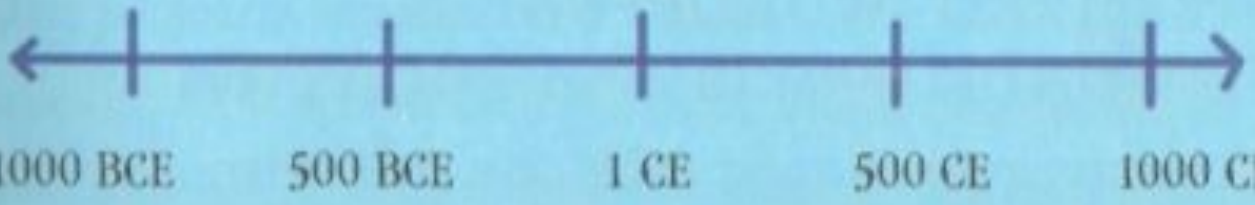
BCE = BEFORE the COMMON ERA

(or before the year was 1)

CE = the COMMON ERA

(or the year 1 and after)



BCE dates sorta work like negative numbers.

For example, 1000 BCE is further in the past than 500 BCE.

Unit 1

The First Humans Prehistory–3500 BCE

What was life like 10,000 or a 100,000 years ago? How have people and cities changed over time? These are some of the questions history tries to answer.

HISTORIANS are the scholars who study our past, using written records and historic art to find the answers. They read letters, look at written laws, and study religious documents and community records.

What if there are **NO** written records of a culture? How can we study **PREHISTORY**, the time before writing was invented?

PREHISTORY
history before written records

The study of prehistory relies on **ARCHEOLOGY** and two groups of people:

ARCHEOLOGY
the study of human history and prehistory through things people made, used, and left behind

Archaeologists are scientists who study objects made by humans, called ARTIFACTS, to better understand human activity. Artifacts can be tools, instruments, or anything made by humans in past civilizations.

OFTEN FOUND BY DIGGING AROUND IN ANCIENT SITES

Anthropologists are scientists who also study artifacts but are more interested in the cultural aspects of human society:

- what people in a particular culture wore
- what they ate
- how they learned and created the customs they followed
- how they developed languages

THAT SHOE YOU LOST UNDER YOUR BED—IF FOUND THOUSANDS OF YEARS FROM NOW BURIED IN WHAT USED TO BE YOUR BEDROOM, THAT WOULD BE AN ARTIFACT, TOO.

All the things happening now—the presidents of today, the global issues, climate change, cultural change, the sort of lives **WE** lead—will be considered part of history someday. Maybe someone will study our "artifacts" and culture. But before that happens, let's go back to the beginning—to the very first humans.

Chapter 1

THE FIRST HUMANS AND THE PALEOLITHIC ERA

STARTING ROUGHLY 6 TO 7 MILLION YEARS AGO

The first humans looked nothing like us. In fact, scientists think we most likely descended from early forms of apes and the earliest humanlike creatures looked like a cross between them and us.

WHERE FIRST HUMANS LIVED

These first humanlike creatures are called HOMINIDS. Hominids had some human attributes, such as the ability to walk upright and OPPOSABLE thumbs (able to move toward and touch the other fingers of the same hand). The earliest hominids lived in Africa four million years ago, evolving over time.

There are many different types of hominids, but here are a few famous types:

THIS SYMBOL MEANS "ABOUT."

Australopithecus (~4 million years ago): AUSTRALOPITHECUS means "southern ape," which tells us that these humanlike apes were probably from eastern or southern Africa. LUCY is a famous *Australopithecus* hominid—she was discovered in 1974 and changed the way scientists looked at the evolution of humankind. It is believed that Lucy is a common ancestor for different types of hominids. She had a very small brain but walked on two legs, nearly two million years before other hominids would walk upright. Walking allowed Lucy to keep her hands free, but she used sticks and stones to dig or break open food instead of making tools. Archeologists once believed that the ability to walk upright led hominids to make tools, but Lucy showed this wasn't true.

Homo habilis (~2 million years ago):
HOMO HABILIS means "able man." This short hominid lived in East Africa and had a larger brain than the species *Australopithecus* and was the first *Homo* species to use stone tools.

