Stonehenge - What the evidence shows

B2 reading development. Work from the text, not outside knowledge. Notice dates, quantities, cause and effect, and the limits of a claim.

A. Read and summarise

1 Stonehenge stands in Wiltshire, in southern England. The monument developed in stages. A circular bank and ditch were created around 3000 BC. The large stone settings were erected around 2500 BC, so the familiar stone circle came later than the first earthwork.

2 The stones include large sarsens and smaller bluestones. Their different sizes make it misleading to give one weight for every stone. Research into the materials has helped archaeologists investigate where they came from. Studying the stones is one part of a much wider investigation of the landscape.

3 Burials and other prehistoric monuments have been found near Stonehenge. These discoveries show that people used the area over a long period. The stones are also aligned with important movements of the sun: the summer solstice sunrise and the winter solstice sunset. The alignment provides evidence of deliberate planning, but it does not reveal every belief of the builders.

4 There is no complete written explanation left by the people who built Stonehenge. Archaeologists therefore compare physical evidence and test possible explanations. A new discovery may support one idea or lead researchers to change it. A theory can be reasonable without being certain. Readers should notice the difference between an observed feature, an interpretation of its purpose and a question that remains unanswered.

B. Check the evidence

Label each claim True (T), False (F) or Not Given (NG). Underline the evidence for T or F. For NG, say what information is missing.

1. ___ The stone settings were erected before the circular bank and ditch.
2. ___ Every stone at the monument has the same weight.
3. ___ The surrounding area contains evidence of prehistoric burials.
4. ___ The stones align with sunset at the winter solstice.
5. ___ Exactly 300 people helped erect the largest stones.
6. ___ Researchers know all the beliefs of the people who built Stonehenge.

C. Look closely

Choose one word or phrase that limits a claim, such as can, around or possible. Explain how the meaning changes if you remove it.

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Stonehenge - Key and distractor practice

B. Answers and evidence

1. False Paragraph 1 gives about 3000 BC for the earthwork and 2500 BC for the stones.

2. False Paragraph 2 says that their sizes differ and one weight would be misleading.

3. True Paragraph 3 identifies burials near the monument.

4. True Paragraph 3 specifies the winter solstice sunset.

5. Not Given The text gives no exact workforce total.

6. False Paragraph 3 says the alignment does not reveal every belief; paragraph 4 explains the limits of the evidence.

D. Choose the strongest answer

Why does the writer mention the lack of a complete written explanation?

A. To prove that the builders had no beliefs.

B. To explain why researchers must interpret physical evidence.

C. To suggest that studying the stones is unnecessary.

D. To show that all theories are equally reliable.

Answer: B. The final paragraph links the missing explanation to comparing evidence and testing ideas.

Why the other answers are tempting

A distractor may reuse a word from the text while changing its meaning. Others reverse a relationship, exaggerate a claim or add a detail the writer never gives. Explain the problem with each incorrect option.

Teacher notes

Ask learners to explain their evidence before checking the key. For a Not Given answer, lack of evidence is different from evidence that a claim is false. Repeat the exercise with a short text learners choose themselves. This is a general reading-skills lesson; it does not reproduce a full Cambridge reading part.

Sources and provenance

New lesson text and questions written for this worksheet. Factual sources checked on 11 October 2026: English Heritage: History of Stonehenge; Significance of Stonehenge; Research on Stonehenge. Full links and source decisions are in the publishing brief.

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