chris chivvied the class off the moor, down the hawthorn path, through the woods and back to Coed-y-Pri. When the class reached Coed-y-Pri, Tom, Sarah and Sam stood panting at the door to the old house.



Miss Slow gave a disapproving look to the three friends and then led the class through the doorway and up the stairs towards the dormitories. When everyone else had disappeared, Tom, Sam and Sarah looked at each other.

‘What was that?’ said Sam eventually. ‘I don’t know’, said Sarah, ‘but it was very scary!’

‘We must tell someone about this’, said Tom. ‘It was amazing – the stone spoke to us!’

‘No one will believe us!’ said Sam.

‘They have to believe us’, said Tom. ‘Tomorrow we have to tell Chris, the warden, and Miss Slow about what we have just seen and heard. Surely, Chris will know something about this – we can’t be the first people to have heard the voice! Then, we have to go back.’

With that, the three walked into the old house to join the others. They didn’t realise that Chris, the Warden, who emerged from round a corner of the building, had overheard their conversation. Chris had a strange expression on his face and slowly nodded his head as he walked into Coed-y-Pri.

After spending the next day canoeing on the river, the three friends decided to speak to Chris, the warden, and Miss Slow about their experience the previous evening. It wasn’t the first time Chris had heard a story like this about the standing stone.



Hot seat: Chris, the warden, who is the teacher-in-role, and whose main task is as follows:

- Treat the children’s story with respect and respond appropriately to their questions;
- Very slowly release information from past encounters, a little bit at a time depending on how well children question. For example, first response: ‘You are not the first to tell such tales about the stone,’ then fall silent, so making the children do the work to get information from you.
- Slowly release key information from past encounters – ***I have never heard the voice myself, but Alf, the previous warden of Coed-y-Pri used to tell stories about the voice of Llech Idris and the strange glow that sometimes comes from the stone.***

According to Alf, the voice of the stone is speaking across over three thousand years of time from what we call the Bronze Age when people first made metal tools and began to live together in settlements.

- Second response: ***To hear a voice from the past has long been the dream of archaeologists and historians. Usually archaeologists have to try and uncover the past through material objects that have been left behind by past people, such as tools and carvings and pottery.***
- Third response: ***I have often wondered if someone long, long ago did manage to plan a way of communicating with us across the millennia.***
- Fifth response could be: ***If there really is a link across this vast stretch of time we are in a very important position. What an opportunity we have to find out about the past – about people, their lives and beliefs. We have such responsibility here. I think we should take this on, but are you ready for this responsibility. Maybe it is too much?***
- So the teacher-in-role will build the responsibility of the children in the unfolding dramatic situation, giving it significance. ***Explain that Alf packed his bags and left Coed-y-Pri a few years ago and has not been seen again.***
- Miss Slow can agree with Chris at this stage or be the subject of a separate rehearsed scene.

Resume Story:



So, after their tea on the second day at Coed-y-Pri, the three friends, Miss Slow and Chris set off to Llech Idris again. The rest of the class were allowed free choice activities and none were interested in coming along. They walked up through the woods and then onto the path between the

hawthorn bushes. Soon they reached the moorland and tramped through the boggy grass. Slowly, they approached the stone of Llech Idris, just as the lowering sun again disappeared behind a cloud.



All five slowly walked around the stone – again Sarah felt its rough and mossy sides. They all listened intently, but heard nothing except the whistling wind. This time no mist began to rise and the sun came out from behind the cloud – the landscape seemed to glow in the late evening sunshine.

Scene: Groups of four mime the scene where they approach the stone to an atmospheric soundtrack of wind and bleak moor. No words to be spoken but the anticipation, expectations, responsibility and tension to be felt. Each group to perform and see who manages to capture this.

Resume Story:

After half an hour Chris reluctantly said: 'Let's go back,' All five turned to walk away from the stone. As they took their first steps, again the sun went behind a cloud. And the temperature suddenly dropped. And a mist began to swirl.



And a strange glow seemed to come from within the stone. And a voice like a shouted whisper said:

'Do not run away again. I will not harm you'

The five slowly turned back towards Llech Idris. All wanted to run, but somehow felt unable to. A shadowy figure seemed to appear from inside the stone. A shadowy figure, but with a friendly, welcoming face.

Hot seat: Teacher-in-role as speaking stone.

Class ask questions of the figure as by this time they should have a sense of the responsibility they carry and know the encounter could stop at any moment.

For example: Who are you? What are you?' Why are you speaking to us? Where do you live?

