

# The Stone Ages and Early Cultures

## Lesson 1



### MAIN IDEAS

1. Scientists study the remains of early humans to learn about prehistory.
2. Hominids and early humans first appeared in East Africa millions of years ago.
3. Stone Age tools grew more complex as time passed.
4. Hunter-gatherer societies developed language, art, and religion.

### Key Terms and People

**prehistory** the time before there was writing

**hominid** an early ancestor of humans

**ancestor** a relative who lived in the past

**tool** any handheld object that has been modified to help a person accomplish a task

**Paleolithic Era** the first part of the Stone Age

**society** a community of people who share a common culture

**hunter-gatherers** people who hunt animals and gather wild plants, seeds, fruits, and nuts to survive

### Lesson Summary

#### SCIENTISTS STUDY REMAINS

Humans have lived on the earth for more than a million years, but writing was not invented until about 5,000 years ago. Historians call the time before writing **prehistory**. Historic time periods began when people started writing letters, words, and numbers. To study prehistory, historians rely on the work of other experts.

Archaeologists have found old bones that appear to belong to **hominids**, early **ancestors** of humans. Discoveries of ancient bones give us information about early humans and their ancestors, but not all scientists agree on the meaning of these discoveries. Geographers and other types of scientists study prehistory, too, to learn about human migration.

**Why is prehistory different from historic time periods?**

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Lesson 1, *continued*

**HOMINIDS AND EARLY HUMANS**

As time passed, hominids became more like modern humans. Many scientists think that the first modern humans appeared in Africa about 200,000 years ago. Scientists call these early humans *homo sapiens*, or “wise man.” Every person alive today belongs to this group.

What do scientists call modern humans?

**STONE AGE TOOLS**

During the **Paleolithic** (pay-lee-uh-LI-thik) Era, the first part of the Stone Age, people used sharpened stones as **tools**. Stone tools were probably used to cut, chop, and scrape roots, bones, or meat. Later, people made tools out of flint. They also learned how to attach wooden handles to sharp stones to make hand axes and spears.

What is one advantage to attaching a wooden handle to a stone tool? Draw a picture if it will help you visualize the tool.

**HUNTER-GATHERER SOCIETIES**

Anthropologists believe that early humans lived in small groups of **hunter-gatherers**. In these **societies**, men hunted and women collected plants to eat and took care of children. Children also did things to help. These societies developed cultures with language, art, and religion. Language developed as a way to communicate and resolve problems like how to distribute food. Scholars are not sure why societies developed art and religion.

What cultural element did Stone Age societies develop as a means of communicating and resolving issues?

**CHALLENGE ACTIVITY**

**Critical Thinking: Draw Conclusions** Many years from now, an archaeologist discovers your house with nothing in it but old furniture, appliances, tools, and bits of clothing. Write a short essay describing some conclusions the archaeologist might draw from these artifacts.

Lesson 1, *continued*

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ancestor	hominid	hunter-gatherers	Paleolithic Era
prehistory	society	tool	

**DIRECTIONS** Write a word or short phrase that has the same meaning as the term given.

1. ancestor \_\_\_\_\_
2. hominid \_\_\_\_\_
3. hunter-gatherers \_\_\_\_\_
4. Paleolithic Era \_\_\_\_\_
5. prehistory \_\_\_\_\_
6. society \_\_\_\_\_
7. tool \_\_\_\_\_

**DIRECTIONS** Choose five of the vocabulary words from the word bank. Use these words to write a summary of what you learned in the lesson.

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