

The First Hominids



1 When did humans first appear?

About 3 million years ago, the first “hominids” – known as Australopithecus – appeared in Southern Africa. Ancestors of many of the animals you see today were plentiful: deer, giraffes, hyenas, cattle, lions, elephants, sharks, birds ... These ancestors are as similar to the creatures you know today as you are to the first hominids.

7 The early hominids were different from apes because:

- they could walk upright, without using their hands
- their hands were jointed differently: whereas an ape’s hands are perfect for hanging and climbing, the hands of Australopithecus were perfect for making and using tools.

12 Their diet was mostly vegetarian, along with some meat, probably obtained by scavenging. The tools that Australopithecus made were simple, made mostly from bone and used for digging and scraping.

1. Read the passage. Time yourself. How long did it take?
2. Re-read the passage. Time yourself. How long did it take?

Dive Deeper 1

Answer the questions, that are on the next page.

Dive Deeper 2

Mark your answers.

Next to each answer, write the skill/s that you have used.

15 Who came next?

As far as we know, true humans, *Homo habilis*, first appeared in Africa about 2 million years ago.

18 *Homo habilis* were taller than Australopithecus and had larger brains. They often sheltered under cliffs as they followed herds of animals. These early people soon learned that there was safety in numbers and would band together to hunt and look after each other. *Homo habilis* couldn’t make fire.

22 When did people have fire?

Homo erectus date from around 1.5 million years ago. These people looked more like we do today: they were about the same size as modern humans although their brains were only two-thirds as big. *Homo erectus* could make fire. That meant that the people could now:

- choose where they camped – they didn’t always need shelter
- cook food – making it more edible as well as killing off diseases
- begin to develop a more formal family and social life around the fire.

Questioning	Find the meaning of the text and further your understanding.
Visualising	Use your imagination to picture what is happening in a text.
Sequencing	Write the things in time order.
Summarising	Find the key points and explain your understanding.
Predicting	Use clues from what you have read and what you already know to make an educated guess about what might happen next.
Retrieval	Retrieve (fetch) and record information directly from the text.
Deduction	Search for clues in the text to find evidence.
Inference	Use what you have read. Use what you know or have experienced before.
Stamina	Read quickly and with understanding for longer periods of time.
Speed.	Read quickly. Understand the text.

1. Why do you think the writer chose to start the piece with an illustration?

2. Why are all the headings in the form of questions?

3. "Their diet was mostly vegetarian along with some meat, most obtained by scavenging."

The word "scavenging" is closest in meaning to which option below? Tick one.

- catching and eating animals eating animals that are already dead
trapping and eating animals farming and eating animals

4. a) Were the lions that were around 3 million years ago exactly like the ones we see today?

b) How do you know?

5. What is the main way in which *Homo erectus* is different from *Homo habilis*?

Dive Deeper 3

Compare the text that you have read this week with the one you read last week.

What is similar about the two texts? What is different?

Are the writing styles similar or different?

How do you know this text is not a poem?

Could you improve this text? Would you include anything else?

6. Tick the best explanation for why the writer uses bullet points in the last section.

To summarise what has already been said.

To explain why *Homo erectus* had a big brain.

To show the main reasons that life began to change for *Homo erectus*.

To show why *Homo erectus* didn't have to hunt.

7. Why did the writer organise the three sections of this text in the order they are in?

8. Draw lines to match the different hominids to their diet.

Australopithecus

raw meat

Homo habilis

mostly plants

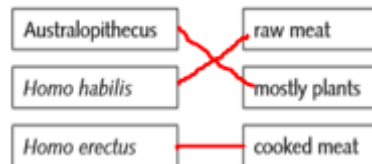
Homo erectus

cooked meat

9. Suggest an alternative heading for the text.

ANSWERS

1. One of the following:
 - To introduce the subject matter.
 - So readers can see what will be written about.
 - It shows how people have changed
2. One of the following:
 - So you know what's coming next.
 - To make the reader want to read on.
 - To make the reader want to ask the questions.
 - So the text can answer them.
 - It feels like the writer is talking to the reader.
3. Eating animals that are already dead
4. a) no
b) The text says that today's animals were as much like their ancestors as we are like the first Hominids, so they were similar but not identical.
5. Homo habilis couldn't make fire and Homo erectus could.
6. To show the main reasons that life began to change for Homo erectus.
7. The sections are ordered chronologically/in sequence/in the order in which they happened.
- 8.



9. An answer that recognises that the text plots progression in early hominids and is not about one point in particular.
For example: What would have you looked like 6 million years ago? / Your early ancestors / Human evolution