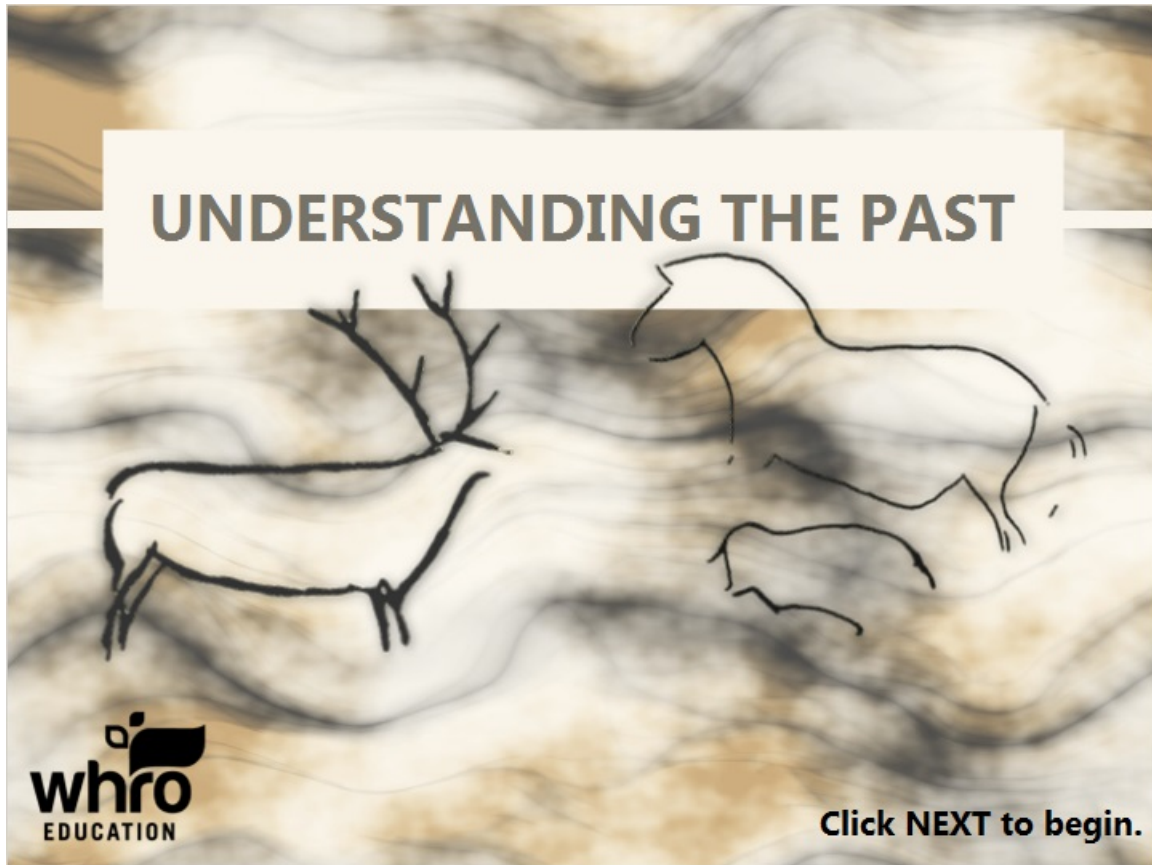


Module 1: Early Humans – The Paleolithic and Neolithic Eras
Topic 1 Content: Understanding the Past

Introduction



Click the NEXT button to learn the various ways scientists understand the past.

Module 1: Early Humans – The Paleolithic and Neolithic Eras

Topic 1 Content: Understanding the Past

Archaeologists



Examine the origins of development

Find and analyze material remains

Artifacts are objects made by human beings

Conclude about beliefs, values, and activities

Archaeologists

Archaeology is a specialized branch of study whereby scientists examine the origins and development of people and their societies. Specifically, archaeologists find and analyze the material remains of human cultures to learn about prehistoric people. They study **artifacts**, which are objects made by human beings. Examples of artifacts include pottery, tools, weapons, and jewelry. By examining artifacts and other items, archaeologists draw conclusions about the beliefs, values, and activities of people from the past.

