

The Stone Ages and Early Cultures

Section 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

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

society a community of people who share a common culture

Academic Vocabulary

distribute to divide among a group of people

Section Summary

SCIENTISTS STUDY REMAINS

Although humans have lived on the earth for more than a million years, writing was not invented until about 5,000 years ago. Historians call the time before there was writing **prehistory**. To study prehistory, historians rely on the work of archaeologists and anthropologists.

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.

What do historians call the time before there was writing?

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?

Continued The Stone Ages and Early Cultures

STONE AGE TOOLS

During the **Paleolithic** (pay-lee-uh-LI-thik) **Era**, which lasted until about 10,000 years ago, people used sharpened stones as **tools**. Stone tools were probably used to cut, chop, and scrape roots, bones, or meat. Later, people 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. These societies developed cultures with language, religion, and art. Language developed as a means of communicating and of resolving issues like how to **distribute** food.

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

Questions:

1. **Explain:** Why do historians need archaeologists and anthropologists to study prehistory?

2. **Inference:** What might have been one advantage for walking completely upright?

3. **Design:** Design a stone and wood tool you could use to help you with your chores. Describe your tool using one or two sentences.

