



The Prehistoric Period

Prehistoric means the time before humans developed written languages to record their history.

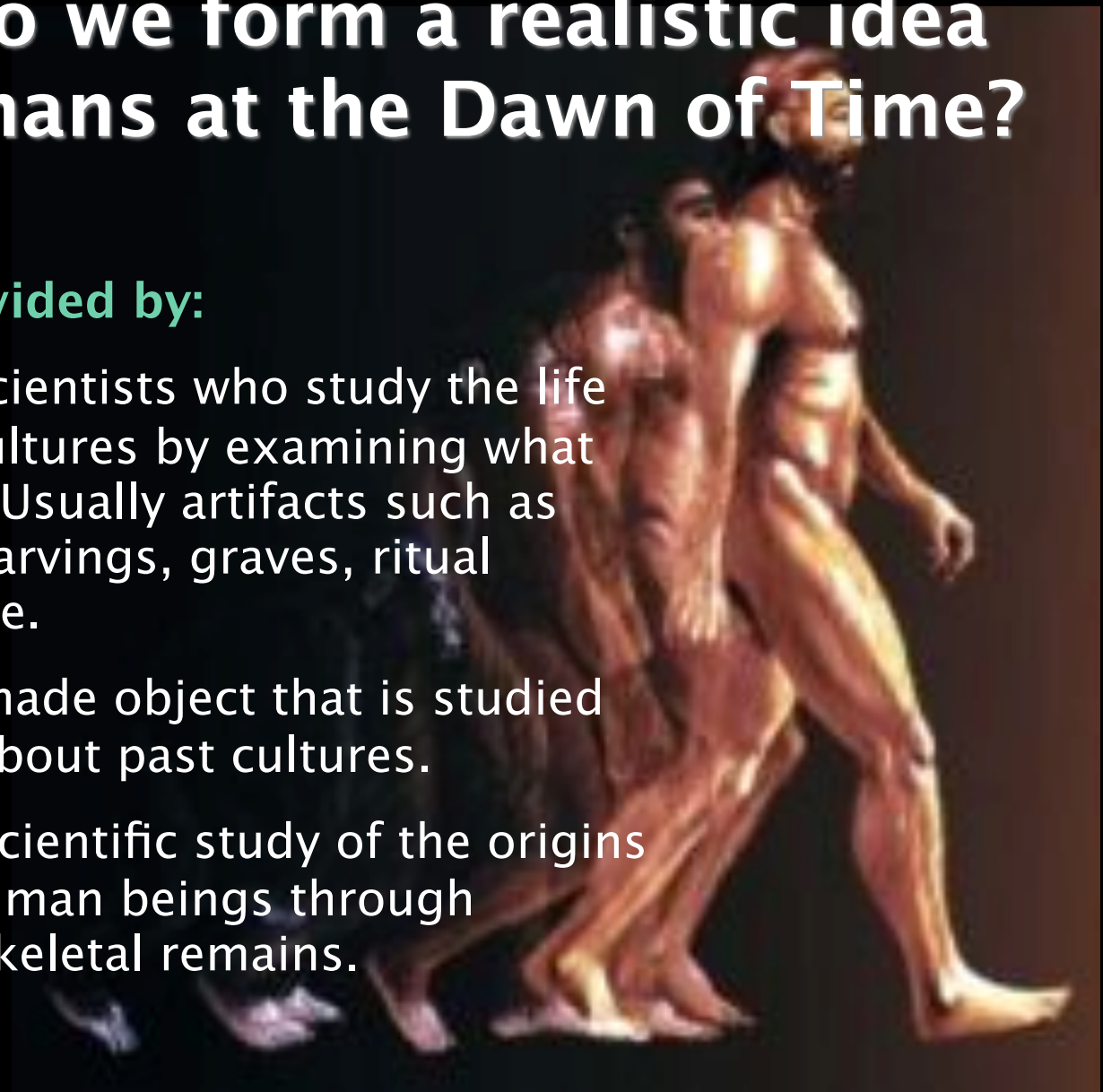
So how do we form a realistic idea about humans at the Dawn of Time?