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Paleontologists



Study fossils

Examples of fossils:

Fragments of teeth, skulls, or other bones

Impressions of footprints, shells, or leaves

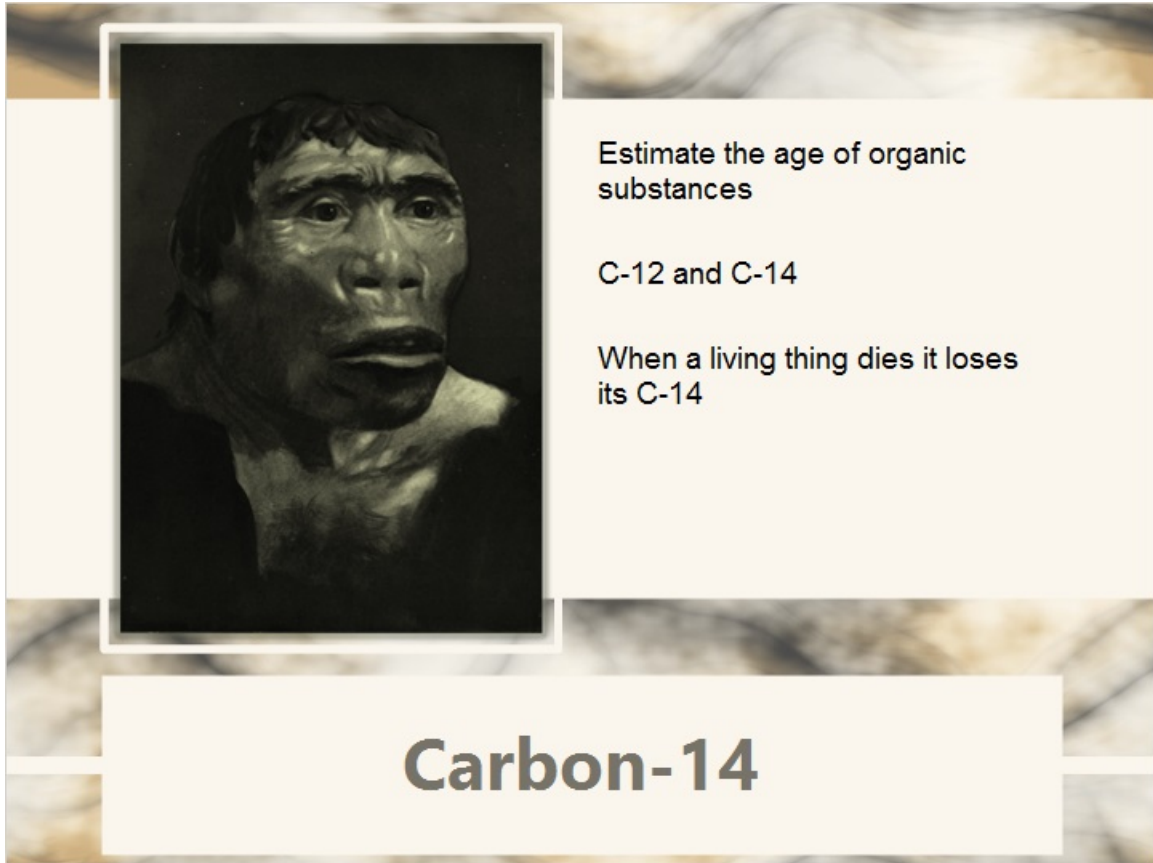
Image: Early human remains found in 1959 in Tanzania, Africa

Paleontologists

Another type of scientist, called a paleontologist, studies **fossils**, which are preserved remains of once-living human organisms. Examples of fossils include fragments of teeth, skulls or other bones, and impressions of footprints, shells, or leaves from plants.

