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Overview: the ancient world

Source 1.1 Aboriginal rock art at Ubirr, Kakadu National Park, Northern Territory, Australia

Activity 1.1

Chronology of early humans

The most ancient evidence for early humans has been found in Africa and dates to sometime between 400 000 and 130 000 years ago. Since then, humans have developed from different types of primates, such as *hominids* and *homo erectus* to our final form, *homo sapiens*, and migrated across the globe. In this activity you are to read Chapter 1 in the textbook, pp. 20-36, and chart the following experiences and activities of early humans in a timeline.

- Appearance of the first humans
- Evolution of *homo sapiens*
- Migrations of *homo sapiens* through Africa
- Migrations of *homo sapiens* to Australia
- Migrations of *homo sapiens* to the Americas
- Migrations of *homo sapiens* to the South Pacific
- *Hominids* develop stone tools
- *Hominids* use fire
- *Hominids* create art

A vertical timeline diagram. It consists of a central vertical line with ten horizontal tick marks. To the left of the line are ten horizontal lines for writing. To the right of the line is a downward-pointing arrow.

Activity 1.2

Early human evolution and experiences

Archaeologists have recovered a wide range of artefacts that tell us about the life experienced by *hominids* and *homo sapiens*. Archaeological evidence, such as stone tools, remnants of campsites and fires, and both human and animal bones, indicates that great changes occurred from the Paleolithic to Neolithic periods. Read pp. 24–9 of the textbook and answer the following questions:

- 1 After completing Activity 1.1 in the textbook (p. 26), summarise in your own words the differences between the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods.

- 2 Explain some of the ways in which *homo sapiens* are different from *hominids*.

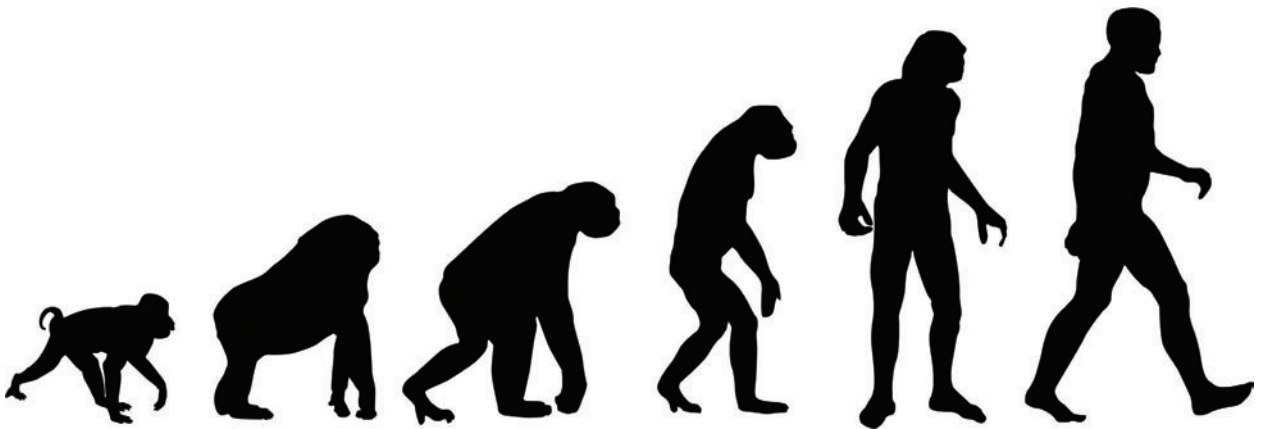
- 3 List the characteristics shared by *hominids* and *homo sapiens*.

- 4 Search the internet for images of Neolithic stone tools, then:

- a Print out this page and paste the images of two stone tools that have different shapes.

b Suggest how you think the stone tools were made.

c Note what you think the stone tools could have been used for.



Source 1.2 The evolutionary chain from primate to *homo sapiens*

5 Read the section ‘Times gone by’ on p. 25 of the textbook and describe the contributions the scientist Charles Darwin and the archaeologists Mary and Louis Leakey have made to our understanding of early humans.

