

Module 1: Early Humans – The Paleolithic and Neolithic Eras

Topic 1 Content: The Paleolithic Era

Introduction

THE PALEOLITHIC ERA



Hypothesize why early humans moved from place to place. Then click the NEXT button to continue.



The lifestyle of early humans was very dependent upon their environment since they relied on hunting and gathering food for survival. Keeping this in mind, can you hypothesize why the early humans moved from place to place? Click the NEXT button to continue.

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Nomadic People

NOMADIC PEOPLE

FACTS

Paleolithic Era/Stone Age


2.5 million years ago - 10,000 B.C.E.


Searched for food, water, shelter

Men hunted and fished

Women gathered berries, fruits, grains

Unpredictable and unfavorable





If you hypothesized that early humans moved to different locations when they needed better food sources, you were likely correct.

The early period of human history is known as the Paleolithic Era, or Old Stone Age. It extends from around 2.5 million years ago until 10,000 B.C. (B.C.E.). During this time, humans were *nomadic*, meaning they moved from place to place in search of food, water, and shelter. Men hunted and fished; and women gathered berries, fruits, and grains. The life of a nomadic hunter-gatherer was unpredictable and often unfavorable. How did Paleolithic people survive in these difficult conditions? Click the NEXT button to find out.

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Tools



As they encountered obstacles in their physical environment, early humans made advancements in culture to make their lives easier. The Paleolithic Era saw the invention of some of the first bone, stone, and wooden tools, including simple weapons. Using hard pieces of wood or bone, the early humans chipped away at stone to make sharp objects useful for hunting and cleaning animals for food, and for defense against predators.

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Fire

FIRE

FACTS

- Defrosting meat
- Cooking prey
- Warmth
- Protection



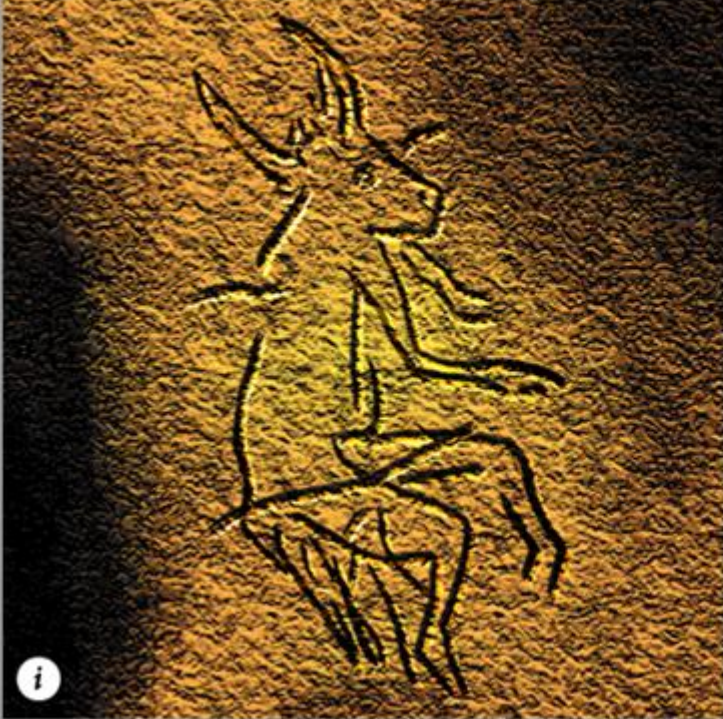


Early humans also discovered fire during the Paleolithic Era, and it was useful for many daily tasks. For example, fire provided a method of defrosting meat to eat, as well as a way to cook prey caught by a clan. Furthermore, fire provided warmth and protection against predators.

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Clans, Communication, and Caves

CLANS, COMMUNICATION & CAVES



THINK ABOUT

What does this suggest about the ability of early humans to communicate and work together?

Why do you think the image was imprinted on a cave wall?

(Note: A small information icon 'i' is visible in the bottom left corner of the image area.)

Take a moment to examine this image. What does this image suggest about the ability of early humans to communicate and work together? Why do you think the image was imprinted on a cave wall?

Click NEXT when you are ready to continue.

