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.

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?
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?
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.