CHAPTER 1

Becoming Human

GLOBAL STORYLINES

► Communities, from long ago to today, produce creation narratives in order to make sense of how humans came into being.

► Hominid development across millions of years results in modern humans (Homo sapiens) and the traits that make us “human.”

► During the period from 200,000 to 12,000 years ago, humans live as hunter-gatherers and achieve major breakthroughs in language and art.

► Global revolution in domesticating crops and animals leads to settled agricultural-based communities, while other communities develop pastoral ways of life.

CORE OBJECTIVES

► DESCRIBE various creation narratives traced in this chapter, including the narrative of human evolution, and EXPLAIN why they differ.

► TRACE the major developments in hominid evolution that resulted in the traits that make Homo sapiens “human.”

► DESCRIBE human ways of life and cultural developments from 200,000 to 12,000 years ago.

► COMPARE the ways communities around the world shifted to settled agriculture and ANALYZE the significance this shift had for social organization.
BEFORE YOU BEGIN

As you prepare to teach the global storylines in Chapter 1, you may find it useful to look at over the more in-depth overview of the main ideas in the chapter’s Conclusion, p. 35. The main points for Tracing the Global Storylines and additional discussion questions for Thinking About Global Connections can be found at the end of the chapter on pp. 36–37.

LECTURE OUTLINE

This chapter offers an overview of the evolution of humans, beginning with their common origins in Africa. It begins by discussing the debates on the origins of humans and the research techniques used to support current scholarship. After information about early hominids and their adaptation, we learn about the competition between Cro-Magnon humans and Neanderthals. Complex thinking aided in the creation of art and language for Homo sapiens, and helped them emerge as the sole surviving hominids. They began to migrate across the globe, crossing the land bridge from Asia to North America (The Bering Strait). When the climate warmed, those living in the Americas were cut off from Afro-Eurasia, developing independently for millennia. Further environmental changes led to the domestication of plants and animals. Southwest Asia, East Asia, the Americas, and Sahel Africa were incubators for settled farming communities, harvesting grains, or fish. That change did not come evenly or completely. Many groups maintained hunter and gatherer or pastoral lifestyles, following herds of animals. Communities that did settle began the process of job specialization and social stratification. Gender differences arose, and patriarchy emerged as certain tasks became specialized. As settled communities continued to advance, they were poised to create the complex civilizations that the next chapter reveals.

LECTURE IDEAS

**Time**

At the beginning of the textbook, the authors briefly discuss time and various views on time. Many students have never thought about the fact that there are multiple ways to measure and perceive time, either in the form of seasons, as is seen in some medieval texts, or cyclical time, such as the wet and dry periods in Egypt. During the Shang dynasty in China, a new system of time was devised that divided the day into two periods—night and day—with ten-day weeks that were repeated in sixty-day cycles called the “heavenly stem.” Each civilization devised its own myths around the division of time and seasons. You can draw in the “starting point” of dating for the Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Chinese, and Sioux as examples for students. This thematic lecture allows you to discuss all of the societies mentioned in this chapter and opens a window onto their social, geographic, climatic, and agricultural differences. This can help students tie the beginnings of Homo sapiens to the later cultures that
they may be more familiar with to better understand the background behind their creation narratives. As a side
note, you can also discuss the difference between the historical term *period* as opposed to specific times, as well
as the meaning of the word *dynasty* and its relevance in regard to the names of the Chinese dynasties, such as the
Shang dynasty or the Xia dynasty.

*Suggested Discussion Questions*

1. Why do you think different forms of measuring time exist?
2. What are some of the characteristics of these societies that might influence how their measurement of time
   evolved?
3. Are any of these forms of measuring time still used today?

**Creation Myths**

It is always fruitful to expose your students to the variety of creation and flood myths. Help your students to
place the archetypes, chronologies, and themes into context as well as creating linkages from one civilization to
another. Since you can’t possibly draw on all of the myths, you will need to select from a few key groups.
Keeping your class demographics in mind, use creation myths to which your students may be able to relate, that
you think they will find interesting, and that might require them to reevaluate stereotypes or disinformation.
Often, students are surprised by the chronology of early Mesopotamian creation and flood myths and how they
were appropriated by Judeo-Christian traditions. Your text includes *Gilgamesh* (see p. 52) and *Popol Vuh* (see
pp. 39–40) so you might consider building on these works.