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Clans, Communication, and Caves Continued

CLANS, COMMUNICATION & CAVES

FACTS

- Clans
- Oral language
- Communication on cave walls
- Religious or spiritual
- Teach young hunters

(Background image shows cave art depicting various animals like horses and bison.)

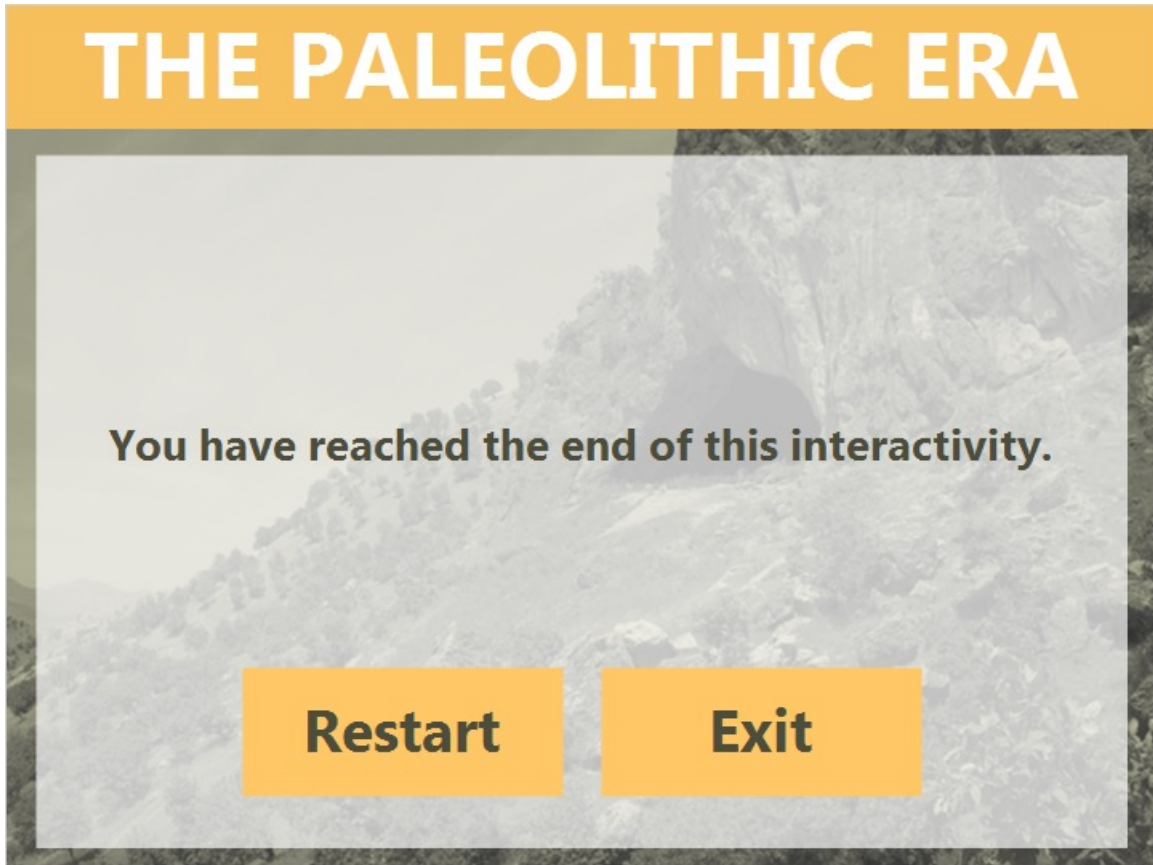
(Information icon in the bottom left corner.)

In order to protect themselves against predators, early humans organized themselves into small groups, or *clans*, of twenty to thirty people. Since it is important for social groups to communicate, an *oral language* allowed early humans to share information and advancements between groups. In fact, evidence dating back to about 30,000 years ago reveal that early humans communicated on the walls of caves. This cave art was an important part of Paleolithic culture; and paintings of animals and stick people have also been discovered on cave walls in Algeria, France and Australia.

Prehistoric paintings probably served a more meaningful role beyond depicting daily life. Specifically, cave art may have had a religious or spiritual purpose. Perhaps some acted like a textbook to help young hunters identify different animals and techniques of hunting. The use of pictures to communicate information represents an important first step in the development of writing.

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Conclusion



You have reached the end of this interactivity.