

Focus on World History

The Era of Early Civilizations and Empires

Kathy Sammis



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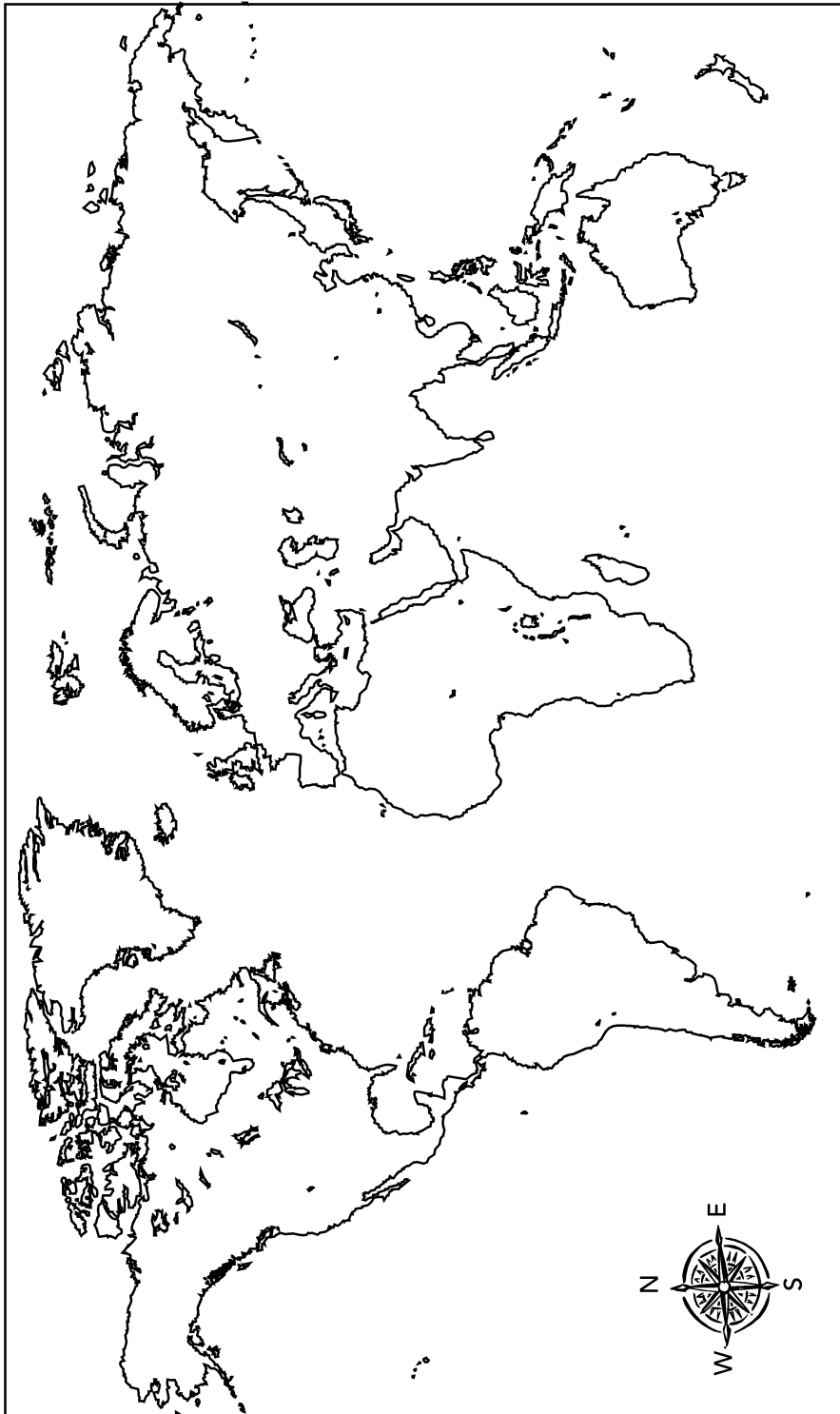
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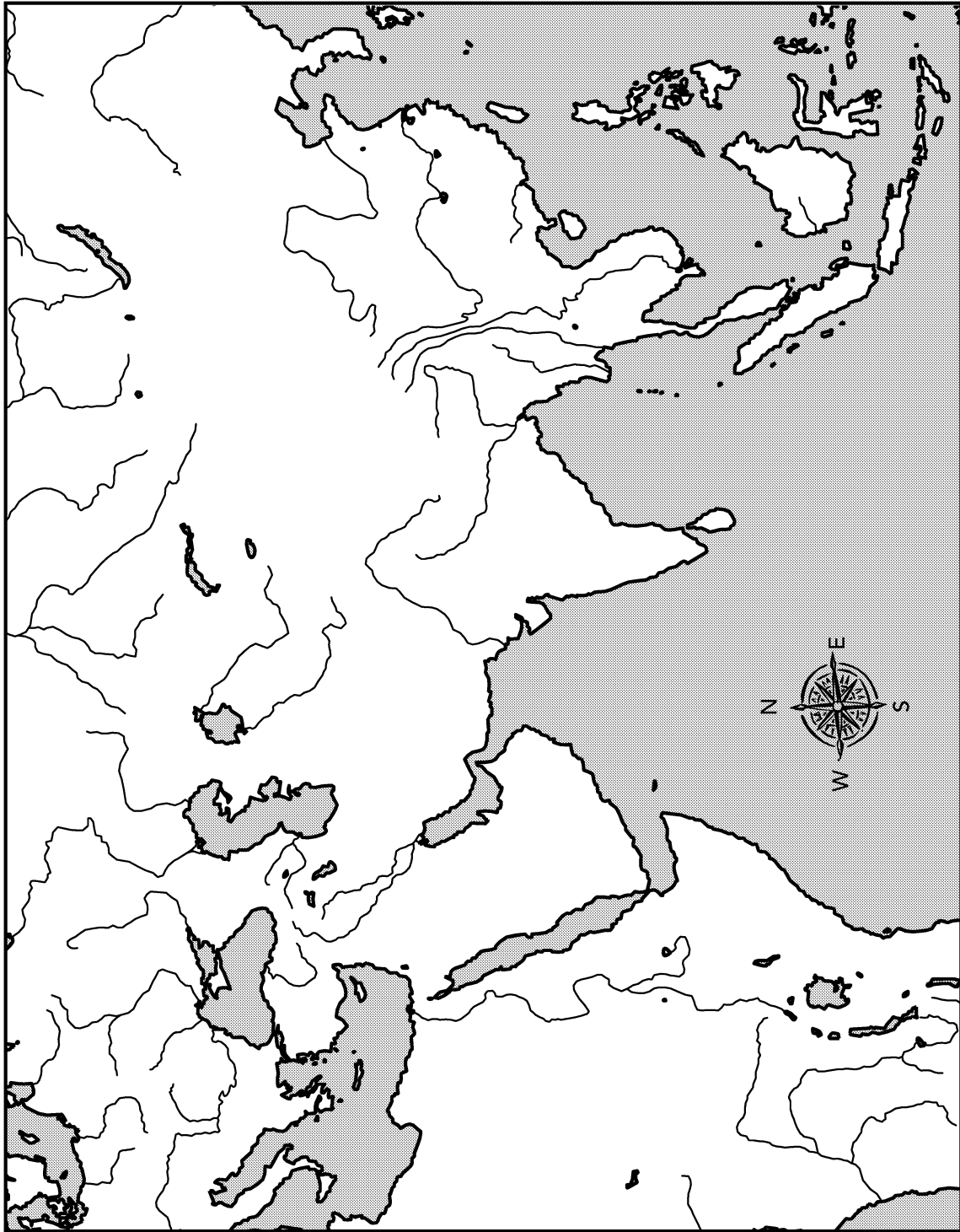
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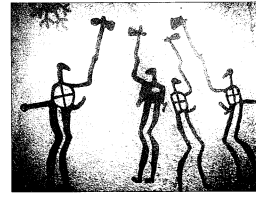
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Map of the World



