

HOMO SAPIENS

Our story begins in Africa, more than 300,000 years ago. There, modern humans evolved. Every single person on our planet, no matter what they look like, belongs to the human race, our species – Homo sapiens.

At first, 300,000 years ago, all Homo sapiens were Black. That's because we had lots of a chemical called melanin in our skin to protect it from the hot African sun.

But Homo sapiens did not all stay in Africa ...



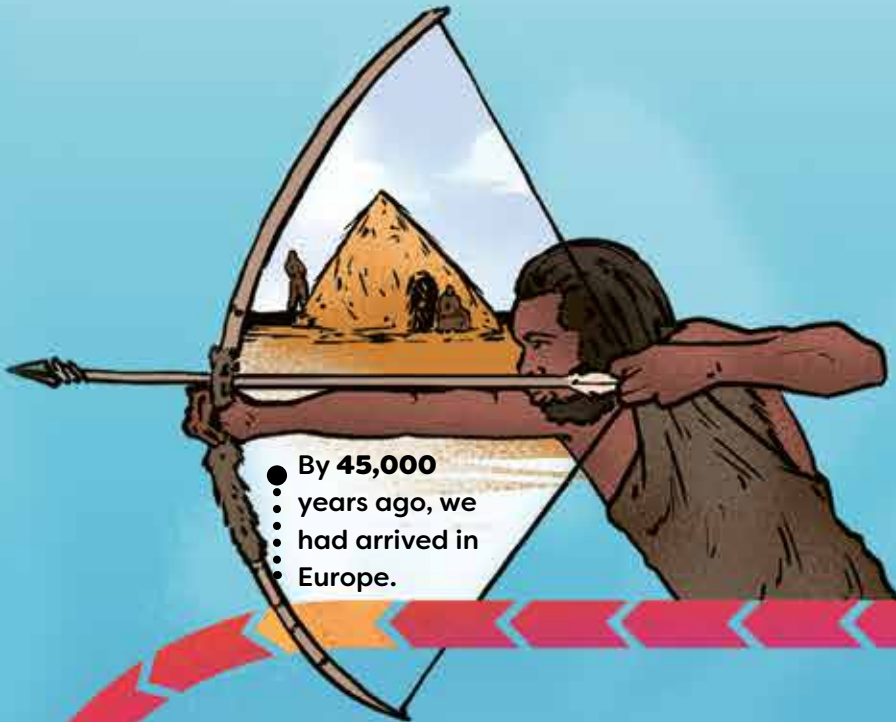
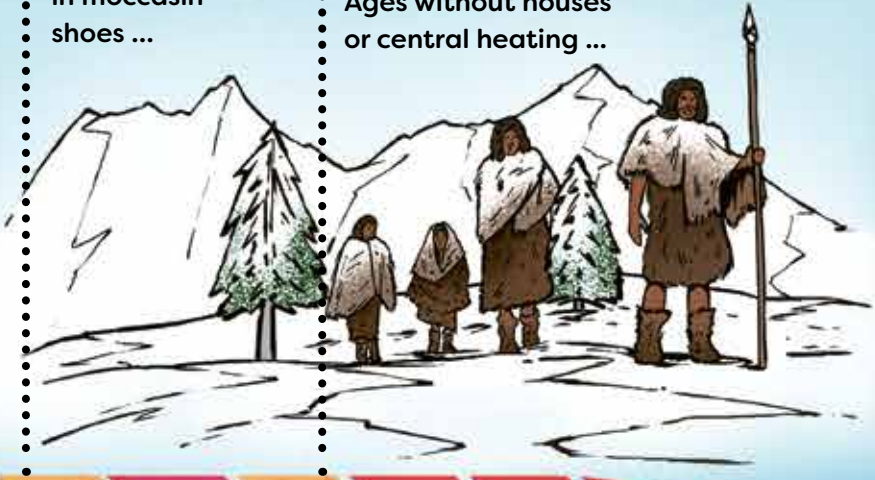
Historians think that more than 100,000 years ago humans migrated to the Middle East. From there, their children and their children's children slowly spread throughout the world.

We are incredible explorers.
We crossed seas on rafts ...



... climbed mountain ranges in moccasin shoes ...

... survived the Ice Ages without houses or central heating ...



By 45,000 years ago, we had arrived in Europe.

By 50,000 years ago, we made it to Australia.



Historians think that about 70,000 years ago, we arrived in South Asia then East Asia.



... and took on huge, fierce animals with only spears.



But along came the Ice Ages, and Europe froze over, trapped in glaciers that were miles high! Homo sapiens had to cling to life.

Back then in Europe the weather was warm, and the forests were full of food for humans to hunt and to gather.



Luckily, we are not just explorers, we are inventors as well. We use our big brains to design new tools to help us survive. And when we need to, we can adapt our bodies in incredible ways.



EVOLUTION

The sun was so hot where the human race evolved in Africa that we needed lots of melanin in our skin to protect it. Melanin blocks out the sun's ultraviolet rays. It also makes skin dark. The more melanin a person has in their skin, the darker it is.

But we actually need ultraviolet rays to make something very important – vitamin D. Without it, our bones don't grow properly and we can get seriously ill.

In places where the sun is super-hot, people can absorb enough ultraviolet rays to make vitamin D even if they have dark skin.

