



Ancient tales

This is the beginning of a stone age adventure... it's up to you to write the rest!

School was over for the summer, and we we're off to France. We didn't fly, instead we packed all our things into the car and drove... it took a long time, and I was quite bored!

We drove on for hours and hours until we came to a small village nestled in a deep gorge. I stared out the window, my breath fogging up the glass as we trundled through narrow streets. The house we had rented for the week was slightly outside the village, lurking at the end of a bumpy lane overshadowed by tangled, twisted trees. It was old, with a steep roof covered in red tiles, the front all crooked and covered in plants. The lady who owned the house was there to meet us, smiling and waving. While she showed the grownups around the house, I went exploring.



The garden was quite big, and wild! There weren't really flower beds, but plants and shrubs burst from the edge of the daisy strewn lawn as though they were desperate to take it over. Rising steeply up behind it was rough hill, covered in scruffy little bushes and trees between outcrops of yellowish grey rocks. Higher up it became a tall jagged cliff, pitted with caves and hollows. I was staring at the dark caves high up above us when Mum shouted that I needed to help get my things in from the car and choose which room I wanted.

As I carried my bag through the sitting room and up the creaky stairs, I noticed some strange things on a shelf and excitedly ran to show Mum. "these are like stone age things, like stone age tools!" I said, remembering the pictures from a book at school. "Yes, they are, you're right" Mum said. "The old lady pointed them out when she was showing me where the blankets are. She said she finds them in the garden when she digs up her potatoes.. at least I think that's what she said, my French never was very good"



The next day some of the grownups decided to drive to the nearest town for food but Mum announced She was very tired after the driving and asked if I'd would be all right playing in the garden for the afternoon.

I had been thinking about that cliff and the caves since yesterday. Mum had settled down on a bench in the shade under some trees and was reading a book, and didn't notice me sneak out of the garden, and start to climb the slope at the back of the house.

It was hard work! The slope was even steeper than it looked, and the loose sandy soil kept getting into my shoes. Once, when I sat down to empty out a little trickle of grit, I noticed a funny coloured rock next to my hand... It wasn't like the other rocks, which were crumbly and gritty, a bit like old concrete. It was dark grey, hard and smooth, with a point at one end. It looked a bit like some of the relics the old lady had displayed on the shelf at the house...flint tools from the Stone Age!

The tool stowed safe in my deepest pocket, I carried on up the slope but now I kept looking at the ground, Eyes peeled for more bits of flint. When I reached the top of the hill I was out of breath and sat down on a pile of boulders looking out over the valley. I could see the house, and the little speck that was mum still reading under the tree.



As I went to scramble up, some of the stones moved. They rolled and tumbled and stopped in the dust, but somewhere, underneath I could hear stones still falling!

I bent down and peered between the rocks. It was dark, and hollow! I started heaving and pushing, moving the rocks away from the dark entrance to a tunnel!

Shrugging off my old faded schoolbag that had been full of drinks and snacks from the drive, I dug about, sure it was in there somewhere. Out came an empty crisp packet, a crumpled Juice carton and a little torch!

“Excellent” I smiled, looking down into the blackness. The boulders and rocks made pretty good steps, and I slowly made my way down. It was quiet and completely still. The air cool, but not cold, and from somewhere deep in the rocks I could hear a steady drip... Drip... Driiippp...

I shone the torch around at bumpy pale walls and a muddy floor. The tunnel was not huge, but I could stand up without bumping my head. I walked forwards slowly, trying not to make a sound. It ought to have been creepy, but it wasn't. It felt like I was in a very strict library, or maybe a church.

I pointed the torch at the up at the ceiling and gasped; It was a Mammoth! Definitely a Mammoth. It had big tusks that curved up a like bananas, and someone had even drawn reddish lines to show the long shaggy hair!

Speechless, I shuffled forwards, gazing up at the ceiling and saw more! A big animal like a cow with a humped back, and vicious pointed horns, and another... and another.

You could research cave paintings... try searching for Lascaux, Le Chauvet, and Altamira.

What were the paints made from, and what did people use as brushes?



The next bit of wall was covered in handprints, some were red, some black, some yellow. There were big ones and small ones. When I held my hand up to the painting, I could see it was about the same size. The rock felt cold and damp, and when I pulled my hand away, it was covered in red paint! The painting was still wet!

Feeling as though I'd done something wrong, I quickly wiped my hand on my clothes. Ahead, the tunnel branched, I was standing, shining the torch about trying to decide which way to go when I heard a noise... I Spun around, and the torch clattered to the floor, flickered, and went out!

It was instantly dark, I didn't know it could be so dark. I could feel panic rising in my chest, I groped around on the earthen floor and found it! I shook it hoping it would come back to life... and suddenly it did! A blaze of white light sliced through the darkness. Only... it wasn't quite as dark as it had been. Was that the light from the entrance flickering ahead?

