Who Built Stonehenge?

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the passage. Identify the central idea. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, write a short summary.

Stonehenge is an ancient circle of large, upright stones standing in the middle of a plain in England. Historians and anthropologist have long speculated about who built this structure and how they managed the construction. Some have mistakenly attributed Stonehenge to the Druids, a Celtic priesthood that existed around 55 B.C. The stones predate the Druids, though, by some 2,000 years and by the time of the Druids they were probably already ruins. Additionally, the Druids worshipped in forest temples and would not have needed a stone structure. Another explanation for Stonehenge is that its construction was started in the late Neolithic period (around 3000 BC) and finished by people who were part of an emerging economy at the time. This “new” kind of people were called Beaker Folk because they drank from pots and used metal. A third explanation for the construction of Stonehenge can be found in the legend of King Arthur. Geoffrey of Monmouth, in his *History of the Kings of Britain*, posits that the wizard Merlin brought the stones to the Salisbury Plain from Ireland. According to Geoffrey, following a massacre of 300 British noblemen by the Saxon leader, Hengest, the high king, Aurelius Ambrosius, wanted to create a fitting memorial to the slain men. Merlin suggested they go to Ireland in order to bring the Giant's Ring stone circle to Britain. As Geoffrey tells the story, the stones of the Giant's Ring were originally brought from Africa to Ireland by giants, and were used as a site for performing rituals and for healing. Led by King Uther and Merlin, the expedition arrived at the spot in Ireland. Since the Britons were unable to move the stones, Merlin transported them by magic and reassembled them in a great circle around the mass grave of the murdered men. Most recently, in 2012, members of the Stonehenge Riverside Project, announced their theory that Stonehenge marks the “unification of Britain,” a point in time when people from across the island began working together and living in similar domestic styles. The strength of this theory is that it offers a plausible explanation for the labor and resources needed for the transportation and construction of the bluestones.

Central Idea: ___________________________