With information provided by:

ARCHEOLOGISTS: scientists who study the life and customs of past cultures by examining what they have left behind. Usually artifacts such as pottery, tools, stone carvings, graves, ritual objects and architecture.

ARTIFACT: Human-made object that is studied to reveal information about past cultures.

ANTHROPOLOGY: scientific study of the origins and development of human beings through analysis of fossil and skeletal remains.



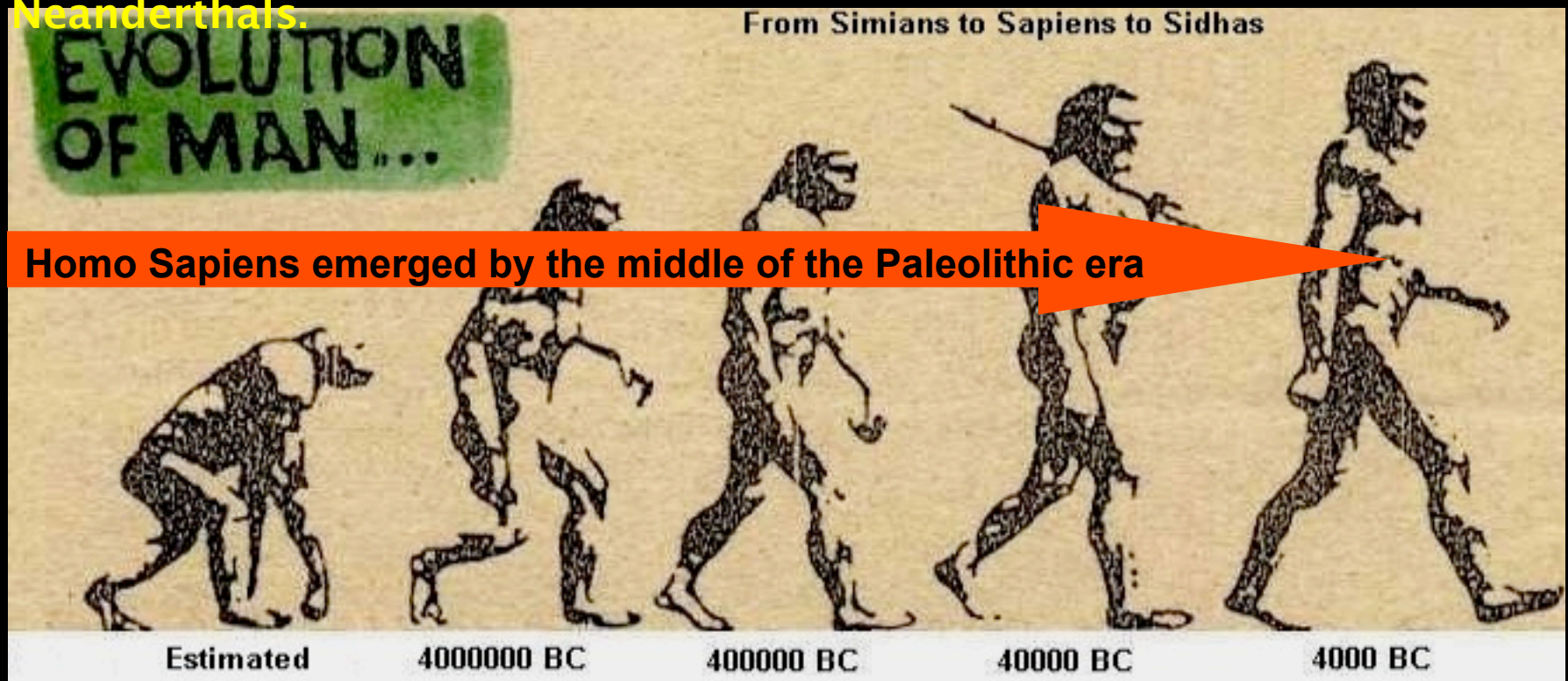
Scientists use a three age system to divide up human prehistory

