

# Lesson 3 How Archaeologists Study the Past

## MAIN IDEAS

**Science and Technology** Archaeologists are scientists who work to uncover the story of early people.

**Science and Technology** Archaeologists have found evidence that tells us a great deal about early humans.

**Culture** Human culture developed during the prehistoric period known as the Stone Age.

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## Finding Clues to the Past

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** How do archaeologists uncover the story of early peoples?

### Working Together

- Archaeologists are scientists who learn about early people
  - study traces of early settlements, prehistoric people
  - figure out the age, meaning of **artifacts**—human-made objects
- Anthropologists study culture—way of life of a group of people
  - study beliefs, common language, shared ways of doing things

### Studying Fossils

- Evidence of early people can be found in fossils
  - **fossils**—remains of early life preserved in ground
  - human fossils include pieces of teeth, skulls, other bones
- Archaeologists try to figure out ages of fossil remains, artifacts

### REVIEW QUESTION

What do archaeologists do?

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# The Search for Early Humans

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** What have archaeologists learned about early humans from the evidence they have found?

## Earliest Humans

- Most archaeologists believe humans began in East Africa
- Australopithecines were some of the earliest humanlike beings
  - called **hominids**—human, humanlike creatures that walk on two feet
  - australopithecines probably learned to walk 4.5 million years ago
- *Homo habilis* (“man of skill”) appeared about 2.5 million years ago
  - used stone tools to cut meat, crack open bones
- *Homo erectus* (“upright man”) appeared about 1.6 million years ago
  - may have developed into our species, *Homo sapiens* (“wise man”)

## Modern Humans

- *Homo sapiens* buried dead, made cave paintings, made sharper tools
  - later farmed, developed writing, built complex villages
- Cro-Magnons were physically modern *Homo sapiens*
  - first appeared about 35,000 years ago
  - migrated from North Africa to Europe and Asia

## Important Finds

- Louis, Mary Leakey found East African *Homo habilis* fossils in 1960
  - showed human evolution began in Africa
  - established that *Homo habilis* was human ancestor
- American Donald Johanson found Lucy in 1974
  - a mostly complete australopithecine skeleton
- Mary Leakey found first australopithecine footprints in 1978
- Leakeys’ son Richard became archaeologist
  - found 1.6 million-year-old *Homo erectus* skeleton in 1984
  - one of most complete skeletons ever found
- American Tim White found fossils of new hominid species in 1990s
- A team found 6- to 7-million-year-old hominid skull in Chad in 2002
  - skull is from earliest human ancestor discovered so far

## REVIEW QUESTION

What are the names of some early hominids?

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# The Stone Age

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** Who lived and what happened during the prehistoric period known as the Stone Age?

## Prehistoric Period of Achievements

- Stone Age period saw important achievements
  - use of tools, mastery of fire, development of language and farming
- Stone Age is divided into three phases:
  - **Paleolithic Age**—Old Stone Age, about 2.5 million to 8000 B.C.
  - **Mesolithic Age**—Middle Stone Age, about 10,000 to 6000 B.C.
  - **Neolithic Age**—New Stone Age, about 8000 to 3000 B.C.
- Farming developed in Neolithic Age
  - people settled down and built communities, stopped wandering
  - skills, tools for adapting to environment more sophisticated

## REVIEW QUESTION

What achievements occurred during the Stone Age?

## Lesson Summary

- Studying ancient artifacts and fossils helps reveal early human history.
- The first humanlike creatures developed in Africa.
- During the Stone Age, people began to use tools, control fire, speak, grow crops, and raise animals.

## Why It Matters Now...

Learning about our common beginnings can help people see that our similarities outweigh our differences.