*Suggested Discussion Questions*

1. Discuss historical and anthropological theories regarding transitions to patriarchy and the disempowerment
   of female divinities such as the goddess variously known as Isis (see p. 60).
2. What similarities can be found across creation myths, and why do you suppose these similarities exist? Is
   there any historical evidence to support theories regarding these similarities?
3. What are archetypes? What role do they play in societies? Name some of the archetypes found in these
   stories.

**Venus Figurines**

Using the reference from p. 22 in the text on the Willendorf Venus, expand on the topic of early female figurines
to add depth to your students’ knowledge of women’s roles in prehistory as well as speculation on prehistoric
religion and social life. Provide images of a variety of Venus figurines (all available on the Internet; search by
figurine name), including the Willendorf Venus. Images are available of the Venus of Dolní Věstonice in the Czech Republic; figurines from the cemetery of Cernavoda, Rumania; the figurine found at Çatalhöyük; and figurines from Israel, Bratislava (Slovakia), and France, among others. Provide a map that marks the regions where the figurines were discovered so that students can see the broad geographic spread of this art form. Discuss the remarkable similarities among the figurines. You can develop a lecture and discussion based on these images, such as how history is developed and other questions. Consider comparing these figurines to the anthropomorphous Bradshaw paintings in Australia, approximately 20,000 years ago. More information on the Bradshaw paintings can be found at www.bradshawfoundation.com/bradshaws/.

Suggested Discussion Questions

1. Why are similar figurines found across Europe and central Asia? Is this an indication of migration patterns or cross-cultural sharing?
2. What does the emphasis on the breasts, vulva, and stomach signify? Why have no similar representations of men been found, as in Africa with later statuary?
3. It generally is assumed that these figurines were representations of goddesses. Is this a fair assumption? What might have been some other applications for the figurines?

CLASS ACTIVITIES

The Cave of Chauvet

Use images such as those found at the Web site for the Cave of Chauvet in France: www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/arcnat/chauvet/en/ to help students begin thinking about the degree of change in human development during this period. Consider having them look at these images as one of the first things you do in the semester, even before a great deal of lecturing. Students can break into groups and explore the cave drawings. By providing the images without text, you create the forum and climate for further questioning. They have a minimum amount of detail on which to formulate suppositions about the lives of these early humans, the purpose of the drawings, and the purpose of the caves. The images depict bones, animals, and parts of human bodies, but no representations of entire human bodies. Why might that be? You may want to see if students come to this recognition on their own, or you could point it out to them and let each group discuss the meaning of the symbols and imagery on the cave walls. This preparatory experience and participation by students can lead into a more spirited lecture and discussion.

Hunter-Gatherers

Food provides an interesting, interactive, and informative way to help your students begin to think about what
life might have been like for hunter-gatherers. Have them read the sections on the Stone Age or the Neolithic Period. Then they can research the types of food that hunter-gatherers had available to them according to the regions they inhabited. Form groups, and assign each group a region. Ask students to bring in small samples of the foods that would have commonly been eaten or a food that is the closest variable. Ask students to create representations of the food for a family of four for one day; they could use the resources available about the so-called Paleo Diet [http://thepaleodiet.com/author/thepaleodiet/]. Have them present the food according to which gender collected it and the ratio of food type. It is projected that women and children collected approximately 65%–75% of the daily calories, gathering mostly berries and nuts, some grains, and some small game or fish in a region such as northern Europe. The men contributed approximately 35% because they usually hunted large game. By dividing the food according to what is collected by group, the students gain an important visual lesson that they do not seem to understand with text alone. Visual representations of the contributions by gender make a greater impact on this important historical detail.

Use the following BBC Web game as either a class activity or an at-home assignment to stimulate further discussion and promote understanding of the development of humans. If you play the game in the classroom, you can discuss the facts elucidated at the end of each brief section and why one choice might be better than another. To increase class participation and ownership, ask for a student volunteer to make the class’s choices on the computer. The game is filled with important details regarding evolutionary stages and brings to life many of the details from the textbook. If you discuss them in class and play the game, it can take at least 30–50 minutes. Caveman Challenge Game: [www.bbc.co.uk/sn/prehistoric_life/games/cavemen/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/sn/prehistoric_life/games/cavemen/)

**POPULAR FALLACY**

**WOMEN DID NOT WORK IN THE PAST**

It can be useful to begin (or end) the discussion of Chapter 1 by addressing students’ misunderstanding about women not working until modern times. Students often think that women did not work before the women’s movement of the 1970s opened opportunities for women. This preconception interferes with students’ understanding of the importance of women’s contribution to the early domestication of plants and animals, c. 8000 BCE, as well as the key role of women in agriculture up to the present. You might consider using the following exercise to alter students’ assumptions about how and when differentiated gender roles developed.

