

Early Humans: The Story Begins

Words to Know

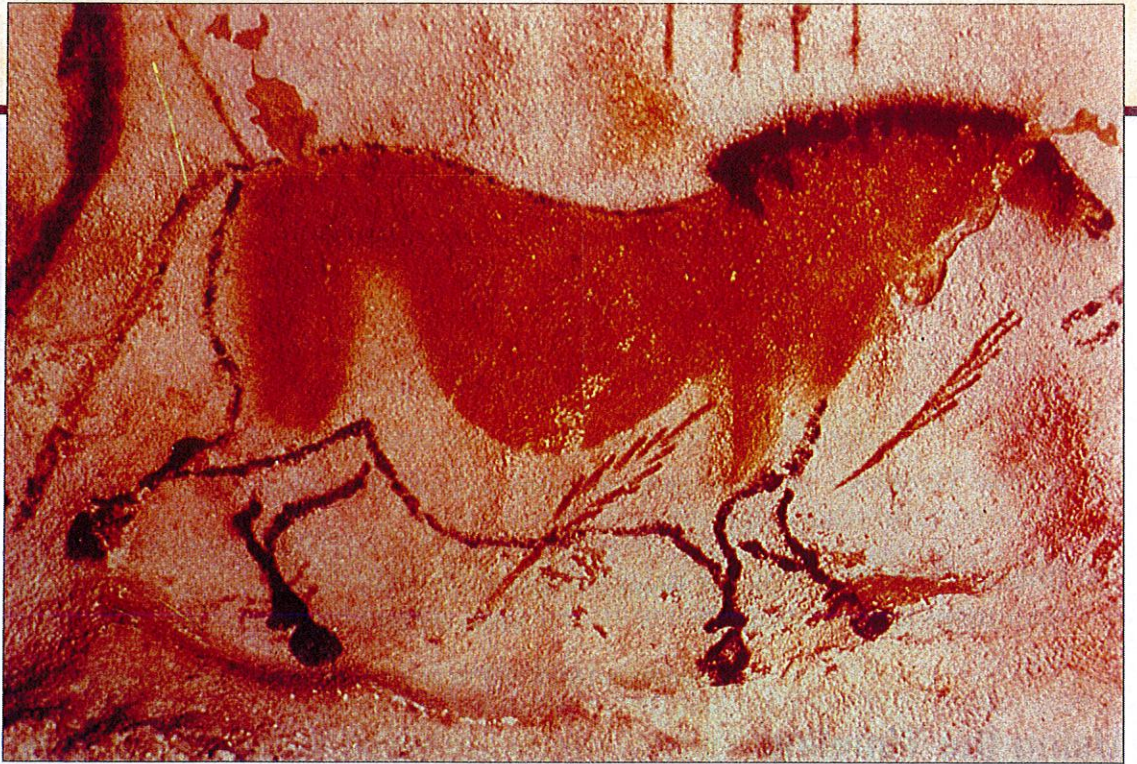
glacier	a large, slow-moving mass of ice and snow
settlement	a small group of homes in an area that has not been populated
specialize	to work in, and know a lot about, one job or field
craft	a trade or art that takes special skill with the hands
fertile	able to produce large crops, as in rich soil
crescent	something shaped like a quarter moon

The Hunters

Our story of the world's history begins more than one million years ago. It was a time called the Ice Age. Most of the world was frozen then. It was covered with thick sheets of ice called **glaciers**. These glaciers had formed in the north.

In the northern parts of Europe, Asia, and North America, ice piled up about 10,000 feet thick. The weight of all that ice caused the glaciers to spread out. As they moved, the glaciers pushed soil and rocks out of their way. Many valleys and lakes were formed. Slowly, the glaciers moved farther and farther south.

Over time, in the southern parts of the three continents, the ice melted some during the short summers. Little groups of people lived there, scattered about. They were hunters. They had learned to make spears and other simple weapons and tools. They used wooden sticks, bones, and stones. They had not yet learned how to use metal. So historians call these people and their way of life a *Stone Age* culture.



This cave painting in Lascaux, France, is thousands of years old. People of Stone Age cultures often painted pictures of animals they hunted.

Learning Objectives

- Describe what people learned when the Ice Age ended.
- Explain how the development of agriculture changed the world.
- Name the kinds of jobs people had in the new settlements.
- Locate the Fertile Crescent on a map.
- Explain how the people of ancient Jericho tried to protect their town.

Such was life on Earth for tens of thousands of years. The hunters left their caves in the summer to move around. They could not settle down for good. They had to follow the herds of wild animals. They also gathered some food from shrubs and trees, such as nuts, berries, and fruits. However, they mainly counted on animals for food and clothing. Hunting was the most important thing in their lives. Without a good hunt, they would die. Just staying alive was a constant struggle for people during the Ice Age.

Learn More About It

CAVE ARTWORK

During the Ice Age, some people were artists. They painted on cave walls or made sculptures from rock. Their art usually showed animals, especially the animals they hunted. Stone Age art has been discovered in caves in France, Spain, Italy, and other places. Most of the time, the caves were discovered by mistake. In 1940, for example, three teenage boys stumbled down a hole and discovered Lascaux Cave in France.

In 1994, three men discovered Chauvet Cave in France. The artwork in this cave was a surprise and some of the paintings were created more than 30,000 years ago! Another surprise was that the artwork included animals not usually pictured on cave walls. Horses and bison were there, but so were leopards, hyenas, rhinos, and bears. In addition, there were many pictures of cave lions. These pictures showed that the artists knew the habits of the cave lions very well.

It is possible that even older cave art has been discovered in Italy. In 2000, painted slabs of rock were found at Fumane Cave in Italy. The art, which includes a half-human, half-beast figure, may be 32,000 to 36,500 years old.

The Farmers

The Ice Age ended about 10,000 B.C. The glaciers began melting. The land was no longer frozen. People now learned how to grow food. They no longer had to chase wild animals across the lands. Once they learned to raise their own food, they could settle down. That change, from hunting to farming, made civilization possible.

The people of long ago watched the winds blow seeds across the ground. They noticed that new plants grew where the seeds landed. This is how the people learned. They tried planting seeds themselves. They broke up the ground to make it soft. They chose the best seeds, and they grew plants. Next, they made tools to use in farming. They used flint sickles to cut grain and wooden plows to help them dig up the ground.

Once the glaciers were gone, life became easier for people. Now they could count on a ready food supply. Often they grew more than they could eat in one winter. They could store food for the future. They would not have to move away from their homes to search for food. People began to live in **settlements**.

They also learned to tame animals. Some say the dog was the first animal tamed. Next came cows, goats, sheep, and pigs. With their own herds, people had a steady supply of meat, milk, and wool. They now had animals that could live side by side with them. The animals could carry loads and help people work.

Remember

The earliest farmers had no system of writing. We learn about them from the artifacts that archaeologists find.

✓ **Check Your Understanding**

Write your answers in complete sentences.

1. Where did people live during the Stone Age?
2. What did people learn to do after the Ice Age ended?
3. Why were people able to live in settlements?



For thousands of years, people have tamed animals to carry loads and help them with work.