Paleolithic (Old Stone Age): 40,000 BCE - 10,000 BCE

Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age): 10,000 BCE– 6,000 BCE

Neolithic (New Stone Age): 8,000 BCE – 3,000 BCE

It took a long, long time for humans to evolve into our species of **HOMO SAPIENS**. Before us there were other species of hominids such as the **Neanderthals**.



Paleolithic Era

40,000 BCE – 10,000 BCE



- Neanderthals showed the first stirrings of **humanness**
- They built shelters, developed tools, fashioned animal skin clothing, cared for their sick, buried their dead and **created ART**
- When early humans migrated to open areas, they built structures out of wood, mammoth bone, and animal skins
- People lived as nomads, in small hunting and food gathering groups and they developed a spoken language

Paleolithic Art

Paleolithic Art from about 32,000 to 11,000 years ago, falls into two main categories:

1. **PORTABLE PIECES:** small figurines or decorated objects carved out of bone, stone, or modeled in clay
2. **CAVE ART**

In creating symbolic images, they tried to ensure human survival and the reproduction of the animals they needed for food and clothing



Portable Pieces The female reproductive anatomy of these sculptures has been exaggerated. It is commonly thought that these little stone carvings served as fertility idols because the sculptors included only those parts of the female body needed for the conception and nurture of children.



Venus of Willendorf

Willendorf, Austria
ca. 24 000 – 22 000
BCE
Limestone
Approx. 4.25 in.



Bison with Turned Head

La Madeleine,
France
ca. 12,000 BCE
Approx. 4 in.



In 1879, while digging in a cave in Altamira, Spain, amateur archaeologist Marcelino Sanz de Sautuola was led by his nine year-old daughter's cries of "Toro! Toro!" (bull, bull) to discover the cave's vast drawings of bison.



The **Lascaux Caves** were found in 1940 by 4 teenage boys exploring a hole left by a fallen tree. Scholars were astounded by the magnitude & the artistic skill of these large wall friezes

Cave Art

Besides small portable sculptures, low relief sculptures were carved in limestone or etched into animal bone fragments.

A relief sculpture has no back and is attached to the surface from which it is carved.

A relief sculpture is meant to be viewed from the front, unlike a freestanding sculpture that can be viewed from all sides.

Cave Art characteristics:

- Depicted animals (bison, deer, horses, wild boar, mammoths) and are detailed and realistic
- Animals were always portrayed in profile, either running or be hunted/wounded
- Paint was created by mixing dirt, ground up rocks, burnt wood and animal fat

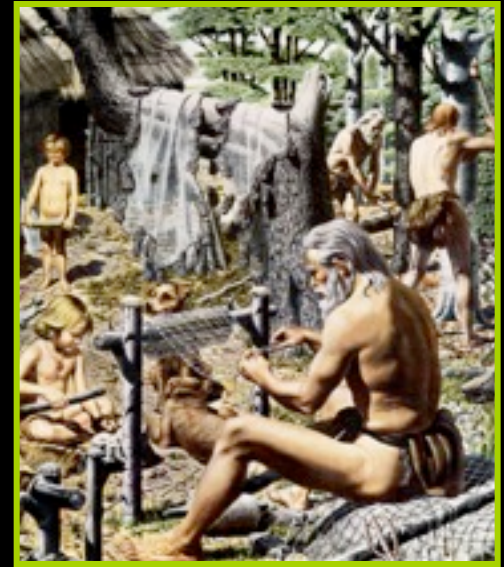
Mesolithic Art (Middle Stone Age) 10,000 – 6,000 BCE

WHAT HAS CHANGED?