This exercise could be given to students individually or in small groups. The following evidence can be given to students as a handout, or you might prefer to lead the analysis by presenting the evidence as consecutive PowerPoints, perhaps with images. The goal of this exercise is to introduce students to the uses of evidence in historical analysis and to guide them toward recognizing the lack of evidence for this misconception.
Historical Analysis Exercise to Counter Popular Fallacy

Presenting historical evidence that women played key roles in plant and animal domestication during the early millennia can be useful in altering student preconceptions that women did not work outside the home in the past. For a full discussion of women’s key contributions to almost all aspects of early agriculture, see Laura Levine Frader’s “Gender and Labor in World History” in A Companion to Gender History, Blackwell, 2006 or Elizabeth Wayland Barber’s Women’s Work, The First 20,000 Years, W.W. Norton & Company, 1994. In Frader’s article and other research on the topic, it is clear that men were responsible for clearing the land of trees and stones and plowing, while women along with men did all of the other work in the fields accompanied by babies and young children. From the time of the early agricultural villages through to today, most small-scale farming families ate one meal a day that was usually a stew of some kind and owned few household goods or clothing so there was little household work for women to do. For an image of men and women working together, you might use the cave art image of men, women, and children with domesticated cattle on p. 2 in Chapter 1.

You can start the exercise by polling students to see if they believe that “in the past women did not work.” Then, it might be useful to ask students what evidence might be used to support this claim about women not working. The next step of the exercise is for students to compare their evidence of women not working (such as the misconception that early agricultural women were too busy taking care of children, cooking, or doing laundry to have time for farming) to the evidence below of women’s agricultural roles. (You may find it useful to focus on one of the following examples or you might want to show students several.) This exercise could be given to students either as a handout that they analyze individually or in small groups—before launching into a discussion or lecture on the content of this chapter. The goal should be to guide students toward recognizing the lack of evidence for their misconceptions about the historical topic and subsequently seeing the value of the evidence about women’s key roles in agricultural development.

Directions to student: Evaluate this evidence to determine whether women did or did not work in the past.

EVIDENCE 1

Hunter-gatherer societies gained most of their daily calories from plants that women gathered or grew. Women also participated in “game drives or hunting expeditions” in foraging societies.

EVIDENCE 2

As settled agricultural communities developed by 80,000 BCE, gender differences emerged in the social hierarchies of many of these villages. Men’s greater upper body strength was needed to clear and plow fields. This change toward gendered labor apparently increased men’s value relative to women’s contributions to planting seeds, watering crops, weeding out inedible plants, harvesting, and storing crops. Archaeological
evidence from early agricultural communities, however, reveals stunted and deformed skeletons of both women and men who spent their lives hunched over to grow and grind grain, showing the physical strain these activities had on the body.

**EVIDENCE 3**

As settled villages grew into cities or larger societies, military protection of resources evolved to be the sole responsibility of men and higher status was given to these male warriors and rulers. Women, however, continued to be essential for producing the surplus agricultural products these complex societies needed for survival and for trade.

*Assessment*

To assess whether students now understand that women worked in the past, you could ask the students to respond to a short answer question. One question might be to “evaluate how the roles women played were important for the development of early agricultural communities.” Their response could be evaluated based on how well they use evidence to support the claim that women did participate in many aspects of farming. You might consider having students’ quickly grade each others’ responses as a way for them to ask questions they might still have about the reliability of the evidence or how to construct a historical argument using evidence.

