THE FIRST PEOPLE

The first people did not live the way we live today. They did not grow food or live in houses. They did not read or write. In this chapter we will learn how the first people lived.

Archaeologists help us learn about people of long ago. Archaeologists are men and women who dig into the earth. They find and study the bones of people who lived thousands of years ago. The bones tell how people of long ago looked and how they lived. Archaeologists have also found animal bones from long ago. Some of these bones were used as tools for hunting.

Archaeologists have found tools used by people who lived during the Stone Age. It is called the Stone Age because most of the tools were made of stone. Stone tools lasted longer and were stronger than tools made of bone or wood.

The Stone Age began more than 2,000,000 years ago. It ended about 5,000 years ago. The people who lived then are called Stone Age people. For thousands of years, Stone Age people spent most of their time looking for food. They did not know how to grow food. They found wild berries and nuts to eat. Most people were hunters. They killed animals for food. They made clothes from animal skins. Sometimes they made tools from animal bones.

People of the Stone Age learned to use fire. Fire gave heat and light. Stone Age people used fire to help them cook food and keep warm. Fire also kept people safe. Dangerous animals stayed away from fire at night.

For thousands of years, Stone Age people moved from place to place looking for food. They stayed in one place as long as there was food. When they could no longer find food, they moved to another place. They usually stayed near rivers. There were more animals and plants near rivers. Most Stone Age people moved many times. They did not build houses.

An archaeologist works slowly and carefully to remove old bones and tools from the earth
Stone Age people sometimes lived in caves. They built fires in their caves to keep warm. Some people knew how to paint pictures. They made pictures on the walls of their caves. We can learn more about Stone Age people from the pictures they painted.

After thousands and thousands of years, Stone Age people learned how to grow their own food. This was the start of the **agricultural revolution**. The agricultural revolution was a change in the way people got their food. People learned to plant seeds to grow fruits and vegetables for food.

People became farmers. As time passed, they grew more and more food. Sometimes they grew enough food to feed wild animals. People began to **tame** dogs, goats, sheep, and cows. Some of these animals helped families with their work. Sometimes people killed the animals for food.

The agricultural revolution changed the lives of Stone Age people. Stone Age farmers did not have to move from place to place to hunt animals. They could live in one place. They lived on small farms. Some people built small mud houses on their farms. Sometimes people built their homes close together in small villages. Then they could work together and learn from each other.

Stone Age farmers needed water to grow food.

Many times there was not enough rain. Farmers began to build their farms near rivers. They used river water to grow food.

As time passed, Stone Age people learned better ways to grow food. They made better stone tools. Stone Age people did not know how to make metal tools. They did not know how to read or write. After many years people in some parts of the world began to do these things. You will read about some of these people in the next chapters.
USING WHAT YOU LEARNED

Using Vocabulary

Chose the word or words in **bold** to best complete each sentence. Write the word or words on the correct blank line.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tamed</th>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Archaeologists</th>
<th>Agricultural</th>
<th>Stone Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. Men and women who study old bones to learn about people of long ago are called ____________________________.

2. Stone Age ____________________________ were items that were used for hunting or farming.

3. The ____________________________ was a period of millions of years in which most people used stones or animal bones to make tools.

4. The ____________________________ revolution was a change in the way Stone Age people got their food.

5. Stone Age farmers ____________________________ wild animals by giving them food to make them less afraid.

Read and Remember

Write the Answer Write one or more sentences to answer each question.

6. When was the Stone Age?
   _____________________________________________________________

7. How did the Stone Age people use the animals they killed?
   _____________________________________________________________

8. How did fire help Stone Age people?
   _____________________________________________________________

9. Why did Stone Age people start their farms near rivers?
   _____________________________________________________________
Understanding Continents and Oceans
We live on the planet Earth. Earth has large bodies of land called continents. There are seven continents. Earth also has four large bodies of water called oceans. The four oceans separate some of the continents. Look at the map.

On a separate sheet of paper, list the four oceans and the seven continents.

Then answer each question below.

1. Which two continents do not touch any other continents?

2. Which ocean separates Africa and Australia?

3. Which five continents have coasts along the Atlantic Ocean?

Using Map Directions
The four main directions are north, south, east, and west. On maps these directions are shown by a compass rose. The compass rose shortens the directions to N, S, E, and W. Study the map above. Find the compass rose. Then finish each sentence with north, south, east, or west.