Homo erectus (~1.5 million years ago):
HOMO ERECTUS, or "upright man," was a more advanced hominid. Even though Lucy and older hominids walked upright, *Homo erectus* had longer arms and legs and looked more like a human. About 500,000 years ago, *Homo erectus* learned to make fire, probably from rubbing two sticks together or by striking stones together to create a spark. This was a huge help for hunting, protection from animals, cooking, and keeping warm. Fire also meant that these hominids could move to areas with colder climates, which is why *Homo erectus* was probably the first hominid type to leave warm Africa.

Homo sapiens (~400,000 years ago):
HOMO SAPIENS, or "wise man," was a new species of human that quickly became the main species. They made tools from stones, animal bones, and horns. With these tools, they developed new farming and hunting techniques.

Homo sapiens had large brains and small jaws. Their limbs were even longer and straighter than those of *Homo erectus*, and closer to what we look like today.

There are two kinds of *Homo sapiens*: NEANDERTHALS and HOMO SAPIENS SAPIENS. Neanderthals lived in and around present-day Europe and parts of Turkey. They maybe made clothes from animal skins, to keep warm, and were the earliest people to bury their dead. They had large brains but heavier builds and were more slow moving than *Homo sapiens sapiens*, who eventually replaced the Neanderthals.

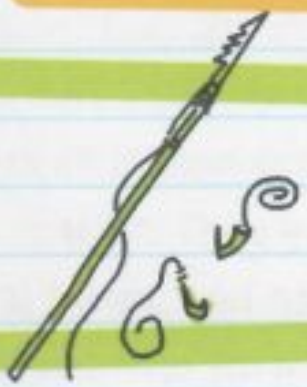
Homo sapiens sapiens (~200,000 years ago):
Homo sapiens sapiens means "wise, wise human" and is the group that includes today's humans. They first appeared in Africa and then spread out around the world about 100,000 years ago. *Homo sapiens sapiens* had a slow journey out of Africa—archeologists say they may have moved only two or three miles in a whole generation!

THE PALEOLITHIC LIFE

The first humans lived in the PALEOLITHIC ERA, or the Old Stone Age (~2,500,000 BCE to around 10,000 BCE). Humans made simple tools from hard stones such as flint. They made:

hand axes and stone spearheads attached to wooden poles, which made hunting large animals easier