**RECOMMENDED FILMS**

- *Ape Man: The Story of Human Evolution* (four-part series, each 50 min.): This is an older series hosted by Walter Cronkite and set in Africa. Still significant, its interdisciplinary focus provides an explanation of our understanding of human development. Parts II and III are probably the most relevant for world history courses. Part II, “Giant Strides,” takes the viewer into the hunter-gatherer’s early technological world with the development of tools and the use of fire. In Part III, “All in the Mind,” Cronkite discusses one of the next major developmental shifts—language and its impact on humanity. One of the great advantages of brain and language development was enhanced creativity. Tools became decorated and individualized. This is the period when cave paintings were created. Consider combining the Classroom Activity on the caves at Chauvet with portions of this DVD. Part IV, “Science and Fiction,” is less about the debate between creationists and evolutionists than about controversies among scientists about the origins and the future of humans, which could be useful in discussions on the development of historiography.
► *Becoming Human* (approx. 30 min.) This short, primary-source documentary is broken into five sections with information about the evidence, anatomy, lineages, and culture of humans. Narrated by Donald Johanson, the discoverer of Lucy, this Institute of Human Origins documentary traces the discovery of Lucy and the scientific process involved in evaluating its finds, all on site in Africa. This film is available at the Web site *Becoming Human* and includes an interactive resource as well. [www.becominghuman.org](http://www.becominghuman.org)

► *The Feast* (29 min.): This documentary, produced by Timothy Asch and Napoleon Chagnon as part of the Yanomamo series, includes a study guide found at: [http://www.der.org/films/feast.html](http://www.der.org/films/feast.html)

This film records the lives of modern-day “Stone Age” people, the Yanomamo of southern Venezuela and northern Brazil. Any of the films from this series reflects people’s lives in prehistoric communities. Its brevity allows students to view the film and engage in a brief discussion of the value of viewing the lives of these modern people as a window into the Stone Age. The Yanomamo are struggling with the ever-encroaching presence of big corporations and urbanization. On the other hand, we as historians can gain much knowledge by viewing their day-to-day lives, including information on ceremonial practices, eating, gender traditions, the need for allies, and aggression.

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**


Steve Mithen, 2006. *After the Ice: A Global Human History 20,000–5000 BCE*.


**RECOMMENDED WEB SITES**

*Action Bioscience*

This site presents articles examining the debate over the “out of Africa” theory

[www.actionbioscience.org/evolution/johanson.html](http://www.actionbioscience.org/evolution/johanson.html)
**Becoming Human**
The Institute of Human Origins (IHO) created this website to publicize an interdisciplinary team of scientists’ work on human evolution. This interactive timeline on “becoming human” is accompanied by links to the most recent research on human evolution.
This site includes an interactive documentary, timeline, and classroom materials

[www.becominghuman.org](http://www.becominghuman.org)

**Big History**
Provides a short video, images, and a textual journey with Yanomami people in Brazil who still survive using foraging techniques. This page also has links to video lectures on hunter-gatherers, how to make stone tools, and comparisons to life today.

[https://www.bighistoryproject.com/thresholds/6](https://www.bighistoryproject.com/thresholds/6)

**The British Museum**
Over two million items in their collection database

[www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org)

**The Cave at Lascaux**


**Caveman Challenge Game**
The BBC site offers an interactive “caveman challenge.” Students can test themselves on this page

[www.bbc.co.uk/sn/prehistoric_life/games/cavemen/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/sn/prehistoric_life/games/cavemen/)

**Journey of Mankind**
This site, sponsored by the Bradshaw Foundation, includes an interactive timeline of the migration of early people that is very detailed and presents a great deal of information on prehistoric rock art

[www.brashawfoundation.com/stephenoppenheimer/index.html](http://www.brashawfoundation.com/stephenoppenheimer/index.html)

**National Museum of the American Indian**
One of the most extensive collections of Native American arts and artifacts in the world with over 825,000 items

[http://nmai.si.edu](http://nmai.si.edu)

**Leakey Foundation Timeline of Discoveries**
Click on “Education,” then “Timeline of Discoveries”

[www.leakeyfoundation.org](http://www.leakeyfoundation.org)
Museum of London Exhibit: London before London

www.museumoflondon.org.uk/archivelbl/

Venus Figurines from the Ice Age
This site offers numerous images of the most famous Venus figurines.

www.donsmaps.com/venus.html

What Does It Mean to Be Human?
The Smithsonian’s Human Origins Program covers all aspects of evolutionary science

http://humanorigins.si.edu

NORTON COURSEPACKS FOR YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS

In addition to the resources and recommendations in this manual, Norton provides PowerPoints of all the maps and art in the chapter, additional Lecture PowerPoints, and a Testbank. Norton Coursepack content is available for hybrid, online, or lecture courses and is designed to work with any existing Learning Management System. Norton Coursepack content is free to students and instructors and includes “office hour” videos on topics in each chapter, chapter review quizzes, maps, documents and images from Global Themes and Sources, Primary Source Exercises, Guided Reading Exercises, and more. An online reader with additional primary source documents and images is also available in the Norton Coursepack.