4. South America is ____________________________ of Antarctica.

5. Africa is ____________________________ of Europe.

6. The Pacific Ocean is ____________________________ of Asia.


Journal Writing
Write a short paragraph that tells how the agricultural revolution changed the lives of Stone Age people.
Learning about the Past

Scientists believe that people have lived on earth for about 2 million years. During most of that time, people left no written records about themselves. That is because people did not develop writing until about 5000 years ago.

Scientists call the period before people learned to write prehistoric times.

- How do scientists learn about life during prehistoric times?
- How do scientists find the age of prehistoric remains?
- What does prehistoric art tell us about the people of long ago?

Key Words You will be using these words in this chapter.

- anthropologist
- artifact
- archaeologist
- theory

Detectives of the Past

Prehistoric people left no writings about themselves. So how do we know anything about them?

Archaeologists are scientists who study evidence, or clues, from the past. Some of those clues are objects that people made, such as tools and weapons. Other clues are the bones of human beings and animals.

Archaeologists are like detectives: They carefully study each "clue" they find. Then they develop theories, or explanations, about prehistoric people and the ways they lived.

The places where archaeologists find ancient objects and bones are called archaeological sites. Many sites are places where prehistoric people lived or buried their dead.

Some sites are found above ground. But most sites are buried deep underground. Archaeologists must excavate, or dig, to uncover those sites. Excavations often take many years and cost millions of dollars.

Archaeologists have excavated ancient camp sites, burial grounds, and entire villages in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

Looking Back

1. How do archaeologists learn about prehistoric people?
2. What are archaeological sites?
3. Thinking Deeper: Why do you think many sites are buried deep underground?
Clues to the Past

Archaeologists answer such questions by studying prehistoric artifacts.

Here’s an example of how archaeologists use artifacts to learn about the past: At Terra Amata, France, an archaeologist excavated a prehistoric camp site. He found the remains of twig huts covered with animal skins. Inside the huts were stone tools. That discovery and others like it told scientists that people made stone tools thousands of years ago.

At other sites in Europe, Africa, and Asia, archaeologists found more prehistoric remains. They found stone tools and tools made out of bone. They also found arrowheads and spearheads made out of stone and ivory. (People get ivory from the teeth and tusks of elephants, walruses, and other animals.)

In some places, archaeologists found bracelets and necklaces made out of shells, fish bones, and ivory. What do you think archaeologists learned about ancient people from those artifacts?

Bones Tell a Story

Ancient bones are another important clue to the past. Archaeologists can measure bones and skeletons, and estimate, or guess, the size of prehistoric people. Archaeologists can also learn about the shape of prehistoric people’s jaws, heads, arms, and legs from bones.

Archaeologists discovered this tomb in Central America, but was a burial place of a people called the Mayas. They lived over a thousand years ago. What do you think archaeologists can learn about the Mayas from the tomb?

Archaeologists have even found bones that show evidence of operations done with stone knives. They were surprised to learn how much some prehistoric people knew about surgery.

Animal bones also help archaeologists learn about prehistoric life. Often animal bones are found near camp sites. That tells archaeologist that prehistoric people probably used those animals for food.

1. What kinds of tools did prehistoric people use?

2. What kinds of weapons did they make?
Dating Bones and Artifacts

It is 1972. Richard Leakey, a British anthropologist, is looking for artifacts and bones at sites in Kenya, Africa.

Near Lake Turkana, Leakey discovers pieces of an ancient human skull. Later, scientists date, or find the age of, Leakey’s discovery. They estimate that the pieces are the remains of a human being who lived nearly 2 million years ago. Those are the oldest human remains ever found.

Carbon-14 Dating

Archaeologists use many different methods to date artifacts and bones.

One method the scientists use is carbon-14 dating. A chemist named Willard Libby developed the method in the late 1940s. The carbon-14 method is used to date human remains and the remains of plants and animals.

Carbon-14 dating works this way: All living things absorb, or take in, something called carbon-14. When a living thing dies, its remains begin to lose carbon-14 at a certain rate. When scientists find the remains, they measure how much carbon-14 is left. Then they can tell how old the remains are.

Carbon-14 dating can date remains as far back as 50,000 years. It cannot tell the exact age, but it can tell the age within a few hundred years.

Tree-Ring Dating

A method for dating an artifact made of wood is tree-ring dating. Tree-ring dating works this way: Scientists learn the age of the trees in the area where, the artifact was found. They do that by counting the trees' rings. (Each year a tree forms a new ring.)