Map of the Ancient World





Early Humans

The objectives of this unit are to help students understand what is currently known about the origins of human life, to examine the spread of human beings around the world, and to review the development of very early human societies. As far as we know today, human beings first emerged in Africa and developed in a series of ever-more-capable species until the emergence of *Homo sapiens sapiens*, the modern human being, in about 35,000 B.C.E. About seven hundred thousand to one million years ago, humans began to spread out of Africa.

The human ability to adapt to and manipulate all kinds of contrasting and changing environments

allowed humans eventually to inhabit every corner of the globe. Along the way, they learned to make and use various types of tools, they learned to speak, and they learned how to start and use fire. They formed kinship bands, produced paintings, and buried their dead. This primitive life of hunting and gathering lasted for millions of years, from the earliest human species to the end of the last Ice Age. This unit's activities are designed to draw students into a better understanding of these early beginnings of humankind and of how scientists learn about the facts of prehistory.

Student Activities

Human Beings Emerge presents the various types of hominids, from prehuman to *Homo sapiens sapiens*. Students identify the approximate date and place each type emerged, its main characteristics, and the ways in which it was better adapted for survival than the species that preceded it.

Human Beings Spread Across the World uses mapping to familiarize students with basic geographic features of the world that relate to human migration and also with locations where early human/hominid remains have been found. The worksheet also helps to reinforce students' knowledge of world geography.

Stone Age Tools uses pictures and questions to draw students into identification and understanding of types of Stone Age tools and of the process and significance of developing increasingly sophisticated tools.

