

# Let's get acquainted with our ancestors!



## HOMINIDS – human-like creatures with interesting scientific names (Latin)

### AUSTRALOPITHECUS AFRICANUS



- ✗ Lived in Africa 2 to 3 million years ago
- ✗ Many fossils found – Taung child and Mrs Ples (Sterkfontein)
- ✗ Adults about the same size and weight as a modern 10 year old
- ✗ Bodies probably hairy. Long, muscular arms. Large gap between big toe and other toes – helped them to climb trees.
- ✗ Study of fossilized teeth and jaws – ate fruit, leaves, plant stems. Simple tools – rocks or sticks to break open hard nuts or fruit.
- ✗ Brain bigger than brain of gorilla – scientists don't think they could talk – probably used sounds/gestures to communicate.

### PARANTHROPUS ROBUSTUS

- ✗ Name means robust ape
- ✗ Lived about 2,5 to 2 million years ago
- ✗ Bigger teeth and jaw, flatter face.
- ✗ Probably ate termites, other insects and meat as well as plants.
- ✗ Evidence to suggest they used sticks to break open termite mounds.
- ✗ May have used stone tools
- ✗ Lived in areas with grass and trees – possibly spent more time on the ground.

### HOMO HABILIS

- ✗ Handy man
- ✗ Lived 2,5 to 1,5 million years ago
- ✗ Less hair on their bodies
- ✗ Small – weighed about 40kg.
- ✗ Bigger brains, small eyebrow ridges, human-like teeth, jaws less protruding
- ✗ Walked upright – spent little time in trees
- ✗ Probably ate plants and meat, used stone tools
- ✗ Evidence found at Sterkfontein



### HOMO ERECTUS

- ✗ Upright walking
- ✗ Fossils found in many different parts of the world
  - ✗ Moved from Africa to other areas
  - ✗ Looked like modern humans but more muscular.
  - ✗ Sloping foreheads, large eyebrow ridges, heads and brains smaller than modern humans
- ✗ Hunter-gatherers.
- ✗ Used tools made from wood and stone
- ✗ Could sail boats
- ✗ Evidence that they used fire
- ✗ May have lived in small family groups and communicated using some form of language



### HOMO SAPIENS

- ✗ Wise person
- ✗ Lived in almost every type of habitat
- ✗ Looked and behaved like modern humans, probably wore clothing of some kind and made shelters to live in
- ✗ Hunter-gatherers – ate what was available in their environment
- ✗ Used tools made from stone, wood, bone – later developed when they discovered how to make metals such as iron and bronze
- ✗ Advanced language skills
- ✗ Buried their dead with special ceremonies
- ✗ Painted pictures, had songs and dances
- ✗ Decorated their bodies with jewellery and paint



# **BREAKING NEWS!!!!!!!!!! THURSDAY 8 APRIL 2010 – WITS UNIVERSITY AND THE CRADLE OF HUMANKIND...**



## **AUSTRALOPITHECUS SEDIBA**



Two partial skeletons of *Australopithecus sediba* dated between 1,95 and 1,78 million years ago were found in cave deposits at the Malapa site in the Cradle of Humankind. These two skeletons represent a new *Australopithecus* species which possibly descended from *Australopithecus africanus*. The fossils show that *sediba* shares more features with early man than any other previously discovered.

They are thought to have lived in a hot, dry climate interspersed with periods of violent thunderstorms and floods. They were discovered in a cave, the mouth of which would have been at least 50m higher than it is today. The individuals appear to have fallen, along with other animals, into a deep cave where they lay on the cave floor for a few days or weeks. The bodies were then washed into an underground lake or pool, possibly after a large rain storm. They were solidified, as if thrown into quick setting cement. The rock they are preserved in is called calcified clastic sediment. Over the past 1.9 million years the land eroded to eventually expose these fossil bearing sediments.



# AFRICA – CRADLE OF HUMANKIND

Strong scientific evidence exists to support the theory that the first humans originated in Africa and moved from here to other parts of the world. The evidence comes from extensive studies on primary material sources – fossils – that have been discovered in many parts of Africa. Studies have also been conducted on languages spoken by people in different parts of the world. Links have been established between the routes taken by people moving out of Africa and the languages spoken by the people who lived along these routes.

## Charles Darwin

In 1859 a scientist, Charles Darwin published a book – The Origin of the Species – in which he explained his theory of evolution, part of which proposed that modern man evolved from apes.

What is a theory? \_\_\_\_\_

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What is evolution? \_\_\_\_\_

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## What is a world heritage site?

World heritage sites are identified by the United Nations. They are:

- ✗ sites or areas which represent prime examples of human creative genius, cultural traditions or civilisations which have disappeared or a place which illustrates significant developmental stages in the history of humankind.
- ✗ Sites or areas which represent major stages of earth's history. They should reflect the continuous ecological and biological processes in the evolution of flora, fauna and their natural habitats.

South Africa hosts the following World Heritage Sites. State whether each is CULTURAL, NATURAL or BOTH and say in which province they are found:

WORLD HERITAGE SITE	C/N/B	PROVINCE
The Greater St Lucia Wetland Park		
Robben Island		
uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park		
The Cradle of Humankind		
Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape		
Richtersveld Cultural and Botanical Landscape		
Cape Floral Kingdom		
Vredefort Dome		

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