The teacher-in-role's job is again to treat all ideas with respect and make the children work towards questions letting information out very slowly. For example:

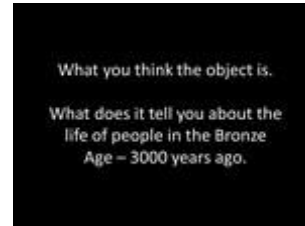
- Response 1: 'I am speaking to you from the distant past'.
- Response 2: 'I am speaking to you – across three millennia; 3000 years'.
- Response 3: 'I ordered this stone to be put here, so I could speak across the years.'
- Response 4: 'I am the speaker for my village – all the families in the village decided that I should be the one to speak to people who visit Llech Idris. Because I am speaking for all the people in the village, my name is not important'



After all such initial questions have been asked then move on to what the children will be given:

Teacher-in-role: ***Look in my shadow,***' [a prepared box - box made of rough wood, with a lid and objects inside that tell us about the voice of the stone and the people – from 3000 years ago.]. ***You will find something of my people. In those times everybody knew all there was to know, it has never been the same since. Tell me what these things***

tell you about me and my people. If you are successful I will reward you by showing pictures of my village and the people who live there.

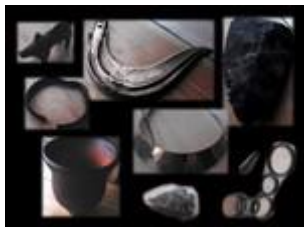


Task: to interpret the artefacts

Hand out the objects in the box to groups of children. For each object, the children should:

1. Say what they think the object is;
2. Say what they think it tells us about the life of people in the Bronze Age – 3000 years ago.

Presentation to speaking stone/teacher-in-role in which the children share their interpretations. Speaking stone/teacher-in-role's job is to value their ideas and input knowledge as relevant and helpful. The 'facts' about Bronze Age people that children identify should be clearly based on evidence in the box.



When presentations have finished, then the speaking stone says: 'You have earned the right to see my village and ask [a limited number of] questions about it. My advice is not to waste the questions; these are all you will ever have.' Reveal the picture of the village and ask children to study it and devise their questions. [printed copies of the picture can be distributed to groups of children to help in prompting questions]



Task: What are the most important questions to ask? Order these.

Scene: teacher-in-role as speaking stone - children ask their most important questions and receive answers based on available research about the Bronze Age – see background notes.



Rehearsed scene: Children go into groups representing the groups of inhabitants in the Bronze Age village picture. They then enact a short scene representing what they see in the picture.

Resume story:

Once Tom, Sarah, Sam, Chris and Miss Slow had asked their questions, the speaker raised a hand and said, 'I must go now, the window to the past is now closing.'

Tom asked, 'Before you go, you must tell us your name, so we can tell everyone about you.'

'No,' said the speaker, 'you must not tell anyone else about me. You can share the information you have gathered, so others know about the Bronze Age, but not where you got the information from.'

'OK,' said Sarah, 'we won't tell, but please tell us your name.'

The figure seemed to slowly fade away into the stone, but as it faded, the voice whispered, My name is Alf'. With that, the friends, Chris and Miss Slow found themselves once more alone on the boggy moorland next to the stone of Llech Idris. From beyond a small hill, they heard the sound of a vehicle starting up and leaving down a bumpy track.



As they walked back down the hill to Coed-y-Pri, the group were lost in thought.

Suddenly, Sam said, 'Did we really speak to someone from 3000 years ago just then or was that a magic trick by Alf, the warden who disappeared? I've heard of things called holograms. They look like real people standing and talking, but they are just clever projections from a computer.'

Miss Slow replied, 'I don't know, but the facts he gave us seem real. He certainly knew a lot about the Bronze Age and the picture of the village was very detailed.'

'Alf knew a lot about technology, said Chris, the warden. 'He had a really powerful computer that he left behind, but I can't see how he did that. I am sure it was real voice from the past.'

'We'll never know,' said Tom.

'Not unless we go back again, tomorrow,' said Sarah.



No,' said Miss Slow, 'tomorrow evening everyone in the class is going to talk about what they have learned here at Coed-y-Pri before we go home. You can tell everyone about the fascinating facts you learned about Llech Idris from an archaeologist that you met this evening.'

With that, the three friends looked at each other, smiled and carried on down the track to Coed-y-Pri.

Task: Children go into groups, discuss and report back on the three most fascinating facts that they have learned about the Bronze Age.