



CROP CIRCLES, A MYSTERY

- 1 For hundreds of years strange circles and patterns appearing in fields have puzzled farmers. The stems of the plants in each circle have been flattened, either in a clockwise or anti-clockwise direction, to make the shape. Most of the time these plants are not badly damaged, just bent over at an angle. Records show that these circles are not crop selective, having been found in fields of wheat, corn, barley, oats and canola.
- 2 The circles and patterns are often enormous, sometimes more than fifty metres in diameter. Some are so complicated they look like huge pieces of circular artwork. Who or what could have made these shapes and where did they come from?
- 3 Perhaps these mysterious circles were made by alien spacecraft that landed in the wheat field overnight. Maybe they have been formed by strange weather conditions, such as twirling currents of air that have been charged with electricity. Or perhaps they are just a hoax, created by clever people who sneak into the fields at night and trample over the plants. No one is really sure.
- 4 Reports of these crop circles go back hundreds of years. In the 17th century there were more than two hundred cases recorded and an English woodcut from the time shows a devil making a crop circle. The locals refer to this creature as the "mowing devil". In 1880 Brandon Meland, a scientist, wrote

an article for the journal, *Nature*. In it he describes finding a wheat field that had been "considerably knocked about". He went on to say there were many peculiar circular patches in the field that may have been formed by a "cyclonic wind".

- 5 It seems that crop circle activity really picked up in frequency in the 1960s and 70s, especially in England and the United States. By the 1990s, these fantastic designs began to attract tourists, researchers and journalists to the farms where they were found. Some farmers even charged a fee to those who wanted to visit the site.
- 6 This recent increase in the number of crop circles, along with their growing complexity, has attracted huge public interest. Thousands of crop circle enthusiasts, called cereologists after the Roman goddess of agriculture, Ceres, flock to these sites looking for answers. Most cereologists, or "croppies" as they are often called, believe either alien visitors or unusual weather conditions form the circles.
- 7 The people who believe aliens are responsible argue that the circles are made when the spacecraft touches down. Others claim that the groups of circles represent special messages from alien visitors, but no one has been able to understand them so far. Some farmers claim to have seen bright lights and heard strange noises coming from the sites. In 2001, two people in Holland claimed they saw tubes of white light beaming down into a string bean field. When they went to investigate they found several new circles in the exact spot the lights were seen.



- 8 Some scientists on the other hand, suggest the circles can be created when currents of spinning winds, or vortices, blast air down to the ground, flattening the crops. Experts from the Tornado and Storm Research Organisation (TORRO) claim these spinning winds catch dust particles that become charged with energy. The charged particles can then appear to glow and look like lights.
- 9 Other scientists have tested the soil directly under the circles and compared it to samples taken nearby. They found the soil below the crop circles had greater levels of magnetic iron compounds. This is unusual. People living near the sites of crop circles sometimes claim to feel dizzy or have a tingling feeling through their bodies. Some have heard

buzzing noises.

10 One of the more interesting aspects of the crop circle mystery is the large number that have appeared around Stonehenge and Avebury, the sites of two huge stone monuments built hundreds of years ago. Did the builders of these monuments, the ancient Druids, know something we don't?

11 In 1991, Doug Bower and Dave Chorley, two Englishmen, claimed they had made many of the crop circles found in England themselves. They even went on television to demonstrate how it was done. They used sets of ropes to measure out the dimensions and wooden planks to crush the plants down.

The sets of circles they made looked very convincing.

12 Not everyone believes that Bower and Chorley are responsible, and most cereologists argue that it would be impossible for these two men to create the great number of circles that have appeared around the world. Circles are now reported in Great Britain, Japan, the USA, Canada, Holland, Africa, Asia, Australia, India and even Russia.

Everyone has his or her own theory and for now this mystery remains unsolved. What do you think causes the crop circles?

Questions

1 In a crop circle the plants are
a cut down.
b burnt out.
c bent over.

2 In this passage what is a woodcut most likely to be?
a a wood cutting tool
b a wooden carving
c an injury caused by wood

3 Crop circles really began to pick up in frequency in the
a 1960s.
b 1980s.
c 1990s.

4 Many "croppies" believe the circles may have been made by
a aliens.
b scientists.
c Bower and Chorley.

5 According to the this text, beams of light were seen above crop circles in
a England.
b Australia.
c Holland.

6 The crop circle mystery remains because
a there aren't enough circles to test.
b they don't occur everywhere in the world.
c each theory can be disputed in some way.

Vocabulary

Find words in the text that match the meanings below. The word is in the section shown in brackets.

- 7 A trick (3)
- 8 Unusual and strange (4)
- 9 Happened a short time ago (6)
- 10 Buildings or statues that represent something (10)
- 11 A set of ideas that explains something (12)

Alphabetical Order

The following words appear in the text. When placed in alphabetical order, which one would be **first**?

- 12 wheat, who, what, weather
- 13 created, crop, creature, circle
- 14 argue, alien, appearing, angle
- 15 recent, records, really, responsible

Back To The Text...

- 16 Another good name for this text would be:
a Funny Fields b Remarkable Rings
- 17 In section 9, "scientists have tested the soil directly under the circles ..." is
a fact. b opinion.
- 18 The purpose of this text is to
a inform. b persuade.

Sequencing

Chronologically, what occurred first? Choose **a** or **b**.

- 19 a Bower and Chorley demonstrated how to make circles.
b Two people saw white lights beaming down.
- 20 a The circles began to attract tourists.
b Woodcuts were made showing the 'mowing devil'.

Think About This

- 21 In section 10 the word *Druid* is likely to refer to
a a large building.
b a drawing carved in stone.
c a member of an old religious order.
- 22 In section 3 the word *twirling* is used as
a a noun. b a verb. c an adjective.
- 23 In section 9 the most important thing we learn is
a that more and more circles are appearing.
b that some people have suffered health issues.
c that aliens may be responsible for the circles.

Challenge Option

Design: Create and sketch your own set of crop circles.