I heard voices coming closer, the tunnel got lighter, and two people appeared in front of me, one of them holding the end of a flaming torch!



What happens next?

The next chapters are up to you, but I've got some ideas...

First of all, you need to describe who these people are;

- **Why** are they in the cave.
- **What** do they look like? Are they friendly? Maybe they are as frightened of you as you are of them!
- **Can you understand each other?** If you can, how is that possible!? If you can't understand each other, how will you communicate? You might have to use hand signs, or maybe you start trying to learn a few words of each other's languages.... Names would good be a start!



These beautiful pictures are by TOM BJORKLUND. His pictures are based on archaeological finds, and Hunter gatherers who still live on earth today. His pictures give a really good idea of how our ancestors might have dressed. The first modern humans to reach Europe, were probably darker skinned than a lot of people realise! How might you have dressed if you lived 30,00 years ago during the Upper Paleolithic?



The man and woman who found you in the cave take you back to their tribe. The land outside the cave will look very different in the past. It is the middle of an Ice Age! That doesn't mean everything is frozen all the time, but it will look different to today. Try researching 'Ice age Steppes', 'Upper Paleolithic Europe' or 'Magdalenian culture'



What sort of houses do they live in? You might call them cave people, but they don't necessarily live in caves. They might live in little tents made of skins, little thatched huts, or even little huts made of old Mammoth bones and Tusks!



What other things might you see as you walk towards the village. What will the other people do when they see you? What sort of things might the tribe be working on when you arrive?

Chapter two...

You spend your time with the other children, what do they get up to? Some of them are very good at finding food; eggs, small animals and tasty bits of certain plants. Even if they are younger than you, I bet they have a thing or two to teach you!

What if you all go foraging, perhaps to pick some kind of berries. On the way the children show you a “pit trap” the hunters have built.

This picture by Tom Bjorklund might give you an idea of how the children are dressed, or how you would be dressed!



Then you carry on your way, but when you get to the berry bushes (or apple trees) you find.... A wild boar ... Or a bear! The others are quicker than you, and scramble up a tree, but you panic and RUN. Just in time you remember that you are heading towards the pit trap. You jump over the hole, but the Bear (or Boar) falls in. The hunters think you are a genius, and give you a necklace made of the bears teeth or claws, but you have never been more scared in your life! Everyone pitches in to help skin, gut and butcher the animal.

You could write a report on how the tribe uses all the bits of the animal or research the animal you've encountered and show what you've learned on the "ANIMAL FACT SHEET "

Medicine woman

Perhaps you twisted your ankle during the chase, and the children take you to see the ‘medicine woman. (that’s a bit like a witch, crossed with a Doctor) She might be a little frightening, but she knows how to use the magic of plants to heal. She’s very old and wrinkled, and wears loads of necklaces made of teeth, claws, bones, carved shapes, shells...What does she do for your hurt knee? Describe what you see in her Hut.... You could try and find out about the plants growing around your school and whether they have any medicinal properties! **Yarrow and Plantain** are good ones to start with!

Fishing and hunting!

What about going fishing with the whole tribe using a big net? (I hope you can swim..) the grown-ups all grab hold of the long net and walk out across a shallow part of the river, while the children go downstream and make a lot of noise and splashing. If you are lucky with your fishing, what will you do with it all? You'll never be able to eat all that fish... maybe you ought to help cut the fish up for drying, but I don't think it's as easy as it looks!

Someone comes running into camp shouting that there are Mammoths coming! (Or bison, or aurochs, or Giant deer!)

You and the other children want to help, but the grownups say its too dangerous, and tell you all to watch from a rocky outcrop a safe distance away.

Perhaps you and your young friends help without meaning to! What if you are trying to get higher up the rocks, and accidentally knock over a boulder.. which knocks over another... and causes a big avalanche of stones which scares the animals towards the trap set by the hunters!



Getting home;

Eventually you're going to have to go home, back to modern times. Maybe you begin to get homesick, or perhaps the tribe is going to move to their winter hunting grounds, and you decide it's time.

If you were beginning to feel home sick, I think the **medicine woman** , or the **Shaman** might notice (they notice everything) Perhaps it is they who take you back to the cave, and show you the way in.

There ought to be some magic involved, some chanting and music. In fact, I bet they were

talking to the spirits in the cave when you first met them, maybe that's how you got transported back in time! Do you keep the cave a secret? Perhaps a rock fall covers the entrance up again as you crawl out.....

What happens when you get back to the cottage? Maybe you are in trouble, maybe not. But I think the grownups might be confused about where you got your necklace and why you smell of wood smoke!