

Explore More—Spreading Out!

Directions: Listen to your teacher talk about the locations of human communities that populated the major regions of the world. You will learn how humans adapted to a variety of environments. Refer to the maps in your Explore Geography Picture Dictionary to locate the places your teacher mentions. Circle any words you don't understand. Underline or highlight important ideas in the text. Write notes in the margins to help you understand key points. Then answer the questions in your own words.

Populating the World

Today, most experts accept the idea that the ancestors of modern human beings came from Africa. However, there is a great deal of debate about how and when populations of modern human beings spread out across the world. Most experts agree, however, that about 100,000 years ago, modern humans were living in southwestern Asia. They believe a wider spread of modern humans occurred between 60,000 and 50,000 years ago in southern Europe. Modern humans were living in northern Europe and northern and Southeast Asia by about 40,000 years ago. They were living in Australia by about 35,000 years ago. Archaeologists have found evidence of Cro-Magnon communities in Spain and France. When the earth became warmer, the ice retreated, and humans followed herds of animals to new areas, including North and South America. Some experts believe this happened 20,000 or even 40,000 years ago. We know for sure that people were in North America by 13,000 B.C.

*Point to these dates on the class time line.
Point to the areas on the world map.*

New information may change our understanding of this issue.

Adapting to the Environment

Archaeological evidence shows that early human communities were successful at adapting to their environment. As result, their populations grew and communities developed in major regions around the world. The Cro-Magnons, for example, created over 100 types of tools using materials in the environment. This made it possible for them to live in a very cold climate and find plenty of food. Human communities that lived in different environments—deserts, forests, grasslands, and mountain regions—adapted in similar ways.

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The people in these early communities lived as hunters and gatherers. They built temporary shelters from portable structures and moved regularly in search of animals and plants for food. In the winter, they moved to areas that were warmer and sheltered them from cold weather. In the spring, summer, and fall, they moved to areas where they could gather nuts, wild berries, roots, and other plant materials to eat. They also made clothing for themselves and used fire to keep warm and to cook. ❖

Questions for further discussion:

- What would you like to know more about in terms of the human communities that populated major regions of the world? Frame questions that you can answer by historical study and research. Conduct this research and discuss your findings.
- How might our interpretations of the lives of early human communities change as archaeologists uncover new information?
- What we know about the Cro-Magnons and other populations of human beings comes from conclusions drawn from fossils and artifacts. What archaeological evidence about these humans is verifiable/unverifiable?