Elements of Stone Age Life has students put themselves into the place of a Stone Age human being, describing given aspects of their daily life. Completed worksheets provide a valuable comparison exercise if you assign various students to describe hunter-gatherer communities in different locations around the world, as suggested in the Answer section.

Ötzi the Ice Man uses the remarkable discovery of a mummified Stone Age body in the Italian Alps to show students what kinds of information about early life we discover from archaeological and paleoanthropological finds. The Extra Challenge asks students to construct a biography of Ötzi or write a narrative about the last days of his life.

Discoverers of Prehistory has students identify the type of work done by four specialized fields of science concerned with finding evidence about prehistory. The Extra Challenge asks students to write a job description for one of these careers that they might be interested in pursuing.

Ongoing Discoveries presents summaries of three intriguing recent discoveries. One questions long-held ideas about when and where human beings first learned to use fire. Another yields possible evidence of migration of South Pacific people to the Americas before the arrival of Asian people across the Bering land bridge. The third reports on the discovery of a fossil skull that may challenge “Lucy” as the direct ancestor of modern humans. Directions for you in the Answer section will help you in getting students to begin an ongoing watch for other new discoveries in media of various kinds.



Early Humans

c. 3.5 million B.C.E. to 8000 B.C.E.

Hominid and Human Development

In 1974, Dr. Donald Johanson made a remarkable discovery in eastern Africa. He found a largely complete skeleton of a human-like creature. This young female had lived about 3.5 million years ago. Dr. Johanson and his coworkers nicknamed her Lucy. She was a **hominid** (member of the human family) of the type *Australopithecus afarensis* (African southern ape). Lucy and others of her kind were probably the earliest ancestors of human beings. They walked upright but were quite short. Their brains were the size of apes' brains. *Australopithecus afarensis* occupied many parts of Africa 3 to 4 million years ago.

Between 2 and 3 million years ago, a new **species** and genus emerged. It is called *Homo habilis*, or “skillful human.” Its brain was 50 percent larger than the brain of australopithecines. *Homo habilis* had enough brain power to use stones as simple tools and to eat a more varied diet.

Where did Lucy get her name? Back at camp, Dr. Johanson and his coworkers were playing a tape of the Beatles' song “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds.” Lucy has an Ethiopian name too: Dinqinesh, “thou art wonderful.”

Another new species emerged in eastern Africa about 1.6 million years ago. It is called *Homo erectus*, or “upright human.” The brain of *Homo erectus* was 30 percent larger than the brain of *Homo habilis*. *Homo erectus* used this greater brain power to learn many new skills. It

found out how to control and use fire. It began to hunt large game animals. It learned to make and use hand axes and chopping tools. The body of *Homo erectus* was like a short, stocky version of today's people. The face, however, had a low, sloping forehead, heavy brow ridges, and a receding chin. By about one million years ago, australopithecines and *Homo habilis* no longer existed.

Next came *Homo sapiens* (“wise human”), sometime between 100,000 and 400,000 years ago. The brain of *Homo sapiens* was 30 percent larger than the brain of *Homo erectus*. *Homo sapiens* could speak. It used more sophisticated tools. A subtype was *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis*, the familiar “Neanderthal human.” Its head had the apelike features of *Homo erectus*.

Finally came the modern human species, *Homo sapiens sapiens*. These people emerged around 35,000 to 40,000 years ago. The people of today are *Homo sapiens sapiens*.

Hominids
<i>Homo sapiens sapiens</i> 35,000–40,000 years ago
<i>Homo sapiens</i> 100,000–400,000 years ago
<i>Homo erectus</i> 1.6 million years ago
<i>Homo habilis</i> 2–3 million years ago
<i>Australopithecus afarensis</i> 3–4 million years ago

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Focus on World History:

The Era of Early Civilizations and Empires

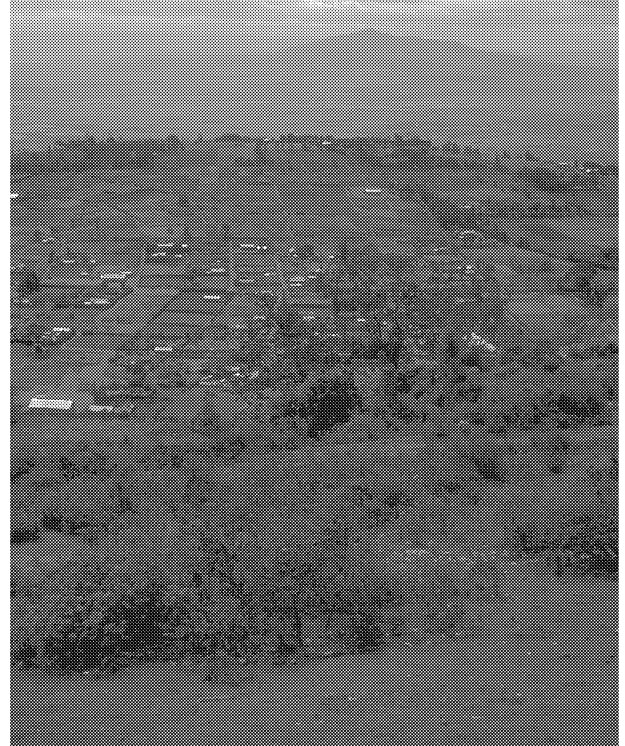


Early Humans *(continued)*

Human Movement Across the Globe

Human beings developed in Africa and stayed there for millions of years. Sometime after about a million years ago, *Homo erectus* began to spread to lands outside of Africa. These people settled widely across Asia and Europe between around 300,000 and 700,000 years ago. *Homo sapiens* and *Homo sapiens sapiens* also probably first appeared in Africa and then spread outward. *Homo sapiens sapiens* displaced Neanderthals in Europe around 30,000 years ago. They also moved into Australia and New Guinea. They took advantage of land bridges (where there is sea today) to **migrate** into Japan and into the Americas from northeastern Asia.

Wherever these early humans went, they were able to adapt to the environment they found. This is a key reason why the species *Homo* came to dominate the globe. People were able to use their mental powers to figure out ways to survive, no matter what conditions they lived in.



Great Rift Valley, Kenya.
Area where many hominid remains
have been found.

Early Human Culture

Prehistoric human beings lived up through the last cold period of the **Ice Age**, which ended about 10,000 years ago. They didn't leave any written records, because writing hadn't been invented yet. But they left many tools. They would have made their tools out of a variety of materials, but most of those that survive are made of stone. Because of this, these years of prehistory are often called the **Stone Age**. Other evidence about Stone Age life comes from rock paintings, pottery, burial sites, animal bones, and carvings.

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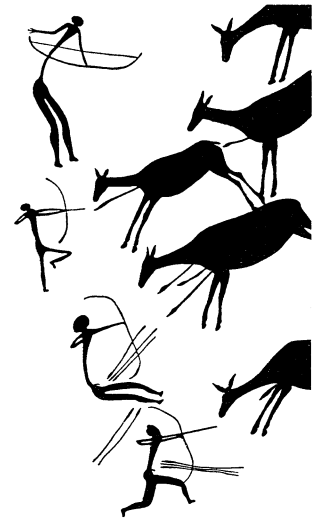
Early Humans *(continued)*

Early human groups were made up of small bands of people. These bands would include several sets of two-parent families, plus children and older and unmated people. Their main task was gathering wild foods to eat. They also hunted wild animals for meat to add to their plant diet. They banded together for protection, for help in caring for children, and to help each other secure enough food to survive. They were **nomadic**—they moved around a lot, following the patterns of ripening plants and migrating animals. They sheltered in huts made of available materials, in dry river beds, under rock overhangings, in caves. People who lived near rivers, lakes, or seas often stayed right there. They didn't need to move around because food was abundant in those waters year-round.

Early humans made many tools. At first, the tools were simple. Then they became more and more complex and useful. *Homo habilis*, for instance, made sharp tools by chipping flakes off hard rocks. *Homo erectus* made and used all-purpose hand axes. *Homo sapiens* made special tools for particular uses, like saws, chisels, and

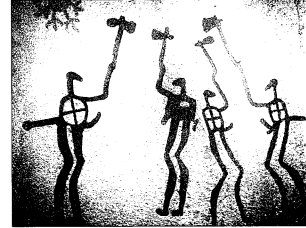
needles. They recorded their way of life in vivid drawings and paintings on the rock walls of their homes. They also buried their dead in graves to which they added pottery, food, and tools—even flowers. Adding items to a grave suggests a belief in an afterlife, a belief that the dead person will need these things in another world.

This hunting-and-gathering Stone Age way of life lasted for millions of years. When people began growing their own food and herding their own animals, the Stone Age gave way to the agricultural age. That, in its turn, led to the first civilizations. You'll learn about those changes in Units 2 and 3.



Human Beings Emerge

Directions: Listed below are the various types of hominids, from prehuman to the species that is the modern human. For each, give the approximate date and place the species emerged, its main characteristics, and the main way(s) in which it was better adapted for survival than the species that came before it.



1. *Australopithecus afarensis* (African southern ape)

Date, place: _____

Characteristics, adaptations: _____

2. *Homo habilis* (“skillful human”)

Date, place: _____

Characteristics, adaptations: _____

3. *Homo erectus* (“upright human”)

Date, place: _____

Characteristics, adaptations: _____

4. *Homo sapiens* (“wise human”)

Date, place: _____

Characteristics, adaptations: _____

5. *Homo sapiens sapiens* (“wise wise human”)

Date, place: _____

Characteristics, adaptations: _____