Scientists then study the pattern of the tree rings. (A tree forms its rings in a certain pattern. For example, tree rings grow thicker in wet years.) Scientists match the pattern with the pattern of rings in the artifact. Then they know the age of the artifact.

Tree-ring dating gives an almost exact age for artifacts made of wood. But it can only date objects as far back as about 8000 years.

Looking Back

1. How do artifacts help archaeologists learn about prehistoric life?

2. What can archaeologists learn from ancient bones?

3. What did Richard Leakey discover?

4. What are some ways scientists date bones and artifacts?
Prehistoric Art

In September 1940, four teenage boys made an important discovery by accident. The boys were hunting in Lascaux woods in France. They came upon a hole in the ground that seemed to be the opening to a large cave.

Later, the boys climbed down and explored the cave. They used lanterns to light their way. They were amazed at what they saw. On the walls of the cave were paintings of large animals—deer bulls, oxen, horses, even a rhinoceros. One painting showed a bison killed by a spear.

News of the boys’ discovery spread quickly. Archaeologists came to study the paintings. They soon realized that the paintings in Lascaux cave were made by prehistoric people.

The Clues in the Painting

Archaeologists believe ancient artists made the Lascaux cave paintings 16,000 to 17,000 years ago. The paintings give some clues about life at that time.

The paintings show that some prehistoric people hunted deer, bison, and other animals for food. They show that hunters used spears to hunt. And the paintings show that some prehistoric people were skillful artists: The paintings are colorful and lifelike.

Archaeologists are not sure why the artists made the paintings. One theory is this: The artists were hunters who believed their drawings were magic. They drew an animal they wished to catch during a hunt. They believed that drawing the animal would help them catch it later.

The Lascaux cave is only one of many caves with prehistoric art. Cave paintings have been found in other parts of Europe and in Asia and North America.

Looking Back

1. What did the boys find in the cave at Lascaux?
2. What did archaeologists learn from the cave paintings?
3. What is one reason ancient artists might have made the paintings at Lascaux?
You read that scientists learn about prehistoric times by studying artifacts. Because most of those artifacts are made of stone, prehistoric times are commonly called the Stone Age.

Scientists divide the Stone Age into two periods: the Old Stone Age and the New Stone Age. The Old Stone Age began about 2 million years ago, when people first appeared. It ended about 10,000 years ago.

For people of the Old Stone Age, life was a fight for survival. But in that fight, people had a great weapon—the ability to think and learn. That ability helped people survive and improve their lives.

- Who were the earliest people?
- How did the earliest people live?
- What discoveries and inventions improved people's lives?
- What was early religion like?

Key Words You will be using these words in this chapter.

- adapt
- communicate
- ancestor
- migrate

The People of the Old Stone Age

Most scientists think the first people appeared about 2 million years ago in eastern Africa. The first people were very different from people today. They were less than five feet tall. They had large heads, teeth, and jaws. And they had small brains. But they were intelligent enough to make simple tools.

Scientists call the first humans *Homo habilis*. (That is the scientific name. It means "skillful humans.") Scientists think that after thousands of years, the first humans died out. They are not sure why.

Other Types of Humans Develop

About 1.5 million years ago, another type of human appeared in Africa. Those humans had smaller teeth and jaws and larger brains. Their legs were longer and straighter, more like the legs of modern humans. Scientists call those humans *Homo erectus*, or "upright humans."


In the mid-1800s, scientists found the remains of yet another type of human. Those humans looked much more like modern people. And their brains were as large as the brains of modern people.

Some scientists believe those people first appeared about 300,000 years ago. They believe they were the ancestors of modern human beings. Scientists call those people *Homo sapiens*, or "wise humans."

Looking Back

1. What were the first people like?

2. How did people change over time?
The Life of the Earliest People

People of the Old Stone Age spent most of their time searching for food. The very first people were food gatherers. They gathered food they found growing around them. They picked fruit from trees and dug roots from the ground. They also gathered seeds, wild grasses, and grains.

In time, people became hunters. At first, people had no weapons. They hunted only small animals they could catch by hand, such as birds, insects, turtles, and lizards. They also fished, probably catching the fish by hand.

The First Weapons and Tools

Early people made an important step forward when they began to use weapons. With weapons, people could fight off hungry animals. And they could increase their supply of food. People could now hunt larger animals, such as deer and bears.

