Review

- Modern human beings are descended from a variety of early hominids that changed slowly over time and adapted to new environments through a process called **evolution**.
- The earliest known hominid was called **Australopithecus**.
- It lived approximately **3-4 million years ago** in **southern and eastern Africa**.
- One of the most important facts about Australopithecus was that it walked on **2 legs**.
- This allowed them to run quickly, freed up their hands to start using tools, and gave them larger **brains** as a result.
- Eventually, Australopithecus evolved into different species, including two called **Homo habilis** and **Homo erectus**.
- These new hominid species spread all over the world. Later, another type of hominid, more similar to modern humans, moved into Europe and the Middle East. They were called **Neanderthals**.
Neanderthals disappeared around 35,000 years ago, which was about the same time modern humans moved into their territory.

Most modern humans from Europe and the Middle East today have a small percentage of Neanderthal DNA, which shows that they and modern humans interbred.

Whether they simply died out from being unable to compete with modern humans, or whether they were purposefully killed off by them remains a mystery.

The scientific name for modern humans is Homo sapiens.

The first Homo sapiens remains appeared around 250-300,000 years ago in East Africa.

After many years, modern humans moved out of Africa, eventually settling on every continent except Antarctica.

By moving into new climates, these early humans evolved different responses to different amounts of sunlight, creating the wide variety of skin colors we see today.

Dark skin was useful in hot, sunny climates closer to the equator because it protected humans from skin cancer.

And because it was sunny all the time, it didn't matter that the extra melanin in their skin, protecting them from skin cancer, blocked some of their ability to absorb vitamin D from sunlight.
• Light skin was useful in cool, cloudy climates, further from the equator, because having less melanin in their skin meant it was easier to get enough vitamin D from a smaller amount of sunlight.
• Humans around the world, but particularly in Europe and the Middle East, experienced a sudden change in their lifestyles around 40,000 years ago, called the Paleolithic Revolution.
• During the Paleolithic Revolution, humans started using much more complex tools, made out of bone as well as stone.
• They also began producing art for the first time, in the form of sculpture, painting, and jewelry.
• No one knows for sure why the Paleolithic Revolution started, but one possible explanation is that it was the first time humans began using language, which might have allowed them to communicate with each other in new and complex ways.
• During the time of the Paleolithic Revolution, and for tens of thousands of years after, all humans around the world practiced a hunter-gatherer lifestyle.
• This lifestyle meant that all adults had very similar jobs, with men hunting for animals, and women gathering wild plants and caring for children.
• This lifestyle also meant that they had to move frequently, in order to follow animals and plants throughout the year.

• Constantly being on the move kept people from keeping many personal possessions with them.

• All of these things combined to make hunter-gatherer societies very equal, with no real rich or poor people, and equal status in society. This is referred to as an egalitarian society.

• Around 12,000 years ago, humans first began controlling their own food supply by practicing agriculture.

• Agriculture allowed humans to stay in one place instead of constantly moving. This led humans to build permanent homes and buildings, as well as to keep a lot more personal possessions.

• As some people proved to be better or worse at farming and making tools, it led to a separation of social classes, with rich, middle class, and poor people for the first time. The invention of agriculture and the changes it created in societies that practiced it is called the Neolithic Revolution.
In drier areas without a lot of animals and plants to gather from nature, people began to practice agriculture sooner. People began to farm along the edges of rivers in areas like these.

When many people began farming in small areas like river valleys, the first cities began to form.

The earliest agricultural civilization was called Sumer. It was located in modern-day Iraq, in the Middle East, in an area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers that was called Mesopotamia.

The Sumerian economy was based on agricultural, as well as making and trading farm tools and weapons made out of bronze.

Each Sumerian city, like the largest ones Ur and Uruk, was ruled by its own king, whose job it was to act as a judge and keep his city peaceful and prosperous.

Sumerian kings carried out their jobs in large structures in the middle of the city called ziggurats. They made sure their justice was fair and equal by recording crimes and punishments in tablets called law codes.

The Sumerians were the first people to create a system of writing, in order to keep track of money and business transactions. Their writing is now called cuneiform, and was written by pressing symbols into tablets made of clay.
Aside from business, the Sumerians also wrote down many facts about their religion, which was polytheistic (many different gods).

