

Learning About Our Past



As a Young Historian, I will be able to...

- Learn how scholars study the historical past.
- Find out how anthropologists investigate the period of prehistory.
- Understand how discoveries in Africa and beyond have influenced anthropologists' views about early humans and their ancestors.

Studying Prehistory

Prehistory- The long period of time before people invented writing.

Historians- Experts who study how people lived in the historical past.

Artifacts- Objects made by humans such as clothing, coins, graves, & artwork.

Historians rely more on written records & interpret the evidence, then explain it.

Historians try to give straightforward accounts, however sometimes will debate.

Historians write & study deeds of people, battles, political events, the economy, sociology, and psychology.

Anthropology- Study of humans, past & present.

**Goal is to learn about people's
origins & development of people &
their societies**

**Anthropologists specialize in fields,
such as human bones and human
culture**

Culture- The way of life of a society
which includes its beliefs, values, &
practices

There are two ways to date materials...

Relative Methods- compare &
determine ages of materials by
others

Absolute Method- Determining the exact
age of objects; Measures carbon-14

The Field of *Archaeology*

**The study of past people & cultures
through their material remains**

**Remains include tools, weapons,
pottery, clothing, & jewelry.**

**Buildings & tombs are examined as
well.**

Archaeologists at Work

**Sometimes they would, & still do, dig
up remains.**

**Now they can make detailed maps
& they can tell about activities &
living quarters.**

Scientists Help Archeologists

Geologists can date the age of rocks found in an area to study the age of materials

Botanists (plant experts)- can examine seeds.

Zoologists (animal experts)- can examine animal bones

Climate experts can determine conditions that people lived through

Biologists can analyze bones to determine age, gender, & hereditary

Chemists & Physicists have developed techniques that measure radioactivity.

Discoveries in Africa & Beyond

Mary & Louis Leakey- searched for clues in the 1930s in the **Olduvai Gorge** for clues to humans past.

They discovered ancient tools & **Technology**-skills & tools people use to meet their basic needs & wants

In 1974, **Donald Johanson** discovered an early hominid skeleton which he named “Lucy”

Lucy gave evidence of our early, upright walking, ancestors.

Early Hominid Groups

Homo Habilis- “Handy Man” showed that early hominids made tools

Homo erectus- “Upright man” showed hominids who walked upright with a large brain who may have discovered fire.

Evidence of Homo Sapiens

Homo Sapiens- early group to which humans belong.

Scholars have many theories if they came “Out of Africa” or developed around the world

Neanderthals evolved about the same time but disappeared.