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| **Prehistoric Britain** | | |  |
|  | **More than two thousand seven hundred years ago Celts came to Britain from Europe. They mixed in with the people who were already there. All who lived in Britain were called Britons. They divided into groups called tribes. Each tribe had its king or queen. The Romans attacked Britain in 55 BC. Consul Julius Caesar had brought the army of 10,000 men. The Britons fought desperately, but they were much weaker than the well trained Romans, and soon fled. After the victory Julius Caesar soon left Britain. The real invasion took place only in AD 43, when the Roman Emperor, Claudius decided to make Britain part of the Roman Empire. An army of 40,000 Roman soldiers landed in Britain (Kent).**  **Britain became part of a huge Roman Empire, which stretched from what is now the north of England to the Red Sea. Many Britons had to accept the Roman way of life, though some of them tried to resist the enemies. The fighting continued for almost twenty years after the Roman invasion. The Romans won many victories, and it was clear that nothing could stop them.**  **But, in AD 60, the Iceni tribe led by their queen, Boadicea, revolted.**  **The very first stages of the existence of people on the British Isles are frequenly described as prehistoric and referred to as unwritten history of Britain.**  **The geographical position of the land was both a blessing and a problem: on the one hand the insular position protected the country from invasions; and on the other — the lowland facing the continent always invited invasions.**  **The greatest material monument of the ancient population of the British Isles is Stonehenge on the Salisbury plain,— a monumental stone circle and a memorial of the Stone Age culture.**  **The first ever inhabitants are believed to be hunters of the Old Stone Age who came from the Continent, to be followed by new waves of immigrants.**  **The beginning of the Stone Age coincided with the arrival of new invaders, mainly from France. They were the Celts. Reputed to be tall, fair and well built, they had artistic skills and were good craftsmen. Their dialects were imposed on the native population: the Gaelic form was spread in Ireland and Scotland, and the Brythonic in England and Wales. It was the Brythonic tribe of the Celts that gave its name to the whole country.**  **The culture of Celts in the Iron Age was not altogether barbaric. Their Priests, the Druids, were skillful in teaching and administration.**  **"But the Romans came with a heavy hand,**  **And bridged and roaded and ruled the land,..."**  **( R. Kipling)**  **The Britons and Their Poets**  **A LONG time after the days of the little men and big beasts there were some people called the Britons, who were not quite wild and savage, but they did everything in quite different ways from those in which, we do them now. There were many kings among the Britons, and the people fought for their kings against other people and their kings. They spent a great deal of time in fighting. They were very big and strong, and had golden hair and blue eyes. They did not wear many clothes, and the men stained themselves blue. They had men of whom they thought a great deal called "Bards," who made and sang poetry for them. On the night before a fight the bards would sing to the soldiers songs about other brave soldiers in earlier times, and this made the men want to fight bravely in the battle. The Britons had not any big towns, and their houses were very small, the walls made of mud. When they were not fighting  the Britons hunted animals a great deal, and afterwards they ate them. They also grew corn and things to make bread.**  **THE BRITISH PRIESTS**  **The Britons did not know rightly about God. They thought there were a great many gods, and they used to say prayers to them among oak-trees. They even said prayers to things which were not alive, such as fire and water; and they thought a great deal of the mistletoe, which often grew on the oak-trees. They had priests called "Druids," who were the cleverest of all the Britons. They used to wear long white dresses. On special feast days they used to cut pieces of mistletoe with long golden knives, and give them out to the people, who thought that they kept them from being sick or unhappy. On the same day the Druids used to kill and burn great white oxen to please their gods.** |  |  |