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Carbon-14



Estimate the age of organic substances

C-12 and C-14

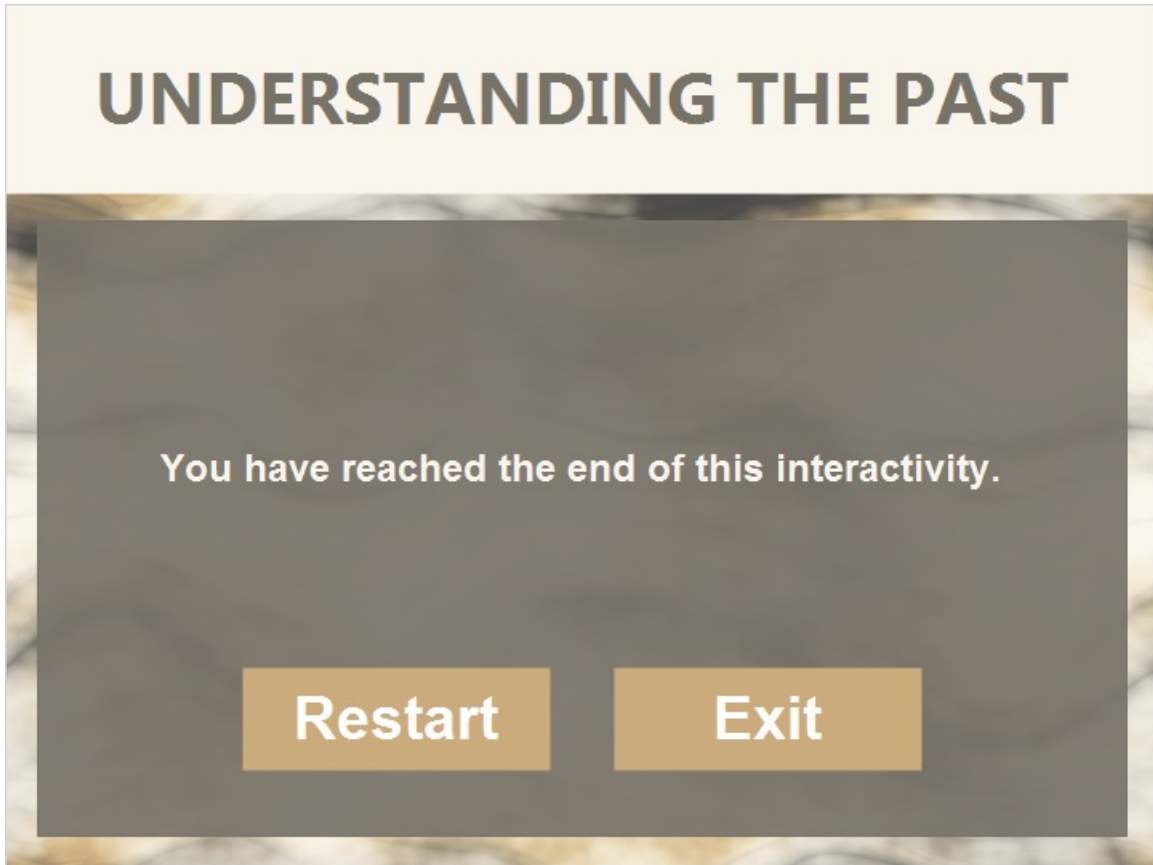
When a living thing dies it loses its C-14

Carbon-14

Archaeologists and paleontologists use **carbon-14** dating to estimate the age of organic materials. Essentially, every living thing is made of two types of carbon, C-12 and C-14. When something dies, it loses its C-14. Therefore, the difference between the C-12 and C-14 offers an approximate date of when the item being studied died.

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Conclusion



You have reached the end of this interactivity.