Activity 1.3

Early human migrations

The movement of early humans from Africa across the globe is one of the most extraordinary and significant feats ever achieved by humankind. The series of migrations occurred over a long period of time – several millennia – and are the main factor in establishing the many features of modern humans, such as the different racial types present today, languages spoken, varying diets and everyday customs.

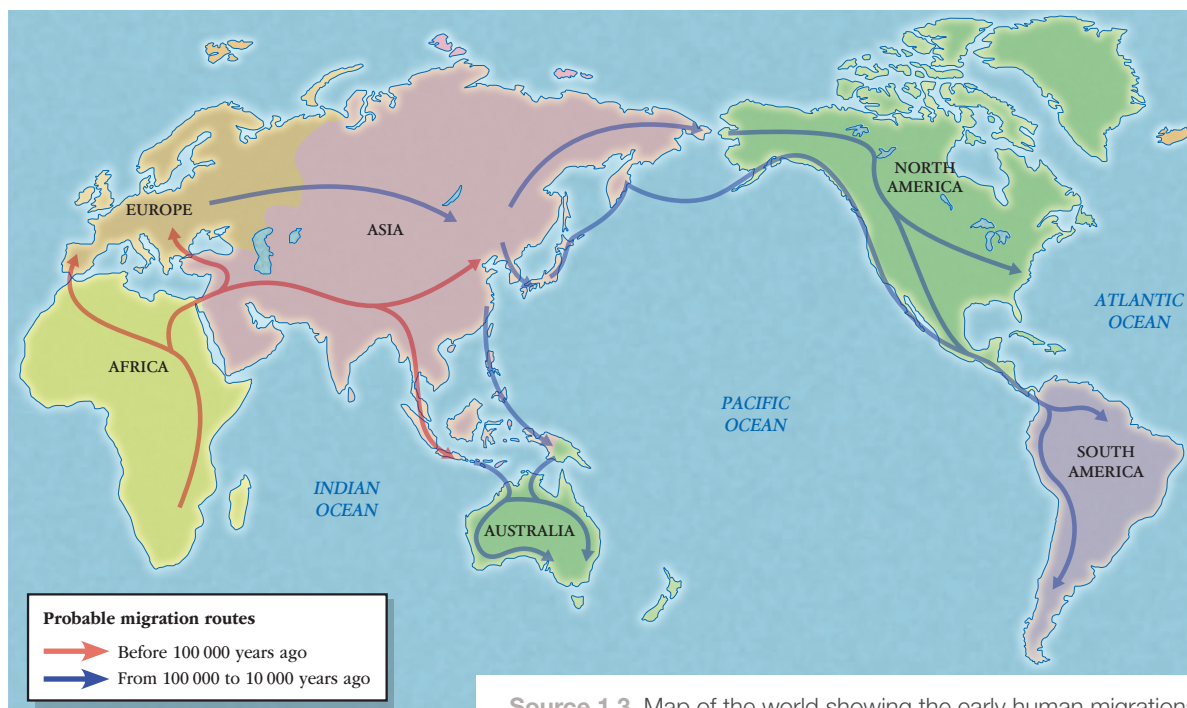
1 Use a dictionary to define the meaning of the following words:

a Migration:

b Settlement:

c Agriculture:

2 Examine the map in Source 1.3 and answer the following questions:



Source 1.3 Map of the world showing the early human migrations

- a** Identify the continents to which early humans migrated, and list the order in which they were settled.

- b** With the aid of an atlas, examine the geography of the areas in which early humans made their settlements and outline why you think early humans chose those places.

- c** Discuss what items (clothing, tools and so on) you think a group of *hominids* would need to embark on a journey to another region. List your ideas below and your reasons for taking such items on your journey.

Activity 1.4

Art in ancient societies

Nearly every society throughout history has produced works of art. This is because art is a good way for a society to express its ideas about itself and the world in which it existed. In this activity, we will look at some examples of art from ancient Sumer (southern Iraq).

