

Honors World History

Reading Questions: *Prehistory & the Birth of Civilization*

Directions. Read and annotate the handout entitled *Prehistory & the Birth of Civilization* and respond to the following in well-developed paragraphs:

1. Define the following terms using your own words.

- Prehistory
- Hominid
- *Australopithecus*
- Paleolithic Age
- Neolithic Age
- Specialization of Labor
- Mesopotamia
- Fertile Crescent
- Sumer
- Asia Minor
- Bronze Age
- Iron Age
- Humanistic Tradition

2. Briefly explain how geologists, paleontologists, anthropologists, archaeologists, and ethnographers each contribute to our understanding of humankind before the invention of writing.

3. In what sense does “tool-making represent the beginning of human culture” (p. 3)?

4. How are *Homo sapiens* distinguished from their hominid ancestors? What is the larger cultural significance of their burial practices?

5. Why was the development of language critical to the cultural development of *Homo sapiens*?

6. What is the significance of the prehistoric cave paintings found throughout Europe, Africa, Australia and North America? What does Frobenius’ ethnographic study of the pygmy peoples of the Congo suggest about the purpose of prehistoric cave painting?

7. How did the development of agriculture during the Neolithic Age revolutionize human culture?

8. How does the artwork of Neolithic humans reflect their concerns with the passing of the seasons, the earth’s fertility, and the cycle of birth and death? Analyze 2 specific pieces of Neolithic art and/or architecture to support your response (pp. 7 – 10).

9. What technological and social developments led to the emergence of cities about the year 4000 B.C.E.?

10. Where, when, and why did writing first come into existence? What form did it initially take, and how did it evolve over time (i.e., compare pictographs with cuneiform, p. 12).

11. What is *metallurgy* and how did it contribute to the evolution of human civilization?

12. Who were the Hittites? How did their introduction of iron weapons and tools transform human societies?

13. What is the overarching theme of this reading? Summarize its key ideas in no more than 1 or 2 well-developed paragraphs.