



THE HUMANS

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The world is an ever-changing place and the people within it are capable of incredible things; discoveries are made, records are broken, new facts are found and history recovered. We will be happy to revise and update information in future editions.

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INTRODUCTION

The human species, as we know it today, has existed for approximately 200,000 years. Though we still look similar to our ancient ancestors, we now behave very differently!

In the last 50,000 years, our species has created thousands of written and verbal languages; we've followed religions; built structures, settlements, villages, cities and civilisations; we've created stories to be passed from generation to generation; climbed mountains, crossed deserts and journeyed far and wide; we've invented transport, technology and cures for diseases; we've written songs, created instruments, art and music; we've even cultivated cultures that still exist today.

This book takes a glimpse at the origin of our species; where we came from, how we used to behave and why we've now traversed the globe, and an in-depth gaze into the great inventions our ancestors created for the benefit of the human race. We'll look at the rise and fall of some of the ancient civilisations and the lessons they've taught us.

From the Nubians to the Native Americans, and the Akkadians to the ancient Egyptians, our predecessors have given us all sorts of incredible inventions, technologies and practices.

Let's delve into the past and discover exactly what the humans have done for us ...

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360 DEGREES

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WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Many other species similar to our kind lived in the world before us. Let's dig through history and see where human life began.

Some of the Latin names that we attribute to animals and plants can be quite confusing, so before we look at the characteristics that make humankind so unique, let's familiarise ourselves with some useful information:

SPECIES VS GENUS



This is *Tyrannosaurus rex*. It belongs to the *Tyrannosaurus* genus and is the *rex* species. Many other dinosaurs exist in the *Tyrannosaurus* genus.



This is *Homo sapiens* (human beings, just like us). We belong to the *Homo* genus, and we are the *sapiens* species. Other types of hominin exist in the *Homo* genus ...

EVOLUTION

Species evolve over time adapting and changing over the course of thousands of years. Evolution can make animals stronger, cleverer, smaller, taller, fatter, thinner, or change their behaviour altogether.



A primate is a classification of mammal, which includes humans, apes and monkeys.

Several million years ago, humans evolved from apes. Some primates changed the way they moved by walking on two legs. Known as bipedalism, this adjustment occurred approximately four to six million years ago and is one of the key characteristics of humankind today.

AUSTRALOPTHECUS

Australopithecus is an extinct genus of primate that existed between two and four million years ago, whose name literally translates to 'southern ape' in Latin. Many scientists and historians believe *Australopithecus* to be our oldest relative.

Palaeontologists study fossils and they unearthed the first fossilised *Australopithecus afarensis* bones in Ethiopia in 1974. Nicknamed Dinkinesh (also known as Lucy), the skeleton provided important clues and clear evidence that humankind descended from apes. By looking at the bones, experts surmised that Dinkinesh walked upright on two legs, like a human.

Many other *Australopithecus* skeletons were unearthed on the African continent and scientists are almost certain that this is where the first humans evolved.

DINKINESH



DIVERSITY

As time passed, our species changed. Humans bred with other hominins, creating a diverse group of people.



HOMININ

Hominin refers to any human or species closely related to humans.

The only species of human alive today is *Homo sapiens*.

THE GENUS

Early human species are still being discovered and our understanding of their relationship with one another is constantly changing. What we're almost certain of, however, is that the first species of the *Homo* genus evolved 2.5 million years ago in Africa. Over the course of a couple of million years, other human species evolved, moving gradually across the globe. These modern humans were the most intelligent beings on the planet, but *Homo sapiens* swiftly became the most dominant.

DID YOU KNOW?

Our ancient ancestors were not always competitors. In 2018, an ancient bone belonging to a teenage girl was discovered in a Siberian cave. When scientists analysed the bone, they realised the girl had a Neanderthal mother and a Denisovan father.



HOMO NEANDERTHALENSIS

Neanderthals evolved approximately 400,000 years ago in Eurasia. They were muscular, powerful, and their brains were actually larger than our brains today.



HOMO FLORESIENSIS

Homo floresiensis fossils are native to the island of Flores in Indonesia. This species stood at about 1m (3ft) in stature, weighing little more than 20-30kg (45-66lb).



HOMO ERECTUS

Homo erectus means 'upright man' in Latin. This species existed for approximately 1.5 million years, making it the longest-lived of all the human species.



HOMO HEIDELBERGENSIS

Their remains were first discovered in the Neander Valley in Germany. The species died out roughly 40,000 years ago.



HOMO RUDOLFENSIS

Well-suited to scarce resources and island life, *Homo floresiensis* existed until just 50,000 years ago.



HOMO HABILIS



HOMO NALEDI

Homo erectus was possibly the first human species to wield and domesticate fire.

Many other species exist in the *Homo* genus and more are being discovered.

There is fierce debate amongst scientists and historians as to whether some of these species should, in fact, be classified separately.

Many have been identified from tiny bone fragments and it is not always clear whether a bone is from a new species.



HOMO SAPIENS

We are *Homo sapiens* ('wise man' in Latin).

Today, just one species of human exists ... us! Our existence sparked the demise of many other animals (including other human species!). Experts aren't certain as to why the rest of the species in the *Homo* genus became extinct, but it's plausible that the dominance of *sapiens* led to their downfall, combined with changes in climate and the emergence of diseases.

Our ability to adapt to changing climates and conditions may have also played an important part in our survival. The *sapiens* species was smaller and less muscular than the likes of *Homo neanderthalensis*, meaning fewer calories were required to survive. Or perhaps other species were just in the wrong place at the wrong time. The Neanderthals, for instance, were caught in a European permafrost during the Ice Age and may have perished as a result.

MAP OF SPECIES MOVEMENT

Homo sapiens rapidly became the most dominant human species and spread to all corners of the globe.



Every single person on the planet today can track their ancestry to Mitochondrial Eve. Eve was born approximately 150,000 years ago, in or near Ethiopia.

WHAT CAME NEXT?

What happened after our ancient ancestors had cultivated societies, built cities and created cultures across the globe?

Well, societies and civilisations pretty much continued as normal, building on what their predecessors had taught them, but the Industrial Revolution in the mid-1700s changed everything ...

It was at this time that the invention of engines and mechanised contraptions allowed humans to travel further and faster than ever before. European empires expanded at a rapid rate as humankind battled for precious resources, commodities and land.

While great civilisations may have lasted for thousands of years in ancient times, most of these modern empires were unsustainable, most notably the British and French Empires, and crumbled just a few hundred years after their conception. Dozens of countries re-gained their independence after this time and today almost all of the countries in the world are governed independently.

WHAT NOW?

Humankind has now created a new age, known as the Technological Revolution. For the first time in human history, technology has advanced at such a rate that its impact is starting to override evolution. Doctors can now eradicate diseases, genes can be mapped and problems overcome without nature's say. Artificial intelligence is transforming our behaviour and it may not be long before the music we listen to, the books we read and the languages we use are composed or authored by computer programs and algorithms.

Within the last century, we've seen the world's population quadruple and this is the biggest issue facing humankind today! Our species has become so successful that our presence on Earth is now affecting the planet itself.

If our ancestors have taught us anything, however, it's that we're an intelligent and resilient bunch. We're the best problem-solvers on the planet. If anyone can fix the issues facing our existence today, the humans can!