MESOLITHIC LIFESTYLE

- The Mesolithic Period or Middle Stone Age, occurred at the end of the last great Ice Age, more than 10,000 years ago.
- As the glaciers receded and the climate became more temperate, plant and animal life multiplied.
- With more abundant food sources, Mesolithic hunters & gatherers were able to establish semi-permanent settlements along rivers, shorelines, grasslands & forests. These humans were semi-nomadic, migrating when the animals did.
- Because of seasonal moving, their huts were light wooden framework covered with animal skins or sods that were easy to put-up or dismantled & moved to another site.
- More sophisticated bows & flint arrows for hunting & tools such as the stone axe were developed. Dog were domesticated for hunting. Pottery for cooking & storing food & cloth weaving began in this era.



Mesolithic Art Style Features



- Paleolithic animal depiction was detailed, realistic & used a full range of color
HOWEVER,
- MESOLITHIC art in contrast was stylized (simplified shapes) with no realistic details and single colored and featured human grouping more than animals
- The depictions of humans typically show them to be engaged in either hunting or rituals whose purposes have been lost to time.
- Very often the groupings of figures are painted in repetitive patterns, which results in a nice sense of rhythm

ROCK ART IMAGES:
Petroglyphs: image scratched into a rock surface

Pictographs: an image painted on a rock surface

How do these images of animals look different from those seen on Paleolithic cave walls?

Neolithic Art (New Stone Age) 8,000 – 3,000 BCE

-Reconstruction of a
farming settlement of
about 4,000 BCE



Neolithic Life Style



- The New Stone Age (the Neolithic period) was a time when people started living in real village communities. Living in permanent communities marks the birth of civilization
- They developed farming, domesticating animals (for work & eating) inventing the wheel & the plow & began growing crops (especially grains).
- Thus, settling & food production allowed populations to grow more quickly.
- Permanent settlements brought about a surge of creativity & the arts developed. Decorated pottery & woven items were typical creations of the Neolithic artisans.

NEOLITHIC ART

Organized religious worship began during the NEOLITHIC ERA

- The main deity was generally the Great Earth Mother who was known to protect and bless the harvest
- This provoked the creation of many fertility statues

Enthroned Birthing Goddess

Catal Huyuk 5700 BCE

Shows leopard to her left

Used as a shrine



NEOLITHIC MYSTERY

STONEHENGE



The exact purpose of Stonehenge still puzzles scholars.

It is thought to have been a ceremonial center for worshipping ancestors and used as an astronomical calculator to predict solar events like the Summer Solstice and eclipses.



Stonehenge was constructed in three phases, over a 2,000 year period between 3000 BC and 1400 BC. Erosion, time and human invasion has worn it down, leaving many of the stones in stumps similar to a set of baby teeth.