Human beings eventually migrated. They settled all over the world, including in places where sunlight is weaker. This was not a problem at first. Humans were hunter-gatherers in those days. They lived on food full of vitamin D – eggs, red meat and oily fish. They did not have to depend solely on the sun.

As time went on, Homo sapiens invented farming and started eating grains, like rice and wheat. These foods did not have enough vitamin D to keep people healthy in places where the sun's rays weren't so strong. So those people eventually, slowly, evolved.

Human beings have always explored and invented, as well as evolved. Our inventions mean we now live mostly indoors so most people don't get enough vitamin D from the sun. However, we have invented another way to get it – vitamin D tablets!

Evolution is when a living thing changes gradually over thousands and even millions of years in order to survive. Homo sapiens have evolved a lot. As we spread across the planet, our bodies changed depending on where we settled.

In places with damp, cold air, people's noses became longer and narrower, to warm the cold air.

In high mountainous areas where there is not much oxygen, people's lungs became bigger.

And in places where the sunlight is weak, people developed pale skin, which could absorb enough ultraviolet rays to make vitamin D.

Humans evolved in different ways across the planet, but human beings are still all one species: 99.9 per cent of our DNA is the same!

Most people in the world have enough melanin in their skin to darken it – they are the global majority. White people are the global minority.

FIRST BRITONS

The Ice Ages came and went for thousands of years. During that time Homo sapiens invented tools like bone needles to sew proper clothes that kept us warm.

Then, at last, around 12,000 years ago, the glaciers started to melt and the land in Europe became warm again.

There were no shops in those days and all humans were hunter-gatherers. Men, women and children worked together to get food and make every single thing they had. They moved from place to place, hunting herds of animals and gathering plants as they went.

In those days there was a vast area of lowland linking Europe to Britain. We call this area Doggerland. After the Ice Ages, some humans in Europe crossed Doggerland, following herds of deer and cattle. They were the first Britons! People have lived here ever since.

Eventually, thousands of years later, the last glaciers melted and a tsunami flooded Doggerland, turning Britain into islands.

Many more thousands of years later, in 1903, a skeleton was found in a cave in England. Scientists could tell straight away that it belonged to a young man who lived long, long ago. They named him Cheddar Man because the cave was in Cheddar Gorge, near Bristol.

When the technology was invented that could date bones, it showed that this young man lived more than 10,000 years ago. He was one of those first Britons!

Scientists at the Natural History Museum in London tested Cheddar Man's DNA. It showed that he had blue eyes, curly dark hair and skin as dark as dark can be. Cheddar Man was Black!

About 12,000 years ago, modern humans settled in Britain. They were Black – like all Western Europeans in those days. About 6,000 years ago, people with brown skin migrated to Britain. They brought farming and built Stonehenge, in Wiltshire. The first white Britons migrated to Britain about 4,500 years ago. Britain was Black for 7,500 years before that!



FIRST CIVILISATIONS

For nearly 300,000 years, Homo sapiens were hunter-gatherers. We thrived, and so did the planet. But, everything changed around 11,000 years ago when people discovered how to farm!

One farmer could grow enough food for lots of people. And those people were now free to do other things – like invent and develop writing, maths and engineering, and build big buildings.

People stopped moving around all the time and settled in villages around farms. The villages grew into towns, towns into cities, and cities into nations. Nations with rulers to rule them, governments to organise them and armies to protect them.

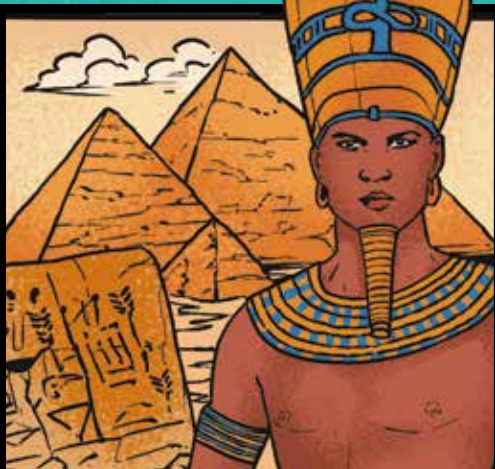
This is called civilisation!



OLMEC AND MAYAN CIVILISATIONS
(Mexico and Central America)
These civilisations were the creators of the best comfort food ever – chocolate!

BRITAIN

There was no civilisation in Britain back then, no towns or cities. But huge stone circles were built that took maths, engineering and the cooperation of big groups of people. Stonehenge is the most famous one. In 2019, scientists did DNA tests on the builders of Stonehenge. They had dark brown skin!



ANCIENT EGYPT

This African civilisation built pyramids and developed maths, medicine, engineering, astronomy and writing.



NOK (modern-day Nigeria)

This African civilisation invented the use of iron to make tools. They also made incredible art.



MESOPOTAMIA (modern-day Iraq)

This civilisation invented the wonderful wheel!



INDUS VALLEY (modern-day Pakistan, India, Afghanistan)

This Asian civilisation invented flushing toilets, buttons and dice.



ANCIENT CHINA

This civilisation invented gunpowder, fireworks and paper – and built the Great Wall of China.



NUBIA (modern-day Sudan and Egypt)

This civilisation was ruled over Egypt by Black pharaohs for almost 100 years.

Civilisations sprang up all around the world from 11,000 years ago onwards. They were all different, but they all depended on farming. They traded with each other, too – not just goods but ideas and inventions as well.