

Practical activity ideas

Notes for the teacher – If your children need to review their learning, you can use these activities to support them.

Minoan marketplace

The resources required for this activity include play food, small objects to trade, jewellery, beads, pottery/ceramic objects, pieces of fabric, shells, small wooden objects, baskets or bags.

Activity: Set up the classroom as a busy Minoan marketplace. Children take on the roles of traders and customers. Some children could be traders from Crete, while others represent people from places the Minoans traded with, such as Egypt, Cyprus, Greece or Italy. Give each trader a small collection of goods. Encourage children to walk around the marketplace, talk to other traders and decide what they would like to buy or exchange.

You could give some children a simple role card, such as:

- Minoan trader: “I have beautiful ceramics. I want something that is difficult to find in Crete.”
- Egyptian trader: “I have jewellery and other valuable goods. What can you offer me?”
- Cypriot trader: “I have copper. What could I trade it for?”
- Minoan craftsman: “I want materials that I can use to make something valuable.”

Bronze-making simulation

The resources required for this activity include copper-coloured beads, tin-coloured beads, string, small bowls or containers, optional cards showing bronze tools, weapons and ornaments, baskets or bags.

Activity: Explain that the Minoans could not simply find bronze ready-made. Bronze was made by mixing copper and tin. The children can create their own pretend bronze by combining the two types of beads. Give each child or pair a collection of copper- and tin-coloured beads. They can: 1. Sort the two materials. 2. ‘Mix’ them together in a bowl. 3. Thread the mixed beads onto string to create a bronze-inspired bracelet or necklace. As they work, explain that this is a simulation – they are representing the process with beads rather than actually making metal. You could then give each group a small ‘bronze workshop’. They have to decide what they will make from their pretend bronze e.g. a dagger, a tool, a bull ornament, a figurine, jewellery. They could then decide which of their objects would be most useful to trade with another country. Add a problem: Give some groups lots of copper but very little tin, and other groups lots of tin but very little copper. They will quickly discover that they need to trade with one another before they can make their bronze.

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Activity: Put children into small groups and give each group a different collection of resources. Explain that there is no money in this game. If they want something that another group has, they must find something that the other group is willing to exchange for it. Give each group a secret goal. For example:

- “You are a Minoan bronze maker. You need copper and tin.”
- “You are a trader who wants to collect ceramics.”
- “You need timber to build something.”
- “You want to collect three different types of goods.”
- “You want to obtain materials to make a valuable object.”

Children move around the room negotiating trades. They might say: “I will give you two beads for your copper.” “I need tin. What would you like in exchange?” “That isn’t enough for my ceramic pot. Can you offer me something else?” Add a second round: Halfway through, announce that a new ship has arrived at the harbour carrying a new type of resource. Give some groups additional goods and allow the trading to begin again.