- 1 *The Standard of Ur*. This artefact, which was discovered in the royal cemetery at Ur and dates to some time between 2600 and 2400 BCE, is a decorated box and depicts two different scenes: one shows the city of Ur at war and the other portrays the city during a time of peace. Examine the Standard of Ur and answer the following questions:



Source 1.4 The war scene on the Standard of Ur



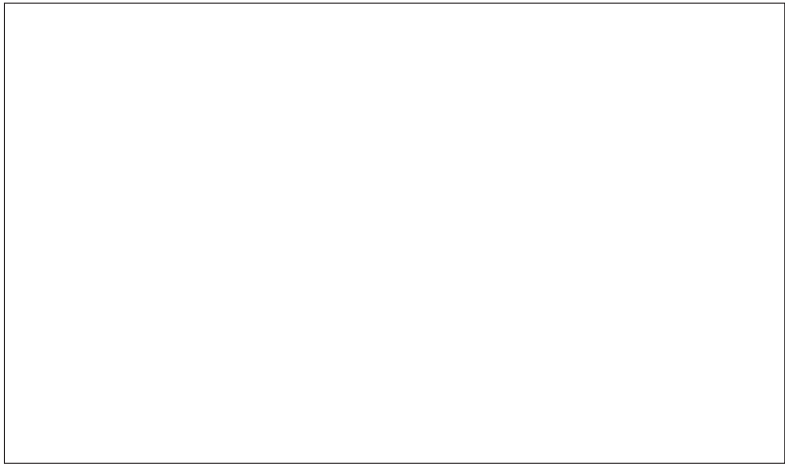
Source 1.5 The peace scene on the Standard of Ur

- a What are some of the clues in Source 1.4 that this is a depiction of a time of war?

b What are some of the clues in Source 1.5 that this is a depiction of a time of peace?

c Discuss what you might conclude about Sumerian society from the scenes on this artefact. Consider the people depicted, the technology represented and the depictions of both war and peace.

d Print out this page and draw your own 'standard' that reflects the time in which you live and what you experience in your own city or town.



- 2 *Gudea's statues.* Gudea was a governor of the Sumerian city-state of Lagash (c. 2144–2124 BCE). While acting as governor, he commissioned a series of statues of himself. One such example is shown in Source 1.6. Examine the statue of Gudea and answer the following questions:



Source 1.6 Statue of Gudea, governor of Lagash

- a Describe how Gudea presents himself in the statue.

- b** Compare and contrast the statue of Gudea with Source 3.28, the statue of Pharaoh Cheops (c. 2589–2566 BCE) on p. 111 of the textbook. What do you see that is similar and what do you observe that is different?

- c** Suggest what a historian could say about Gudea from studying his statue.

Activity 1.5

Cuneiform writing system

The invention of writing is one of the most important achievements in human history. Writing forms the basis of almost all types of modern communication. We can think of writing as a technology because it is a tool that helps humans to express and understand ideas.

In this activity, you will look at the cuneiform system of writing. Cuneiform was invented in Mesopotamia, and may be the oldest writing system in the world – although Egypt also began using hieroglyphs at around this time.

- 1** Imagine if writing had not been invented. How would a world without writing affect your day-to-day living?

- 2** Go to www.cambridge.edu.au/history7weblinks and watch Professor Theo van der Hout of the University of Chicago explain how the cuneiform writing system worked, then answer the following questions:

- a** Describe how the cuneiform writing system worked.