- They had full-time priests who worshipped the gods on behalf of all the Sumerian people.

- They believed that after you died, every person went to a dark, dreary place called the "house of dust," where people drank dirt and ate clay for all eternity in boredom.

- One of the Sumerians' greatest accomplishments was the writing of world's oldest known book, called "The Epic of Gilgamesh," about the imaginary adventures of a Sumerian king.

- More than a thousand years after the founding of the cities of Ur and Uruk, the people of Egypt became united under one ruler for the first time.

- The Egyptians also practiced agriculture along the banks of the Nile River, as well as trading tools and weapons.

- The ruler of Egypt was called the pharaoh. Unlike Sumerian kings, who were just respected men, pharaohs were treated like gods. Their job was to keep Egypt united and protect the people during times of war.
• The Egyptians had a polytheistic (many gods) religion, except during the reign of one pharaoh who made everyone worship just one god. Like in Sumer, there were full-time priests, but the Egyptian people were more involved in performing rituals and prayers.

• The Egyptians believed that in the afterlife, each person was judged to be good or bad. Good people led a happy afterlife, while bad people had to be servants to the good people.

• To be in the afterlife at all, though, they believed the remains of your physical body on earth had to be preserved, which is why they turned their dead into mummies.

• For the mummies of pharaohs, they built huge triangular monuments out of stone called pyramids, in order to preserve their bodies and possessions forever.

• The Egyptians also invented their own writing system called **hieroglyphics**. Instead of being carved into clay tablets, it was drawn onto paper made from **papyrus**, or carved into stone.
• Around the same time that Egypt was being founded, thousands of miles away to the east another civilization was being created in the Indus Valley, in modern-day Pakistan.
• Like Sumer and Egypt, they also practiced agriculture, but also traded a lot of cloth and beads with the Sumerians in exchange for bronze tools and weapons.
• Unlike other early civilizations, the people of the Indus Valley did not have any strong leaders like a king or pharaoh. All the houses were about the same size and quality, which leads historians to believe they had an egalitarian society, which is unusual for agriculturalists.
• Although their art shows they had some kind of polytheistic religion, they did not build any temples or have any priests. What seemed most important to them was their advanced urban planning, which included a huge drainage system and public wells and baths. From this, we can assume that their religion had a strong emphasis on cleanliness.
• The first civilization in East Asia came around a little later, in a part of northern China called the Yellow River Valley.
• They mostly farmed millet, not rice like most people would expect based on the diet of Chinese people today.
• Not a lot is known about ancient Chinese society, and it was most likely ruled by village elders instead of powerful kings. Their cities were simple, and surrounded by tall, thick walls made of dried mud to protect them from enemies.

• Their religion was based on ancestor worship, instead of a huge collection of gods. The process of trying to read the future, called divination, was an important part of their beliefs.

• The first civilization to develop in the Americas was created by the Olmec people of southern Mexico.

• Because they lived in a lush, tropical climate with a lot of water, animals, and plants, they were able to practice agriculture and hunter-gathering at the same time.

• Aside from farming the classic Native American combination of corn, beans, and squash, they raised dogs for meat, and gathered a wide variety of plants from nature as well.

• Although it’s hard to say for sure because their language is undeciphered, it appears from art and archaeological artifacts that their society was led by a king treated like a god, similar to Egyptian pharaohs.
Their religion was polytheistic and formed the basis of religion found in later Mexican civilizations, like the Mayans and Aztecs. There's some evidence to suggest that they might have sacrificed infants as part of their religion, similar to the practice of adult human sacrifice among the Aztecs many years later.

One of their biggest achievements was advanced artwork, including colossal heads and face masks made of jade, which was obviously important to them since it was mined and had to be transported from hundreds of miles away.

The first civilization to develop in South America was called the Chavin. They were centered in one city high in the mountains of the modern country of Peru.

They practiced agriculture on terraced farms, growing corn, beans, squash, and a grain called quinoa. They also raised llamas for meat, farm work, and their thick hair.

Like in the Indus Valley, the Chavin had an advanced drainage system that supplied water to the people of the city, as well as irrigation diverting water to crops.

The Chavin were the first early civilization to have a government system called a theocracy (ruled by religious leaders).

These ruling priests used a complex maze of underground passages and visual and sound effects to convert new people into their religion.