the bow and arrow



harpoons and fishhooks of bone, to catch fish and other sea animals

baskets to gather and carry food, and rope from vines twisted together

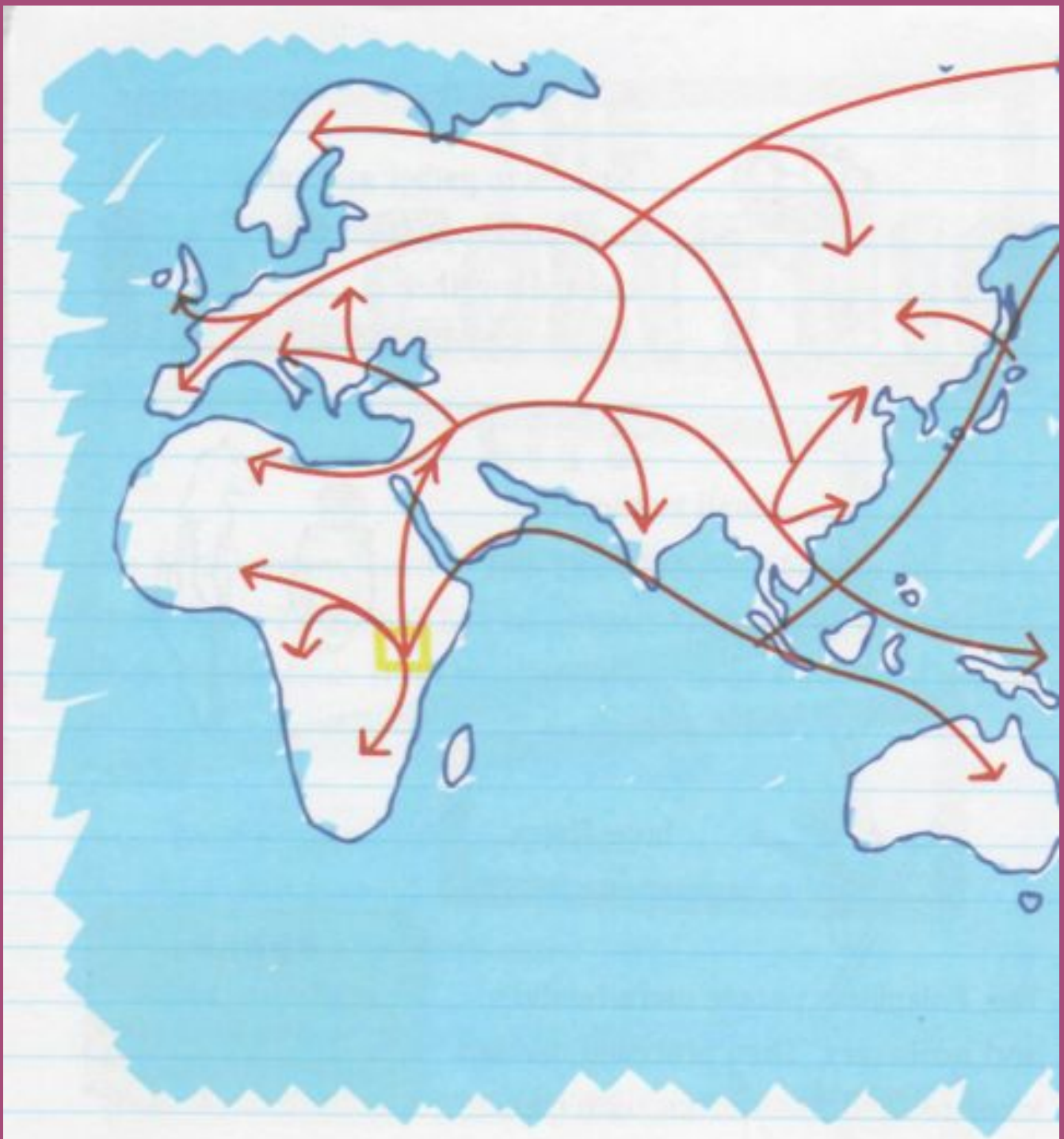
small statues from stone and ivory and

bone flutes

NOMAD
person who has no permanent home and travels to find food

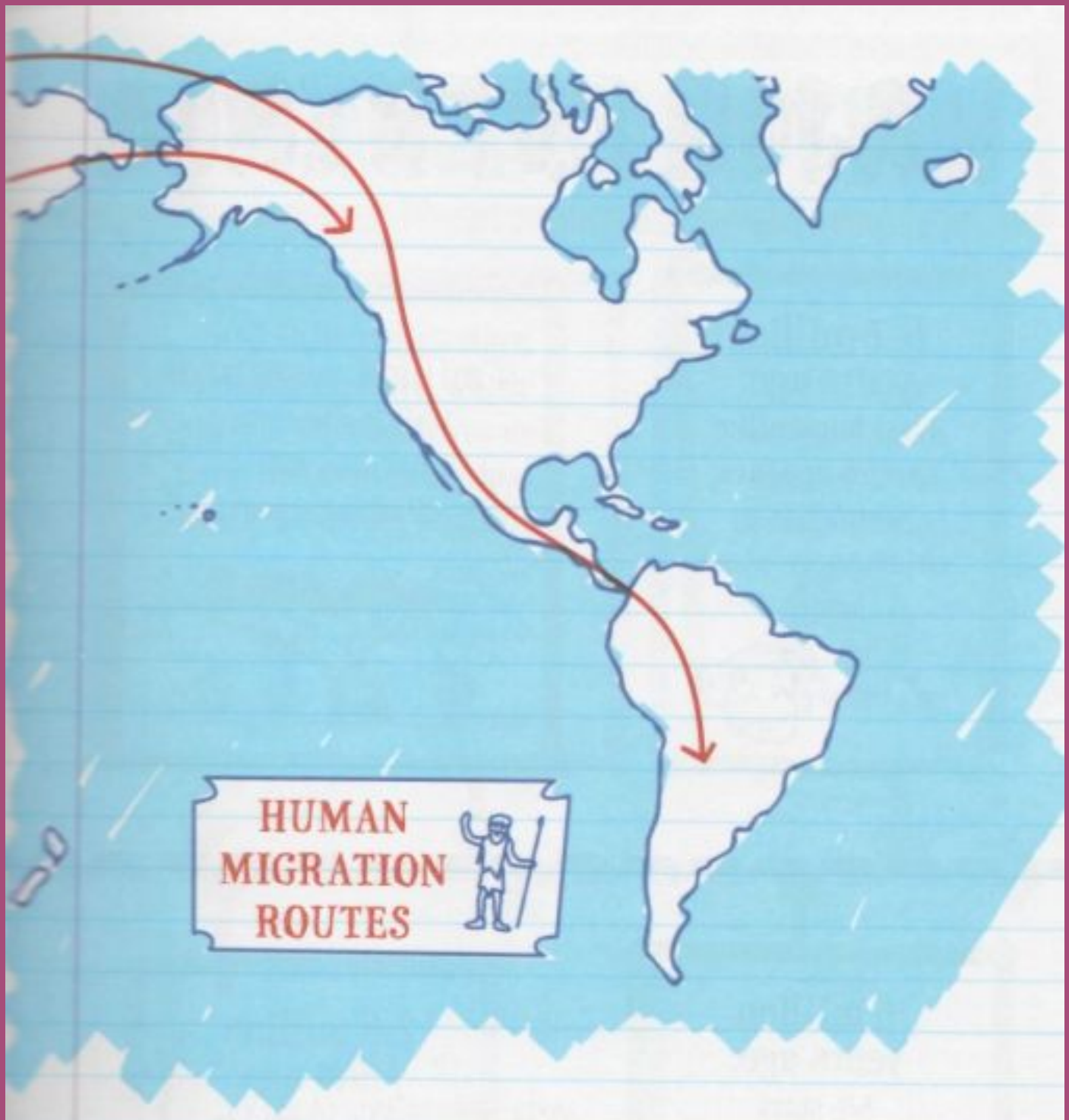
The Paleolithic people were hunters and gatherers. They probably divided labor to feed themselves, with men hunting and women gathering berries, nuts, and plants. They were **NOMADS**, moving from place to place to survive in small groups. They followed grazing animals, and they changed location based on the growing season—when plants stopped growing, they would move again. Paleolithic people had no permanent homes and built new shelters wherever they went.

