



Newgrange

A Search for Meaning

What is the Human Search for Meaning?

As humans, at some point in our lives, we ask ourselves difficult questions about life and its meaning. Some people turn to religious beliefs and morals and others turn to their own morals, and how they feel they should live their lives. For many years it has been seen that humans have pondered the meaning of life, it can be seen through art, architecture, music, literature and many more. Each person has their own individual meaning of life as no one life is the same.



Sample 2

The Big Questions in Life

Some of the bigger questions in life are as followed:

1. What is the purpose of life?
2. Why am I here?
3. What makes for happiness?
4. Can one life make a difference?
5. What happens when we die?
6. Is there a God/Gods/Divine Reality?
7. Why is there suffering?
8. Is there a heaven?

What is Newgrange?

Newgrange is a Neolithic passage tomb (a narrow passageway that is build with large stones, and then covered with earth and stone. They contain one or more burial chambers also) in which can be dated back to 3,200 B.C, making it older than the Egyptian Pyramids! Newgrange has a corbelled roof which is a roof that is in the shape of a dome, made by overlapping stones until they meet at the top. After the corbelled roof was put into place, a capstone was put in on top. The roof was built so well that even to this day, there are no water leakages in the chambers. On the outside of the chambers, and around the entrance, there are great big stones that are decorated with beautiful and intricate carvings of spiral patterns.



On the winter solstice of each year, when the sun rises, it shines through the roof-box, lighting up the passage of the chamber. Newgrange is said by archaeologists to be built for religious, astrological and spiritual reasons, and overall for ceremonies.



Sample 2

The Winter Solstice



The darkest day of the year, December 21st, is the winter solstice. This day is when in the chamber of Newgrange, the light from the rising sun comes the roof-box, lighting up the entire passage in the chamber. Due to the idea that the purpose of Newgrange was for spiritual, astrological and religious ceremonial reasons, the light coming through on the darkest day of the year could suggest hope, and that they may be life after death or it could suggest that they believed in a God, Gods or a Divine Reality. Overall, it seems that the purpose of the light coming through could either be for religious reasons, or to demonstrate hope to people even on the darkest day of the year.

What questions does it bring up about life?

When we look at Newgrange it becomes exceedingly clear that even the people in the Neolithic period in Ireland could have believed in some form of life after death. Newgrange is a passage tomb, meaning that it was used for burials, which puts forth the idea that these people could have possibly believed in life after death, or even a God, Gods or Divine Reality. Thinking about the winter solstice, Newgrange was built in a way that the light shines through on the chamber, which suggests that even though it is the darkest day of the year, there is still light; therefore there is still hope. Other questions that are brought up in terms of Newgrange are why is there suffering and is there a heaven due to the fact that Newgrange was used for burials.



Sample 2

What Does Newgrange Mean to Me?

When I think of Newgrange and its meaning, I see the light coming through on the darkest day of the year as a symbol of hope and reflection. Newgrange is a passage tomb, so for light to be coming in on the darkest day of the year could give someone the chance to reflect on their life and lives of the people around them, and give hope for the future ahead. I chose Newgrange because I have an interest in the architecture and the art used in Newgrange, and how that suggests different interpretation of the meaning of life.

Reflection

Overall, Newgrange is an extremely important part of Irish heritage and history. Is it important to history and it suggests the beliefs of the people of Neolithic Ireland. Many different questions revolving around the meaning of life can be found when examining Newgrange. Some being:

- What happens when we die?
- Is there a God/Gods/Divine Reality?
- Why is there suffering?
- Is there a heaven?

Newgrange was used for burials, meaning that the people of the time could have believed in a God, Gods or Divine Reality and questioned what happens after death. In addition to that, it could also bring up the idea of why is there suffering because they buried people there, further asking if there is a heaven or something after death. Newgrange was built in a way that even on the darkest day of the year, the light still shines through, suggesting hope and reflection. The meaning of life is different for everyone, and each person will interpret Newgrange and the part it plays on the meaning of life differently, but it is clear that Newgrange and the people who built it brings up many of the different questions that revolve around the meaning of life.

After completing this project, I feel that I have learned more about the meaning of life and the questions that go along with it, and how it can be interpreted through architecture and art.



Sample 2

Sources Used

- [Newgrange Stone Age Passage Tomb - Boyne Valley, Ireland](#)
- [Newgrange Winter Solstice - Sunrise Alignment](#)
- [Newgrange | Built heritage | Brú na Bóinne | World Heritage | World Heritage Ireland](#)
- Artefact Junior Cycle History Book



Sample 2

TEACHER ANNOTATIONS USING THE FEATURES OF QUALITY

The annotations capture observations by the teacher, using the features of quality, with a view to establishing the level of achievement this work reflects. The annotations and judgments were confirmed by a Quality Assurance group, consisting of practising teachers and representatives of the NCCA, the Inspectorate, the State Exams Commission and the Junior Cycle for Teachers support service.

TEACHER ANNOTATIONS

Feature of Quality 1 The report shows good research on Newgrange and this is evident in slides 3, 5 and 6 in particular. It is commendable that the sources used are included, although the inclusion of religious sources would have helped ensure a clearer focus on the task. Further research and understanding of the pre-Christian burial practices and solstice rituals is required to fully explore how Newgrange shows the neolithic people's quest to find answers to life's big questions. The research could also have gone further by drawing the reader's attention to additional artistic and architectural features inside and outside of Newgrange that show how our ancestors designed Newgrange in an attempt to make sense of their world and express meaning to their lives.

Feature of Quality 2 The report states that four questions relating to the meaning of life can be found when examining Newgrange. The report would have benefitted from focusing on just one or two big questions as some of the questions raised are not addressed in the report, such as why is there suffering and is there a heaven? The report provides some good evidence that people living in Ireland more than 3,000 years ago believed in an after-life, believed in hope in the darkest hours and possibly even believed in a God or Divine Reality.

Feature of Quality 3 The student shows some evidence of reflection in the final slide when s/he acknowledges that each person will interpret Newgrange and the part it plays in addressing questions about the meaning of life differently. The report concludes 'I have learned about the meaning of life and questions that go along with it', though we are not given any further information about this. The report would have been enhanced if the student shared their personal response to the questions (what happens when we die and is there a God/Gods/Divine reality) and showed a capacity to engage with the questions and draw their own conclusions.

OVERALL JUDGEMENT:



In line with expectations