



Name: _____

Date: _____

Study Guide #1: Before Civilization

Early Hominids. Anthropologists believe that the first hominids, or humanlike creatures, lived in Africa millions of years ago. Most experts today believe these hominids and modern humans are related. To understand this relationship and how humans developed, **archaeologists** interpret hominid and human remains as well as **artifacts**, which are objects either made or altered by humans.

Archaeologists use **stratigraphy**—the study of the strata, or layers, of the earth—to try to determine the sequence of events of the past. Stratigraphy is based on the idea that artifacts found in deeper layers of earth are usually older than those found above them. Archaeologists also use **radiocarbon dating**, a technique that enables them to determine the approximate age of organic objects, such as pieces of wood or bone.

The First People. More than one theory exists about exactly how and when early humans began developing. Most scientists believe that modern humans, known as ***Homo sapiens***, or “thinking man,” began to appear in Africa by about 200,000 B.C. Over the next 60,000 years, they spread throughout Africa and into Eurasia and Australia. As *Homo sapiens* moved to new areas, they adapted to their new environments, and so began to develop a great variety of genetic traits.

Other scientists, however, believe that the first *Homo sapiens* emerged several hundred thousand years ago in several different places. Thus they would have begun developing different genetic traits almost from the beginning of their existence.

Early humans lived as **nomads** in small bands of hunters and gatherers. They moved constantly in search of food and water and built no permanent shelter. Over time they learned to cooperatively hunt animals, develop language, master fire, and use tools.

During the Paleolithic period, or Old Stone Age, humans began to develop **culture**. They had customs, a sense of identity, and religious beliefs. Artifacts such as cave paintings and carvings show that early humans were able to think about the world in which they lived. All of this set them apart from earlier hominids.

The Later Stone Age. During the Mesolithic Age, or Middle Stone Age, humans began to develop new methods of adapting to their environment. They produced more specialized tools and weapons. During the Neolithic Age, or New Stone Age, people began to polish their stone tools as well as chip them. This technique made the edges of the tools much sharper and led to the creation of such tools as awls, needles, and chisels.

In parts of the present-day Middle East around 12,000 B.C., some nomads chose to settle in one place. Because the region was rich in wild grains, people came to rely on gathering these foods. Some people built permanent settlements and learned how to store grain.

Between 8000 and 5000 B.C., climatic changes and changes in the migratory patterns of animals led people in different places around the world to practice **domestication**—the intentional adaptation of both plants and animals so they could better benefit humans. This shift from food gathering to food producing is called the **Agricultural Revolution**.

By the end of the Neolithic Age, people in areas of Southwest Asia had learned to make pottery and to use metal for toolmaking. Metal tools and pottery for food storage allowed populations to increase. By about 9,000 years ago, settled villages had grown in many parts of the world. Soon these societies stood on the brink of becoming **civilizations**, complex societies with towns or cities, production of surplus food, and division of labor.

Answer the questions below in your own words. Highlight your evidence. Also read pages 2-7 in your textbook

1. How are scientists able to estimate the age of artifacts?

2. What are two differing theories on the development of early humans?

3. What showed that early humans had developed culture?

4. How did humans adapt to their environment during the Mesolithic period?

5. What was the purpose of the domestication of plants and animals?

6. How did new tool technologies and new ways of getting food change how people lived by the end of the Neolithic Age?
