• The development of radiocarbon dating radically changed the ways in which archeologists studied prehistory. Have students explore what radiocarbon dating is and how it works. Useful link: www.c14dating.com/k12.html

• Ain Ghazal is one of the most important Neolithic sites ever discovered. In small groups, have students research different aspects of this site. Possible topics include dwellings, art, burial practices and religion. Students can compile their research to create a book on this important archeological site. Useful resource: inic.utexas.edu/menic/ghazal/contents/tableindex.html

Suggested Internet Resources
Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at www.LibraryVideo.com

• www.besthistorysites.net/PreHistory_StoneAge.shtml
  This is an excellent resource with an abundance of links to sites dedicated to the Stone Age.

• worldhistoryforusall.sdsu.edu/dev/eras/era3.htm
  This site provides a very solid background to the Stone Age.

Suggested Print Resources

The First Towns & Villages

Grades 7–12

The Stone Age, named so because the tools that were used were fashioned out of stone, is a prehistoric stage of human development that began around 600,000 to 700,000 years ago. This preliterate stage in human development is subdivided into three shorter time periods — the Paleolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic — each characterized by the types of tools these prehistoric people used. Generally speaking, the stone tools that Stone Age people employed ranged from the simple to the complex and from nonspecialized to specialized implements designed for specific tasks. Stone Age populations existed over vast areas; from the Fertile Crescent in the Middle East to Northern Europe, and each population developed according to its specific needs, which were primarily dictated by the environmental conditions under which they lived. The Stone Age is the period in history where anatomically modern humans took the first steps that eventually led to modern civilization.
Program Summary

The First Towns & Villages explores the dramatic leap prehistoric peoples made from hunting and gathering to farming that occurred about 8,000 years ago. At the end of the Younger Dryas (a kind of mini-ice age which caused severe drought throughout the Fertile Crescent) the world became ripe for farming, and the Neolithic people living in the area now known as the Middle East took the first of many steps that would eventually lead humankind out of the Stone Age. This was an extraordinarily creative period in human history which saw the invention of the plough, the use of plaster in building, and the development of the village which became the catalyst for burgeoning political, social and religious institutions. As Neolithic peoples began to travel, fanning out further from their ancestral homes, a cross-pollination of technologies and ideas spread, transforming the ways in which people lived.

Vocabulary

Paleolithic Period — A stage in human development characterized by the use of stone tools.

Mesolithic Period — A stage in human development that occurred between the Paleolithic and the Neolithic Periods about 10,000 years ago. The Natufians existed during this period.

Neolithic Period — The final stage in prehistoric human development. This period precedes the Bronze Age.

Younger Dryas — A short period of cold temperatures about 10,000 years ago.

Natufian — A Neolithic group of people who lived in the Fertile Crescent. The Natufians are credited with being the first Stone Age farmers.

glacier — Gigantic deposits of ice that move and erode the landscape.

loom — A device used to weave thread or wool to make clothing.

plaster — A man-made building material created by heating limestone at very high temperatures.

long house people — A Neolithic people living in Northern Europe. Archeologists used this term as it describes the types of dwellings in which these people lived.

Pre-viewing Discussion

• Discuss with students the non-linear aspect of human development. Explain that both Neolithic (farmers) and Mesolithic (hunter-gatherers) peoples were living simultaneously in the world. Have students think of contemporary examples of similar situations. For example, the differences between developing (third world) and developed (first world) countries.

• Explain to students that prehistory is defined by the absence of literacy. Have students imagine a world devoid of literacy. What problems did literacy solve? What problems did it create? (Continued)

• Explain to students that during this period in human development there is very little archeological evidence of conflict between and among people. Have students discuss how cooperation facilitated human development. What lessons may be derived from the cooperative behavior of our prehistoric progenitors?

Focus Questions

1. What item is considered to be the first example of complex technology?

2. What was the disadvantage of people living so closely with the animals they herded?

3. What was the first domesticated farm animal?

4. What was the first artificial building material?

5. Describe the process by which plaster was made.

6. Describe what the people did with the skulls of their dead relatives.

7. How do archeologists think the stone columns found in Turkey were used?

8. What effect did the people living in the Fertile Crescent have on the environment?

9. What problem precipitated the invention of the plough?

10. Who were the “long house people”?

Follow-up Discussion

• Have students think about points of commonality between themselves and Stone Age people. Can they see themselves or remnants of our current civilization in these prehistoric people?

• Prehistoric humans created religious rituals to help them understand their world. Have students discuss this uniquely human impulse. How did religion become manifest in the Stone Age?

Follow-up Activities

• In small groups, have students use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast Mesolithic (hunter-gatherers) and Neolithic (farmers) people. Students should consider such things as social organization, religious ritual, dwellings and tools. Useful link: mr_sedivy.tripod.com/prehist3.html

• Using poster board, paint, clay and other art materials, have students recreate art popular in the Neolithic Period. Students should work to understand the meaning behind the symbols and patterns they recreate. The students’ work can be gathered to create a Neolithic Art Gallery. Useful link: www.emis.de/monographs/jablan/chap26.htm

• Paleonutrition is the study of the diets of Stone Age populations. In small groups, have students research the human diet as it evolved, noting similarities and differences between prehistoric and modern diets. Useful link: faculty.smu.edu/jowillia/berardi_paleonutrition/williams_paleonutrition.htm (Continued)