The first weapons were probably sticks and stones people found on the ground. In time, people improved on those weapons. They learned to shape tree limbs into clubs. And they learned to give stones a sharp cutting edge by striking one stone against another. Early people also learned to make simple tools. The first tools were probably axes without handles called hand axes. Later, people made stone knives and scrapers. People used their tools to cut up animals they had killed and to clean and scrape animal hides for clothing.

Small Bands of People

The earliest people were nomads, or people who constantly moved from place to place in search of food. When they used up the supply of food in one place, they moved to a new place.

Very early, people learned the value of living in groups. In groups, people were safer from animal attacks, and from attacks by human enemies. And everyone in the group could help in the search for food.

The basic group was the family. The earliest people probably lived in small family groups made up of parents and their children. Later, people formed larger groups, or bands, made up of several families. There were probably from 20 to 30 people in a band.

Shelter and Clothing

Old Stone Age people usually camped out in the open. Some people built simple shelters out of tree branches, leaves, and animal hides. In cold climates, some people lived in caves.

In warm climates, people wore little or no clothing. In cold climates, they wore simple clothing made of leaves or hides.

Looking Back

1. How did early people get their food?

2. Why were weapons an important step forward for people?

3. What did people gain from living in groups?

4. What did early people do for shelter and clothing?
Discoveries and Inventions

During the Old Stone Age, people made discoveries and inventions that are still important to people today.

About 1.5 million years ago, people discovered how to make fire. People knew about fire from fires they saw in nature, such as those caused by lightning. But they did not know how to make fire. People probably first made fires by rubbing sticks together over dry leaves.

Fire had many important uses. It frightened off wild animals. It was used to cook meat, making the meat easier to chew and digest. It also provided warmth for people in cold climates.

Language

Anthropologists think people developed language during the Old Stone Age. Before language, people probably communicated by grunts and shouts. They also pointed and used hand signals.

Some anthropologists believe that language developed when people began to hunt in large groups. Hunters needed a way to communicate quickly and clearly to give instructions and warn each other of danger. Language helped hunters work together more easily.

Language helped people in other ways. People could more easily teach others what they had learned, such as how to make tools and weapons and where to find food. Storytellers also used language to pass along stories about their people.

Better Tools and Weapons

Over thousands of years, people learned to make better tools. About 200,000 years ago, people made the first flake tools. They made flake tools by chipping thin pieces, or flakes, from stones. The flakes had very sharp cutting edges. About 40,000 years ago, people made the first blade tools by shaping stones into sharp blades.

People also learned to make special tools for special jobs. Some tools were made just for cutting. Other tools were made for chopping or for boring holes. About 20,000 years ago, people used bones to make the first needles for sewing.

People also invented new weapons, such as the spear. People made spears by attaching sharp stone points to sticks. About 20,000 years ago, people invented the first bow and arrows. Old Stone Age people also made the first fishhooks and harpoons, or fishing spears.

Looking Back
1. How did early people use fire?
2. Why was language important?
3. What tools and weapons did people make?
Shaman Becomes Important

Among many early peoples, shamans, or priests, became important. People believed that shamans had a special relationship with the spirits. Shamans could speak to the spirits. And their songs, chants, and dances could influence or please the spirits.

Among some groups, for example, the shaman often danced before a hunt. The people believed the shaman’s dance pleased the spirits, who rewarded the people with a successful hunt.

Life after Death

In the mid-1800s, archaeologists in Germany found the remains of some Old Stone Age people. They called those people Neanderthals. (Archaeologists found the first remains near the Neander Gorge.) Later, archaeologists found Neanderthal remains in other parts of Europe and in Asia and Africa.

In the burial sites of the Neanderthals, scientists made an interesting discovery. They found that Neanderthals buried food, weapons, and tools with their dead. That seemed to show that Neanderthals believed the dead would need those things in a life after death.

Later, archaeologists found evidence that other prehistoric people seemed to believe in life after death.

Looking Back
1. How might religions have begun?
2. Why were shamans important?
3. What evidence seems to show that Neanderthals believed in life after death?

Early Religion

Many anthropologists believe that Old Stone Age people developed the earliest forms of religion.

Anthropologists are not sure why religions began. One theory is that religions began as a way for people to explain things they feared or did not understand. Some of those things were events in nature, such as lightning, floods, and earthquakes. Others were human events, such as birth and death.