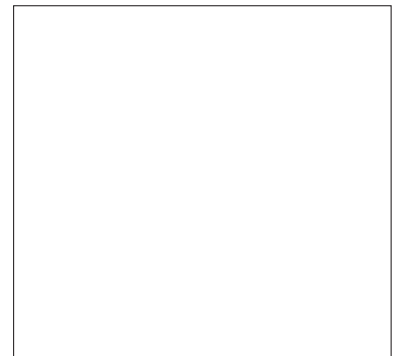
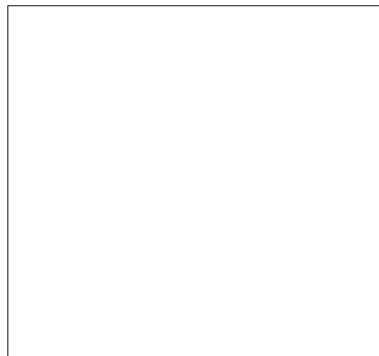
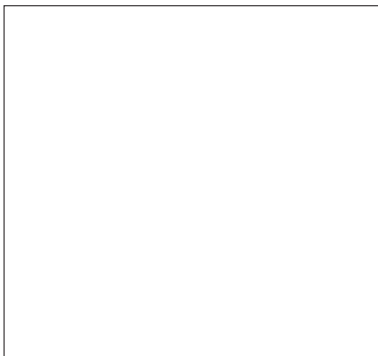
- b** With reference to Source 1.7, outline the evolution of cuneiform writing.

- c** Discuss how different this script is from the Latin script that we use to write English today.

kú eat	šah pig	mušen bird	gi reed	sag head	kiri orchard
gin/gub walk/stand	anše donkey	gu ox	dug pot	šu hand	gišimmar date-palm
še barley	ud day	áh cow	pú well	a water	ku fish

Source 1.7 The evolution of cuneiform signs

- d Print out this page and in the boxes below, create your own cuneiform signs to represent the following modern words: 'car', 'television' and 'aeroplane'. Remember that cuneiform signs originally were pictographic, and therefore looked like the objects they represented.



Activity 1.6

Analysing ancient social structures

Every society throughout history has had a social structure. A social structure is the way a society is organised into different groups, such as rulers, officials, priests, scholars, artisans, peasants and slaves. Each society arranges the different groups of its society in its own way. Therefore, one cannot assume that all societies of the ancient world were the same, and you will need to examine each on its own terms.

A good way to analyse a civilisation's social structure is to construct a 'social pyramid'. This is a graphic representation of power in a social structure. The structure takes the shape of a pyramid because most societies typically place the greatest amount of power in the hands of a few people, or even one single person (such as a king or pharaoh), leaving the vast majority with little to no power. When one places the different levels of society on top of each other, the result is a structure that looks like a pyramid.

Choose one ancient society – Egypt, Greece, Rome, China or India – and read the respective chapter on the social structure in the textbook, then complete the social pyramid below by detailing the following:

- the different social classes (ruler, officials, priests, peasants, slaves, etc.)
- the role in society of the different social classes
- the amount of power each social class held.



Activity 1.7

Religion in ancient society

In ancient societies, religion was an inseparable part of everyday life. It was the basis of how most people understood the world in which they lived, and was incorporated into most activities from politics to hygiene, and from the production of art to the naming of children. To understand an ancient society, you need to examine its religious beliefs.

Select one ancient society – Egypt, Greece, Rome, India or China – and read the relevant chapter to answer the following questions about its religious practices.

- 1** Identify who were the major gods of your chosen society. Describe their main characteristics.

[illegible]

- 2** Identify whether the ruler was considered to be a god. Describe his (or her) role in the society.

- 3** Recall what evidence there is for the religious practices of everyday people (that is, the general population, not the rulers and priests).

- 4** Search the internet for a myth from your chosen society, and summarise the story in your own words.

- 5 Discuss the usefulness of the myth you used in Question 4 for understanding the religious beliefs of your chosen society. In your answer, consider the following questions:
- Who are the main characters (heroes or gods)?
 - What is the relationship between gods and people?
 - How is the universe described?
 - What is the moral of the story?

Activity 1.8

Technology and everyday life

The basis of much technology we use today was in fact invented in ancient times. We have already looked at the technology of writing in Activity 1.5, and now we shall look at breakthroughs made by other ancient societies.

- 1 Use a dictionary to define the word 'technology'.

- 2 Categorise the following objects, and use the table to identify what the object is, how it was used in ancient times and where you may find the use of this object in modern technology.