TITLE: Stonehenge

LOCATION: Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, England

DATE: 2000 BCE

CONSTRUCTION: Post and Lintel

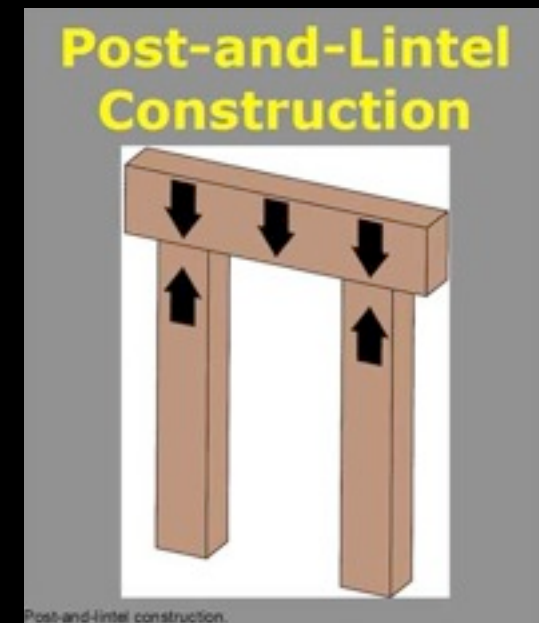
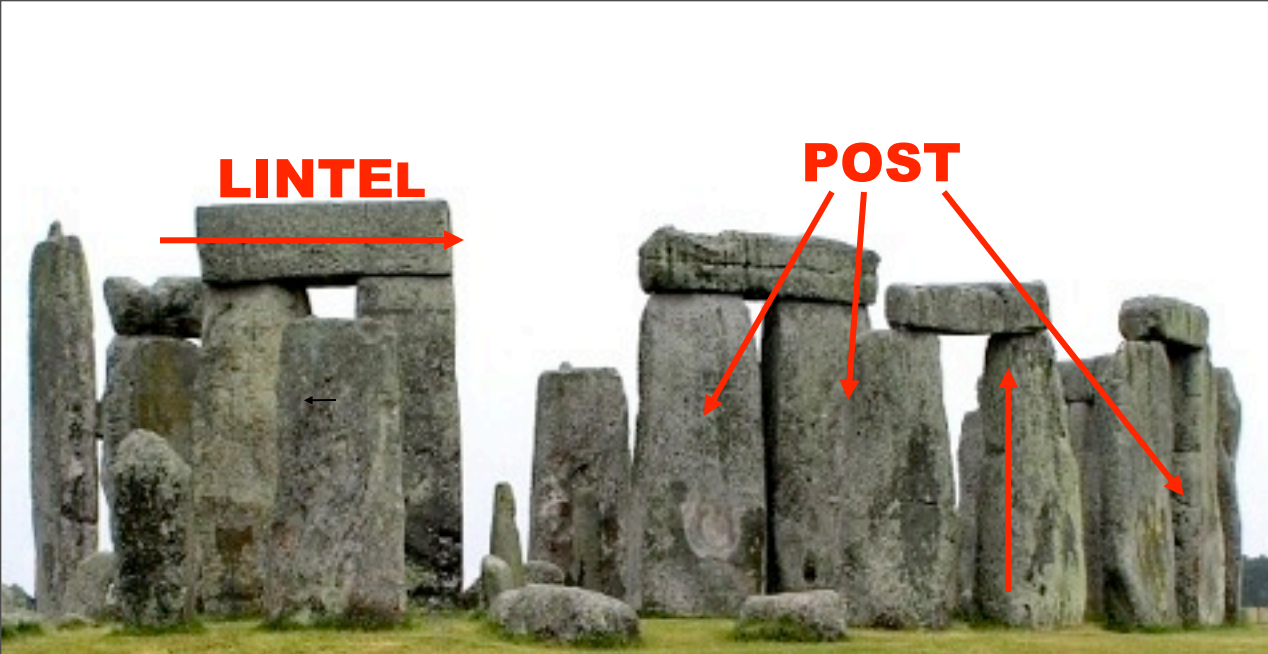
PURPOSE: Ceremonial centre for worshipping and astronomical calculator



MEGALITH:

Huge, rough stone or stones, used to create NEOLITHIC monuments





13.5 feet

POST AND LINTEL CONSTRUCTION: The most ancient but still widely used system of construction. Consists of two or more upright posts supporting a horizontal beam or lintel.

Numerous megalithic sites are constructed over Europe. Stonehenge being the most famous. Some 97 feet in diameter, Stonehenge consists of thirty stone pillars 13.5 feet tall and weighing nearly 25 metric tons. Additionally, there is an earth mound some 320 feet in diameter surrounding the compound. Currently over one million people visit the structure annually.



As the NEOLITHIC ERA evolved all the features of “civilization” developed: **COMMUNITIES**, architecture, **RELIGIONS**, languages, **GOVERNMENTS**, diverse labor forces & trades, **POPULATION BOOM**, disease, **SOCIAL STATUS**, new technologies & inventions, **CRIME**, laws, **FASHIONS & STYLES**, & various forms of **ART!**