People believed such events were under the control of spirits, or powers greater than humankind. Some people began to worship spirits they believed controlled the wind, rain, and other forces. Other people worshiped the sun, moon, and stars.
A World of Ice

Old Stone Age people lived during the Ice Ages. That was a time when the climate changed in many parts of the world. Temperatures became colder. Heavy snows fell. And glaciers, or large sheets of ice, formed at the North and South poles.

The glaciers slowly spread, covering huge areas of the earth. Then, after thousands of years, the climate became warmer. The glaciers melted, retreating back to the poles.

Scientists believe there were four different Ice Ages during the Old Stone Age. Look at the map at the top of the page. What parts of the world were covered by ice during the last Ice Age?

People Move to Warmer Lands

Life was hard for people during the Ice Ages. Many people living in cold climates died because of the freezing temperatures. Many others died of starvation when the cold killed the plants and animals that were their food.

Some people adapted to the cold weather by living in caves and wearing warmer clothes. Fire also helped them survive.

But many other people migrated to warmer lands. People migrated to Africa, southern Asia, and southern Europe. Near the end of the last Ice Age, people moved to two lands where people had never lived before—Australia and America.

Looking Back
1. What were the Ice Ages?
2. How did some people adapt to the colder weather?
3. Why did some people migrate to warmer lands?
During the Old Stone Age, people hunted and gathered their food. Then, about 11,000 years ago, people made a great discovery: They learned to produce their own food. People began to grow plants and raise animals for food. That was the beginning of farming.

The shift from food gathering to food producing brought great changes to people's lives. Scientists call this period of great change the New Stone Age.

- Where did farming begin?
- How did farming change the way people lived?
- What new jobs developed in farm villages?
- What discoveries brought an end to the Stone Age?

**Key Words**

- Agriculture
- Population
- settle
- transportation

**Farmers and Herders**

Historians believe that agiculture began in the ancient Middle East. The warm climate and fertile soil of the Middle East made it a good place for farming.

Scientists can only guess how farming began. One theory is this: Someone, probably a gatherer, noticed that plants grew where wild grains had been spilled by accident. The gatherer tried planting seeds from grains to see what would happen. And farming was born!

Farmers in the Middle East began to plant and harvest, (gather) grains, such as wheat and barley. Later, people in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas also learned to farm.

Some farmers of today use farming methods that are thousands of years old. This wheat farmer is winnowing, or cleaning, wheat much as New Stone Age farmers probably did.

**Some Hunters Become Herders**

At about the same time that people learned to farm, they also learned to domesticate, or tame, animals. Again, the people of the Middle East were probably the first to domesticate animals. They domesticated wild sheep and goats. In time, some people who were once hunters became herders. (Herders are people who care for large herds of animals.) Hunters could never be sure of finding game during a hunt. But herding provided people with a steady supply of meat and hides.

**Looking Back**

1. Where did farming probably begin?

2. How might farming have begun?

3. Why did many people who were once hunters become herders?
These drawings show how early metalworkers made a bronze sword. They used a mold to make the blade and handle. They then decorated the handle with wood and ivory.

A New Age Begins

Throughout the Old Stone Age, transportation was slow and difficult. People traveled mostly on foot, carrying goods on their backs or heads. People used rafts and canoes to travel on streams and rivers. But most of those craft were not sturdy enough for ocean travel.

The Sail and the Wheel

About 5000 years ago, New Stone Age people invented the sail and built the first sailboats. With sailboats, and favorable winds, people could travel more quickly. In time, people built sailing ships that were sturdy enough for ocean travel.

Probably the greatest advance in transportation came with the invention of the wheel. The wheel was invented about the same time as the sail.

The first wheeled vehicles were small carts that people pulled. Later, animals were used to pull larger carts. With wheeled carts, land travel became faster and easier.

The Age of Metals

Near the end of the New Stone Age, people made another great step forward. They began to use metals to make their tools and weapons.

Stone tools and weapons were difficult to shape and sharpen. Metal tools and weapons were easier to shape and had sharper cutting edges.

Copper was the first metal people learned to use. Then people discovered that copper, when mixed with tin, made a much stronger metal. That metal was bronze.

Not everyone in the ancient world learned to use bronze and other metals at the same time. Some people continued to use stone. But by about 5000 years ago, the Stone Age was over for many people, A new Age of Metals had begun.

Looking Back
1. What was transportation like during the Old Stone Age?
2. What inventions of the New Stone Age improved transportation?
3. What discoveries brought an end to the Stone Age?
4. Thinking Deeper: Some people say that today we live in an "Age of Plastics." How would you describe the age we live in