

THE STONE AGE KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

Overview

The Stone Age

The Stone Age is the name given to the earliest period of human culture – from the dawn of civilisation 2.5 million years ago, to around 5000 years ago, when humans began utilising metal to make tools and objects. The Stone Age is often divided into three periods:

- Paleolithic (Old Stone Age);
- Mesolithic (Mid Stone Age);
- Neolithic (New Stone Age);

The Paleolithic era lasted for such a long time that it accounts for 99% of all human history!



Hominids and Animals

Homo Erectus



Homo Erectus lived from about 2 million years ago, to about 150,000 years ago. Although they came from Africa, scientists believe that they may have spread to Asia and Europe. The nose and jaw of homo erectus skeletons are much wider than ours, their teeth were bigger, and they had considerably smaller brains. It is uncertain whether the demise of homo erectus was due to the arrival of the more intelligent homo sapiens species.

Homo Denisova



The Denisovans were a species of human that were closely related to the Neanderthals – it is thought that the two species branched off somewhere in the Middle East, with the Denisovans occupying the far-eastern hemisphere. Denisovans are a recent discovery, with the first bone fragments found in 2010. It is thought that humans and Denisovans co-existed for some time; up to 5% of modern Aboriginal and Melanesian DNA is Denisovan.

Homo Neanderthalensis



Neanderthals are a species of hominid that lived relatively recently, from about 400,000 years ago, to about 40,000 years ago. They were a very near relative to our own species, and were probably highly intelligent, with large brains. They were shorter, but stockier, than modern humans. Their bones have only been found in Europe and parts of Asia. It is thought that they may have died out unable to compete with homo sapiens.

Homo Sapiens














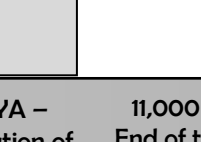
Homo sapiens is the scientific name for our species – modern humans. It is thought that homo sapiens originated in Africa between 300 and 150,000 years ago, and branched out into Eurasia about 60,000 years ago. It may be coincidental, but it appears that wherever homo sapiens went, other hominids died out (most scientists believe that they could not adapt to compete with intellectually-superior homo sapiens).

Stone Age Animals

The world was filled with creatures in the Stone Age, many of which are still around today, but lots of which are now extinct. One of the most famous examples of those that are now extinct is the woolly mammoth, a species of elephant that was covered in fur – adapted to survive in the last ice age. Another example is the sabre-toothed tiger, a large big cat with long canine teeth, weighing up to 400kg! (the largest tigers are around 300kg). Giant ground sloths were another interesting animal from the time. Living in South America, these sloths were as large as elephants, weighing up to 4 tonnes! It could stand on two legs in order to reach food from trees.



Life in the Stone Age

Food - Hunter Gatherers		In the Paleolithic era, humans found their food from the local environment. They mainly used tools such as spears and slings to kill and capture animals. They moved from site to site depending on the season, following sources of food as it migrated.	Fact Early humans were also able to forage for fruit and nuts.	THE PALEOLITHIC ERA
Tools		Early hominids (even homo erectus) used tools in order to aid everyday life. Many were chopping and cutting tools, although basic spears and hand axes have been found from the era. Tools increased in complexity over the Paleolithic era.	Fact Oldowan tools, the earliest tools, were shaped from rocks.	
Language		Perhaps the most important innovation of the Paleolithic era was the beginnings of language. Scientists can infer from cave drawings and the establishment of social structures that Paleolithic humans must have developed language.	Fact Scientists think the language part of the brain developed at this time.	
Religion		The period also saw the development of religions. Cave paintings suggest that many tribes believed in 'animism', or the idea that everything has a spirit, including animals, plants and inanimate objects.	Fact Cave paintings found in France are about 40,000 years old!	THE MESOLITHIC ERA
Food - Hunting and Fishing		More elaborate weapons, such as arrows and spears, were developed. Canoes were constructed to allow humans to fish in the rivers and seas, probably carved from tree trunks and branches.	Fact The oldest discovered canoe is 8,200 years old!	
Domestication		Humans began to domesticate animals for various uses. For example, it is thought that dogs were domesticated from breeding the tamest wolves, and were used to aid hunting.	Fact It is thought Stone Age man also bred dogs to be cute pets!	
Clothes		Mesolithic humans used to wear clothes made of bark and leaves in the summer months, and clothes made of animal skins in the winter months.	Fact The first leathers were probably made in this era.	THE NEOLITHIC ERA
Culture		As languages developed, so did distinct cultures. Art, dance, and social traditions appear to have been formed by this point in time.	Fact Burials took place for the dead.	
Food - Agriculture		Animals such as cows and sheep were domesticated, providing a ready-made supply of meat, milk and bone. Grain was developed as it could be stored for a long time.	Fact Agriculture meant that people settled in one place.	
Construction		Better tools and permanent settlements meant that large scale construction could take place. People lived in more permanent houses, which were congregated together in villages.	Fact 'Skara Brae' off Scotland, is a well-preserved Neolithic village.	THE NEOLITHIC ERA
Roles/ Occupations		Neolithic peoples created different roles in their societies, for example farmers, priests, and hunters. There is evidence that some people were made into leaders, whilst some became slaves.	Fact Roles were decided based on gender and age.	
Culture		A range of carvings and other art forms demonstrate rapid developments in culture. These moved beyond what was literally seen in the world to include moral/ spiritual ideas. This was influenced by improved language, society structures and tools.	Fact People from this time were able to make mud and clay objects.	

Stone Age Timeline

2.5 million years ago – Stone Age begins – first rock artefacts. 300-150,000 years ago – Homo sapiens appear in Africa. 40,000 YA – First cave painting and carved figures, (Spain). 30,000 YA – Neanderthals become extinct. 25,000 YA – Use of needles, saws and harpoons. 25,000 YA – Earliest examples of pottery. 15,000 YA – Domestication of pigs. 11,000 YA – End of the last Ice Age. 10,500 YA – Cattle were domesticated. 8,000 YA – Wheel invented, irrigation begins. Around 6,000 YA – Writing invented in Sumer. Horses domesticated.