THIS WOULD BE LIKE MOVING AROUND FROM SCHOOL TO SCHOOL WITH YOUR ENTIRE HISTORY CLASS.



The GREAT MIGRATION

The GREAT MIGRATION was a time of vast movement and long-distance travel for humans, who were beginning to explore other continents. Most humans followed the animals they hunted across the continents, often moving toward wet climates with lakes and fertile lands. The **ICE AGE** pushed humans toward warmer regions and connected



the continents through land bridges that were uncovered as sea levels lowered. Humans walked from Africa until they reached every continent except Antarctica. It took roughly one million years!

The **ICE AGE** was the most recent glacial period, when much of the earth was covered by ice and oceans were frozen over. It lasted about 100,000 years and ended around 10,000 BCE.

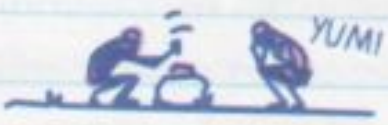
MAJOR EVENTS IN

6–7 million years ago:
First humanlike species appears, which has a chimpanzee-sized brain.

4 million years ago:
Walking upright but also still climbing trees

6 million years ago:
We start walking upright around now.

2.6 million years ago:
Technology! We start using stone flakes and cores to cut and crush food.



HUMAN EVOLUTION

500,000 years ago:

We discover fire, which changes our diet, gives us a warm hangout, and helps us to stay safe from predators.

80,000 years ago:

We leave Africa and begin the Great Migration.

200,000–800,000 years ago:

Our brains rapidly grow bigger, so we communicate better and more of us survive in the harsh environment.

ART was one form of communication for the nomadic Paleolithic people, probably used for telling stories and sharing myths. Sometimes, hunting strategies were drawn on the walls of a cave. Stone lamps filled with animal fat would light the caves while the Paleolithic people painted. Animal fat was also used to make paint: Mixed with various mineral ores, artists used fat to create reds, yellows, and blacks for their work. Artists would use their fingers to draw on the walls of the caves or they would use sticks, leaves, and hollow reeds to blow paint through. Sometimes they left handprints, maybe as a signature. Most cave paintings show animals during a hunt, and some anthropologists think the paintings were created as rituals to ensure a good hunt.

PETROGLYPH
a carving or inscription on a rock

CHECK YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. What was the Great Migration and how long did it take?

2. What are some reasons why early humans made cave paintings?

3. How do scientists learn about things that happened in prehistory?

4. When was the Paleolithic era?

5. What effect did the Ice Age have on the planet?

6. What sorts of objects did Paleolithic people make?

ANSWERS