

CHAPTER 1 Section 1 (pages 5–13)

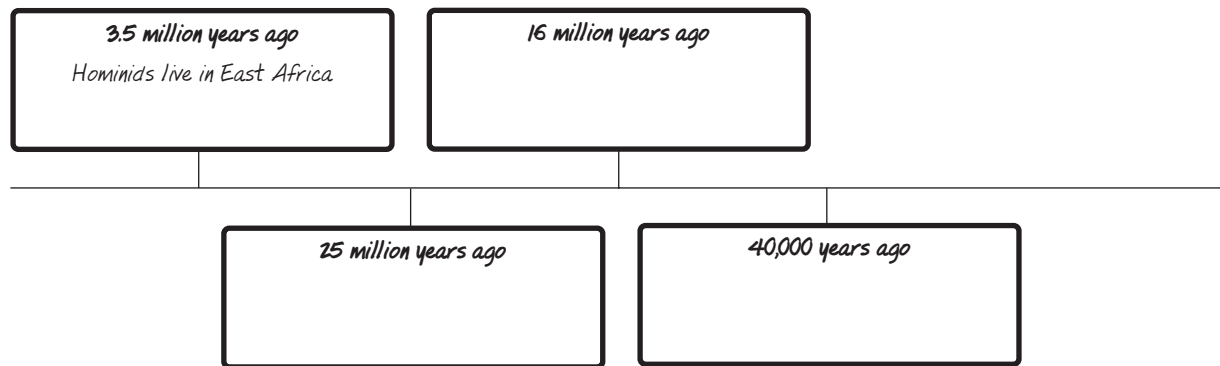
Human Origins in Africa

BEFORE YOU READ

In this section, you will read about the earliest humans.

AS YOU READ

Use the time line below to take notes on the earliest humans.



TERMS AND NAMES

artifact Remains, such as tools, jewelry, and other human-made objects

culture People's way of life

hominid Human or other creature that walks upright

Paleolithic Age Old Stone Age

Neolithic Age New Stone Age

technology Ways of applying knowledge, tools, and inventions to meet needs

Homo sapiens Species name for modern humans

Scientists Search for Human Origins (pages 5–7)

How do scientists learn about early humans?

People can learn about the past by using written records. But these records cover only the last 5,000 years or so of human life. To learn about the time before written records, scientists called *archaeologists* use special skills and tools.

Archaeologists work at places called *digs*. They uncover **artifacts**: tools, jewelry, or other things made by people. Archaeologists also dig up bones—the bones of ancient humans and of the animals that lived with them. Some of these bones have become *fossils*, meaning they have survived over time because they were preserved in stone. By studying bones and artifacts, scientists learn about the **culture**, or way of life, of early humans.

In the early 1970s, archaeologists in East Africa found the footprints of humanlike beings, called *australopithecines*. Humans and other creatures that walk upright, such as australopithecines, are called **hominids**. These footprints were made about 3.5 million years ago.

Because these early beings walked upright, they could travel long distances more easily than four-footed ones. They could also use their free arms to carry food, tools, and children. They also had an *opposable thumb* that could move across the palms of their hands and touch their other fingers. The opposable thumb allowed them to pick up and hold objects.

Analyzing Key Concepts: Culture

Culture is the way of life of a group of people.

1. What were the first humanlike beings, and where were they found?

The Old Stone Age Begins (pages 7–8)

What advances did hominids make during the Stone Age?

Humans made important advances during a period called the Stone Age, when people used tools made of stone. At this time, they also began to use fire and learned to speak.

Scientists divide the Stone Age into two parts. The **Paleolithic Age**, or Old Stone Age, began about 2.5 million years ago and lasted until about 8000 B.C. The **Neolithic Age**, or New Stone Age, went from about 8000 B.C. to around 3000 B.C.

Much of the Old Stone Age overlapped the Ice Age, when the earth was colder than it is now. Huge sheets of ice—*glaciers*—covered much of the land. About 10,000 years ago, the earth’s temperature increased. The ice sheets grew smaller. People began to roam wider stretches of land.

In East Africa, archaeologists found a hominid fossil they named *Homo habilis*. It means “man of skill.” The fossil was given this name because the site also held tools made of lava rock. *Homo habilis* lived about 2.5 million years ago.

About 1.6 million years ago, another kind of hominid lived. This one was *Homo erectus*. *Homo erectus* began to use tools for special purposes. That is when **technology** began. *Homo erectus* dug for food in the ground, cut meat from animal bones, and scraped animal skins. *Homo erectus* also used fire and may have had spoken language.

2. Who were *Homo habilis* and *Homo erectus*?

The Dawn of Modern Humans; New Findings Add to Knowledge (pages 8–13)

Who were the Neanderthals and Cro-Magnons?

Many scientists believe that *Homo erectus* eventually developed into humans, or ***Homo sapiens***.

Scientists once thought that Neanderthals were ancestors of modern humans but no longer do. These hominids appeared 200,000 years ago. They lived in caves or built shelters of wood or animal skins. At one time, they were thought to be rough and wild people. Now scientists think that they may have held religious beliefs. These people found ways to survive the freezing cold of the Ice Age. About 30,000 years ago, though, the Neanderthals strangely disappeared.

About 10,000 years before these people vanished, the *Cro-Magnons* appeared. Their bodies were just like those of modern people. Scientists think that these people worked with one another in planning large-scale hunts of animals. They may have also had more skill at speaking than did the Neanderthals. Because they had these skills, the *Cro-Magnons* were better at finding food. That may explain why *Cro-Magnons* survived and Neanderthals did not.

Scientists are continuing to work on many sites in Africa. New discoveries continually add to what we know about human origins.

3. How is the species *Homo sapiens* different from earlier hominids?
