

Object explore and discover

Learning from Museum Objects

Museum objects are irreplaceable evidence of our history and heritage and can really bring your lessons to life. Each of these downloadable resources explores one of the objects in our collection.

For even more ideas, discover our loan boxes at

<http://schoolloans.readingmuseum.org.uk/> and search our amazing online database at <http://collections.readingmuseum.org.uk/>

Woolly Rhinoceros fossil jaw



Follow this [link to online database](#) to see the object's full record

DESCRIPTION

Object: Woolly rhino jaw fragments

Museum object number: REDMG: 1997.15.1

Material: Fossil jaw (bone and teeth)

Size: 220 mm wide and 160mm wide

Date: circa 26,000 BCE

The **woolly rhinoceros** had a thick fur coat and lived in Europe during the Last **Ice Age**. They could reach 2 metres in height, five metres in length and weigh 3.5 tonnes. These **fossilised** pieces of the woolly rhino's jaws, found in Pleistocene cave deposits at Kent's Cavern (Torquay), show the big and powerful teeth of these prehistoric animals. Woolly rhinos (*Coelodonta antiquitatis*) are an **extinct** rhino species that lived in open grassland and tundra.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The woolly rhinoceros was related to the modern rhino. Some woolly rhino species (nick-named unicorns) had one horn, but these jaws belonged to a species with **two horns**. Rhino's horn is made from keratin (the **protein** in hair and fingernails). The front horn was large, curved and could also be used in fights with other animals. Rhinos held their heads low to the ground and used their horns to push snow aside. They were **herbivores**, the high-crowned molars, the largest teeth were adapted to chewing the tough steppe grasses that were spread across Ice Age Europe.

Their thick fat and long, shaggy fur coat protected them from the extreme cold of the Ice Age. They thrived during the later **Pleistocene** from about 200,000 to 10,000 years ago. **Climate change**, loss of **habitat** and **hunting** caused mass extinction of the 'Ice Age Giants' at the end of the Ice Age. This included the extinction of the woolly rhinos, who are believed to have been hunted by humans, nomadic hunter-gatherers who used stone weapons. Woolly mammoths, giant deer, cave bears, cave lions, spotted hyenas, scimitar-toothed and sabre-toothed cats also became extinct.

We know what rhinos looked like from fossils, skeletons, frozen bodies (in Siberia, Russia) and cave paintings made by early humans who had seen them. Woolly rhinos, as well as other Ice Age animals travelled to the UK from continental Europe across a land-bridge known as **Doggerland** (now under the English Channel). Sea levels were up to 100m lower then.

LINKS TO OTHER OBJECTS

We have a collection of Prehistoric artefacts that you may find useful in your lessons. These are a few examples.

- [Palaeolithic \(Old Stone age\) axe](#)
- [Mesolithic \(Middle Stone Age\) axehead](#)
- [Neolithic \(New Stone Age\) axehead](#)

See also our [Loan Boxes database](#) for related objects.

IDEAS FOR ACTIVITIES

- **Your teeth tell what you eat.**
Animal teeth have different shapes depending on what they eat: herbivores have flat teeth, carnivore have sharp teeth and animals that eat anything (omnivores) have both flat and sharp teeth. Why? What kind of animals are humans?
- **Design your own prehistoric animal.**
Will it have tusks, horns or huge teeth? Will it be four legged, with a shaggy coat? What is its name and its story? Did it hunt woolly Rhino or eat grass in the tundra? Make a drawing and write about it.
- **Think about how different materials survive**
What kinds of materials do archaeologists find from prehistory? Why?
- **Download our [Woolly Rhino Cut and Colour Template](#)**