Source 1.8 Bronze axe blades from ancient Egypt



Source 1.9 A vase from ancient Greece



Source 1.10 Egyptian writing, which is called hieroglyphs



Source 1.11 A wheel made of stone with an axle made of wood

Object	Use in ancient technology	Use in modern technology

- 3** Examine each source closely, and try to identify how each object was made and what materials were used to produce it.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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4 Discuss how the object in each of the sources would have improved the lives of ancient people.

Activity 1.9

Key features of ancient society – rule of law

Law was just as important to ancient societies as it is to modern ones. Laws maintain order in society, establish customs and behaviour, decide punishments for breaking the law and sometimes even set prices in the marketplace.

The earliest collection of laws that archaeologists have recovered is that of the Sumerian king Ur-Nammu, who founded the Third Dynasty of Ur around 2112 BCE. Ur-Nammu was very proud of the laws he created, and had them recorded on clay tablets (see Source 1.12).



Source 1.12 A tablet containing the laws of Ur-Nammu, king of the Sumerian city of Ur

Prologue

After (the gods) An and Enlil had turned over the Kingship of Ur to (the god) Nanna, at that time did Ur-Nammu, son born of (the goddess) Ninsun, for his beloved mother who bore him, in accordance with his principles of equity and truth ... Then did Ur-Nammu the mighty warrior, king of Ur, king of Sumer and Akkad, by the might of Nanna, lord of the city, and in accordance with the true word of (the god of justice) Utu, establish equity in the land; he banished malediction, violence and strife, and set the monthly temple expenses at 90 gur of barley, 30 sheep, and 30 sila of butter. He fashioned the bronze sila-measure, standardised the one-mina weight, and standardised the stone weight of a shekel of silver in relation to one mina ... The orphan was not delivered up to the rich man; the widow was not delivered up to the mighty man; the man of one shekel was not delivered up to the man of one mina.

The laws

- 1 If a man commits a murder, that man must be killed.
- 2 If a man commits a robbery, he will be killed.
- 3 If a man commits a kidnapping, he is to be imprisoned and pay 15 shekels of silver.
- 4 If a slave marries a slave, and that slave is set free, he does not leave the household.
- 5 If a slave marries a native (i.e. free) person, he/she is to hand the firstborn son over to his/her owner.
- 6 If a man divorces his first-time wife, he shall pay her one mina of silver.
- 7 If a man is accused of sorcery he must undergo ordeal by water; if he is proven innocent, his accuser must pay three shekels.
- 8 If a man knocks out the eye of another man, he shall pay half a mina of silver.
- 9 If a man has cut off another man's foot, he is to pay 10 shekels.
- 10 If a man, in the course of a scuffle, smashed the limb of another man with a club, he shall pay one mina of silver.
- 11 If someone severs the nose of another man with a copper knife, he must pay two-thirds of a mina of silver.
- 12 If a man knocks out a tooth of another man, he shall pay two shekels of silver.

Source 1.13 Extract from Ur-Nammu's law collection

Read Source 1.13 and answer the following questions:

1 What reasons does Ur-Nammu give in the Prologue for the creation of his laws?

2 Explain how important justice was for Ur-Nammu. Give three examples to support your answer.

3 Read the laws and use the table below to place them in categories according to the crimes they are trying to prevent.

Law	Concerned with what type of crime?

- 4 Identify which of the laws you think would be most important for today's society, and discuss why.

[illegible]

- 5 Recall what these laws tell you about the society of ancient Sumer. Give three examples to support your view.

[illegible]

Activity 1.10

Research into the ancient world

Using ICT, research and deliver a presentation to the rest of the class on one topic about the ancient world. Your presentation should be 10 minutes in length, and should make use of visual media such as photos or video clips, and even sound recordings. PowerPoint is useful software to organise and present different media.

Topics you could research are:

- early human migrations
- early human evolution
- a comparison of the art of two of the following ancient civilisations: Sumer, Egypt, Greece, Rome, India or China
- the evidence for the use of stone, bronze and iron tools in Egypt or Greece
- the importance of agriculture in ancient societies
- a comparison of the social structure of two civilisations (Egypt, Greece, Rome, India or China).

